Identity, Facebook and Education:
Students Negotiating Identity on a Class’ Facebook Page

Keely Blanch

A thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Arts (Education)
At the University of Otago, Dunedin
New Zealand

25 March 2013
Abstract

New technologies have led to changes in teaching pedagogy. Among the digital technologies introduced into classrooms are software packages, such as Moodle, which are designed to offer online learning environments. More recently, New Zealand schools are also using social network sites (SNS) such as Facebook for learning (NZ Teachers Council, 2013). Yet, social network sites have been identified as spaces for identity experimentation and impression management for young people (boyd, 2008). Furthermore, the co-opting of students’ “social space” for educational purposes, and the presence of the teacher, blurs the boundary between public and private.

This thesis documents the ways in which a group of New Zealand students negotiate their identities on a class Facebook page. I examine the way one teacher and her class use Facebook as an online learning environment, the way a group of students from the class negotiate their identities on Facebook, and what the educational presence on Facebook means for students and teachers. Operating from a poststructuralist framework, I conceptualise identity as a fluid process and recognise the discursive constructions that shape identity. I compliment this approach with Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical analogy of the front-stage and back-stage performances of identity, which allows for consideration of the public/private influences on identity. Literature regarding SNS often explores either SNS and education, or SNS and identity. I situate this thesis between the two fields, drawing together the use of Facebook for education and identity negotiation.

I conducted a two-part qualitative research study in a New Zealand urban, mid-decile school. In the first phase of data collection, I interviewed nine Year 13 students and their teacher, about their personal and educational experiences of using Facebook. In the second phase of data collection, I observed the participants’ online interactions on the class page to supplement these reported experiences. Drawing upon discourse analysis, the findings were analysed and are presented in two parts: to explore the way the class used Facebook for educational purposes, and to explore the way students negotiate their identities on Facebook.

The teacher and student participants’ perceptions of the affordances offered by Moodle and a Facebook Page determined how they used these platforms. Whilst Moodle remained the resource repository, Facebook was used for interactive communications. Although the teacher hoped for a collaborative learning community, traditional teacher-student relationships of the
classroom were replicated on the Facebook page, affecting the students’ online presence and interactions. The students crafted their digital identities on Facebook through performative acts such as deciding which information was revealed or associated with their personal profiles, and to which audience. They applied Facebook’s technical affordances, such as account settings, to control their digital presentations. Findings indicate that the educational use of Facebook affected the students’ identity performances, with the participants aware of the teacher’s presence and her expectations of their behaviour on the page. For most students, the benefits offered by the Facebook page outweighed the tensions caused by the blurring of private/public spaces.

This study provides insights into the reciprocal influences of identity negotiation and the use of the class Facebook page. It provides knowledge about the way young New Zealanders use Facebook to craft digital identities, and the way one teacher and class use Facebook for educational purposes. While Facebook offers opportunities for educational use, there are still issues worthy of consideration, such as equitable access opportunities, clearer guidelines for teachers and students, and the requirements for a collaborative learning environment.
Acknowledgements

This thesis is dedicated to the memory of my parents:

who passed away before I started this thesis;

and my Mother, Sharon Evelyn Davies (31.08.1944 – 24.8.2011),
who sadly passed away before seeing me complete it.
I think they would have been proud.

When I thought about embarking on Postgraduate studies, it seemed exciting, challenging, scary and time-consuming. The process to complete my MA has been all of those and more. Completing it would not have been possible without the support of some awesome people and I owe them all a vote of thanks.

I would like to express my gratitude and respect for my supervisors, Dr Karen Nairn and Dr Susan Sandretto. Thank you. Throughout this process, I have appreciated your support and guidance. Though I may have cringed at times when I received my draft chapters back covered in pencil, your comments have improved this research and my writing and often inspired new thoughts. Karen, I do not know if I am ever going to get over that nervous feeling when asking you to read my writing, but I always look forward to seeing your thorough feedback and suggestions. I must owe you a box of pencils by now! Your quiet humour, warmth and support have been invaluable. Susan, I appreciate the time you have taken when you have been so busy this year. The smiley faces on my writing were always the highlight of getting feedback, matched only by your ready smile in the corridors.

There is a saying about ‘behind every man…..’, but in my case it is the great man behind me that has made all the difference. To my husband Ross, without your support this journey would not have been possible. You have been my chief cheerleader and my sounding board, even when you could not be here in person. I still hold that you deserve an honorary degree because I am sure you have learnt as much as I have. In fact, I am sure you have heard enough about Facebook and my thesis to last you a lifetime!

To my awesome children, Kyle, Shannon and Erin, I would not have been able to do this without your help while Dad was away with work. I promise no more TV dinners. However, I am still going to pester you about your Facebook security.
I also owe a debt of gratitude to my sister, Kirsty. She has been there through the highs and lows of this journey. She has kindly shared experiences from her PhD, helped with formatting and laughed at my complaints. She took on more than her share of executor duties after Mum’s death and took a lot of the pressure off me. Kirsty, you have been a brick – Thanks!

Oh, and I am still going to get you to read my ‘doorstop’.

I also owe thanks to my fellow post-grads: Dr Leigh Smith, Lara Sanderson, Kelly Keach, Megan Anakin, Adisorn Juntrasook, Shire Agnew, Kim Brown and Julie Stigter. The community feeling on the 4\textsuperscript{th} Floor provided a welcome counterpoint to the stress of deadlines, and the kitchen conversations about our research projects helped me wade through what, at times, felt like a quagmire. Julie, without your extensive resources, the University library would have had a lot more fines out of me, so thank you for the use of all your books.

To the best out-of-office support team anyone can have: Judy, Jacquie, and Michelle. Thank you all for reminding me there is life outside of the office. I may not have made every ‘meeting’, but thanks for not giving up on me!

My heartfelt thanks goes to the wonderful teacher and students who agreed to participate in my research study and gave up their time to share their experiences of using Facebook. Without you, this research would not have been possible. I wish you all the best in the future.

I would also like to thank The University of Otago College of Education and the University of Otago for the support I have received for my studies through a University of Otago Research Master’s Scholarship, and a Waddell Smith Postgraduate Scholarship.

Thank You.
Table of Contents

Abstract .................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgements ............................................................................................. iv
Table of Contents ............................................................................................... vi
List of Tables ........................................................................................................ ix
List of Figures ......................................................................................................... x
Glossary ................................................................................................................ xi

Chapter One: Introduction .................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Background to the Research ..................................................................... 1
  1.2 Research Problem and Core Research Questions .................................... 5
  1.3 Theoretical Framework ............................................................................. 7
  1.4 Importance of this Research ..................................................................... 8
  1.5 Outline of this Thesis ................................................................................ 9

Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework ................................................................ 11
  2.1 The Social Construction of Identity ............................................................ 11
  2.2 Structuralism and Poststructuralism ........................................................... 12
    2.2.1 Discourse .............................................................................................. 14
    2.2.2 Discourses and Power ........................................................................... 15
    2.2.3 Subjectivity and Positioning ................................................................. 17
    2.2.4 Performance, Performativity and Impression Management .................. 18
      2.2.4.1 Butler and Performativity ............................................................... 19
      2.2.4.2 Goffman and Performance of Identity ......................................... 19
  2.3 Concepts of Public and Private ................................................................. 22
  2.4 The Construction of Young People in Society .......................................... 26
  2.5 Summary ................................................................................................... 27

Chapter Three: Literature Review ...................................................................... 29
  3.1 The Use of SNS for Educational Purposes ............................................... 30
  3.2 Online Identity and SNS ............................................................................. 36
    3.2.1 Identity and Discourses of Risk on SNS ............................................. 36
    3.2.2 Creating a ‘Self’ Through the Profile: Writing Oneself Into Being .... 38
    3.2.3 Negotiated Co-Construction of Identity ........................................... 43
  3.3 Summary ................................................................................................... 47

Chapter Four: Research Methodology ................................................................. 48
  4.1 The Research Design .................................................................................. 48
    4.1.1 Participant Recruitment ....................................................................... 50
List of Tables

Table 1.1: Research Questions .......................................................... 7
Table 4.1: Research Questions Revisited .............................................. 49
List of Figures

Figure 1.1: Socially Perceived Membership of Common Social Network Sites..........................3
Figure 1.2: Situating this Thesis..................................................................................................9
Figure 2.1: Reconceptualizing Public and Private as a Continuum........................................24
Figure 2.2: Information Flow between Class and Individual Profiles........................................25
Figure 5.1: Administrators Posting on a Facebook Page Use the ‘Name of the Page’...............63
Figure 6.1: The Compulsory Public Profile ..............................................................................85
Figure 6.2: The Public Profile Page .........................................................................................86
Figure 6.3: The Extended Facebook Profile............................................................................92
Figure 7.1: Revisiting the Public-Private as a Continuum.........................................................106
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Glossary</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cover photo</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friend</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Friending</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Groups</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Like/Liking</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Likes</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>LMS</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>News feed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Notifications</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Page</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
in the newsfeeds of the member and their Friends. Pages are different from personal profile pages, which are also known as Timelines.

**Profile**
On Facebook, your profile is also known as your Timeline. This is where you construct yourself through sharing of information and details.

**Profile Picture**
The main picture of you, which appears on your Profile and as a thumbnail beside any comments or posts you make.

**Posts**
Items, photos or other messages shared on a Wall or Timeline.

**Sharing**
Providing a link to an item on either your own, or a Friend’s Wall. Again, I use italics to distinguish the Facebook usage of the term from common usage.

**SNS**
Social Network Sites

**Tagging**
Creates a link between a person, place, or Page and a Post or photo.

**Timeline**
The chronological collection of posts, photos and information about you.

**Wall**
The space on your profile where you and your Friends share information.
More than ever, education is taking place in a time of rapid social, cultural, economic, technological, and global change. In New Zealand, the education system needs to respond to the changes taking place as we become a knowledge-based society. (Ministry of Education 2003, as cited in Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 6)

1.1 Background to the Research

As technological advances, and the possibilities they offer, have become more widely integrated into society, young people are among those adopting new technologies into everyday practices (Kreps, 2010). Among the advantages offered by the digital age is the ability for increased communication. Whether this communication is synchronous, as in live chat streams, or asynchronous, as in message boards, people now have the ability to make, or remain, in contact with others via the global internet community. Moreover, the rise in popularity of social network sites\(^1\) (SNS) in recent years has further fostered the ability for contact with others, regardless of geographic locale.

Interactive technologies, such as the internet, have also led to the need for the development of new strategies to help make meaning of the varied texts that are available. In the 1950s, literacy practices were traditionally centred around making meaning from print technologies or “reading and writing words” (Anstey & Bull, 2006, p. 2). However, globalisation, greater cultural awareness, and the changing technological environment have led to a need for a diverse range of meaning-making skills, or literacy practices. Traditional literacy pedagogy is no longer sufficient for literacy development in the constantly evolving digital age (Unsworth, 2002). Rather than trying to make new technologies and texts ‘fit’ into old literacy practices, there is the need to develop and acknowledge new emerging multimodal literacies, or multiliteracies (Anstey & Bull, 2006; Goffman, 1967; Quinlivan, 2002).

\(^1\) boyd & Ellison (2007) argue that the term ‘social network sites’, in contrast to ‘social networking sites’, acknowledges that ‘networking’ is not necessarily the primary practice of these sites. Rather, social network sites are often used to communicate with others already part of an offline social network (see also Greenhow & Robelia, 2009). I note that danah boyd uses the lowercase spelling of her name.
Chapter One: Introduction

The term ‘multiliteracies’ was originally coined by The New London Group\(^2\) (Cazden et al., 1996) to describe a new approach to literacy pedagogy designed to acknowledge the increasing “plurality of texts” arising from a culturally diverse globalised society, in addition to “the burgeoning variety of text forms associated with information and multimedia technologies” (p. 61). More recently, Danzak (2011) defines multiliteracies as “a shift in the conception of literacy and literacy pedagogy from that of a page-bound practice restricted to an official/standard (i.e., monolingual and monocultural) language to a critical and dynamic understanding of literacy as a multiplicity of discourses” (p. 188). In other words, there has been a shift from communication through language and print means, to communication involving a multiplicity of codes and communication patterns via textual, visual, audio, spatial, and behavioural components. For young people, this means that they must be able to create meaning, not only from traditional print-based texts, but also from electronic text forms and personal face-to-face interactions. Additionally, students need the ability to recognise and utilise contextually appropriate literacy practices. As Anstey and Bull (2006) note,

> At the most rudimentary level, this means it is not sufficient to simply know the vocabulary; students need to know how and when to use it and with whom. At more sophisticated levels, it means having the problem-solving skills, flexibility, and strategic awareness to work in groups, move between tasks and workplaces, and use or adapt knowledge to live life as an active and informed citizen. (p. 18)

The increasing availability of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT), and the corresponding literacy requirements, has led to changes in teaching pedagogy. ICT is widely accepted as a necessary component of the curriculum if students are to become active global citizens (Ministry of Education, 2007). Many schools utilise computers in each classroom, as well as providing computing suites for students. Some schools have instigated “bring your own device” (BYOD) policies, which require students to invest in personal computing devices, such as iPads, for daily school use (see for example, Binning, 2011, July 20; Chaffin, 2011, July 18; The silver lining of cloud-based learning., 2012, December 17). In addition, secondary schools often utilise educationally designed software, such as Moodle, to provide resources through the online environment. Recently, schools are being urged to support student learning through the use of SNS, such as Facebook, for educational purposes (Dede, 2008; Ministry of Education, 2013).

---

SNS provide a relatively recent form of computer-mediated communication. SNS were created, and became popular, based on the assumption that “there is a need for people to make more connections” and that to do so via the internet is both easier and desirable (Donath & boyd, 2004, p. 71). boyd and Ellison (2007) define SNS as sites that encompass web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (p. 211)

Whilst the first major SNS, SixDegrees.com, was launched in 1997 (boyd & Ellison, 2007), the majority of SNS have only been operative since 2003. For instance, Facebook, perhaps the most widely known SNS in New Zealand, initially started in 2004 as a site solely for Harvard students, and did not become fully publically available until 2006 (boyd & Ellison, 2007).

SNS are now widely used, with Facebook alone claiming more than one billion active users, of whom more than half login in any given day (Facebook, 2012d). Each SNS offers users a variety of services, which affords users different experiences and benefits (boyd, 2009) and develops a specific culture, or ‘flavour’, for each site (Kreps, 2010) as illustrated by the cartoon below.

![Figure 1.1: Socially Perceived Membership of Common Social Network Sites.](http://www.socialsignal.com/image/theirspace)


---

3. Space constraints prevent a more detailed examination here. However, a comprehensive timeline of the launch dates of many major SNS is available in boyd and Ellison (2007).

4. Where relevant, the source of the Figure or Table is stated below the title. Where no source is cited, the Figure or table is the author’s own work.
Although the above cartoon offers extreme and only male representations, it nonetheless sums up the way common subcultures are socially associated with these SNS. For example, MySpace has rapidly become known as the music-centric SNS for bands and music-lovers (boyd, 2009; Kreps, 2010). Linked-In is associated with working professionals, and Facebook retains some association with its College/University roots. For the purposes of this thesis, I focus primarily on Facebook, as this is the SNS that the participating school is utilising.

My interest in this topic was spurred by a newspaper article that mentioned schools using Facebook as a supplementary learning environment. As a mother to teenagers who are all avid Facebook users, and as a Facebook user myself, I was intrigued by the possible implications of this educational usage of what is considered by some to be a ‘public’ space. I have been a continuous noise in my children’s ears about the need to consider carefully any online postings. In my own postings, I am often mindful of the potential for an unknown invisible audience. Yet I am aware that my children and their peers seem more comfortable than I am, sharing details of their lives with a wider audience via SNS. They have different concepts of private and public than I hold. Nevertheless, my children have not had their school entering their ‘social space’ for educational purposes. How then, I wondered, do students at schools which are utilising SNS educationally, think about concepts of public and private in relation to SNS? Furthermore, given that SNS have been identified as sites of identity experimentation and impression management for young people (see for example boyd, 2008a; Davies, J., 2012; Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008), will the teacher’s overt presence on Facebook affect the way these young people perform their online identity?

I also questioned what Facebook affords educators that educational systems such as Moodle do not. Moodle is described as “an Internet based system for delivering e-learning programmes for educational and training organisations” (Moodle, 2011). It offers teachers the ability to lodge learning materials, set up discussion forums, and interact with students in an educationally appropriate controlled environment. What may influence the use of one site over another are the affordances each site offers, where affordances can be defined as “the perception of a possibility of action (in the broad sense of thought as well as physical activity) provided by properties of, in this case, the computer and software” (Hammond, 2010, p. 216). Furthermore, Hammond (2010) states that “affordances arise because of real physical and symbolic properties of objects” and “provide both opportunities and constraints (p. 216). Thus, the affordances are not only what the Facebook site design and properties can offer the
class, but also what teachers and students perceive Facebook can, or cannot, offer in terms of a learning environment.

My research therefore is driven by my social context, my prior knowledge, and the subject positions I occupy. As a mother of teenagers, a Facebook user, and a married, white, middle-class, tertiary-educated, British-born New Zealander, my various positionings inform and shape my research, both in design, and implementation (Davies, D., et al., 2004; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

1.2 Research Problem and Core Research Questions

Despite the variety of SNS on offer, a consistent feature is the ability to create a personal profile and list ‘Friends’ who are members of a social network and also users of the particular site (boyd & Ellison, 2007). Profiles provide individuals an opportunity to choose what information about themselves will be revealed and allows them to “type oneself into being” (boyd & Heer, 2006, p. 3). Thus, profiles allow users to experiment with identity presentation. However, Morrison (2010) argues that SNS profiles are limited by the connections of the Friends network in the material world. The presence of offline friends as network Friends limits the amount a user can vary their online profile presentation from the face-to-face presentation shown in other contexts. As contacts from various life contexts are pulled together onto one SNS, individuals must juggle the multiple portrayals of identity and images of self, which are reflected back by others. Every status post, Like of a page, or photo posted, will reveal aspects of identity to the user’s social network. This has implications for the way young people negotiate their identity when contexts collapse and SNS are used for educational purposes.

Furthermore, unlike a network created by a user for social reasons, when schools co-opt a SNS for educational purposes and create class networks, there is an inherent power imbalance between teachers and students. The teacher retains the traditional position of authority in the online learning community. As such, the teacher oversees students’ extra-curricular activities in the online learning community. Similarly, teacher and peers’ interactions online may pressure non-participating students to join SNS for their educational benefit. Previously, young people have reported fears that not maintaining a presence on Facebook may result in

---

5 boyd and Ellison (2007) delineate between the online lists of ‘Friends’, and offline ‘friends’, through the capitalisation of the former. To ensure clarity, this thesis also adopts this delineation.
their exclusion from social events (Davis, K., 2012a). However, a low SNS presence potentially carries wider implications than a decreased social life when SNS are used for educational purposes, with non-participating students potentially excluded from education-related details, explanations proffered via the class page, and other learning opportunities.

Likewise, the school presence on SNS blurs the boundaries between public and private contexts with implications for both students and teachers. Technology changes have resulted in generational and contextual gaps as to the meaning of the concepts of public and private. Rather than a dichotomy, public/private can be conceptualised as a continuum on SNS, which have both ‘publicly private’ and ‘privately public’ aspects (Ford, 2011; Lange, 2007; Waskul, 1996). SNS are publicly private in that many identity markers are shared with a ‘limited’ private group of Friends, and privately public in that profiles can share a small number of identifiers with a wider, uncontrolled public audience. Audience awareness therefore plays a role in the perception by users of the public/private level of their interactions. For instance, Facebook, in particular, is often viewed as ‘private’ when posting to a perceived audience of friends, yet in reality may be public in nature if privacy settings have not been utilised. By contrast, school classrooms may be viewed as public, yet are relatively mediated and private with a controlled and limited sized audience.

For this research, I approached a mid-decile, single-sex, New Zealand secondary school. One teacher and nine students from a small class participated. The class used a Facebook page to complement traditional educational practices. As with most SNS, Facebook allows users to prescribe various levels of privacy settings. The security level each individual instigates, is not only an indication of identity, but will also affect his, or her, identity performance and the audience to which he, or she, ‘performs’.

In this thesis, therefore, I set out to explore the various strands, such as risk, privacy, and identity, which affect, or are affected by, the use of Facebook for class-related use. From these strands, I developed an overarching question and a set of sub-questions as shown in Table 1.1.
Table 1.1: Research Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Main Research Question:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do young people negotiate their identities on Facebook groups or pages that are being used for educational purposes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Sub-Questions:</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do students use Facebook to craft their identity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why is this particular school using the ‘public’ medium of Facebook, as opposed to a more mediated educational software platform, such as Moodle? What are the affordances of Facebook that makes this the preferred choice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are the implications of blurring boundaries between the public and private spheres for teachers and students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What reasons are there for students’ participation, or non-participation on the class’ Facebook page?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These research questions informed the theoretical framework and the methodological approach to the research process.

1.3 Theoretical Framework

Conceptualisations of identity are central tenets in this thesis. Accordingly, I draw upon poststructuralist theory, which I explain more fully in Chapter Two. I see identity as a fluid process, always in a state of becoming (Belsey, 2002; Butler, 1990; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1997). Identity is therefore a ‘doing’, a series of performative actions, which re-present ‘subjectivities’ (Butler, 1990). In this thesis, I will use ‘identity’ as opposed to the poststructuralist term, ‘subjectivity’. I do so because ‘identity’ is the more commonly used and understood term in writing about young people and online ‘identities’ (for example, boyd & Heer, 2006; Morrison, 2010; Stern, 2007). Identity encompasses aspects of the internalised ‘self’, and at the same time the ‘social’ individual. It acknowledges the way the individual positions him/herself and is positioned by others through classifications of race, class, gender, age, and so forth. Additionally, Merchant (2006) argues that, in recent years, globalisation has led to new identity categories defined by consumerism. ‘Identity’, therefore, can imply shared characteristics between individuals within a category, although this does not mean that all
individuals within that category are the same. For instance, an identity as a student should not be read as all students enacting that identity in the same way.

Exploring identity through poststructuralist theory allows me to recognise the effects of discourses, signifying practices which construct and constrain possibilities through language and meaning (Belsey, 2002). Individuals take-up and resist subject positions which are shaped by discursive practices. Through discursive interactions, individuals construct, and co-construct, identities. Additionally, discursive formations inform the way individuals interact on SNS. In this thesis, I acknowledge the effects of conceptualisations of private and public spaces, which influence perceptions of Facebook as a space for learning. Together with discursive constructions, public/private concepts shape identities of young people and as a result, identity performances on Facebook. Goffman’s dramaturgical analogy of front-stage and back-stage identity performances is therefore useful in acknowledging the multiple discursive formations offered by differing audiences for Facebook interactions (Goffman, 1959). I aim to draw on both poststructuralism and Goffman’s theory to provide a conceptual framework that allows identity performances to be explored whilst acknowledging the impact of public and private conceptualisations upon these performances. These terms and theoretical concepts will be unpacked further in Chapter Two.

1.4 Importance of this Research

Although research literature has previously addressed the use of SNS in education, and a separate body of work addresses identity performance on SNS, there appears to remain a gap between the two. I aim to situate this thesis between these two bodies of work (see Figure 1.2), drawing on both and providing an insight into the way students negotiate identity on a SNS that is being used for education. Furthermore, many studies on SNS focus on the international context. With this thesis, I therefore aim to contribute to knowledge of young New Zealanders’ experiences using SNS for educational purposes.
Chapter One: Introduction

1.5 Outline of this Thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter is an introduction to the thesis. Here I have provided a brief background to the research, outlined the research problem and my core research questions, and discussed the significance of the research.

In Chapter Two, I describe my theoretical framework in detail. I outline Poststructuralist theory and the impact of discourses and discursive formations on identity. The notion of identity as a performance, or series of performative actions, is discussed, with support from Goffman’s dramaturgical analogy. I acknowledge the discursive formations of public/private, and the construction of young people, that will also influence identity presentations in this research project.

Chapter Three reviews a range of literature examining the use of SNS for educational purposes (section 3.1). A selection of literature, which examines the concepts of identity on SNS, is reviewed and I explore the construction of digital identities through the sharing of identity markers and interactions with others.

I set out the research methodology in Chapter Four. This outlines the two-part qualitative approach I took towards the research process, which was informed by a poststructuralist theoretical approach. I discuss the ethical issues that arose throughout this project, and explain my approach towards data analysis.
Chapter Five and Chapter Six are the findings chapters. In Chapter Five, I draw upon Facebook page observations, and interviews to explore the way this class is using a Facebook page for educational purposes. I start the chapter with the teacher’s story on why and how she uses a Facebook page for her subject. I follow that with the students’ voices on their use of the Facebook page for formal educational purposes. I look at the one non-Facebook using participant and what this means for her. I finish the chapter with a look at what affordances Facebook offers the teacher and students that Moodle does not.

In the second of the findings chapters, Chapter Six, I draw upon interviews with the students to explore the means by which this group of students utilise Facebook to enact their identities. I look at the impacts of discourses of risk upon the students’ identity performances. The compulsory public profiles, disclosure of identity markers, and use of imagery for identity presentation are outlined. I follow this by looking at the choices students make when revealing details and interacting with Friends on Facebook, and the consequences these decisions may have for the students.

The final chapter, Chapter Seven, is a discussion and conclusion chapter. It is here that I draw together the key points of my two findings chapters. This integration enables me to explore what it may mean for this group of students as they negotiate their identity presentations on Facebook when the teacher is also present. The implications of this research for educational use of SNS are discussed and possible opportunities for further research are offered.
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

In the first chapter, I provided a background to this research and outlined the research problem and the research questions which inform this research project. In this chapter, I explain the theoretical framework that underpins my approach to the research and informs the data analysis. For this thesis, I draw primarily upon poststructuralist theory to situate my understanding of identity negotiation. I acknowledge theoretical conceptions of public/private, and the discursive construction of youth. I also explore the concept of discourses, as I will later analyse interview data using discourse analysis.

2.1 The Social Construction of Identity

The way identity is viewed is central to this thesis. Online identity is often conceptualised through discourses of risk of identity theft, where identifying data – name, address, date-of-birth, gender – are potentially stolen and used illegally (Merchant, 2006). This assumption of identity as fixed and entirely individual is common in research about identity and SNS (see for example, Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Kreps, 2010; Stutzman, 2006). However, other studies have focussed on a wider interpretation of identity, which acknowledges the influence of social processes upon identity formation and performance (see for example, boyd, 2008b; Marwick & boyd, 2011). Identity, in these studies, is seen as socially constructed and thus, more than individual identifiers. What is important is not only how an individual sees themself, but also how they want to be seen by others, and how others see them (Taylor, 2010). From this, identity can be conceptualised as a performance; a conception which affords a sense of agency (Butler, 1988; Goffman, 1959), although this approach is not meant to imply that the individual is unaffected by social structures (Jones, 1997).

In this thesis, I wish to draw a distinction between personal identification data, and the ‘labels’, or positions, such as ‘girl’, ‘boy’, or ‘teen’, which are socially constructed, and taken-up, resisted or subverted, and re-presented by an individual. Identity is therefore socially constructed, but within that construction exists the agentic individual operating within the discursive constraints of society. To this end, I utilise a poststructuralist framework, which builds upon the notions of identity developed in a social constructionist approach, as my theoretical framework.

Social constructionism suggests that reality, or our beliefs about what things ‘are’ and ‘mean’, are constructed through social interactions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Hacking, 1999;
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Liebrucks, 2001). Social processes therefore, play a role in constructing our beliefs about our world, the social institutions of our culture, and about the people in our world. Individuals internalise and re-present these beliefs, often (but not always) becoming a part of replicating social processes through which particular beliefs become the ‘natural order’.

Liebrucks (2001) asserts that “the psychological properties of persons are the products of discourses” (p. 374), where discourses can be defined as “practices which systematically form the objects of which they speak” (Foucault, 1972, p. 49). In other words, Liebrucks argues that through enacting the practices associated with discourses, for example, around education, individuals are shaped by those discursive practices. For instance, it is more difficult to choose to be a tertiary student in an impoverished community where the dominant discourses construct success through employment rather than further education. Even when young people do not engage in tertiary study, they are shaped by the discursive practices associated with educational discourses. The community shapes the individual. Thus, there is no inherent individual self. Rather, identity is an effect of the interactions between individuals, shaped by individual expectations, the cultural context, and societal discourses (Butler, 1990). Individuals shape and perform their identity as they interact with discourses. In this thesis, discourses shape the way young people use and construct their use of SNS, and in the process enact their identities.

Where social constructionism meets poststructuralism lies in the argument that language does not reflect reality, but produces reality (Edley, 2001). Reality is therefore, “the product of discourse, both the subject, and the result of what talk is all about” (Edley, 2001, p. 437, original emphasis). As language constructs reality, and my language choices will influence the meanings created by readers of this thesis, it is therefore necessary to explain my understanding of poststructuralist theory and its relationship to social constructionism. In the next section, I outline the core ideas of poststructuralism and the associated terminology. By doing so, I recognise I have been influenced by, and in turn influence, discourses that surround poststructuralism as I interpret and re-present them through this thesis.

2.2 Structuralism and Poststructuralism

Murdoch (2006) notes that defining poststructuralism can be difficult, so that it can seem there are “many poststructuralisms” (p. 2, original emphasis). As he goes on to explain, the term poststructuralism “refers to philosophical and social theories that come, in some sense, ‘after’ structuralism” (p. 3). Additionally, poststructuralism arose as a backlash against the
A rigid scientific approach of structuralism (Belsey, 2002). An outline of what poststructuralism is, therefore, requires a short explanation of structuralism.

Structuralists argue that, as society is shaped by an underlying structural order, the way to understand society is to understand both the structure, and the relationship of all parts of society to this structure. Structuralist theory, therefore, seeks to identify the “universal structures underlying culture, usually as binary oppositions” (Belsey, 2002, p. 114). Structuralism itself, originated through the work of Saussure, who posited that language, specifically words, named concepts, not ‘things’ (Palmer, 1997). Structuralists consider that language creates, rather than reflects, the social reality. More importantly, Saussure argued that language was a system where words were defined, not by what they signified, but by their difference to other signifiers, i.e. by negative difference (Palmer, 1997). For instance, a girl is not a boy. Conversely, a boy is not a girl. However, words only carry meaning through location within the structural system. The idea of ‘boy’ and ‘girl’ requires a structural language system, which delineates by gender and age. Structural orders are then reinforced as individuals learn to use words and terms ‘correctly’ within the structural context, and internalise the meaning (Belsey, 2002). Hence, for structuralists, reality is about the relationships of the part to the whole. By focussing upon a fixed universal order, structuralists decry any emphasis placed upon an individual or historical context to create meaning (Palmer, 1997).

In contrast, poststructuralist theory builds upon the social constructionist perspective that, “we are all born into a world of meaning” with multiple interpretations available (Crotty, 1998, p. 54). For social constructionists, meaning is not created solely by the individual, because we cannot ignore the socio-historical and cultural context within which that individual lives. Accordingly, constructionism posits that meaning is both created, and reproduced by society, with the social construction of meanings shaping individuals’ understandings of the world and thus, perpetuating cultural worldviews (Crotty, 1998). Meaning, therefore, is not only contextually specific, but also individually specific. Both an individual’s circumstances, and their cultural context, shape the way individuals make meaning of the world. While this appears somewhat similar to a structuralist approach (if we posit the dominant worldview as a structural order), social constructionism allows for individual meaning making within the limits of social discourses.
A poststructuralist approach allows for multiple interpretations when making meaning. Therefore, meaning cannot be inherently defined, objective and absolute (Davies, B., 2000; Morrison, 2010). Instead, poststructuralism expands Saussure’s concept of a linguistic system with fixed signs and fixed meanings, by focussing on the power of ‘language’ to define, name and create reality through discourses. Although I use the term ‘language’ here, this refers to more than traditional written and spoken text. Davies (2000) asserts that discourse can be “understood as an institutionalised use of language and language-like systems” (p. 88). These ‘language-like systems’ include embodied and visual cues and ways of making meaning, which may carry contextually specific meanings.

### 2.2.1 Discourse

Language not only describes, but also constructs reality (Edley, 2001). In other words, the way we ‘talk’ about a concept and share assumptions, moves beyond simply explaining the concept, to re-creating that concept. Discourses then, are “ways of constituting knowledge”, but are “more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern” (Weedon, 1997, p. 105). Discourses, and therefore meaning-making, are explicated through images and embodiment as well as words. Discourses then, are the tools of social construction; the public narratives (Somers & Gibson, 1993)\(^6\) that normalise cultural practices and shape social processes, and come to be seen as common sense.

Multiple discourses connect in discursive formations (Danaher, Schirato, & Webb, 2000; Foucault, 1972; William, J., 2005). Discursive formations are forged by social institutions and in turn shape those institutions. This process reinforces discourses, but also allows them to be subverted and changed. For instance, education in New Zealand is shaped by multiple discourses of what it means to be a good teacher or a good student, what constitutes knowledge or literacy and so on. However, over time these discourses have fluctuated and changed. What it means to be a modern student as a co-creator of knowledge, is different to the historical construction of a student as an ‘empty slate’, who merely needs to rote-learn prescribed knowledge. These changes occurred through challenges and changes to individual educator’s discourses around pedagogy and learning. Thus, the discursive formation of education has changed through the changing discursive practices of educators and students.

---

\(^6\) Somers & Gibbons (1993) describe public narratives as “those narratives attached to cultural and institutional formations larger than the single individual, to intersubjective networks or institutions, however local or grand, micro or macro” (p. 34).
Chapter Two: Theoretical Framework

Foucault argued that discourses need to be troubled; viewed as the “result of a construction, the rules of which must be known, and the justifications of which must be scrutinised” (Foucault, 1972, p. 25). Discourses may contradict each other in the way they position and constitute an object (Foucault, 1972). For instance, discourses around internet use position online spaces as sites of threat and/or opportunity, depending on the group promoting the discourse. In recent years, there has been a moral panic in the media over the dangers young people face when using SNS (Merchant, 2006). As a result, some parents and schools who have taken-up the discourse of the internet as a threat, have installed filters to limit SNS use, and some schools ban SNS use altogether (Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Mesch, 2009; Sharples, Graber, Harrison, & Logan, 2009). On the other hand, as this thesis demonstrates, some educators are now promoting SNS use for educational purposes. For example, recently the New Zealand Education Gazette (Ministry of Education, 2012) carried an advertisement for using the SNS, Google+, as a teaching resource. Discourses, therefore, are not neutral. How discourses are formed, and the discursive practices that result, are contextually dependent upon those formulating and enacting discourses (Weedon, 1997).

2.2.2 Discourses and Power

Weedon (1997) argues that discourses are “part of a wider network of power relations, often with institutional biases” (p. 108). Dominant social discourses reflect cultural hierarchies shaped by class, race, gender, disability and age. Discourses therefore, have social power, but this power is dependent on the actions of social institutions and of social actors (Weedon, 1997). Through the interactions of social institutions, dominant discourses, and social actors, power is reproduced (Foucault, 2002). For example, on a class’ SNS page, teachers and students may act in a way that discursively constructs and reinforces the teacher’s authority as adult and school representative. Thus, knowledge, and the ability to exercise power, are positioned on a hierarchical scale, from those discursively positioned as lacking knowledge and status, such as students, to those discursively positioned as in possession of knowledge and status, such as teachers.

The hierarchical structuring of discourses, and therefore ideologies, results in social advantage for some groups, while disadvantaging other groups (Davies, B., 2000). Discourses are used as social structuring tools, promoting ‘common-sense’ ideologies that serve to support the interests of dominant social groups, while rejecting those that do not. However, Foucault envisioned power as an enactment, “something that is exercised, rather than possessed” (Quinlivan, 2002, p. 57). Hence, the discursive production of high status knowledge is an
effect of the enactment of power by dominant social groups (Davies, B., 2000; Foucault, 2002; Quinlivan, 2002), although the unequal power relations created by common-sense discourses may render the exercising of power invisible (Weedon, 1997). Nonetheless, whilst dominant groups exercise power to gain advantage, some individuals may also exercise power to resist discourses and mobilise discursive practices “with very beneficial effects on a wide range of people” (Davies, B., 2000, p. 19). Privileged individuals may exercise power to resist discourses to benefit others who lack access to effective discursive practices of resistance. For instance, Facebook’s Terms of Use require users to be aged 13 years or older (Facebook, 2012a). Thus, parents who allow, or even encourage, their under-13 children to create Facebook profiles, are resisting the discursive practices of SNS which construct young children as ‘at-risk’ and ‘incompetent’ in the online environment.

I do not mean to imply that power is something only those in authority possess. Instead, power is inscribed in different ways for different groups (Weedon, 1997). For instance, through the discursive construction of internet use in young people’s lives, SNS have become sites of potential resistance for young people. Safety fears for children have grown in recent years, leading many parents to become protective of their child’s online relationships (Mesch, 2009). As a result, SNS have become sites where young people can resist the paternalistic discourse of ‘stranger danger’ and be-Friend others, often free from the parental gaze (boyd, 2008b; De Souza & Dick, 2008). Additionally, the creation of profiles and subsequent decisions as to what information to include provides young people with the opportunity to resist discourses of adult control and instead, exercise power of self-determination over their digital identity (Regan & Steeves, 2010). On a more global scale, SNS have recently been used as sites of organised resistance by youth to subvert discourses of social and state control (Egypt Protests, 2011; Howard, 2011). These resistant moves allow individuals to challenge the subject positions imposed upon them by dominant discourses and create “alternative forms of knowledge” (Weedon, 1997, p. 111) thereby, making possible new discursive positions. For instance, boyd (2008b) found that some young people resisted adult paternalistic discourses and subsequent control of SNS profiles by creating separate and secret profiles which were free from adult observation, yet enabled them to take up positions as SNS users alongside their peers. In this way, young people resisted adult control to craft alternate subject positions and subjectivities (identities).
2.2.3 Subjectivity and Positioning

In poststructuralism, the term identity is replaced by subjectivity, referring to the meanings created by the subject of discourses. By referring to the subject, the focus is on the meanings developed from language and discourses that shape who an individual is becoming (Belsey, 2002). Individuals “become subjects . . . by internalising our culture, which is inscribed in the signifying practices which surround us from the moment we come into the world” (Belsey, 2002, p. 57) An individual is not only a subject, but also subject to, and subject of discourses. Belsey (2002) argues that the term ‘subject’ is in itself, ambiguous and “allows for discontinuities and contradictions” (p. 52). For instance, an individual may take up multiple subject positions, some of which may be contradictory, dependent upon context. Students who represent the subject position of ‘good student’ within the classroom and on the class Facebook page, may also position themselves as ‘anti-establishment’ or ‘rebellious teen’ on their private profile. A subject position therefore, is one which an individual also subjects themselves to, and re-produces, through the discursive practices available (Belsey, 2002). In doing so, the subject is not only constructed by signifying (discursive) practices, but also becomes a signifier of those same discursive practices. In other words, a subject is produced by, and re-produces discourses.

St Pierre (2000) notes that the agentic subject “constructs itself by taking up available discourses and cultural practices” whilst simultaneously, it is “subjected, forced into subjectivity by those same discourses and practices” (p. 502). The available subject positions may limit individual agency, yet the individual still exercises power and agency in taking up as her own, or resisting, the discursive practices shaping his/her subject position(s). In addition, the multiple positions an individual takes up and resists shape her subjectivity (Weedon, 1997). Weedon (1997) defines subjectivity as “the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, her sense of herself and her ways of understanding her relation to the world” (p. 32). Subjectivity therefore, can be understood as the way individuals make meaning of the subject positions available to them through social discursive practices; both the process by which an individual is subjected to discourse, and the meanings the individual creates from this process (Jones, 1997; St. Pierre, 2000; Weedon, 1997).

Individuals are born into a world of discourses and as such, are “spoken into existence” (Davies, B., 2000, p. 77), as the product of the discourses to which they are subject. Furthermore, discourses shape and limit the options individuals see available in the social structure, creating the storylines within which they position themselves (Davies, B., 2000).
Resistant discursive practices however, make available alternative storylines and therefore, subject positions. In resisting dominant societal discursive practices and subject positions, the individual is also resisting the normalising practices of these discursive formations (St. Pierre, 2000). Through adopting positions of resistance to normalised subject positions, the individual is subjecting himself/herself, to a new subject position, one in binary opposition to what is considered normal (St. Pierre, 2000). However, there can be consequences for the subject in adopting alternative subject positions ‘different’ to the norm (Jones, 1993). The subject risks peer pressure and sanctions from being misunderstood, although this misrecognition may be contextually and culturally specific to the reader of an individual’s identity performance. How the subject chooses to perform discursive practices associated with varying subject positions impacts on the reading others make of their performance. For example, non-participation on SNS may be variously read as careful protection of identity by some, or may be read as technically disadvantaged by others.

Wetherell (2008) notes that subjectivity too often evokes the ‘private self’, whereas identity is seen to encompass the publically constructed self. Like Wetherell (2008), I argue that the term ‘identity’ can represent both, which acknowledges the influence of self and social identities upon each other. ‘Identity’ therefore, acknowledges that an individual simultaneously occupies multiple subject positions and enacts multiple identities in specific contexts.

2.2.4 Performance, Performativity and Impression Management
Butler (1990) argues that identity can be viewed as a performance, an effect of the interactions between individuals, shaped by individual expectations, the context, and societal discourses. While the concept of identity as performance is more recently associated with poststructuralist theorist Judith Butler and her writings on performativity, Butler’s ideas appear to be drawn from the earlier work of Erving Goffman (Jacobsen, 2010; Kreps, 2010; G. Smith, 2006). Indeed, Bordo (2010) argues that Butler’s work can be seen as “a poststructuralist, feminist reincarnation of Erving Goffman’s innovative and persuasive performative theory of identity” (p. 168). From my own reading, it appears the differences between Goffman and Butler can be considered mainly one of terminology, an understandable difference considering Goffman was writing in 1959 and Butler, almost three decades later. For this thesis, I have chosen to draw upon Goffman, as well as poststructuralism, in my conceptualisation of identity in order to encompass the social as well as the individual aspects. I do so because I find Goffman’s use of the dramaturgical metaphor useful for conceptualising identity performances in public/private spaces, whereas Butler has been criticised for her subject being too
“voluntaristic”, too individualistic, too removed from the social context (Lovell, 2000, p. 15). Rather, the use of the dramaturgical metaphors allows Goffman to explore the complexities of social situations (G. Smith, 2006).

2.2.4.1 Butler and Performativity

Butler (1988) however, distances herself from Goffman, arguing that, whereas Goffman “posits a ‘self’ which assumes and exchanges various ‘roles’ within the complex social expectations of the ‘game’ of modern life” (para. 20), her theory posits that both exterior and interior identity are formed through social discourses. Butler, therefore, is arguing that both social identity and internal, or self-identity, are formed in response to discursive formations. Who we think we are, and who we are seen to be, is the result of our response to social discourses. However, as I will show, Goffman’s and Butler’s concepts appear similar, despite Butler’s claim to the contrary.

Butler differentiates between performance and performativity, arguing that for there to be a performance there must be a subject (Butler, Osborne, & Segal, 1994). For Butler, individuals are born as subjected bodies into a discursive world. Through subjectivity, the subject takes up the discursive practices of the subject position. The repetitive performance of these discursive practices serves to re-create particular discourses. In this way, performative discourses create and re-create themselves, in a process Butler called performativity (Butler, 1988, 1990). Butler considers performativity to be “that aspect of discourse that has the capacity to produce what it names” (Butler, et al., 1994, p. 33). She further explains that identity, such as gender, “is performatively constituted by the very ‘expressions’ that are said to be its results” (Butler, 1990). Thus, Butler reaffirms that identity is not a ‘thing’ or a ‘being’, but is a performative ‘doing’ (Butler, 1990).

2.2.4.2 Goffman and Performance of Identity

Butler’s stance that identity is a ‘doing’ (not a noun, but a verb), is compatible with Goffman’s concept of identity as a performance. Performing identity is akin to the taking up of the discursive practices of the subject position. In a metaphor reminiscent of the historical context Goffman writes from, Goffman (1959) uses the analogy of the dramaturgical stage to explore the conception of ‘self’. Social interactions are seen as akin to theatrical productions. In every interaction individuals attempt to “present themselves as an acceptable person: one who is entitled to certain kinds of consideration, who has certain kinds of expertise, who is morally unblemished, and so on” (Miller, 1995). In other words, Goffman sees individuals as
aiming to make themselves recognisable by drawing upon and re-presenting the dominant discourses of their social group in interactions. However, Goffman accepts limits to the extent of the dramaturgical analogy. Real life is not a stage, individuals are not given prescribed and complex performance scripts, and reactions tend to be spontaneous and unconscious, rather than the deliberate, planned contrivances of a theatre performance (De Souza & Dick, 2009).

Instead, Goffman’s writing offers two concepts of self. The self may be viewed as a character in a performance; a social product, “generally built out of multiple, loosely-integrated social roles” (De Souza & Dick, 2009, p. xlvi). Goffman also discusses the self as the performer, the individual agent behind the character, the “harried fabricator of impressions involved in the all-too-human task of staging a performance” (1959, p. 252). Although it appears that Goffman’s performer presents an innate inner-self, his constructions of ‘self’ complement Butler’s views. The character, or role, is the socially constructed subject position. The performer is an agentic individual, who creates a performance within, and possibly against, the expectations imposed by social discourses, and the performance constructed by the ‘agent’ is akin to Butler’s ‘subject’ performing, resisting or subverting the discursive practices of the socially imposed subject position. As Branaman (2010) notes, “when Goffman spoke of performances shaping the self, he meant that how we act, or the character we perform and are able to have recognised and supported by others in everyday life, shapes our self-identity” (p. 249).

Goffman (1959) argues that, through the information shared in social interactions, individuals learn not only what is expected of them in the situation, but also what behaviours to expect of others. In other words, the discursive practices of social interactions reinforce the social discourses, which shape subject positions. The individual not only communicates, or gives, information consciously through conversation, but also gives off informative cues through embodied actions (Goffman, 1959) as they are ‘doing’ identity. This shared information acts as signifiers, or “sign-vehicles”, conveying clues as to social status as well as informing the social identity that the group ascribes the individual (Goffman, 1959, p. 1). In poststructuralist terms, individuals are not only choosing to perform and/or subvert an identity, but are also re-producing discourses through discursive practices. Each piece of information an individual posts on their SNS profile acts as a sign-vehicle to other users, an indication of the identity the individual wishes to portray. At the same time, this information must fit within the parameters of expected behaviour for that identity role (or subject position). For instance, a student portrays herself through Facebook posts as a hardworking, ‘good student’, but also posts
photos of herself which show her regularly drinking at parties, and therefore a ‘bad student’, which might be perceived positively by (some) peers. Dependent upon the audience and context, these multiple subject positions appear contradictory, although both versions are equally valid identities. Thus, identity performance choices are shaped by social structures and the social expectations of others; that is, by discursive formations.

The dramaturgical metaphor allows the performer of identity to acknowledge the recipients of the performance, the audience. In doing so, Goffman talks of both front-stage and back-stage performances (Goffman, 1959). Front-stage performances are public, where the individual is acting to fulfil expectations of the social identity, performed to a specific audience and as such, shaped by the expectations of that audience. Conversely, the back-stage performance is a private space, where the individual may rehearse ways to subvert or resist the socially imposed ‘character’ of the front-stage. On the front-stage, individuals are thus performing in such a way as to reconcile their identity with the socially constructed subject position. On the other hand, back-stage performances are consciously reserved for those whose view of the social identity matches the individuals’ image of self, where an individual feels she can ‘be herself’. In other words, the front-stage ‘public’ performance of ‘school leader’ and ‘role model’ on the Facebook public profile, may give way to other subject positions back-stage. Performances of certain subject positions such as ‘socialite’ are likely to be reserved for the more private, back-stage context of friendship groups and reflect discourses in that context. SNS, however, pose a problem for individuals in terms of identity performance and control. Through the merging of multiple audiences, such as offline friends, online Friends, classmates, teachers, workmates and family, the individual is juggling multiple front-stages and risks being exposed if the performance does not match an expected identity and the back-stage is glimpsed by the wrong audience.

Goffman agrees people do not behave literally as actors in social interactions. Much like the actor is constrained by the rules of theatre performance, the individual is constrained by the rules of society, by the social status of the performed role and by the knowledge those around have of an individual’s role and identity from previous interactions (De Souza & Dick, 2009). Furthermore, the “ability to sustain a respectable self-image in the eyes of others depends on access to structural resources and possession of traits and attributes deemed desirable by the dominant culture” (Branaman, 1997, p. xlvi). We can recognise in these resources Bourdieu’s later concept of cultural capital (Bourdieu, 2010). As both Goffman (1991) and Bourdieu (2010) note, access to the desired capitals varies with social status and relation to the
dominant social group. Unlike Bourdieu, however, Goffman appears to fall short of considering power issues within interactions, although Branaman (2010) argues for a reading of Goffman as analysing the effects of differing access to resources on interactions. By drawing upon poststructuralist theory and specifically, Butler’s theory of performativity, I address this potential gap in Goffman’s theory. Poststructuralism allows power, and the ability to exercise power, to be considered. While Goffman appears to reflect the humanistic view of his historical context with his concept of ‘the self’ implying an innate self, his analogy works well to explain the unconscious performances of individuals.

Importantly for this thesis, Goffman also posits that social experiences are framed “by principles of organisation” in ways that construct, and constrain, meaning: “Framing involves bracketing an activity and providing some sort of cue as to what the bracketed activity means” (De Souza & Dick, 2009, p. xlvii). Meaning is constructed within the boundaries created by social structures, with the result that meanings cannot be constructed in ignorance of context. Interactions on SNS therefore, are framed by the social context and discourses of the individual site, where each site has socially constructed principles of interaction. For instance, the differing framings, or discursive positions, provided by Google+, Facebook, MySpace and LinkedIn for example, shape the way individuals interact in the different online environments, as well as the meanings constructed from these interactions (Donath, 2008). In terms of this thesis, identity performance will be framed by, among others, the online environment and affordances of Facebook, and the framing provided by the educational structure of a New Zealand secondary school.

The inclusion of Goffman’s theory in this thesis allows a wider conception of identity that incorporates public and private contexts for the performance of identity. Thus, Goffman’s theory provides a bridge between identity performance and concepts of public/private spaces.

2.3 Concepts of Public and Private

SNS blur the boundaries of public and private spaces. As ‘virtual spaces’, online interactions are moved from geographically distinct spaces to an indistinct geographical space, seemingly boundaryless and situated globally on the internet. SNS have therefore been popular with young people, who embrace SNS as spaces to interact with peers in an environment with limited adult surveillance (boyd, 2008b; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Livingstone, 2008). Young people use SNS to share information among ‘private’ networks of Friends on ‘public’ SNS. Yet the sharing of information on SNS means private actions become publically known. In the
digital age, the definition of ‘public’ and ‘private’ is no longer a clear distinction, but instead is a complex and nuanced concept.

Historically, concepts of ‘public’ and ‘private’ spheres have been socially constructed, primarily along gendered divisions (Duncan, 1996). Since the Industrial Revolution, the public sphere has traditionally been discursively constructed as the realm of the male workforce, a rational, communal space of state control. Conversely, the private sphere has been constructed as feminised, domestic, emotional, and a personal space of familial autonomy (Duncan, 1996; Ford, 2011; Lange, 2007). What happens in the private home space is viewed as private and of no concern to the public sphere. As Duncan (1996) notes, “the idea of spaces (material and metaphorical) hidden from the light of public view in which autonomy is most effectively enacted is widely respected” (p. 128). However, concepts of private and public are more complex in online spaces and move beyond gendered roles, whilst still influenced by concepts of power and gender (Lange, 2007).

Gal (2002) notes that “whatever the local, historically specific content of the dichotomy, the distinction between public and private can be reproduced repeatedly by projecting it onto narrower contexts or broader ones” (p. 81). Within public spaces are private spaces. Within private spaces are further divisions of public and private. In terms of online spaces, the internet is ‘public’, yet contains many ‘private’ spaces in terms of individual sites. SNS may be ‘private’ in terms of the internet as they require membership, yet for those members posting updates it is essentially a ‘public’ site in that postings are visible to other members of the network. Facebook, with its open membership to anyone over the age of 13 years, is a ‘public’ site, yet the ability to control individual privacy settings offers an illusion of ‘private’ space. Furthermore, individual profiles and pages are under the control of the profile owner, offering a semblance of privacy, yet the public, searchable nature of Facebook means that profiles and postings are often publically available. Schools, too, are complex structures of public and private. With restricted access to the community, a school is ‘private’ to the general public, whilst at the same time ‘public’ to those members of the community. Within the school there are further divisions of class, age, subject, gender, and social cliques, which separately can be both public and private in different contexts. ‘Public’ and ‘private’ are therefore defined and co-constructed within discursive contexts, such as schools and SNS.

Information technologies have contributed to the blurring of the public/private boundary (Ford, 2011). The demarcation between the ‘private’, home space and the ‘public’, ‘not-
home’ space is no longer clear as new digital technologies bridge the gap. These technologies allow individuals to integrate work and home spaces and “dismantle temporal and geographical barriers that separate home and work roles” (Ellison, 1999, p. 347). The result is a middle-region between front-stage and back-stage (Ford, 2011), where public and private overlap and interact (see Figure 2.1). Public and private can therefore be seen as a continuum, fluid and negotiated, rather than a categorical divide (Ford, 2011, p. 561).

Figure 2.1: Reconceptualizing Public and Private as a Continuum.


SNS such as Facebook also blur boundaries. Facebook requires compulsorily public profiles, as well as allowing extended profile information and interactions to be controlled by the user. In Figure 2.2, the arrows show the flow of information that is shared, dependent upon individual security settings. Facebook pages, such as that used by the participating class, are public and therefore all activity is visible. The shaded areas denote information that is publically available.
Although Ford (in Figure 2.1) offers a new perception of the public/private distinction, young people are still confronted with the need to juggle multiple front-stage performances and audiences within the continuum. As schools move towards using digital technologies which draw the school and class into the student’s home, the public/private distinction is in a state of negotiation, reliant on the individual user’s ability to manipulate privacy features and juggle a ‘work/life balance’. For students and teachers, the front-stage of the school is thus integrated with the back-stage of the home. Each front-stage is discursively constructed and multiple
front-stages offer multiple possible subject positions, or roles. As individuals form their understanding of these subject positions, they take up and/or resist discursive practices. In this thesis, I will explore the effect of multiple discursive formations upon the way young people perform identity when audiences mingle and are present at multiple performances on Facebook, including the class Facebook page. In doing so, I also recognise that young people are also subject to social discourses of what it means to be an ‘adolescent’, ‘youth’ or ‘young person’ within their society, with each term positioning young people in different ways.

2.4 The Construction of Young People in Society

Young people are variously discursively positioned through the use of terminology such as ‘youth’, ‘adolescent’, ‘teen’, each of which imply the individual is ‘not adult’ and ‘not child’. As such, young people are in transition, in a state of becoming adult, and simultaneously becoming not a child, defined by what they are not, rather than what they are (Valentine, Skelton, & Chambers, 1998). White and Wyn (2008) refer to youth “as a social process”, where culture and social institutions shape the way young people experience being young (p. 3). The formation of a sense of self and identity as ‘youth’ is therefore made through interactions with society and societal discourses, and the meaning the individual takes from these interactions (boyd & Heer, 2006). While I use multiple terms in this theoretical chapter to explore the construction of young people, I will primarily use the term ‘young people’ throughout my thesis to refer to the participants. I do so in an attempt to minimise the discursive constructions other terminology may invite.

Since its conception, ‘adolescence’ has become a convenient target for adult negativity. The media portrays and reinforces discourses of adolescents ‘at risk’ of harm, whether self-inflicted or imposed (Messias, Jennings, Fore, McLoughlin, & Parra-Medina, 2008). Furthermore, adolescents are portrayed as a risk to other members of society (Valentine, 1996). Adolescents are presented as problems, rebellious, and troubled, and at the mercy of hormonal changes and peer pressure (Moje & van Helden, 2004). These views have continued into the online environment. The media, which portrays young people as at risk of stranger predation and cyberbullying, and incompetent when it comes to privacy issues, have created a moral panic (Holmes, 2009; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Mesch, 2009). However, research by Holmes (2009) found that young people operate in ways that resist these discourses, and are in fact more competent than the media imply.
Notions of space and belonging also construct young people. Sibley (1995, as cited in Valentine et al., 1998) argues that adolescence is a problematic boundary, where young people may invade adult spaces. As such, adults seek to exert control over young people through artificial means. Political and legal processes create artificial markers of maturity by socially constructing ages at which young people are considered responsible enough to smoke, drink, drive a vehicle, marry, enlist in the armed forces, vote, and so on. Adults exercise power, and through cultural formations construct the experience of youth to support power hierarchies (Giroux, 2000). Thus, adults can maintain advantage by restricting young people’s access to adult workspaces and practices through social and political means. In other words, adults define young people from an adultist perspective, and in ways that often serve to reinforce adult needs (Valentine, 1999).

Adult control also extends to the home space. Parents enact rules to control adolescent activities and leisure time, whilst schools control adolescents away from the home (Valentine, et al., 1998). Yet, social changes such as the ‘digital revolution’ mean young people experience the world differently to their parents (boyd & Heer, 2006). Technology has put the world of information literally at young people’s fingertips. At the same time, the popularity of SNS provides young people with the opportunity to forge global social networks of Friends. Popular technologies enable youth to form ‘sub-cultures’, which exclude adults (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Cyberspace provides a site for youth to resist societal expectations and parental control, whether by protesting via SNS pages, or using SNS to organise events away from the adult gaze. This potential escape from parental control only serves to fuel the moral panic and feed calls by adults for more control of online spaces. In this vein, the utilisation of Facebook by educational authorities could be seen as the co-opting of young people’s spaces to serve the needs of the adult teachers (and parents) in ways that discursively construct this move as beneficial for young people. Furthermore, the adult presence of the teacher, and potentially parents, carries issues of power and control that can affect interactions by young people on SNS. The way this affects the participants and their identity performance on the SNS therefore needs to be explored.

2.5 Summary
In this chapter, I have outlined the theoretical framework that underpins my approach to this thesis. I have explained my understandings of identity as seen through a social constructionist and poststructuralist lens. I expanded the concept of subjectivity by introducing Goffman’s dramaturgical concept of front-stage and back-stage performances of identity. This
incorporates the dualistic nature of SNS as both a private and public space. I have also acknowledged the way young people are discursively constructed in society, which influences their use of SNS and their identity performances as they occupy multiple subject positions. Through this chapter, I have married together the myriad theoretical streams to formulate a theoretical structure that allows me to explore the ways young people are negotiating their identities on SNS when educational authorities enter this space.

In the next chapter, I review a selection of the literature that informs this thesis. I examine the use of SNS for educational use, including software platforms such as Moodle, which are designed for this purpose. I then discuss a range of literature that explores the negotiation of identity on SNS.
Chapter Three: Literature Review

SNS have been identified as sites for identity construction for young people. In the previous chapter, I briefly outlined the way identity is defined in dualistic terms. Identity is often viewed in terms of individualistic, relatively stable, personal identity markers, or alternately, as a socially constructed performance and state of becoming by the individual. This dichotomous definition is reflected in the research into online identity. This thesis sets out to explore why, and how Facebook is used in a New Zealand school and the effect this has on student identity negotiation. Consequently, in this chapter I look at the issues surrounding the use of social network sites (SNS) in educational settings, the developing links between education and SNS, and the ways SNS are used for educational purposes (section 3.1). I briefly discuss the ambiguity of the term identity, from the use of identity to encompass stable, personal identifying details, through to the concept of identity as an individualised, fluid, performance of self. I argue that digital identity is more than details such as name, address and age. While I examine the discourse of risk that results from a focus on identifying details (section 3.2.1), I also explore the ways in which digital identities are constructed through the actions of the individual sharing information (section 3.2.2) and co-constructed through interactions with others (section 3.2.3).

There is much research available on SNS and Facebook. It was necessary therefore, to limit the literature in some way. Article databases were searched for key terms for each of the areas of interest, such as educational use of SNS, identity and SNS, and identity and Facebook. The results were mined for further references. Additionally, researcher databases on Facebook research, such as that maintained by danah boyd (2013), or that by Robert Wilson (2012) were utilised. To ensure current changes on Facebook were acknowledged, I undertook Google searches on the topics and subscribed to the research news channel ‘ScienceDaily.com’. The resulting literature was limited through appropriate theoretical (poststructural and/or identity studies) and methodological (qualitative) approaches. Additionally, the SNS used, participant age, and other contextual settings were used to set limits. Thus, studies which focussed on Facebook, young people between the ages of 12 to 25, or educational settings similar to New Zealand, were given priority.

Much of the research on the use of social network sites (SNS) by ‘young people’ focusses on older youth and specific SNS, or has been conducted in single university campus populations aged between 18 and 25 years old. While this does not preclude the use of these studies as a
literature basis, Hargittai (2008) raises a salient point about the differing ‘types’ of user attracted by specific sites. She reports that popularity and use of the various SNS differed among sociocultural groups on a university campus and identified influential factors such as living environment, ethnicity and parental education. Nonetheless, as Hargittai’s study was conducted in a single campus population, the results cannot be generalised beyond that specific population. In my research, the site(s) used by participants will reflect the popularity of these sites in the New Zealand context, and will be influenced by factors such as current offline social networks, and associations with age and interests. Whilst not specifically addressing identity negotiation on SNS, research which focuses upon the disclosure of personal identifying information (see for example, Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Mesch, 2009), or the type of user attracted to each site (Hargittai, 2008), serves to inform research on the choices young people make in constructing and presenting their digital identity. One of the components important for this thesis therefore, is to explore the way the literature on SNS utilises concepts of identity, and specifically, young people’s digital identity.

3.1 The Use of SNS for Educational Purposes

In the first chapter, I outlined the way that advances in technology and a changing social environment have led to changes in literacy practices and fuelled the evolution of multimodal literacy practices, or multiliteracies (Cazden, et al., 1996). This new socio-technological environment has led to new ways of making meaning and the requirement for new ways of learning how to make meaning. As a result, teaching pedagogy has also changed to both address these needs and utilise new technologies. Information and communication technologies (ICT) are widely used in schools and classrooms as teaching tools and have contributed to changed teaching strategies, such as blended learning which combines “traditional and e-learning practices” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 2). Among these changes have been increased acceptance, promotion and use of internet-based technologies. For instance, Techlink, a NZ based resource site for Technology teachers, advocates the use of the pinboard SNS, Pinterest, as a way for students and teachers to organise and share internet research (Techlink, 2012). Resource kits are now available for teachers wishing to use Google+ in the classroom (CEPNZ, 2012), and advertisements for these are placed in local education magazines. Google, as a search engine, is used in classrooms and the home environment. Even Twitter, where messages are limited to 160 characters, has been found useful for classroom interactions (Grosseck, Bran, & Tiru, 2011). These online technologies are already extensively used by learners in their personal lives. Furthermore, the hardware used to access these online tools crosses the boundaries of school and non-school
environments, as students are encouraged to use personally owned devices such as tablets, smartphones and netbooks in the classroom (Binning, 2011, July 20; Prensky, 2010).

Among the e-learning resources commonly used in New Zealand classrooms are password-entry controlled social resources such as licensed Blackboard software, or freely available Edmodo or Moodle software. Moodle and an educational SNS, My Portfolio (Mahara) are the most popular e-Portfolio or Learning Management Systems (LMS) used by New Zealand secondary schools (Johnson, Hedditch, & Yin, 2011). Commonly, these software packages allow teachers to offer online learning content and provide students with the resources to undertake independent study (Nozawa, 2011). Moodle, for instance, allows teachers to upload class resources, collect assignments, develop and share quizzes and tests, or to create discussion forums (Al-Ajlan & Zedan, 2008; Robb, 2008). The use of discussion forums allows synchronous and asynchronous communication among student peers and with teachers, which facilitates clarification and understanding of material (Robb, 2008). As closed, learning communities, these platforms offer educators the ability to provide safe and controlled environments for student learning via the internet.

When provided alongside traditional face-to-face classroom education, computer-mediated communications allow for a flexible blended learning approach (Davis, N., 2011; Parkes, Zaka, & Davis, 2011). For example, after the Canterbury earthquakes, Christchurch schools collaborated to provide online learning resources via Moodle to supplement the limited classroom time available (Davis, N., 2011). Online feedback about Moodle and Edmodo extols the ease of use for teachers and students and the similarity of Edmodo to Facebook is noted as ensuring a seamless transition (see for example, adaptivelearnin, 2011). Like Facebook, Edmodo is also available via mobile phone ensuring portability and access (Edmodo, 2012). Nonetheless, online computer-mediated learning relies on input from teachers and students. To ensure the maximum benefit, teachers need to be active in maintaining and uploading resources, and interacting with students to facilitate discussions (Parkes, et al., 2011).

Online learning also requires students, teachers and other staff to be able to access the website. However, the ICT in Schools 2011 report shows that, while 69% of New Zealand secondary schools report that students and parents can access the school network remotely, only 10% of secondary schools report that students are able to access E-Learning systems such as Moodle remotely from home (Johnson, et al., 2011). Broadband or bandwidth
restrictions were identified by schools as impacting on the use of most externally hosted services, with 30% of secondary schools believing more broadband would allow the LMS to perform more satisfactorily (Johnson, et al., 2011). It may be that these restrictions are why educators have followed students to the publically available online SNS such as Facebook with 26% of secondary schools reporting that their students use Facebook for educational purposes (Johnson, et al., 2011). It is difficult to determine the accuracy of these figures as they are based on estimates by school principals. The figures also do not determine who, teachers or students, is responsible for the educational populating of Facebook. Nonetheless, there is an indication that students are already moving, with or without their teachers, to utilising public SNS such as Facebook for educational purposes.

Despite moves by some schools to increase the use of personal technologies, (such as SNS, tablets, smartphones, netbooks and so on) with students, other schools continue to delegitimise some digital technologies through bans on SNS, mobile phones or other student driven technologies in the classroom (Clark, Logan, Luckin, Mee, & Oliver, 2009). The result is a “digital dissonance” (Clark, et al., 2009, p. 57) as students and teachers negotiate the tensions between informal and formal use of technologies. Both teachers and students seem unaware of the full range of possibilities offered by technology integration in the classroom. Clark et al. (2009) found that teachers tended to focus on the ‘distracting’ socialisation affordances of technology such as texting, email and SNS use, while students focussed only on the obvious features their technologies provided. For instance, students were often unaware of the way their online practices could contribute to learning (Greenhow & Robelia, 2009a) and often utilised SNS for observation of content rather than participation (Pempek, Yermolayeva, & Calvert, 2009). Although students are often using these technologies in the classroom, with or without the teacher’s knowledge (Prensky, 2010), there is a need for educators to lead the way in utilising new technologies for maximum educational advantage. Clark et al. (2009), support this view by arguing that educational institutions need to adopt and promote a more flexible approach towards technology use if they are to guide “the learner towards a more critical, reflective appropriation of these technologies” (p. 68).

Whilst students of many education levels are using SNS to informally discuss learning (see for example, Greenhow & Robelia, 2009a, 2009b; Madge, Meek, Wellens, & Hooley, 2009), much of the academic research on the use of SNS within classrooms looks at the use of technology in higher education (Hew, 2011). Students use SNS, such as Facebook, to form informal peer learning and support networks with classmates, and to share notes and research
(Madge, et al., 2009; Selwyn, 2009). As a result, some authors have suggested that teachers utilise popular SNS to complement traditional teaching and form collaborative learning communities, especially in higher education (Grosseck, et al., 2011; Madge, et al., 2009; Muñoz & Towner, 2011; Pempek, et al., 2009; Selwyn, 2009). Muñoz and Towner (2011) maintain that SNS “offer unique opportunities for education: facilitating communication, fostering a learning community, and promoting twenty-first century literacies” (para. 12). Among the benefits they proffer, are increased communication abilities between staff and students, as well as increased contact between students which encourages shared-learning opportunities. Staff and teaching assistants further enhance the informal co-construction of knowledge via SNS when they are able to play a less formal instructional role on the SNS. Yet, for all that Muñoz and Tower (2011) claim that SNS provide opportunities for learning new literacy skills, the power differential between students and teachers should not be ignored. Formal educational use requires the teacher to instigate and play an active role in the SNS use, and teachers retain their offline authority. Nonetheless, by including digital technologies within the classroom-learning environment, teachers are able to model best practice, such as appropriate posting and safety considerations. Students in this new era of “e-professionalism” need to learn to manage their digital representations in ways that will not jeopardise future opportunities (Muñoz & Towner, 2011, para. 24; see also, Sendall, Ceccucci, & Peslak, 2008; Tynes, 2007).

Whilst Muñoz and Towner (2011) focussed on the university environment, many of the same issues hold true for high school teachers. Issues of privacy and safety are paramount when negative or inappropriate comments and behaviours that are publically stated via SNS can have consequences for both teachers and students (Davies, M. & Lee, 2008; Timm & Duven, 2008). Age is also a factor in SNS participation. Whilst many young people have SNS profiles before the SNS’s allowable age, participation is not guaranteed (boyd, 2008b; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Livingstone & Brake, 2010; Ybarra & Mitchell, 2008). Although university age students reportedly have a high and active presence on SNS (Gangadharbatla, 2008; Pempek, et al., 2009; Subrahmanyam, Reich, Waechter, & Espinoza, 2008; West, Lewis, & Currie, 2009), attempts to introduce academic-oriented Facebook use into a Chemistry laboratory saw less than half of students participate (Schroeder & Greenbowe, 2009). As noted at the beginning of this chapter, the types of users vary between the different SNS (Hargittai, 2008). Which SNS is used will help determine who participates. This raises issues of participation and equality for students. Again, the majority of research has been based in university campuses in the United States (US) and the relevance of results to schools and
universities in New Zealand is unknown. On the other hand, in the absence of contrary evidence, it can be assumed that the issues faced by educators in New Zealand may well be similar to those faced by their overseas counterparts.

Apart from equity issues of access and participation for students, educators also have to decide how to incorporate SNS into the classroom. Vie (2008) claims that the digital divide is no longer purely a problem of access, but has developed into a participation gap between older educators and young users. As such, many educators are themselves unaware of the potential and lack confidence to incorporate new technologies. Yet, Vie (2008) warns that to ignore newer technologies runs the risk of students disengaging from education as they find teaching practices irrelevant in their increasingly digitally oriented lives (see also, Huijser, 2008). Paradoxically, some older students are reluctant to see their digital technology use co-opted for educational purposes (Lohnes & Kinzer, 2007). As Lohnes and Kinzer (2007) note, “the students’ reluctance to use technology in their classrooms challenged stereotypical assumptions about the Net Gen’s expectations for technology on campus” (para. 2). Whilst the findings are interesting, the ever-changing nature of technology and growth in popularity of SNS may produce different results if Lohnes and Kinzer’s study was repeated on campuses now. Nevertheless, there is obviously a need for educators and students to negotiate appropriate use of technologies in the learning environment.

Although SNS and other interactive Web 2.0 technologies can benefit education, often it is the risks that are emphasised (Green & Bailey, 2010; Huijser, 2008; Tynes, 2007). Huijser (2008) claims that technology may be viewed as a threat by educators who “remain locked in a binary framework of ‘educator versus student’” (p. 49). Instead, he argues, teachers need to reconceptualise their positions as co-constructors of knowledge with the students. Yet, often it is not the sanctity of the knowledge transmission process that is feared for, but the sanctity of student and teacher privacy (Maranto & Barton, 2010). School boards, particularly in the US, have taken steps ranging from warning teachers away from having any presence on SNS, through to promotion of controlled SNS use in the classroom (Maranto & Barton, 2010). Media stories have also promulgated tales of teachers’ profiles showing unfit behaviours such as drinking. This has fuelled parental and institutional fears for the safety of students (Maranto & Barton, 2010). As a result, social media guidelines are in place for most US school districts and there is a push for schools to use social media developed for educational purposes (CBS News, 2012, April 18). However, this overlooks the potential for greater engagement with students who are already using popular SNS, such as Facebook. The
downside of a separate school SNS is that it requires the user to opt in to participation, as opposed to receiving information delivered to them.

Information on using SNS in the classroom is becoming more widespread. Cramer and Hayes (2010) note that “the device can often be much less important than the development of content and practices to enable learners to reach educational objectives in new ways” (p. 38). Whilst acknowledging tensions around the potential misuse of technology in schools, the authors argue that school policies can normalise, and help students learn, safer ways of engaging with technology. Outright bans on technology use can lead to students resisting and subverting institutional decrees. Instead, Cramer and Hayes (2010) argue that teachers need to co-opt the technology and utilise it to engage students in collaborative learning and meaning-making, albeit within acceptable-use guidelines (see also Rosen, 2011). Mullen and Wedwick (2008) agree, providing suggestions for ways to incorporate YouTube, digital stories, and blogs into classroom use. Rather than treating new technologies as distractions or a hindrance to learning, educators are being encouraged to embrace technology as a challenge (Cramer & Hayes, 2010; Green & Bailey, 2010; Mullen & Wedwick, 2008).

Through the appropriation of SNS as tools for classroom use, SNS have become new sites of communication involving differentiated linguistic styles that reflect the subcultural capital of the users (Cazden, et al., 1996). The use of these SNS for educational purposes extends the teaching environment from the public classroom, into the private home. This blurring of boundaries allows for scaffolding of learning (Cazden, et al., 1996; Cope & Kalantzis, 2006; van Aalst, 2009). In this context, teachers and students contribute varying degrees of expertise, and meaning is collectively/socially constructed. Van Aalst (2009) argues that knowledge is constructed and created through social interactions in communities. Carol Chan (2011, June 2) notes that while children may not be able to ‘create’ knowledge in the formal sense, they are engaged in the knowledge creation process. The question is whether educational SNS interactions are ‘learning’ in terms of knowledge creation, or whether interactions remain primarily a sharing of opinions and knowledge discussion.

Social interactions on SNS allow for more than the construction of ‘formal’ knowledge and learning. Through these interactions, knowledge is not constrained to the topic in hand. Each interaction also allows the social actors to gain knowledge of, and form impressions of, the other actors within the field of interaction. In this way an image of an actor’s digital identity is
formed. In the following sections, I outline the differing ways identity is constructed in terms of the digital environment.

3.2 Online Identity and SNS

Buckingham (2008) describes identity as “an ambiguous and slippery term” (p. 1), used to denote both individual and shared categorisations, both difference and sameness. Individually, identity categories are unique and relatively stable identifiers, such as name, address, and date of birth. Yet ‘identity’ is also shown through identification with others (Guzzetti, 2006). It is used to denote shared categories of gender, culture, or class that make us the same as others (Buckingham, 2008). However, definitions of these shared categories can vary socially and historically (McMillin, 2009) meaning that categorisations are fluid. Drawing upon the postructuralist framework of this thesis, I see identity as a process, always in a state of negotiation (McMillin, 2009) and a state of becoming (Cover, 2012), “an endless journey with no final destination” (L. Smith, personal communication, April 26, 2012). Personal identifying details are just one aspect used by individuals in their identity construction.

Literature that examines identity on SNS frames identity within the same dichotomous individual/social construction. For instance, a common thread pervading SNS is the discourse of risk centred on the provision of personal identity markers. Yet, SNS are also seen as sites of identity construction and experimentation for young people (see for example, boyd, 2008b; Cassell & Cramer, 2008; Manago, et al., 2008; Selwyn, 2009). Furthermore, identity performance research expresses discourses of both opportunity and risk for young people in the use of SNS: opportunity for young people through the ability to experiment with alternate identities, and risk to young people in following, or straying from, the normative discursive practices of their peers and facing social sanctions. On the other hand, research which focuses only on individual identifiers can also lead to the perpetuation of negative discourses, which serve to position young people as at-risk, and SNS as sites of threat.

3.2.1 Identity and Discourses of Risk on SNS

The provision of personal information, or identifiers, is often linked by the literature to increased risks of victimisation, and fuels parental fears. A survey of 12 to 17 year olds in the United States by Mesch (2009), found a link between membership of SNS and victimisation risk for young people. Mesch notes that parental strategies, such as locating the computer in a common space, or the use of restrictive ‘nanny’ software, have little effect on the incidence of cyberbullying. On the other hand, Mesch reports that parental rules for internet use lessen the
risk of cyber-bullying for young people. What is problematic is that Mesch treats chat rooms and SNS as similar risk environments, which ignores the differing affordances of each, and the different reasons and ways in which users interact on these sites. Chat interactions are synchronous, with an uncontrolled audience potentially including strangers. Due to the immediacy of replies, users may receive immediate feedback on their identity performance as judged by those with whom they are ‘chatting’. Chat rooms may be text-based, or include video and audio, as well as use of avatars. Nevertheless, the nature of chat rooms and short-term use provides temporally limited options for identity presentation. In contrast, SNS allow for the development over time of a visible profile and identity performance, with interactions occurring primarily asynchronously. Interactions predominantly occur within a network of Friends, or ‘Friends of Friends’, dependent upon individual security settings. Arguments such as Mesch’s, which attempt to treat all social media as homogenous, serve to reinforce discourses of youth incompetence and authoritarian discourses of parental control in online environments.

Other studies have also linked online identity expression to discourses of risk for some young people. In a study of MySpace use by Australian secondary school students, De Souza and Dick (2008) raise concerns that, while most young people “are acting responsibly in embracing this new technology” (p. 143), some young people still reveal personal identifying material such as address and phone contact details. Like Mesch (2009), De Souza and Dick reiterate discourses of incompetence, positioning young people as in need of parental mediation when using SNS. However, ‘risky’ disclosure behaviours are not confined to school-age students. Similar studies with university-age students have also found that some older users disclose address and contact details, despite a stated awareness of potential audience (Fogel & Nehmad, 2008; Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Hinduja & Patchin, 2008; Peluchette & Karl, 2008). For instance, Peluchette and Karl (2008) report that college students shared “inappropriate information” (p. 96), such as photos of alcohol and drug-use, despite stated concerns about employers or strangers potentially viewing information. Discourses of incompetence are re-stated by the authors: “the findings show that students are somewhat naïve about the potential negative consequences concerning the access and use of such information” (Peluchette & Karl, 2008, p. 96). What these various studies fail to address, (although De Souza and Dick acknowledge the issue) is why young people are revealing this information, and what role this information plays in the construction of their digital identity.
Notably, many of these studies were limited to examining public profiles of university-age students. That is, the users have kept their information accessible to all, which in itself, is an expression of identity by the user. When Hinduja and Patchin (2008) examined the content of youth profiles on MySpace to evaluate the presence of identifying information, they found that 40% of youth profiles were private and only available to their network of Friends. By comparison, the publicly available youth profiles tended to contain identifying information making it possible non-Friends could locate them. It is probable that those users likely to attempt control over their digital identity performance are not available for these mainly quantitative studies by dint of already having tightened their profile security settings. Nevertheless, such results feed the moral panic over the safety of young people in the online environment which persist, despite not reflecting the reality for most young people (Holmes, 2009).

Notably, the veracity of the ‘public’ information is difficult to ascertain. Many young people provide false details on profiles as a way of avoiding parental scrutiny (boyd, 2008b). The information that is released is often carefully considered in terms of controlling access to information (boyd, 2008b; Lenhart & Madden, 2007; Livingstone, 2008). To this end, many older youth are reluctant to be-Friend parents or other older family members (West, et al., 2009). SNS are privately public spaces where young people can interact free from overt adult surveillance and are able to experiment with identity construction (boyd, 2008b).

### 3.2.2 Creating a ‘Self’ Through the Profile: Writing Oneself into Being

J. Davies (2012) notes that, “simply belonging to Facebook is a statement of identity” (p. 27). Identity on SNS involves more than the disclosure of personal identifying details. As individuals move across multiple contexts, they construct and perform multiple identities. As one digital context, SNS appear to offer the opportunity for individuals to experiment with their identities when creating their networked profile. Manago et al. (2008) argue that, “profiles can represent the authentic self, selected aspects of the multi-faceted self, the idealised self, or experiments with possible selves” (p. 451). However, although profiles give a glimpse of self-representation, “for all that is revealed there is much more that is not” (boyd, 2008a, p. 121). Profiles and activity presentations do not reveal motivations or underlying thoughts and feelings, but only let an observer see what the owner has chosen to reveal. Consequently, digital profiles are shaped by more than choices of information disclosure; SNS profile constructions are negotiated through filters of site architecture, self-presentation choices, concepts of friendship and audience, contextual cues, notions of public and private,
and temporal aspects. Each of these factors shapes the way an individual works to construct and present themselves online, and the way that presentation is read by others.

Cover (2012) describes the construction and management of social network site profiles as a form of identity performance, where identity is fluid and continuously being re-constructed. However, using the tools provided by SNS for profile development provides a structure, which discursively constructs the user, and limits the profile development (boyd, 2008b; boyd & Ellison, 2007; CEPNZ, 2012; Mallan & Giardina, 2009; Marwick, 2005). SNS limit profiles per email address and provide a limited set of generic fields for profile presentation. Generally, SNS ask users to provide personal identifiers and some expressions of taste, such as favourite films or music. For instance, Facebook provides initial data fields for places of work and education, geographic location, hometown, relationships and family members, contact details, as well as spaces for religious views, political views, language spoken, and a self-descriptive paragraph (Facebook, 2012c). Further categories of ‘social apps’ let users share the music they are listening to, favourite films, television, books, games, activities, sports teams, people they admire and other interests. Notably, Facebook reflects Butler’s concept of ‘doing’ identity. In Facebook’s (2012c) own words, “Now there’s a new class of social apps that let you express who you are through all the things that you do [emphasis added]” (para. 3). Identity performance is therefore possible in the choice to complete, or not, the available data fields (CEPNZ, 2012); to construct a biographical narrative (Livingstone, 2008). Thus, SNS profiles both represent and reinforce social discourses through the way the site architecture shapes profile construction.

Before constructing their own profiles, young people often spend time perusing their Friends’, and even Friends-of-Friends’, profiles to establish the social norms for that SNS (boyd, 2008b). By doing so, social cues can be garnered which frame the way the young person goes on to complete the fields provided by the SNS. The result is an apparently homogenous appearance across a Friends network (boyd & Heer, 2006) where each page has the same structure and overall appearance. Additionally, the ability for users to restrict the access of others to their profile information can reinforce this impression, removing some individual identity markers and taste indicators whilst leaving compulsory, standard identity markers publicly visible. For instance, even the most private and secure Facebook profile is still searchable and will have name, gender, profile picture, cover picture and Facebook username and ID visible (Facebook, 2012b). Furthermore, whilst users can opt to state ethnicity in the general ‘About Me’ category, at the time of writing ethnicity is not explicitly requested as an
Chapter Three: Literature Review

identifier by Facebook, which may serve to privilege whiteness as the unspoken norm (Marwick, 2005). The uniqueness of a user’s identity display is thus structured, both by the site architecture or design features, and by the user’s preferences in representing themselves online (Davis, K., 2012b; Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman, & Tong, 2008).

The social construction of identity on SNS is likened by Mallan and Giardina (2009) to the interactional negotiations that take place on wiki sites. For instance, on wiki sites, knowledge is co-constructed as a group and individual ownership of knowledge is difficult to claim given the collaborative nature of the wiki (Mallan & Giardina, 2009). The authors argue that the collaboration inherent in identity construction on SNS through interactions with Friends gives rise to co-constructed identities, which they term “wikidentities” (Mallan & Giardina, 2009). These ‘wikidentities’ develop through the postings, comments, photo tagging and other interactive performative actions of identity construction on SNS. Even the act of be-Friending another is a performative act of identity construction. Nonetheless, users exert some control over their digital identity through the content they post. Although the site structures the initial profile categories, the decision over what information to provide in status updates belongs to the user. Mallan and Giardina (2009) found that, MySpace users imposed their own concepts of what reflected them as a person when choosing what extra information to share.

The cues given in profiles draw others into conversation, providing information about points of commonality, or difference, to be discussed (boyd & Heer, 2006). Yet, these cues are also shaped by the offline environment and are contextually and “culturally situated” (boyd & Heer, 2006, para. 36). Removed from the offline context in which these cues were formed, they are open to misinterpretation by others. The development of a digital identity is shaped by societal norms, but is also influenced by the subcultural norms of the particular digital environment. Digital identity construction, therefore, is a series of performative acts, the meaning of which is negotiated between the performer, and the audience.

For young people online identities are often contingent upon, or direct representations of, their offline identities (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Valentine & Holloway, 2002). Key to the profile presentation is the profile photo or imagery, which act as core identity markers (boyd & Heer, 2006; Greenhow & Robelia, 2009a; Mallan, 2009). In a study into self-presentation of MySpace users, Boyle and Johnson (2010) found that over 75% of users displayed a biographical photo, as compared to the approximately 60% who listed their actual name. As the quantitative study did not ask participants why they chose these representations,
it is difficult to make definitive conclusions. Nonetheless, we can surmise that the accuracy of image presentation appears to be more important to users than the accuracy of their name. For SNS users, there is a “balance between presenting their “best self” on their profile and offering accurate information” (Boyle & Johnson, 2010, p. 1398; see also Donoso & Ribbens, 2010). Notably, younger users were more likely to reveal accurate information than older users (De Souza & Dick, 2008). Again, the limitations of the quantitative design prevented the authors from exploring why young participants generally chose to reveal accurate information. We could posit that younger people are more comfortable in the online environment and thus, more prepared to maintain an ‘accurate’ representation when constructing profiles (Nyland, Marvez, & Beck, 2007). This view is supported by Greenhow and Robelia (2009a) who also found that high school students were generally truthful in the information they provided, with only a few outright identity fabrications (see also, Larsen, 2007, October). Conversely, boyd (2008b) reports that young people often falsify identifying details to limit profile access, not just from strangers, but also from the parental gaze. Young people want “to see and be seen by those who might be able to provide validation” (boyd, 2008b, p. 132; see also Donoso & Ribbens, 2010; Mallan, 2009). Yet, the way different audience members, such as peers or parents, validate performances will depend on the context within which the subject is known.

Constructed profiles act as representations of the offline identity(ies), acting as textual avatars that embody the digital identity(ies) (Amichai-Hamburger & Vinitzky, 2010; Brooks-Young, 2010; CEPNZ, 2012; Davis, K., 2012b; Thomas, 2007). A prominent feature of Facebook profile construction is the profile picture, which may be a photo, a representative avatar, or some other image. In a study which asked 18 to 24 year olds to construct avatars for three different online contexts, Vasalou and Joinson (2009) found that the avatars constructed tended to be self-representative of the participants’ offline identities: dressed in similar fashions and colours, accompanied by “self-relevant props” (Vasalou & Joinson, 2009, p. 518) and inhabiting similar living environments to those of the participant’s offline environment. Similarly, when Morrison (2010) asked a group of teenage girls to create avatars, which they thought represented themselves, she expected that the avatars would represent fantasy versions. Despite the limitations posed by the avatar creation site used, Morrison found that the girls deliberately chose features they felt were recognisably associated with them.

Furthermore, Morrison’s (2010) participants reported concern that their avatars were accurate, because of the importance of first impressions and the messages their avatars would provide
about them. In other words, there is a desire to control the visible, public face of the front-stage (Goffman, 1959). In that vein, avatar use on Facebook can be seen as an attempt to retain a measure of anonymity, whilst still providing an accurate representation of the subject. In Morrison’s study, the “autobiographical avatar is a deliberate attempt to represent and re-embod[y] the real-world body in cyberspace” (Morrison, 2010, p. 149). Bardzell and Bardzell (2008) on the other hand, argue that “avatars are (often deliberately) poor as literal representations of users, but they are rich as performed expressions of how users perceive themselves and/or desire to be perceived” (p. 12). Furthermore, Vasalou & Joinson (2009) claim that avatars retain the ability to project fantasy alter egos, as well as the real, in a way that photographs do not. However, I feel that this claim appears to neglect the image manipulations possible through photographic composition, and through photo-editing software. For instance, advertising companies often manipulate photographic imagery to ‘sell’ the fantasy (Back & Quaade, 1993; Johnston, 1997).

Through terminology such as ‘cyberspace’, ‘virtual reality’, or ‘virtual world’, online spaces are often conceptualised as disembodied spaces, separate from ‘everyday reality’, where the mind is freed from the limitations of the physical body (Sunden, 2003). Yet, Sunden (2003) argues, “the virtual does not automatically equal disembodiment” (p. 5). As internet users produce texts online, they “type oneself into being”, creating a digital identity upon which they may project their offline embodiment (Sunden, 2003, p. 3). Sunden bases this view upon her research into text-based online role-player games, where players create spaces and textual avatars through text commands. She argues that textual productions are “contemporary fragments of networked subjectivities with certain independency” (p. 8), yet, as the creation of an author, they can never be totally disembodied because the author exists in the ‘material world’. Without the author, the online representation cannot exist, and at the same time, the online representation is just one of the author’s many identities. The digital ‘body’ may bear no resemblance to the physical, but nonetheless, “how people represent themselves and interact online is fundamentally influenced by their embodied experience” (boyd, 2008a, p. 127). Although the personal identifying details of the physical body may be optional, the digital identity still expresses embodied characteristics such as the habitus and cultural capital of the individual (Valentine & Holloway, 2002) through the activities and interactions which become the primary digital embodiment and representation (Merchant, 2006).

For SNS such as Facebook, identity construction and re-presentation come about through multiple activities. Identity work moves beyond the initial profile presentation to include
'Friending', posting photos, tagging photos, commenting on others’ posts, providing status updates, *Liking* of pages, comments or statuses, and other performative presentations of identity (boyd, 2008b; CEPNZ, 2012; Manago, et al., 2008; Marwick, 2005; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Walther, et al., 2008). The online environment has allowed the appropriation of taste categories to become inexpensive and widespread, requiring only a click to *like* and references to popular culture are encouraged by site architecture (Williams, B., 2008). By listing taste categories, or *Liking* pages for favourite bands, music, shows and so on, SNS users appropriate attributes of those genres into their identity performance (Liu, 2007; Williams, B., 2008). Popular culture discourses combine with normative societal discourses and are appropriated and performed by the user through their online interactions. These acts serve to present a narrative of self, re-presenting identities to an imagined audience.

Common popular culture references encourage users to think of their networks as affinity spaces, or communities sharing common interests and desires (Guzzetti, 2006; Morrison, 2010; Williams, B., 2008). J. Davies (2012) found that Facebook users co-constructed events with their Friends’ network. Participants viewed updates as “Facebook mediated” stories with the initial participant as the central performer. The flow of responses to the initial performance, or update, in the form of comments, additional information and photos, draw the Friends’ network in as co-performers. Positive responses to the performed actions reinforce the displayed identity (Manago, et al., 2008). Conversely, negative responses can prompt negative self-impressions. Furthermore, even one-way interactions of observing another user’s idealised profile identity may have negative impacts on the individual if they compare themselves unfavourably (Manago, et al., 2008). By engaging with the individual’s initial performance of identity, members of the Friends’ network are helping construct the initial user’s identity, whilst they simultaneously construct their own.

### 3.2.3 Negotiated Co-Construction of Identity

As Merchant (2005) states, “acts of performance require an audience” (p. 303). Yet, the online environment can lull users into a false sense of security about their intended audience. boyd and Heer (2006) point out that often research analysing online conversations assumes the speaker has an identified audience. Yet, the “lack of presence makes it difficult to know who is listening” (Brooks-Young, 2010, para. 4). Moreover, identity performance cues come from not only the other people present, but also spatial and architectural elements (boyd, 2008b; Brooks-Young, 2010). The size and intended function of a room, for instance, provides indications as to the potential audience an individual can expect. Individuals usually
have some conception of, and can see, who will constitute the offline audience (Brooks-
Young, 2010). Yet, SNS and other online environments provide few of these clues. Identity
performances may be structured by the ‘architecture’ of the site in terms of the tools and
structure provided for profile development (Brooks-Young, 2010; CEPNZ, 2012; Facebook,
2012c; Mallan & Giardina, 2009), but contextual cues can only be determined through
interactions with other digital identities (Brooks-Young, 2010).

In the offline environment, the material body provides visible indicators of identity, making it
more difficult to construct and present alternate identities. In contrast, the online environment
allows for the creation of alternate identities with a few strikes of the keyboard (Donath &
boyd, 2004). Names can easily be created, changed, or abandoned. Loss of reputation for an
online identity can be solved by creation of a new identity with a new name (Donath & boyd,
2004). This task is made easier when deceiving strangers. However, SNS involve networks
that include offline contacts (Donath & boyd, 2004; Marwick & boyd, 2011). Theoretically,
these “anchored relationships” (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008, p. 1818) should ensure that
the online identity presentation is consistent with the offline identity as the presence of offline
contacts is read by others as verification of an ‘authentic’ presentation (Donath & boyd, 2004;
Zhao, et al., 2008). However, unless one is part of the same offline network, it is difficult to
verify the accuracy and reliability of the information provided (Boyle & Johnson, 2010;
Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006). There is an assumption that members of online networks are
genuine individuals. Nonetheless, Donath and boyd (2004) note that, despite the time
commitment required, there remains the possibility of grand-scale deception measures
involving a network of fake profiles. Furthermore, there is also the possibility that the Friend
network consists of genuine profiles belonging to individuals, but that these individuals have
only weak connections to the individual and cannot reliably verify the individual performance
(Donath & boyd, 2004).

Contexts collapse on SNS. Audiences become blended as work, social, family, and friend
networks merge and have to be addressed with the same profile (Kendall, 2007). Despite the
tensions created by performing to the blended audience, LiveJournal users in Kendall’s study
noted the efficiency of communication as an advantage. Like most SNS, LiveJournal users
could choose to filter who received their posts. The presence of audience members from
different contexts, however, required users to exert more care in their use of the site. Kendall
found that some participants sought connections, but also expressed the need to control their
performance. As such, the lack of ability to control the potential audience in interactions on
others’ weblogs caused concern and impacted on the level of interaction taking place (Kendall, 2007). Despite these tensions, it is interesting to note that the participants still used the SNS, although Kendall neglects to explore this contradiction. Similarly, Marwick and boyd (2010) report that most Twitter users target audiences, although Twitter itself allows little control of the actual audience. Whilst many ‘tweeted’ to an imagined audience, some Twitter users felt that it was artificial and unacceptable to consciously ‘tweet’ to others. Whether the individual performs to an imagined audience of one or many, “the ideal audience is often the mirror-image of the user” (Marwick & boyd, 2011, p. 7). What is not addressed by Kendall, or Marwick and boyd, is that the potential audience exists beyond the initial performance. The nature of the internet results in postings that continue to exist in some form, even if deleted from the original site. While a performance may be aimed at a particular audience, at a particular time, “it is impossible to gauge future potential audience” (Brooks-Young, 2010, para. 21).

The role of the immediate audience in identity development is not confined to that of passive imagined recipients. Rather, the audience co-constructs the profile with the individual. This may take the form of a collaborative approach to the initial profile development (Mallan & Giardina, 2009), but also extends to the maintenance of profiles (Cover, 2012). Through interactions such as comments on posts and tagging of photos, the visible audience of Friends imposes their perceptions of an individual’s identity upon the individual performance. Friends may act as script editors, editing and re-writing the individual actor’s performance to ensure it is an ‘authentic’ and acceptable (to them) representation of the socially known identity. Thus, social discourses, such as those that regulate online friendship and that influence subject positions, continue to do so in the online environment, creating expectations of behaviour and presentation that are policed by the network of Friends.

The result is a negotiated ‘truth’, or accepted performance, which is not fully within the individual’s control: “The cumulative effect of profile image and information and Friends list and comments may contribute to a communally negotiated truth” about a person’s identity (Mallan & Giardina, 2009, para. 36). Although Friends’ comments can often be removed from a wall or post, the immediacy of posting and sharing, for instance via mobile phone

---

7 John Dvorak of PC Magazine (2011, July 1) argues that online posts are permanent as they can exist on a server even if deleted from the original site. Furthermore, other digital repositories such as the Internet Archive (http://archive.org/index.php), archiveteam.org, and search engines such as Google, cache pages and store these ‘snapshots’ in time.
technology, means it is likely that at least some of the network will view, and possibly reply to, the comments (boyd, 2008b; Mallan & Giardina, 2009). In New Zealand, Facebook offers the ability to post updates, and be notified of activity on your network, via SMS (text) service, as well as offering a free access, text-only version of the Facebook site via mobile phone browser. Technology, therefore, confers an immediacy to SNS use that moves the previously asynchronous interactions of social networking media towards a synchronous chat-like structure. This allows comments and posts by Friends to co-construct and re-present those Friends’ readings of an individual’s performed identity. Furthermore, the identity performances of the Friends themselves, influence the reading of an individual’s performance by others (Donath & boyd, 2004; Walther, et al., 2008).

When Friends interact on an individual’s profile or wall, the “behavioral residue” they leave behind conveys an impression, not only of themselves, but also of the individual (Walther, et al., 2008, p. 35). In other words, we are known by the company we keep. Walther, et al. (2008) found that the attractiveness rating of Friends’ profile pictures influenced perceptions of profile owners. Complimentary or favourable comments from highly rated Friends further improved the perception of the profile owner. On the other hand, unfavourable comments, which could be deemed as unsanctioned by the profile owner, were perceived to have more veracity than the profile owner’s posts (Walther, et al., 2008). What our friends say they think of us, and our actions, means more to others than what we think of ourselves. Favourable (or unfavourable) comments from Friends reflect on the profile owner’s discursive enactment/performance. Given that often friends/Friends postings are not removed, even when unfavourable, the choice by a profile owner to allow a posting to remain could be read as condoning or agreeing with the views stated (Walther, et al., 2008). “In negotiating unknown audiences, people must be prepared to explain both their performance and that of their Friends” (Brooks-Young, 2010, para. 23). However, the reason for allowing unfavourable posts to remain on a profile may have little to do with agreeing with the stated views. Instead it may reflect the discursive construction of ‘friendship’ and the need to be seen as ‘nice’, as well as the discursive practices of SNS, such as the reading of an individual’s popularity through the number of post acknowledgments.

---

8 Zero.facebook.com has been offered in over 45 countries since 2010. The three main mobile network operators in New Zealand all support this service which works across the majority of handsets available. Even without zero.facebook access, the ability remains for individuals, with any SMS messaging capable handset, to post updates and be notified of their network’s activity via the 3223 Facebook SMS address.
3.3 Summary

This chapter has explored the way online SNS are used for education and online identity construction. In the first section of this chapter, I explored the use of SNS in education. Risk discourses are prevalent with fears for student and staff privacy and institutional reputations, and concerns social media may distract from learning. Nonetheless, many educators promote the inclusion of these new technologies in the classroom as ways of engaging students and creating opportunities for collaborative knowledge construction. Although acceptance of SNS appears greater among higher education levels with older students, new teaching strategies to include social media are being shared among educators within schools.

There is a portion of SNS identity research that focusses upon the provision of personal identifying data and discourses of risk. On the other hand, there is also a wealth of research developing, which explores the way identity is presented and co-constructed through actions and interactions on SNS. The choices in whether to join an SNS, which SNS to join, what information to disclose, who to Friend, and the interactions with those Friends, all contribute to an individual’s performance of identity. While some of the choices on information disclosure may be read as risky, this too contributes to an individual’s identity construction.

In the next chapter, Chapter Four, I will outline the methodology and research methods used in this research project and discuss the ethical considerations of researching the online environment.
Chapter Four: Research Methodology

In the previous three chapters, I have briefly introduced the background to the research (Chapter One), outlined my theoretical framework, which informed the conduct of my research (Chapter Two), and examined a selection of the literature that looks at the way young people construct identity, especially in the online environment (Chapter Three). In this chapter, I set forth my approach to this research, which is framed by the poststructuralist belief that individual meaning making is shaped by context and social discourses. I describe how the research questions and my theoretical framework guided my research methods and data collection process. I will also address the procedural ethics involved in undertaking this research and discuss, as a reflexive researcher, some of the “ethically important moments” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 261), the unexpected disclosures, actions and situations that arose during the research process. Finally, I explain my approach to the data analysis, which again draws upon poststructuralist concepts of discourses and discourse analysis.

4.1 The Research Design

The online, or digital, nature of the context in which I wished to explore identity negotiation contributed to my research methodology deliberations. When considering the research design the researcher must be aware, not only of the underlying theoretical framework with which they approach the research, but also the purpose of the research to be undertaken (Denscombe, 1999; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). The research questions are therefore important in determining the research design. In this study, I wished to explore the ways young people were performing and reading identity when teachers were using social network sites (SNS) for educational purposes. This focus placed limits upon the research design in terms of scope and ethical considerations, as young participants needed to be attending a school that used a SNS for educational purposes. The focus upon identity negotiation further shaped the research design, requiring an approach that allowed for the teasing out of individual practices and meaning making.

A qualitative study enables the researcher to explore the meanings each individual makes within their particular context (boyd, 2008a; Neuman, 2006). Reflecting my poststructuralist stance, I wished to acknowledge that my participants were co-constructing meaning and representing discourses through discursive practices such as participating, or not participating, on the subject page (Morrison, 2010) and that reading and meaning making are likely to
change over time. In designing my research process, I therefore held in mind my research questions as shown again in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: Research Questions Revisited**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Main Research Question:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How do young people negotiate their identities on Facebook groups or pages that are being used for educational purposes?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-Questions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. How do students use Facebook to craft their identity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Why is this particular school using the ‘public’ medium of Facebook, as opposed to a more mediated educational software platform, such as Moodle? What are the affordances of Facebook that makes this the preferred choice?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. What are the implications of blurring boundaries between the public and private spheres for teachers and students?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. What reasons are there for students’ participation, or non-participation on the class’ Facebook page?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I was interested in the effects on student online behaviour from the school’s appropriation of a SNS that had hitherto been a non-educational space for students. I was also conscious, however, that when conducting research into a familiar context, the researcher faces the task of identifying what is ‘unknowingly known’, that is, the taken-for-granted aspects. Previous awareness of the context may contribute to a form of “cultural blindness” where the researcher becomes impervious to the familiar and fails to recognise the discursive constructions inherent in familiar cultural practices (Prasad, 2005, p. 87). As a Facebook user, I was aware there might be aspects of the Facebook environment which I would not think to question, and which may affect my understanding of the participant’s experiences. It was therefore important to me to allow the participants to explain their own understanding and reasoning. I opted to break the research into two components: the first component expressly observing the use of the Facebook page for educational purposes; the second inviting the participants’ views on the use of Facebook for educational purposes, as well as exploring their self-reported ways of reading and performing identity online. These two methods of data collection ran concurrently throughout the research project.
4.1.1 Participant Recruitment

The recruitment process began by identifying schools where teachers were using online public SNS for educational purposes. I had become aware of some schools through initial internet searches, articles in the media\(^9\) and through word of mouth. Initial contact was made via letters to schools to provide information about the project and gauge interest.

Researching in schools requires negotiating with gatekeepers to gain access (Heath, Charles, Crow, & Wiles, 2007; Valentine, 1999). Institutional gatekeepers “are frequently charged with the responsibility for making decisions on behalf of the children and young people in their care, including whether or not to grant access to researchers” (Heath, et al., 2007, p. 405). I initially wrote to the Principal of the participating school and offered to visit and talk to the school and Board of Trustees (BOT) to address any concerns about the research. I also included information sheets and consent forms for the Principal to consider. I am aware that this approach structures student participants as subordinate to school governance in the decision-making process regarding participation. However, I attempted to ensure students were not co-opted into the process as I explain below.

The participating school was a New Zealand urban, mid-decile, single-sex secondary school, with a class using a Facebook page for educational purposes\(^{10}\). The principal devolved responsibility to the teacher who was using Facebook to decide whether to participate, which may have reduced the chance the teacher was co-opted by the school governance into the project. I then visited the class during class-time, to explain my research project and to circulate the consent forms. The students were provided with a set of each of the consent options, involving Information and Consent forms for students and parents for Interview participation, and also a set for non-interview, observation-only participation (see Appendix A). The teacher collected the completed consent forms and returned them to me in the supplied post-paid envelope. During the project extra students opted-in and consequently, I interviewed one teacher and nine Year 13 students, one of whom did not use online SNS. After the individual interviews, the participants were provided with $25 retail vouchers as an acknowledgment of their time and their contribution to the project.

---

\(^9\) In order to protect my participants’ confidentiality; I do not feel I can provide further identifying details.

\(^{10}\) I have opted to provide minimal identifying details in order to help protect my participants’ confidentiality.
4.1.2 Part One: Offline Interviewing

In qualitative research the role of the interviewer is important because the interviewer is the tool of data collection (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003). Interviews allow individual meaning-making to be explored. In other words, in an interview “the researcher’s objective is to facilitate respondents’ descriptions and reflections on their experiences” (Opie, 2003, p. 245). To garner participants’ views, the first component of my data collection involved two interview rounds: a group interview with the initial six student participants, and later in the school year, individual face-to-face interviews with the participating students and the teacher. The interview questions were semi-structured and informed by the reviewed literature. Questions were open-ended and involved participants’ self-reporting of their experiences and strategies using Facebook (see Appendix B). These interviews were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

The first interview was conducted early in the school year utilising a group interview to explore student perceptions and experiences of using social networking sites. Group interviews allow participants the security of a social support network (Marshall & Rossman, 2011), and the group interactions may fuel debate about the topic (Kvale, 1996). However, group interviews may also silence some voices as some participants may be reluctant to speak up, or may be overshadowed by more vocal participants (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). From a practical viewpoint, the transcribing of group interviews posed difficulties with the lively discussion among participants. While the use of multiple voice recorders helped with separating individual voices when transcribing, it was still noticeable that two of the six participants were considerably less forthcoming in the group interview I conducted. Individual interviews, therefore, can provide quiet participants with a chance to speak.

I used the data from the group interview to inform the interview questions for the individual interviews at the beginning of the third school term (see Appendix B). One-to-one interviews were held with each student to further explore points of interest from the group interview. The success of interviews depends upon the interviewing techniques of the researcher. As a novice researcher, I am aware that it was possible I would miss opportunities to follow-up information disclosed by participants. In an attempt to address this issue, I planned the interview questions with prompts and rephrased questions through the interview to provide multiple opportunities for participants’ views. In addition, I also conducted a semi-structured interview with the teacher about her experiences using Facebook for both personal and teaching-related activities (see Appendix B for the interview guides).
4.1.3 Part Two: Online Observations

The second method of data collection involved observations of the Facebook page. With permission from the teacher and the students involved, I observed interactions visible upon the Facebook subject page\textsuperscript{11} over the first two school terms. The aim was not to focus on individual students, but to gain an appreciation of the nature of the online group interactions. I took screenshots to aid subsequent analysis. These were then stored as a password protected document on a password protected computer. Only patterns of interactions were recorded during analysis. Initially, the aim was to seek permission from all those who participated in the participating class’ online forum. However, it soon became apparent that multiple classes, as well as former students and friends, posted and commented on the recruited class’ Facebook page. As I had not sought consent from these other users, I redacted these extra postings from analysis. I discuss this issue further in the ethics section of this chapter (section 4.2).

The observations of group interactions between participating students and the teacher in the online SNS forum were designed to both inform and complement the interview data. Neuman (2006) states that “the interactions and beliefs of people create reality” (p. 89). The researcher must become acculturated to the context in order to gain meanings, whilst retaining the ability to record detailed field notes and observations (Luders, 2004). Furthermore, the researcher’s personal reflections also contribute to understanding by making “the strange familiar and the familiar strange” (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p. 141). By observing within the context, the researcher can gain an appreciation of the way context may shape meaning. Within the context of the Facebook page, I observed interactions, but apart from informing my student participants at the beginning of the study, I was not overtly present on the subject page. Facebook pages are automatically set to public and all postings and information are in the public domain and available for viewing. As such, I did not feel my presence and observations were intrusive for users who had not formally consented, who it could be argued, should be aware of the possibility of an invisible audience on a public page. Monitoring of the subject page ended after two school terms when the participating teacher took a leave of absence.

\footnote{As the teacher operated this page for all Year 11-13 students in this subject, I have chosen to refer to the page as ‘the subject page’, rather than ‘class page’ to acknowledge that other classes are also using the page.}
4.2 Ethical Considerations

All research involving human participants requires ethical considerations. In qualitative research, Guillemin and Gillam (2004) argue there are two distinct aspects of research ethics: procedural ethics and ‘ethics in practice’ (p. 262). The qualitative researcher must first address the ‘procedural ethics’, the issues considered important by the relevant ethical review committee. Yet, it is difficult to foresee all ethical issues that may arise during the research process. As such, Guillemin and Gillam argue for reflexive research, where the researcher is self-aware of the consequences of their actions, decisions and analysis. In this section, I shall address the ethical issues of my research project following Guillemin and Gillam’s suggested framework.

4.2.1 Procedural Ethics

Procedural ethics requires the researcher to consider the important “issues of harm, consent, deception, privacy, and confidentiality of data” (Punch, 1994, p. 89). These are the factors considered by the University of Otago Ethics Committee.

As the research interviews were interested in the participants’ perceptions, opinions and views, it was unlikely the interviews would cause harm or discomfort. However, as the research looks at issues of internet use, it was possible that a participant may disclose sensitive information, for example, that he or she is the victim of ‘cyberbullying’ or abuse, or has been exposed to inappropriate sites. In consideration of this possibility, I prepared a leaflet suggesting possible sources of help with appropriate contact details. Examples included school counsellors, Youthline, Youthlaw, ‘What’s Up’ Helpline, Netsafe, and the NZ Police (See Appendix C). In addition, I provided participants with my university contact details so that they could follow up on any issues if they wish. Although I had not anticipated it at the time of ethics approval, I also swapped cellphone numbers with participants to arrange interview times. I discussed this move with my supervisors and felt this was a necessary action as it was difficult to get responses when I emailed students.

To protect the participants’ privacy, I decided not to identify the location of the participating school, instead generalising the locale to ‘a New Zealand school’. I considered this a valid action due to the global nature of SNS participation. For instance, Facebook is based in the United States, yet 80% of membership is outside of the United States and Canada (Facebook, 2012d). Furthermore, the small population and geographic size of New Zealand requires consideration of the ease with which schools can be identified (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). It
was hoped that by generalising the information and declining to apportion commentary and actions to individuals, confidentiality of the participants would be protected from those outside the project (Tolich, 2004).

The necessity of gaining parental consent for young people was an ethical dilemma. Legally, many of the students were still considered minors at the beginning of the research and institutional ethics therefore requires parental consent. On the other hand, there is a growing body of research arguing for young people to have the right to decide whether to consent and participate (see for example, Valentine, 1999). For this research, I felt I needed to consider the permanence of internet postings, as well as participants’ internet awareness, which may vary considerably. I acknowledge that this stance potentially constructs young people as incompetent in the online context and denies agency (Heath, et al., 2007). Nonetheless, after careful consideration, I decided to require parental consent, as well as student assent, as I felt this would also allow participants an excuse to avoid participation in the interviews if they did not feel comfortable with the research.

Anonymity for participants cannot be offered within the interview situation, as the interviewer knows the participant’s identity. Instead, interview participants are offered confidentiality through the use of pseudonyms and the removal of identifying material from the data. Furthermore, while external confidentiality may be maintained through careful presentation of data analysis, the interview situation offers differing issues of internal confidentiality where participants may be able to identify the information from other participants within the project (Tolich, 2004). Asking participants to choose their own pseudonym allows some small measure of individual agency whilst protecting the group. Nonetheless, with a small number of participants who know each other well, addressing this issue can be difficult for the researcher without compromising data and careful presentation of analysis is needed. For instance, one of my participants, Jane, wished to have her real name used rather than a pseudonym, “because that’s me”. By negating her request and using a pseudonym, I risk denying her agency in the research process. However, this risk is outweighed by the need to protect other informants from identification where possible.

Interviews also carry issues of power relations. For instance, I acknowledge I structured, designed and conducted the interviews, on the topic of my choice, and for my benefit. The balance of power remains with the researcher and as a reflexive researcher, I tried to remain aware of these issues during analysis of the data. The site of the interview location may also
carry issues of power and meaning (Elwood & Martin, 2000). Aware of this possibility, I offered participants the choice of location for the interviews, including at the school. I hoped this would somewhat alleviate power issues for the students who, as seniors, would be comfortable with the school environment. I also started each interview by meeting the students at the school office and asking them to lead the way to the space available for interviewing, positioning them as more knowledgeable in the school environment. I took care to dress casually in a manner similar to the students, and provided snacks. During the interviews, I shared some of my own Facebook experiences. This approach positioned the interviews on a more conversational level, rather than interrogatory, although Kellehear (1996) describes all interviews as “polite interrogations” (p. 98). Nonetheless, I am also aware that there have been concerns that empathic and conversational interview techniques can be exploitative (Stacey, 1991). Duncombe and Jessop (2002), for instance, voice concerns over the potential for “faking friendship” and “doing rapport” to gain participants co-operation. Moreover, even though the participant retains the power to refuse to answer, power issues continue as their silences may still be analysed for significance (Nairn, Munro, & Smith, 2005).

4.2.2 Ethics in Practice

Whilst many ethical issues are considered before the research project begins, other ethical dilemmas can arise during the research process. Guillemin and Gillam (2004) refer to these as the “ethically important moments” in research and recommend researcher reflexivity as a method of taking an ethical approach to these unforeseen issues (p. 262). During my research project, I encountered several ethical dilemmas, that at times left me feeling uncomfortable, and required a reflexive approach.

Throughout the data collection process, I was aware of issues due to the use of technology. For instance, I was conscious that, although it would be easier for me, I could not Like the subject page, as this would create a web history linking my profile to the participant group and potentially lead to a breach of confidentiality. Therefore, I had to search for the subject page each day in order to check for new postings. Consequently, I have been careful of my own Facebook privacy settings to ensure that I am reducing the risk of any tracking of my Facebook views, for example by applications that collect Facebook data. Nonetheless, the nature of the internet means that there is still an electronic link between the subject page and myself. Although it is extremely unlikely, should a University of Otago computing technician, Facebook employee, or even my Internet service provider (ISP) wish to check my Facebook
usage, it remains possible the school could be identified. This underscores the vulnerability of any information on the internet. Furthermore, a page open on a computer screen is more visible to others in a shared office than a printed page. As a result, I undertook the screenshots of the subject page when I knew I would have privacy in the office.

Tolich (2004) notes that it is difficult for the researcher to identify all nuanced details that may result in breaches of internal confidentiality. For instance, I encountered an ethical dilemma when I discovered many non-participants also used the class’ public Facebook page. To gain permission from the members of other classes using the forum would require seeking information from the school to identify individuals by full name and class. It would be even more challenging to identify those users who were no longer part of the school community. After consideration I decided to remove non-participants’ information from analysis, rather than risk breaching the confidentiality of the participants through attempts to gain consent from all non-participants. The permanence of online data combined with a public acknowledgment that only one school is participating then led to elaborate redacting of information from screenshots for presentation and reporting use. Despite my attempts to anonymise data, however, it is still possible that identifying markers, such as patterns of speech, will be reported and the risk remains of participants identifying each other in the analysis.

As the research process advanced, I became concerned at my inability to maintain confidentiality in the school environment. Participants revealed their roles in the study from the start, with one heard telling other students, “we got donuts for talking about Facebook!” as they left the group interview. I also encountered another student as I waited at the office for an interview meeting who exclaimed, “Oh you’re the donut lady! You’re here to talk to [teacher’s name] class”. Students were revealing their own participation in the study, breaching not only their own, but potentially other participants’ right to confidentiality. I also needed to contend with staff interruptions during the group and individual interviews, and it was clear many staff also knew my purpose in the school. For instance, it was clear the school secretary was aware of the research project, the research subject and participating class, which I can only assume was from participant disclosure. Additionally, the school’s access procedures, understandably, required me to sign-in and out of the school, with details of whom I was there to see. To maintain what confidentiality I could during the individual interview stage, I negotiated the written use of ‘student’, rather than the student’s name, although I verbally informed the secretary of the student’s identity when I arrived.
Similarly, I found myself facing another ethical moment during the second interview, when the school counsellor interrupted the interview to check on the well-being of the student. While I accept the school was perhaps more conscious of its institutional responsibility to students in the absence of the participating teacher, this again negates attempts to maintain confidentiality for the participants. After the interview, the guidance counsellor approached me and enquired as to my purpose in the school. I felt I had to prevaricate on detail to protect participants, whilst also allaying concerns. I was then surprised and uncomfortable when the counsellor offered to provide me with student timetables so I could work out when they were available, and offered to contact students for me. I was relieved to be able to inform the counsellor that I was in cellular communication with the student participants so that was not necessary. Notably, while potentially ethically challenging, this conversation resulted in the provision of a fixed and bookable space for interviews to take place, thus minimising the chances of further interruptions.

4.3 Analysing the Data

Analysis of the data began during the data collection process. After each interview, I wrote field notes, highlighting any points that had arisen during the interview, and noting any embodied cues, such as shrugs, that would help analysis. In order to gain familiarity with the data and begin identifying points of interest, I chose to transcribe the majority of the interview data myself. Where time constraints necessitated employing another transcriber, I later read their transcription whilst listening to the interview to notate additional cues such as laughter.

For the group interview, I transcribed, read, listened, and re-read the transcription to identify points of interest, paying attention to how information was shared. For instance, if a participant offered a statement alone, in support of, or was supported by other participants, I read this as a weighting of the group feeling about the information. I then used these points of interest to inform the development of the questions for individual interviews, and as indicators to inform the analysis of the online observations. The individual interviews were also transcribed for analysis, paying attention to not only what was said, but also how it was said. As well as identifying discourses, I paid attention to pauses (…), laughter [laughs], emphasis, and indications of thought processes such as thinking (ummm) or agreement (MmHmm), all of which shape the meaning of the communication.

For poststructuralists, interview narrative is underpinned by multiple discourses and thus offers more information than that provided verbally. “Talk is not just ‘data’, it is also
discourse” (Cameron, 2001, p. 145). In the interview context, participants shape and construct their identity and positioning through the narrative (Cameron, 2001; Wetherell, 1999), through meaningful silences (Poland & Pederson, 1998) or through rhetorical moves such as laughter (Gronnerod, 2004). Furthermore, the asymmetrical power relations of the interview also serve to shape the participant’s responses (Cameron, 2001). However, the poststructural approach is not confined to the interview context. For instance, Zembylas and Vrasidas (2007) explore the role silence may play in text-based, online communications as a signifier of anxiety or confusion; as a space of reflection; or as a signifier of non-participation and marginalisation. Thus, the interview with the participant who did not belong to Facebook, or any other SNS, was also carefully analysed, as were the online observations.

During the analysis of the interviews, I looked for themes and discourses and coded these numerically on the transcripts. These were then merged, considered and eventually the most common themes were identified for the two findings chapters: the use of Facebook for educational purposes; and the negotiation of identity on Facebook. The online observations were thematically coded for patterns of use and these were used to inform the analysis of the use of Facebook for educational purposes. At all times, as I analysed and later wrote the findings chapters, I have been conscious that the teacher and several participants have expressed an interest in reading the finished thesis. It is important therefore that, as researcher, I remain reflexive, where “a reflexive researcher is one who is aware of all these potential influences and is able to step back and take a critical look at his or her own role in the research process” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 275).

4.4 Summary
This chapter has focussed on the methodology of the research process. I have outlined the two-part method of data collection that was underpinned by my theoretical approach and my research questions. The ethical considerations of conducting research that has an online component have been explained. These incorporated both the procedural ethics and the ethical dilemmas that arose during the process. Lastly, I have explained my approach to the data analysis, with a brief explanation of the discursive features that were identified and used in the analysis.

The following two chapters are the findings chapters, which draw upon the themes, and discourses I identified in the analysis phase. In Chapter Five, I will provide an accounting of the way this group of participants have utilised a Facebook page for educational purposes.
The second findings chapter, Chapter Six, then examines how the student participants craft and perform identity on Facebook. In the final chapter, I will draw the two findings chapters together, providing a meta-analysis and addressing my main research question: How do young people negotiate identities on a Facebook page that is being used for educational purposes?
So far, in this thesis I have outlined the background to this research (Chapter One), explicated my theoretical framework (Chapter Two), and examined a selection of the literature regarding the use of SNS in education, as well as literature examining the construction of digital identities (Chapter Three). In Chapter Four, I explained my approach to the research and the ethical issues I faced throughout this process. I described the research process from participant recruitment, through the interview process, to the analysis approach taken. In this chapter, I share the results of the research process. I use the interviews with the teacher and students, and draw upon my observations of the class’ Facebook page, to explore the ways this class is using Facebook for educational purposes.

E-learning resources are increasingly common in New Zealand classrooms. Social resources such as the Moodle, Edmodo and Blackboard software allow teachers to upload and share content with students in a controlled and password-protected environment (Johnson, et al., 2011). However, there is an increasing use of open-community, online SNS for educational purposes. I begin this chapter by examining the teacher’s experiences in beginning and utilising a subject-oriented Facebook page. I then look at the students’ perspectives on using Facebook for formal educational purposes. I was curious as to why, when the school already uses Moodle, the students and teacher had moved to using Facebook. What affordances does Facebook offer this class that Moodle does not?

5.1 Implementing the Subject Facebook Page

Like her students, Ms Jones initially began personally using Facebook “to keep in touch and to see what other people are doing”. From there, her Facebook use expanded to include educational sites as she took advantage of resources and links made available through the Facebook platform. She finds the resources helpful as she explains: “There’s some plans, latest research, like there’s a lot coming out now on [pedagogy]. . . . It’s just to keep an eye on what’s going on”.

---

12 All names of participants are pseudonyms.
Subject-related links via Facebook have allowed Ms Jones to stay abreast of current thinking in her topic. Nonetheless, the subsequent move from personal Facebook use to using Facebook with the class was in response to Friend requests from students. As Ms Jones reports, she was reluctant to Friend students on Facebook, so suggested a class page as a way of maintaining boundaries:

The kids have absolutely no idea of who you are, so their first port of call is to go onto Facebook because they’re all using it and see if they can find you and who are you and all this. Well my page has always been private and there was no way I was going to let anybody onto it and . . . because they were talking about Facebook I said why don’t we just set up a [subject] page, and they were like ‘oh, that sounds really cool’. So I just thought that if we did it that way then it’s going to stop all those blimmin friend requests which I had to just keep saying no, no, no, to. Because there is that boundary. I don’t want them on my page and I don’t want to be on their page, I don’t want to know what they’re getting up to on the weekend. So it was just because of that, that’s why.

In referring to young people using Facebook as a way of learning about others, Ms Jones acknowledges that Facebook profiles are perceived to portray identity, or ‘who you are’, through what is shown, and not shown. Although she is reluctant to observe her students’ profiles, we can also read her averseness to be-Friend students as an unwillingness to have her profile and behaviours observed by her students. She considers her personal profile page a ‘private’ space, which would be at risk if she Friended students. This highlights the tension when using SNS for educational engagement and personal networking. Risk discourses in the media have emphasised the risks for both students and teachers who post on SNS such as Facebook (Belch, 2011; Davies, M., & Lee, 2008; Timm & Duven, 2008). It is not only ‘strangers’ over the internet, but also closer acquaintances who may pose risks in terms of privacy breaches. A subject page allows Ms Jones to retain her profile privacy, and separates her personal Facebook presence from her students’ profile pages, thus separating audiences and maintaining multiple front-stage performances.

Simultaneously, the subject page structure replicates classroom teacher-student boundaries. Power differentials are clear in the set-up of the subject page, including ‘membership’, as Ms Jones as the administrator retains final control over matters involving the subject page. Students may voluntarily follow the page by Liking it, although Ms Jones regularly checks the followers list and deletes any students who are not taking that subject. Notably, Ms Jones allows teachers of other subjects, including those from other schools, as well as some of her ex-students and her interested friends to remain members. She explained that she allows other
adults who she considers interested in the subject to follow the page. However, school students who are not studying the subject are removed, as she explains:

I check the membership [followers] list and if the kids aren’t doing [subject] at school then I delete them. Um, I remove them. I’ve got teachers that are on that page - other [subject] teachers and that’s fine. . . . oh, and I’ve got one or two of my friends on it because they’re interested in [subject] and that’s okay. That doesn’t worry me. But what it has meant is that the kids can post questions and there’s other people that can answer if they want to, so it’s actually built a bit of a community as well.

The page fosters a subject-centric community, yet the students in the class have no control over who follows the page. The control for the page resides with Ms Jones, which replicates the classroom power dynamic. Nonetheless, to become a follower simply requires a Facebook user to Like the page. If Ms Jones blocks people who have Liked the page, this removes that person’s ability to comment and receive the posts on their profile pages. The blocked person is still able to observe page interactions, as Facebook pages are public and viewable by anyone, even without a Facebook account (if the page name is known). Therefore, Ms Jones is unable to control the invisible audience for the Facebook page.

Control over who may post, along with administrator privileges that allow offensive posts, and individuals, to be removed, affords Ms Jones control over the public performance of the class and, by inference, school identity(ies). These actions reinforce the power differentials between teacher and students. The students are performing for the greater public audience, as well as the school-centric audience of teacher and fellow students and Ms Jones positions the students as aware of what constitutes appropriate behaviour:

They know the expectations. They know that it’s like being out on a school trip or something like that. They’re in the public face and are representing, if you like, the school, so they know it has to be appropriate and if there is stuff up there that is inappropriate I’ll just delete it. Then I’ll delete them sometimes too [laughing]. They’re banned [laughs].

Given the public nature of the page, I was curious as to why Ms Jones had decided to start a ‘Page’ rather than a ‘Secret Group’, which would have allowed the membership and content to remain more private. Ms Jones explained that, at the time, groups were more difficult to set-up compared to pages, which was a key factor in her decision: “At the time there weren’t any secret groups of things and groups were a bit harder to create and I was just like ‘ohh, gawd I can’t be bothered with that’”. She notes that the page is easy to use as she has it linked to her Facebook account:
The [subject] page is via my own personal account. It’s not a separate account, but it’s actually easier if it’s through my account because then I do get the notifications and it comes through onto my [profile] page as well and things like that. The way that it’s all linked up makes it a lot easier.

Additionally, she notes that students are also able to manipulate their Facebook settings to receive notifications of activity on the subject page:

If they like the page then anything I put up to it goes onto the newsfeed and also they can do the whole mobile thing, activate it through mobile and all that sort of stuff and they can get everybody’s responses.

The Facebook page therefore offers the opportunity for Page participants to remain informed and in contact through any Facebook-connectible device, such as mobile phones. Although the set-up Ms Jones desired is now also possible with ‘Groups’ as well as ‘Pages’, the page allows a disconnect between her personal profile and her public page profile. As the page creator and administrator, Ms Jones posts on the page using the name of the page. Figure 5.1 below, shows a page as it appears to the administrator.

![Facebook Page Administrator](image)

**Figure 5.1:** Administrators Posting on a Facebook Page Use the ‘Name of the Page’. *(This page has been set-up on the author’s personal Facebook account as an example.)*

As Figure 5.1 shows, Ms Jones is able to post as two identities on Facebook: Ms Jones, and the ‘subject page’. As a result, her identity performance in one role is not overtly linked to her identity in the other role. She can maintain multiple front-stage performances (Goffman,
1959) and subject positions (Butler, 1990), and the page allows her to separate audiences from different contexts. Only those Friends she informs will be able to link her personal profile and page performances.

5.2 The Teacher’s Use of Facebook for Educational Purposes

One of the benefits of the control Ms Jones exerts over the Facebook page is that it provides what she believes is a safe learning community for the students. Unlike media-fuelled discourses, which posit SNS risk as one of ‘stranger-danger’, Ms Jones equates safety with the provision of a positive and emotionally safe environment. This reflects requirements that schools provide physically and emotionally safe positive learning environments for children (Ministry of Education, 2010) and further underscores the links between offline and online spaces. Through monitoring and deleting what she considers inappropriate posts, she is able to provide a site that models appropriate practice for an online learning community. She explains:

They can talk to each other and it’s a safe environment to do it because I’m just going to delete anything which is inappropriate [laughs]. So yeah, they’re good and they do use it appropriately. There have only been a couple of people that I’ve removed for inappropriate things, but they were friends of some of the girls.

Ms Jones also has clear expectations of the students and that they will behave appropriately on the school page:

None of [the subject students] have ever really been inappropriate . . . I think they respect it too much. They know that it’s actually really valuable. I don’t think they would ever do that. If they were to, then I would delete them, and then I would tell them why that’s happened. . . . They know what’s appropriate and what isn’t and that’s been instilled in them in classes as well. So they’re not going to abuse the privileges of that. They’re just not like that at all.

Ms Jones is aware that her students find the co-operative learning environment valuable. Through her expectations of appropriate behaviour, she anticipates the students will perform certain identities. She assumes competence and positions students as ‘good students’, who know the value of educational resources. She positions the Facebook page as beneficial while reiterating notions of student compliance to adult expectations, further positioning the students as compliant, ‘good students’.

The Year 13 participants also constructed themselves, and were positioned by Ms Jones, as leaders and ‘role models’, reflecting the discursive positioning which senior students are
subject to within schools. Ms Jones explains how the discursive positioning of the participants affects the younger students on the subject page:

Those Year 13s [take the responsibility of being role models seriously] and the Year 12s are starting to move into that now, because of course they’ll be taking over those roles next year. So, yeah, they do. The group that’s in there at the moment are really aware of that and they are very on to it kids. They know where they are going. They’ve got purpose and direction and trying to instil that across those year level boundaries is really important to them.

The participants have taken up the discourses of senior students and, as Ms Jones reports, are reproducing these through discursive practices of responsible Facebook users, which further serves to position the Year 12 students. The Facebook page, according to Ms Jones, provides a discursive space that encourages informal learning of social and leadership skills and provides a space for knowledge sharing. It offers a collaborative learning community where older students discursively construct and model appropriate online behaviours for younger students, reflecting the traditional school structure.

While Ms Jones had been following informative educational Facebook pages in her personal use of Facebook, she was unaware of other educational institutions using Facebook pages until after she had set up the subject page:

It wasn’t until after I had set it up that . . . a thing came through about would those people using Facebook in education, would they like to join a page and when I joined that page it became obvious to see that there were a whole lot of people, mostly in the USA, that have done it. There are some universities in the UK, like Liverpool and places like that, but it’s mostly American. But I don’t know whether they are using it necessarily for the same purposes that we do.

The formal use of Facebook for education is predominantly in University environments (Hew, 2011). For instance, Universities use SNS to provide learning and support communities (see for example, Madge, et al., 2009). Nonetheless, whilst detailed usage may vary, Ms Jones class is not unique in the way they use the Facebook page.

5.2.1 A Collaborative Learning Community

Due to class sizes, Ms Jones has merged several year levels on the one subject page. However, she explains this arrangement benefits the students, as this builds a community and allows older and ex-students to share knowledge with younger classes:

It means that the Year 11s, if they ask a question then the Year 12s and Year 13s have already done it and they can actually give them advice if they want to, though that’s something which they haven’t done too much of yet. But a number of my ex-students have actually given the Year 13s advice. So that’s
also sort of linking those kids into other areas and into other people and resources that they can use. And I really like that. I don’t think education is about holding something to yourself. It’s about sharing and making the most of what you’ve got.

From the above excerpt, we gain a sense of Ms Jones’ learning philosophy and her desire to foster an engagement with learning in her students. The Facebook page allows Ms Jones to create a subject-centric community that encourages participants to share their knowledge beyond the formal learning of the classroom. Indeed, several times during the interview, Ms Jones espouses a belief that learning transcends the school day:

Learning doesn’t stop when school stops and I think that’s really important that these kids - they’ll go off and they’ll do their sport or they’ll do their work or whatever and then they’ll go home and then they’ll start to do a bit of their research . . . and they have questions, and those questions often don’t really wait until the next day because they don’t write them down. But they’ll type them in and they send them off and even if I don’t get to them for a day or two at least the question is there and they’ve asked it and I can answer it.

The Facebook page therefore affords Ms Jones the ability to extend learning and knowledge-construction beyond the school gates, and beyond formal school hours. As she explains above, the students can ask questions as they arise, rather than waiting for the next class. The boundary between school and home blurs, for both teacher and students, as the class effectively gains extended teaching time through the Facebook page.

Nevertheless, colleagues who consider the prospect time intensive and an imposition in out-of-school hours have questioned Ms Jones’ decision to operate the Facebook page:

The reaction I get from a lot of teachers is [laughs] ‘why would you bother? It’s too much like hard work, and it’s your own time, and it’s your out-of-hours, dah dah dah’ and I’m just like ah well, you know, learning doesn’t just occur between 9 and 3 [laughs].

Despite her colleagues’ scepticism, Ms Jones reported finding the Facebook page easy to monitor as she is already working at home. Like many of her students, she has the Facebook page open in another tab as she works on the computer, which enables her to receive activity notifications for the page and promptly address any questions students may ask. Furthermore, an advantage of the Facebook page is that it does not require a specific geographic location for learning. It is accessible as long as there is internet access. For example, when Ms Jones was away from school she was able to check the Facebook page and answer students’ questions:

I was particularly bored at one meeting and I thought ‘oh stuff this’, so I went onto the site, because I had my laptop . . . and I had this whole raft of questions
from my level 2s that were about to hand in an assignment and so I just dealt with them there and then and I thought, I will have now, probably 95% if not 100% of those kids hand those assignments in, because I can deal with it and it’s during the holidays and it’s got to be handed in on the first day back. So . . . they all got their answers, they all understood what they were doing and they all handed it in. . . So it’s like why wouldn’t you do that? Why would you come back and on the first period of the first day back you’re dealing with all these kids, ‘daduhdaduhdaduhda’. It’s like nah. I don’t need that stress [laughs]. So it’s just easier to deal with it at the time. And you know what questions are like. If you have a question, you need to ask it and have an answer there and then if you can.

For Ms Jones, the Facebook page enables her to promptly deal with issues, enabling her students to have high completion and success rates for assignments. The avoided stress offsets any encroachment of her public teaching role into her out-of-school ‘private’ life. For Ms Jones, the important aspect is creating a learning community and fostering her students’ engagement with learning, as she clarifies:

No, I don’t find it onerous. It doesn’t worry me and it’s quite nice, because you can have a bit of a chat with them and have a bit of a laugh and they actually see you as not just the person at the front of the room or the person that’s wandering around trying to keep them under control or telling them to do more work, they can actually see you as a human being.

. . . So I don’t find that an imposition. It’s about the learning. It’s about the kids’ learning, and hopefully instilling that love of learning.

In the above excerpt, Ms Jones positions herself as a ‘good teacher’, fostering a love of learning. She provides an example of identity performance where she uses interactions to craft an identity beyond that of ‘the teacher’, encouraging students to see her as “a human being”, shifting the power relationships of the classroom, and attempting to reposition herself.

5.2.2 The Teacher’s Use of the Facebook Page

Ms Jones primarily uses the Facebook page to share information she feels her students may find helpful, such as links to extra resources, and to answer any questions her students pose about their work or subject-related material. During the time I observed the page, the main use of the page appeared to be students confirming homework tasks, and asking questions about assignments when they were having trouble. Using the Facebook page, the teacher could answer questions, provide guidance and links to resources for those who needed help, and post reminders about due dates for assignments. Additionally, other page members also shared knowledge of subject-related resources that they considered interesting. Ms Jones explained her use of the Facebook page:
You always do the reminders and things and I’ll let them know if I’m going into school during holidays and stuff like that in case they want to go in and ask questions or anything, particularly if they have assessments coming up. And yeah, it’s really just a place to put links out to things and to answer questions, set reminders and ‘head off to Moodle’, and ‘do this or that’ and homework stuff, but that’s really it yeah.

Nonetheless, interactivity on the Facebook page varies depending on the class cohort with some groups of students more active on Facebook, while some individual students may not be on Facebook at all. Ms Jones clarifies that use of the page is voluntary and students must make the decision whether to participate on Facebook, or rely on traditional methods of interaction with her. She therefore positions students as competent and capable of deciding which method of access suited them best, as she reiterated at several points during the interview:

> It’s there. They don’t have to join it. It’s just there if they want to they go for it. If they don’t or can’t, or whatever, then that’s their decision and I think you’ve got to respect that decision.

> . . . And they know that if they can’t get on to that, or if they’re not on it or whatever, then they’re going to have to make that other effort to catch me at some stage. I can’t force them to go on it [laughs].

Ms Jones respects the students’ right to decide to join the Facebook page, or not. Notably, when students join the page ‘followers list’, they do not necessarily actively participate. For example, Mary and Tintin reported only observing the page.

Perceptions of activity on the page are influenced by the size of the classes, and the number of individuals within each class participating on the page. Currently, Ms Jones notes there is a larger cohort of younger students on the subject page with about half actively participating:

> The Year 11s are quite vocal and they’re a very different group coming through . . . you get a few kids that are really into it and they tend to bring the others along. I think there are probably about 10 in that Year 11 group of 24 who are really active on the page, and the Year 12s I think there’s 16 in that group. I think they’re all on it, but you’ve probably only got 5 or 6 that are really asking things, but again that could change as we head into exams.

Of the Year 13 participants, Ms Jones noted that this cohort had been less active and more sporadic than previous years. Although unsure exactly why this was so, she believed it might be due to a number of factors, such as extra- and co-curricular activities, or perhaps deeper engagement with internal assessments and clarifying points in the classroom. She noted that while some used the Facebook page, a few students appeared to be absent from the page:
“some of them have used it. But a number of them I don’t think I’ve ever heard from”. However, she did not feel it was a confidence issue as she had been teaching the majority of the participants for several years. She noted that the participants tended to be more confident online:

Some of them I’ve taught now for four years, five years. They know that no question is a silly question and that anything is going to be answered. [Sporadic activity] could be that it’s in a public forum, but then there’s no comments anywhere on that page that would be derogatory toward what another student has asked. . . . Usually you find that they are more confident online than they are in the classroom, especially if you have other people in the classroom. But all of those girls, I don’t know that any of them would be lacking in confidence [laughs]. There are some quiet girls who tend to process and then will ask stuff after class, but, no, I don’t think there is anybody in there that would ever feel ughh about asking a question.

From the excerpt, we can surmise that Ms Jones feels the relationship between her and the students encourages participation on the Facebook page, as students can feel confident she will answer questions. She iterates the notion of a safe community as shown by the absence of derogatory comments, although it is unclear whether this is due to the page members’ posts or her actions as administrator in removing any inappropriate posts. Again, she discursively constructs the student participants, describing them as confident online, although she acknowledges the impact of audience upon identity performance in the classroom. This perceived confidence online, as opposed to the lesser confidence in front of others in the classroom, reinforces the perception of Facebook as privately public (Lange, 2007; Waskul, 1996). In this case, the page is public in that it allows connections with many others, and is accessible to a public audience. Yet it is also private in that limited identity information is shared. In each interaction, therefore, participants on the Facebook page juggle the tensions inherent in conceptions of online public and private spaces. Participation and sharing of information on the page, needs to be balanced against perceptions of the potential audience for interactions, even in what appears to be a private forum. As a result, some students may feel uncomfortable overtly participating on the Facebook page.

5.3 Student Use of Facebook for Educational Purposes

Student use of the Facebook page varied. Most students had been on Facebook for several years, though notably Mary and Anna had only recently reactivated their accounts after a hiatus. Anna reported she had taken a break from Facebook at her parents’ request after she was the focus of nasty comments on Facebook: “there were some dramas going on on Facebook and my parents didn’t want me to be involved in that”. Anna explained that she had
not overly missed the Facebook page for the few months she was away, as she was doing well in class and had no assessments due:

It was alright because I was kind of going well. Like I could understand it in class, but it’s helped going back onto it so I know what everyone’s up to as well. . . . and we didn’t really have an assessment around that time as well so it wasn’t busy until when I joined back.

Anna uses the Facebook page as a resource for her studies, which she can utilise as necessary. As she notes, activity on the page is less when there are no assessments.

Mary, on the other hand, had deactivated her account as she felt Facebook was impinging on her studies: “I’ve just found school more important and I realised that I needed to study to get university entrance instead of just being on Facebook all day”. Although she has since restarted her account, she uses Facebook less than she had been: “I was on it every day, but now that I’m more focussed on school I haven’t been able to go on every day, so I go on like every couple days”. We could read Mary’s statements here as self-positioning herself as a ‘good student’ and indicating she has taken-up discourses of Facebook as ‘time-wasting’. Several participants also mentioned that the time spent on Facebook could be a disadvantage. Jessica commented that “a lot of people spend far too long on Facebook. . . . I used to spend a lot of time doing nothing online and that’s really bad”. Tintin also appears to have taken-up discourses of Facebook as time-wasting, saying “it takes up time when you could be doing other things”.

In contrast, Anna was undecided about Facebook use. For instance, she describes how easy it is to be distracted by Facebook activity when working on the computer:

It’s definitely a big distraction for me when I’m trying to do an assignment on the computer. I end up going ‘oh I’ll just check my notifications’ and then I end up going on someone’s page and writing to them or chatting with someone, so definitely it distracts, but I guess it’s just about the person having self-control [laughs].

However, the page can also provide helpful reminders to continue with schoolwork. Anna explains:

At first, I was like ‘Oh! A school page’, but now that it’s got really common it’s now ‘oh a school page, that’s actually really helpful’ because when I’m being distracted with my work and on Facebook there’ll be like a [subject] notification and I’ll be ‘oh right, I’m meant to be doing that’ and then I check on the page and I’ll go back to doing my assignment.
Anna offers contradictory discourses of Facebook as distracting, yet helpful. Student identification of Facebook as time-wasting possibly reflects adultist discourses of SNS as distracting and frivolous. At the same time, Anna reflects Ms Jones’ discursive positioning of Facebook as positive. Anna’s suggestion that Facebook use is about self-control could represent a taking-up of the discursive practices surrounding the positioning of senior students as mature, self-directed ‘good students’, and capable of exhibiting control in Facebook use.

In the above excerpt, Anna articulates her initial surprise at using Facebook for schoolwork, but goes on to explain that she sees benefits now that she is used to the concept. Nonetheless, not all participants agreed with the use of Facebook by the class. Although Mary did follow the Facebook page, she had not actively participated as she felt there were better ways to use the internet for educational purposes. Mary was clear that she found the presence of teachers in a ‘social’ space difficult:

I think there could be better ways of using the internet for schoolwork rather than using Facebook. . . . I don’t think Facebook is for schoolwork, it’s more for socialising. . . . I haven’t written anything on the page, or commented on anything. . . . I just kind of find it awkward with the teachers on the Facebook and stuff. I’d rather do it face-to-face than over Facebook . . . and I don’t like want them to know what I get up to or anything.

Mary’s disquiet is fuelled by the blurred boundary between school and home that the subject Facebook page represents. As a result, Mary both reinforces and subverts the use of the Facebook page by the teacher. Like Ms Jones, Mary also wishes to maintain the boundary between teacher and pupils and keep front-stages separated. By Liking the page, Mary may stay informed about page activity through notifications on her newsfeed. Yet, she also resists posting on the page and thus offers resistance to a use of Facebook with which she disagrees.

Despite Mary’s views, most students described the Facebook page as a supportive community. Indeed, although Mary felt Facebook was more for socialising than schoolwork, other participants described the subject page community as having social aspects. For instance, Tintin appreciated that ex-students often answer questions and the opportunity this would provide for her cohort to stay connected with the teacher after they left school:

It’s like a community. It’s nice and when we leave we can still do stuff and still talk to Ms Jones. . . . It just has a nice feel. When people post they’re all like, ‘Hello. How’s it going?’ They’re all friendly and everyone knows each other.

Yet, I wondered whether other participants perhaps felt like Mary, that the learning community was an intrusion into their informal space. When I asked, most student
participants reported feeling the benefits outweighed any intrusion. For example, Jessica felt the page on Facebook was easier for students who are on Facebook regularly as they did not have to remember to check other sites:

> I actually really like it because it’s what we’re doing. It’s a lot easier and it’s just like, there, because we’re already using it. It’s not something you have to try and remember to go on all the time, and that’s what I find hard with Moodle. You’ve got to remember that you’ve got to go check it. And Facebook, I just think it’s a lot easier, and most people are on it, but if people aren’t on it then it’s a disadvantage for them I guess.

Tintin agreed that the page was beneficial, but noted that not all reminders were welcome:

> It’s nice, but sometimes when you have a project or something, and someone asks a question about it, and you’re trying to like have this bit of relaxing time and then you’re ‘oh god, now I’m going to worry about that!’ But most of the time it’s good if you don’t have something due, because it’s just kind of social half the time and it’s not just like boring old schoolwork.

Unlike Anna, who in an earlier excerpt reported that notifications from the subject page could be a positive reminder of schoolwork, Tintin finds the notifications can be intrusive at times. Anna and Tintin have differing perceptions of the affordances of the Facebook page, which offer “both opportunities and constraints” (Hammond, 2010, p. 217). Nevertheless, with the Facebook page, the teacher can ‘push’ information to the students, rather than the students having to seek the information on a different site such as Moodle. Additionally, the learning community that is created provides a sociable atmosphere and enables a transition between traditional classroom learning and online complementary learning (Muñoz & Towner, 2011).

### 5.3.1 The Students’ Use of the Facebook Page

From the interviews, it became clear that the students used Facebook for educational purposes both formally through the organised page, and informally amongst themselves. Student participants who used the subject page asked questions of Ms Jones and each other about assignments, homework and assessments. Observing the page, I noted that questions ranged from issues such as requests for gear lists for a class trip, clarifying what an assessment asked for, through to requests for help to find resources. Tintin’s description of her use of the page was typical of her classmates:

> [I use it] mostly for asking questions, like when I’ve got a problem with a project or homework—if I’m not sure what the homework is when I’m sick or something you can ask on that and if I don’t understand a question in a unit standard or an achievement standard or something then I can ask her.
Chapter Five: Using Facebook for Education

Primarily, students reported using the page to seek help or clarification to enable them to complete work successfully. Jane explained that she uses the page to check requirements for assignments and feels all senior classes should have Facebook pages:

> Just to see when assignments are due and then to ask her a question about it because everybody will want to know it, so you just post it instead of emailing her. And she’d just have to explain it to everybody again anyway. . . . I reckon all classes or all senior classes should have a Facebook page just for like assignments and stuff, because some teachers are really slack at reminding you, or giving you a good understanding. And it’s kind of what the page is used for.

Jane positions her questions as acceptable in the learning community as the answers also serve to inform others. She further positions her teachers as to blame for her need to ask questions, thus maintaining her identity as a good student. She reflects an assumption that others on the page will view her performance in the same light as they also will “want to know”.

Conversely, Tintin maintains her public performance in a different manner. She explained that sometimes she is embarrassed to ask some questions publicly, in case her peers judged her:

> I sometimes end up asking her through private message, because it’s just kind of weird [laughs] so yeah. . . . Like, if no one asks the question, they [the other students] could help me I guess, but then they’d probably just laugh at me because it’s probably a silly question [laughs].

I read Tintin’s description of asking questions on the page as ‘weird’ as an acknowledgement of the middle region on the public–private continuum, between the publically private classroom and the privately public page. Whereas Jane, in the previous excerpt, positions herself as agentic in remedying the teachers’ lack of clarity, Tintin appears to view her lack of information as personal and assumes other students will know what she does not. By asking questions of the teacher privately, Tintin seeks to maintain her front-stage identity as ‘capable student’ in the more public forum of the Facebook page where the questions, and thus her performance, remain permanently visible.

An awareness of the audience shapes interactions. For instance, the presence of the teacher on the page also influenced the language used by the student participants. All of those who used the Facebook page reported being more careful in their language use on the page, as opposed to their posts on their personal profiles. Maxine, for example, explained that she was conscious of the teacher’s presence when she posted on the subject page:

> I’m already conscious of the way I post on the page because I know Ms Jones is reading it and she’s a teacher so I would never be like, ‘oh this work is so crap’
or anything like that, yeah. So I just normally just write the way I would talk to her.

Mary explained that she also is more conscious of presentation on the subject page: “I’ve been more formal on the [subject] page than I would be like, with just my friends, and I wouldn’t use inappropriate language”. The language choices made by the participants reflect an awareness of the different audiences and thus performances required to maintain desired identities. As Maxine notes, “sometimes you do talk, like you joke completely with your friends and they [original emphasis] know you’re joking, but someone else might actually take it as serious”. Maxine appears to acknowledge the different identities and front-stage performances required in different contexts, for different audiences.

Presentation differences, however, are not restricted to the online environment. Kelly perhaps summed it up well, explaining that she sees the different presentations as a requirement of different settings. She feels this is following the appropriate expectations for each setting:

That’s just a reflection of like, life. Like I wouldn’t talk to a teacher in the same way I would talk to friends, or like I wouldn’t talk to people at my work the same way I talk to friends. Just because at school there’s a certain kind of level of responsibility that you have to show, and like at work I’m around a lot of young kids so I wouldn’t swear, where if I was talking to a friend in real life or on Facebook I would, as I’m far more comfortable with that. It’s not necessarily like a double standard, it’s just following how it is in real life I guess. . . . There’s a difference in the way you talk to a teacher and the way you talk to a friend so, you kind of just have to respect that difference and keep that line [laughs].

In the excerpt, we see Kelly’s acceptance and re-presentation of societal discourses of authority and power. She accepts that certain behaviours are expected toward authority figures, such as teachers and employers. She also positions herself as a responsible role model for younger children and re-presents the expectations of this identity.

Jane also positioned herself as a role model, acknowledging the presence of younger classes on the Facebook page. She explained that she behaves similarly on both the subject page and her personal profile:

Jane: I act the same, like I just don’t post anything immature or anything, yeah.

Keely: So what made you think about how you act online in terms of what you do and don’t post?

Jane: Umm, like being a role model because it’s not just for our class, it’s for all the [subject] students to ask things.
Jane then went on to explain that she maintains the same presentation as she has Friends who are present on both the subject page and her personal profile: “some of them do see it because I’m friends with them, so I kind have to keep up with it”. Jane has merged front-stages and therefore needs to present a consistent identity performance to audience members who are present across different contexts. This blended audience provides tensions for Jane in her identity performance and entails self-management to maintain a consistent presentation to her blended audience.

5.3.2 Informal Educational Uses of Facebook

The tensions caused by context collapse are heightened by students’ informal use of Facebook for educational purposes. Several students reported that they were members of Facebook groups formed for extra- or co-curricular activities. Groups for the prefects, the formal committee, and other extra-curricular clubs, were often initiated, and maintained by students. Some students belonged to groups that their sports team’s coach had started. Jessica was a member of several groups and explained that she did not join many:

I just join groups that are relevant, like my [sports] team has a group and that’s like reminders and because everyone’s on Facebook in my team it’s really good and our coach will post up like, ‘watch this link to learn this’ and stuff like that. So that’s really good. I’m not really involved in too many others just the prefects and the formal committee. . . . The head girls set up the prefects’ one and the formal committee one. The sports one was set up by our coach.

Jessica explained that groups were different to the subject page in that participation was by invitation: “it’s not a Like thing; you’ve got to be invited to join the group so it’s just like a private conversation”. Jessica’s description of her groups as a ‘private conversation’ illustrates the ambiguous conceptions of public and private. In these groups, interactions are perceived as moving to a more secluded front-stage. Groups are a privately public forum where interactions are shown to albeit a smaller public, yet intimate details of identity performance remain private through the use of profile privacy controls. Nevertheless, the blended audience contexts of these informal groups may influence identity presentations if Friends exert particular expectations of behaviour.

5.3.3 Non-Facebook Users

Although Mary and Anna had taken breaks from Facebook, Susan had never been a member of Facebook. She explained that non-participation was at her parents’ behest as they were concerned about security risks: “it started off as Dad’s idea because [of his work] and he’s aware of things like hacking, but then . . . it was more like Mum talking Dad’s ideas”. From
Susan’s statements, it appears that her parents have take-up discourses of risk for Facebook. Yet Susan resists these discourses at times. For instance, Susan was still able to view the subject page by searching the page name on Facebook, and at times used her friends’ profiles to view her cohort’s interactions on Facebook. As a result, Susan did not feel she was at a disadvantage by not participating on the Facebook page. She explained that her friends in the class kept her informed:

They [classmates] tell me stuff anyway. . . . Like, I can still see the page and see what people have been talking about and stuff like that and I don’t know, if I have just a question for her [the teacher] I’ll just email her. . . . She gives us her email address so we can email her whenever.

Additionally, Susan felt that Ms Jones kept them well informed in class so she could find out that way. If she did have a query, Susan’s classmates often wished to ask similar questions. I asked her if she had ever asked her friends to specifically post on her behalf and she explained that usually she discusses issues with her friends who then post:

I haven’t yet [original emphasis] but like, me and my friend will maybe discuss it or something and she’ll be like, ‘oh should I just ask her this’, or ‘oh I wonder if she got my assessment’, and I was like ‘oh yeah I wonder if she got mine’ and she was like ‘oh, I’ll just say it’, so I was like ‘okay’.

Susan is therefore able to compensate for her non-participation on Facebook through her friends who also interact on the page. She can also rely on personal email to Ms Jones to answer specific queries.

Jessica, who does use the page, agreed that using the Facebook page was not essential. As she noted:

If you don’t see something on the page it’s not life or death. Like she’ll [Ms Jones] put something up on the page and if you haven’t heard about it it’s not really a big issue. . . . But if it’s something really important you will get a text about it and somebody in the class will be like ‘did you hear we got an extension?’

Maxine, however, disagreed. She felt that, although classmates may keep her informed, Facebook use was beneficial for her. She explained:

I don’t think anyone’s really obligated to [use the page]. As long as you’re putting like a good amount of effort in the classroom that’s fine.. . . [But] if I wasn’t on Facebook then I wouldn’t be able to ask her questions all the time and I’d be disadvantaged compared to everybody else.

The importance of the page to students appears to reflect the affordances that students perceive Facebook to offer. For Susan and Jessica, the benefits of being informed are not
dependent upon personal Facebook use, although Susan, as a non-Facebook user is dependent upon classmates to participate and then inform her. For non-Facebook users there is an assumption that the information the teacher posts on Facebook is not essential and can be replaced through direct interactions in the classroom. As Maxine’s quote shows though, whether individual students are comfortable with this view can vary.

5.4 Why Facebook? What about Moodle?

One of the reasons that participation on the subject page is not essential is that the class also uses the educational software, Moodle. Given that Moodle is designed as an educational platform, it was notable that the class did not use available features, such as message boards, which could replicate the Facebook page. Instead, Ms Jones places documents from the class on Moodle and then uses Facebook to remind the students the notes are available. She explains,

I use it [Moodle] as a document repository basically. So any notes from classes, any PowerPoints, any slides, presentations, those sorts of things, essay questions, that sort of stuff, I’ll put up there. But, I mean Moodle has got a chat feature, but the kids don’t use it. So I’m like, why am I going to persevere with something they don’t use? Whereas I can dump all the stuff there and I know they can access it and it’s all over to them if they access it. If they don’t, well then be it on their own head. It’s not my problem. You know, they’re responsible enough to be able to go in and do the additional reading and stuff. But I can use Facebook to remind them to go to it and read the stuff and I know that they’ve got that because they’re on Facebook [laughs].

In the excerpt, Ms Jones positions the students as responsible and capable of exercising agency in their decisions regarding their learning. While it may be by choice that students do not use the chat features of Moodle, Ms Jones acknowledged there were difficulties in using the Moodle platform, both at school and offsite. She explains:

I try to tie the Facebook to Moodle. But the Moodle is so slow that it’s like nah. Even though the whole program’s up for Year 13s, and all the readings and all the presentations and all that sort of stuff, you know if they can log into it at home they’re really lucky. So at least on Facebook I can put up links and I can do those sorts of things and I know that they’re going to get it.

She perceived the access problem to be one of technical infrastructure as she explained:

For them [students] at home it’s often internet access. At school, it’s the server. . . at the moment the server is so slow it’s like you’re on dialup which is a frustration.

Ms Jones’ uses Moodle to replicate the written features of the course. She continues to use the Moodle platform, while acknowledging students may have difficulty accessing it. By utilising
Facebook to remind students of what is available on Moodle, Ms Jones relies on the self-
motivation of the individual students to follow through and access material.

In contrast, she appreciates the accessibility and popularity of Facebook for students. She
describes how students are constantly accessing Facebook, and that this influenced her
decision:

The kids know how to use Facebook. They’re constantly on Facebook. They’re
on it on their smartphones at interval and lunchtime, so why wouldn’t you use
it? Why introduce something that they’re going to go ‘pfft’ to?

Ms Jones therefore, perceives Facebook as offering greater ease of use for students regardless
of location. Notably, SNS use, including Facebook, is blocked on the school computers, but
the students confirmed Ms Jones’ perception that Facebook was easily accessible via other
devices. Although Ms Jones expects students to utilise Moodle, her use of Facebook
acknowledges its popularity with students. Indeed, she noted that, if Facebook offered
document storage, she would be likely to move the coursework there. However, she felt that
currently Facebook does not offer the same features as Moodle, as she explained:

You can’t upload PowerPoints and Microsoft word documents and things. You
can add stuff into the notes section, but that means copying and pasting
everything over and you lose all your formatting and stuff like that, so it doesn’t
quite have that same capability as that sort of repository that Moodle has. . . .
That ability to upload documents and things like that for educational sites
would be great, because it would mean that you could have the entire course up
there and the kids could access it. It doesn’t matter how they get it as long as
they get it [laughs].

For Ms Jones, the importance appears to lie in accessibility of information for the students,
rather than how they access it. The difficulty in posting larger files to Facebook dictates her
continuing use of Moodle for the class. I note here that, although Facebook does not offer a
direct way to upload files such as word documents, PDFs and PowerPoints to Facebook, there
are workarounds available that facilitate sharing. Teacher use of the differing platforms
therefore appears to be influenced by the perceived affordances of each.

The student participants also noted differing affordances for Moodle and Facebook. Kelly’s
response was typical when she explained the differences between the two:

Moodle is more for … like you can post actual files and stuff, like PowerPoint
and things like that. So if you’re sick, I’d be like ‘what did we do in class today’
and they’d be like ‘this PowerPoint and I’d go on and just check it out and copy
some notes because the files of what we actually did in class it’s probably
easier. But Facebook is just a good way of clarifying, like we said before and asking any quick questions or anything.

Like Ms Jones, the students consider Moodle an information repository, whereas Facebook offers an interactive component. It is possible difficulties of access are part of the reason students are less likely to utilise all the features of Moodle. As Anna notes, “Facebook is really helpful because you just ask questions on it and you get a reply like straight away”.

The perceived speed of response from the teacher, as well as the ease of access, underpinned student use of the two platforms. For instance, Jessica reiterated Ms Jones’ comments about Moodle’s accessibility. She described it as “clumsy to use” and explained that she therefore tends to access Moodle only if she is reminded:

It just takes like, forever to sign into Moodle, and you have to go pick a subject and pick a topic and it takes quite a while. . . . I don’t even really go on Moodle unless I’m told to. Like I won’t go on unless there’s a reading that you have to read on Moodle, then I’ll go on.

The technical difficulties in accessing Moodle affect the way the platform is used as Jessica illustrates. While Jessica still utilises the files deposited on Moodle, she confines her use to the necessities. This reflects the overall reported, and observed, use of the Facebook page on an ‘as required’ basis. The students exercise agency in their choices to use, or not, the educational resources of each platform. In doing so, they take up Ms Jones’ positioning of senior students as capable of making choices for their own educational purposes.

5.1 Summary

In this first findings chapter, I have outlined the way the teacher and the student participants have utilised Facebook as an educational resource. Ms Jones shares educational resources with students on the subject page with the aim of developing a safe, collaborative learning community that encourages “that love of learning”. This arose from Ms Jones’ strong beliefs that learning does not stop once students leave school at the end of the day. She is quick to note that monitoring the page is not overly time-intensive and affords her benefits in terms of higher completion rates from her students.

Similarly, students also report receiving benefits from the Facebook subject page. Senior students from Year 11 to year 13 utilise the page to ask questions, clarify points and receive help with finding resources for schoolwork. The older students, and ex-students, are positioned as role models and leaders, and discursively enact this by offering advice to
Chapter Five: Using Facebook for Education

younger students. Nonetheless, although the invisible audience observing cannot be controlled, Ms Jones, replicates the traditional authoritative discourses and power relationships of the classroom and controls the ability of Facebook users to participate on the public page.

For both students and teacher, the perceived benefits of the Facebook page outweighed the perceived constraints such as the inability to share large files easily. As a result, Moodle continued to be used by the teacher and students as a document repository, with Facebook used by the teacher to push students towards the Moodle platform. Thus, the perceived affordances of both platforms, Moodle and Facebook, structured how the class used them. The use of Moodle also allowed the non-Facebook users in the class to remain informed. At the beginning of this chapter, I shared a quote from Tintin, which clearly summarises the class’ educational use of Facebook and Moodle: “On Moodle you’ve just got access to a file that you might need, but on Facebook you can talk, and ask questions and help people”. Tintin’s response illustrates the differing affordances offered by each site and the construction of the collaborative learning community which Ms Jones aimed to achieve.

Nevertheless, while most students appreciated the affordances offered by the Facebook page, one student found it intrusive into what she considered a social space. There are tensions therefore in the use of SNS such as Facebook for educational purposes. The fluid nature of the public-private distinction renders Facebook both publically private and privately public. As a result, the teacher’s presence affects students’ actions and interactions on Facebook.

In the next chapter, I explore the ways in which the student participants utilise the different features and settings of Facebook to re-present their identities online. I will then draw the two findings chapters together in the final chapter, where I will discuss the potential impact of educational related use of Facebook on students’ negotiation of identity online.
Chapter Six: Negotiating Identity on Facebook

I think if someone went on my Facebook and became a Friend with me, they'd get the general gist of who I am, but they wouldn’t know me entirely, and that’s something that I think is good. (Maxine)

In the preceding chapter, I explored the way one teacher and her students are using Facebook for educational purposes. Notably, the perceived affordances of both Facebook and Moodle dictated the ways the teacher and students utilise the two platforms. In this chapter, I focus on the students and the way they negotiate their identity(ies) on Facebook. In doing so, I draw upon the interview responses from the student participants to explore the ways in which this group of young women employ the various means available through Facebook to craft and perform their digital identities.

As the visible aspect of Facebook, Facebook profiles and profile construction provides discursively constructed opportunities to share personal identifiers and expressions of taste as a representation of digital identity (boyd, 2008b; boyd & Ellison, 2007; Cover, 2012). Yet, identities are fluid and evolve over time, depending on different contexts and communities (Nairn, Higgin, & Sligo, 2012). Consequently, the self-descriptions of identity performances and the choices this group of students make about sharing further information within the generic Facebook structure, provide insights into the way these young women negotiate their online identity presentations. As senior students in their final year of schooling, these students are variously constructed as both children (girls) and adults (young women), straddling “the child-adult border” between school and work (Nairn, et al., 2012, p. 20). They occupy senior positions within the student body and are conscious of the responsibilities and expectations, which accompany their place within the school community. Many mentioned part-time jobs and leadership roles in various cultural and sporting clubs, as well as at school. Yet, these girls are also students, subject to parental and school control, which can limit and shape opportunities for identity performance. This chapter sets out to explore the various ways these girls perform identity on Facebook.

6.1 Facebook Presence and Discourses of Risk

Discourses of security and risk influenced the use of Facebook by the participants. However, these discourses are not evenly taken-up by individuals. While most participants have
Chapter Six: Negotiating Identity on Facebook

internalised media discourses of risk and adapted their security settings for their Facebook profiles, re-presenting ‘responsible’ identities, the degree to which this affected their behaviours and participation on Facebook varied.

6.1.1 Discourses of Risk and ‘Non-participation’ on SNS

One participant, Susan, rejected discourses of the connected net-generation and did not actively participate on SNS. Susan explained that she had respected her parents’ concerns by not participating on SNS. In respecting her parents’ reiterations of discourses of risk and information security surrounding SNS, Susan positions herself as the ‘good girl’ and exhibits an awareness of the potential audience for information shared on SNS:

Um, it started off like when I was little and there was like bebo and stuff and I was just like, mmm, no not really and then, dad didn’t want us to, like have our photos out there cos you can never really get them back or anything like that. And now it’s sort of like, yeah I might need it later and it is better to keep in contact with people, but also, if certain photos go up on line then you can’t get them back and then future employers like look at them and will be like ‘ooh maybe I shouldn’t employ her’ or something like that (laughs).

For Susan, the potential risks outweigh the potential benefits of Facebook participation. She acknowledges the inability to control the audience for digital data as well as the relative permanence of online information. Multiple readings of Susan’s non-participation on SNS are available. While we could read Susan’s non-participation as a reiteration of discourses of vulnerability and youth incompetence at protecting themselves, we can also read Susan’s acquiescence to the views of her parents, as a self-positioning as ‘the good girl’, where ‘good girl’ is a subject position discursively constructed through performances of socially acceptable femininity, including notions of compliance (Hey, 1997). Alternatively, Susan’s non-participation could reflect a resistance to peer pressure to be on SNS. By reporting her parents’ wishes, Susan gains an ‘acceptable’ reason to explain her position as a non-user of SNS.

Yet, the subject positions girls take-up can vary with contexts and peer grouping (Reay, 2001). At odds with her ‘good girl’ identity, Susan states a desire to participate on Facebook with her peers, thus resisting parental authority. Susan has access to Facebook through her friends, who let her use their Facebook profiles at times to view what is happening with her cohort. She admits she has considered joining Facebook this year: “I was considering it for like after exams because I thought maybe... cos there is a chance I could get addicted to it (laughs)”. For Susan, multiple identities are possible, and at times, contradictory. She is the
compliant ‘good girl’, the ‘semi-connected peer’ dabbling on SNS, and a member of the ‘net-generation’ through use of other digital and online technologies such as SMS texting, the school Moodle site, and YouTube. As such, Susan’s non-participation on Facebook, or other SNS, does not preclude her from participating online in other ways. Nonetheless, while tempted to participate on Facebook, Susan has also internalised adult-mediated discourses of Facebook as ‘distracting’ and ‘time-wasting’ which further shape a construction of SNS as dangerous to young people.

Despite Susan’s lack of an SNS profile, she cannot avoid a digital presence and her non-participation gives her less control over what is posted about her. She admits that controlling information involving her that others post online is difficult:

**Susan**: I think there’s quite a lot [of information about me]. There’s a lot of photos and stuff like that as well, but I was like (shrugs). . . . hopefully they wouldn’t mention my name or they wouldn’t like put my name into the photo or anything like that.

**Keely**: So how does that fit with the concerns you and your parents have about your information online?

**Susan**: I think it’s more like, um, personal information and your photo because then more people are more likely to be like, ‘ok that’s that person’, but if it’s just a photo then they might not know everything.

Susan identifies that it is the links between photographic information and personal identifying details such as her name that pose the greatest risk. Notably, if Susan did have a Facebook profile she would be able to utilise the security settings to control linking of her name to visual imagery, as well as being in a position to monitor her digital presence on others’ profiles. Ironically, a Facebook profile would thus enable Susan to better protect her digital identity and ensure she was less vulnerable to being positioned through others’ constructions and sharing of her information.

### 6.1.2 Discursively Constructed Participation and Information-sharing on Facebook

While Susan declined to participate on SNS, for those who did choose to participate on Facebook, the desire to maintain control of their digital information and digital identities was a consistent theme throughout the interviews. The participants varied in the amount of identifying details they shared, often reiterating discourses of risk and citing personal security as a reason.
Although none of the participants reported providing completely false details on their Facebook profiles, Jane admitted providing misleading information. She reports her decision to reveal only a partial name on Facebook was based on fears of identity theft:

I put my name up, but not my full name. Mainly because I’m real scared that somebody will steal my identity or something, and, um, I put like my information, but not like where I live or my address and stuff like that.

Facebook’s own account requirements state that, “Facebook is a community where people use their real identities. We require everyone to provide their real names, so you always know who you're connecting with” (Facebook, 2012a)\(^{13}\). The use of amended or partial names subverts Facebook’s imperatives, and allows the user to maintain some control over potential audience. By providing only a partial name, Jane’s profile will be more difficult to locate unless she, or someone in her network, has shared her Facebook identifier. Like Susan, Jane has taken-up societal discourses of risk and information security, and exhibits agentic control in attempting to protect her online information. In doing so, she performs a subject positioning as responsible young woman.

Like Jane, Tintin also only provides a partial name, leaving her middle name absent, although she claims this is not for security reasons:

Yeah my full name’s on there – well actually my middle name isn’t (laughs). . . . I don’t think there was an option for it (laughs). Yeah, and half the time I don’t know how to spell it (laughs). . . . I don’t worry too much about what information I put on because I know that it’s like, private to the people who I add and I know I only add people who I wouldn’t mind seeing the information.

Tintin’s statement of confidence in her Facebook security settings reinforces her placement in the net-generation and affirms her comfort using technology. Taken together with her control over her name as an identity marker, Tintin is asserting her ability to protect herself using Facebook’s settings. Tintin, like Jane, acknowledges discourses of risk, and exhibits agentic control to challenge discourses that position young people as in need of parental protection.

Facebook’s requirements for ‘authentic’ profiles and information did not always sit well with the participants who had taken-up discourses of risk and vulnerability whilst attempting to control their own identity presentation. Facebook’s discourses of open and accurate information sharing runs counter to societal discourses of risk promulgated by parents and

\(^{13}\) By March 21, 2013, Facebook had rewritten the Help pages. The emphasis on ‘real names’ had been removed, although the phrasing remained the same (Facebook, 2013).
media and this caused tensions for participants. For instance, Maxine stated her frustration with Facebook’s default security settings: “[Facebook] generally want you to have no privacy. That’s what kind of annoys me. They want everybody to be open, but they don’t understand that sometimes it’s really unsafe”. Facebook users therefore need to juggle multiple competing discourses. Subversion of the Facebook requirements allows young people to challenge not only Facebook’s own imperatives, but also discourses of parental control and youth vulnerability.

6.2 The Compulsory Public or ‘Privately Public’ Profile

Control over profile and information sharing on Facebook challenges Facebook’s desire for ‘authenticity’ and default open security settings. Once an individual chooses to join Facebook, the generic structure of the Facebook profile limits opportunity for identity expression through a limited profile design. Furthermore, Facebook deems that certain information must remain publically available (see Figure 6.1). Identifiers such as name and gender are compulsory, as are profile and cover photos. As noted earlier, Facebook requires ‘real’ names and declines those it considers may represent ‘fake’ profiles. Users may therefore find their ‘real’ name challenged and be required to prove their identity to Facebook.

![Compulsory Public Profile](image)

*Figure 6.1: The Compulsory Public Profile*

Although Facebook allows the user to choose to keep their gender choice ‘private’, gender expression is constructed as a binary, with users forced to choose between male or female when they create a profile. Furthermore, Facebook then uses gendered identifiers, which
provide overt cues to the user’s positioning. As Figure 6.2 shows, if the user does not upload a profile photo, the default generic profile picture provides gendered cues through hair shape. Additionally, Facebook uses gendered pronouns such as him/her on the profile page, which indicate the gender choice of the user even when they have chosen to keep this hidden.

![Figure 6.2: The Public Profile Page](image)

All the Facebook users in this study restricted the information that was publically available. For the most part, this consisted of publically sharing only the minimum allowed (name, gender, profile and cover photos), although Anna and Mary also located themselves geographically, thereby publically linking their digital embodiment to the physical. For Mary, the provision of her located town was acceptable, although she has limited any other available information because “I don’t want randoms stalking me” (Mary). The use of the word ‘stalking’ is an emotive one. It invokes imagery of unwanted surveillance and threat, in this case from ‘random’ strangers. Mary is clearly affected by discourses of risk and ‘stranger danger’, which have left her unwilling to reveal too many identifying details. Nonetheless, in providing her geographical location she is representing herself through contextual cues, which can provide a sense of community and belonging with Friends on her network who live in the same place.
Anna, on the other hand, elected to provide misinformation in her location details by providing a location from earlier in her life: “[it’s] just the city that I’m from. I don’t put like, right where I’m living right now”. Anna provides enough information for those that know her to distinguish her profile on Facebook, whilst serving to protect her current location. In doing so, Anna manages to both subvert and reconstruct to discourses of risk.

6.2.1 Showing Identity through Imagery

The control of online identity presentation is not confined to name disclosure and other “text-based descriptions” (Hancock & Toma, 2009, p. 368). As shown in Figure 6.1, profile and cover photo images are publically exhibited with no ability for Facebook users to restrict access. These photos are available for viewing by anybody with a Facebook profile. The choice of ‘which’ images are used to represent their user profile is therefore a core identity marker available to these young women. I asked student participants to describe their profile and cover photos to me in their own words. It was interesting to note that all the students had chosen to use photos, rather than avatars, to represent themselves.

Profile photos are a way of “showing, not telling” gender and identity cues (Hum et al., 2011, p. 1829). As a result of Facebook’s generic appearance, the only way to personalise the appearance of profile pages is through the choice of profile and cover photos. Most personal photos are not produced for publication and thus general public view (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010). However, the profile photo and cover photo on Facebook are chosen for public exposure and an uncontrolled variety of audiences. Hum et al. (2011) state that “as the Facebook profile photograph offers an important first attempt to construct one’s online identity, it is logical to assume that a significant amount of deliberate and conscious thought is put into offering this first important clue” (p. 1832). All the girls in this study were aware that Facebook profile and cover photos were compulsorily public.

Given the role of profile photos in providing identity cues, I asked the participants how they ensured their photos reflected the way they wanted to be seen. Kelly reinforces the importance of photographic representations online:

[To ensure that people see you the way you want to be seen] . . . You want to pick like nice pictures, like you wouldn’t pick ugly pictures of yourself. That’s just not how the online world works. You have to pick nice photos and stuff and if you change [your profile photo] and a whole bunch of people like it you’re kind of like ‘Oh yay! People like this photo’ or whatever . . . It’s not like it’s you. I guess it’s not you. It’s more like a reflection of you, or just like a part of
you, but it’s not necessarily all of you I guess, just because you have to be more guarded online. You have to be more careful.

Kelly restates the discourses of risk that appear to permeate every decision about online identity re-presentation. Kelly also acknowledges that the audience discursively constructs what is expected on Facebook, that ‘nice’ photos be shown. Audience feedback can indicate whether the chosen image reflects the audiences’ perception of the performed identity. Note that Kelly recognises that a photo is a reflection of only “a part of you”. What is not seen is what led up to the taking of the photo, the full context of the location, the decisions behind the posting of that image, the ‘tweaking’ of the image or the notions of friendship that underpin the process. To be the subject of the photo requires the invisible ‘other’ who holds the camera, who shares and ‘tags’ the image and who may host and control the image in their Facebook photo albums. Having photos uploaded and tagged can therefore be an indicator of popularity as part of the friendship group, and a validation of performed identity. Further validation of the identity re-presented in the image is provided as Friends acknowledge, Like, and comment on the shared photo.

6.2.2 Marking Transitional Moments in the Identity Process

Friends also endorse identity performances by being present as co-subjects in photographs. The inclusion of others in photos can provide textual cues as to the social status of the individual. Including friends in the profile picture encourages readings of the profile owner’s identity as social, and allows the profile owner to position herself with, and against, her friend’s performance (Walther, et al., 2008). When I asked the participants to describe their profile photos, many participants reported that the photo included friends, although in varied contexts.

Several participants had chosen to use photos from the recent school formal as profile pictures. For instance, Maxine had just changed her profile photo to an image of her and a friend from the school formal. She explained she did not regularly change her profile photo:

Like the one that I changed it to recently is from this year’s formal and that was a month or so ago, and the one that I had before that was from the same time.

---

14 Tagging involves adding a link to a status or photo which links to someone’s timeline. Depending on privacy settings, the linked item is then available to be viewed by that person, by Friends or Friends of Friends of both the ‘tagger’ and ‘taggee’, or even openly public. It is possible to adjust personal security and privacy settings to ensure items you are tagged in must be approved by you before being posted to timelines.
last year, but there are people that change their profile pictures like, at least once every three weeks, but I leave them there.

Similarly, Kelly had made use of photographs from the formal and had regularly changed her profile picture after the event in order to share all the images:

I was changing it like every day after formal; just because I had so many that I wanted to be there. But usually I’ll just change it like, if I went out to dinner for a friend’s birthday and they took some pictures there. So I’ll just change it whenever something pings up and if not I’ll probably just default back to a nice [photo] of me.

By sharing photographs from the school formal, Kelly and Maxine are able to share not only their participation in the event, but also strengthen ties with their Friends who were also present on the night. Photos of events such as the formal provide permanent nostalgic points of shared memories, strengthening friendship ties and reinforcing a sense of belonging (Neustaedter & Fedorovskaya, 2009). In addition, the school formal is often considered a major social ritual for senior students (Smith, L., 2012). School formals are a site where young women, and men, can perform adult subjectivities/identities (Smith, L., 2012). Kelly and Maxine are inviting others to join them in recognising the formal as a significant point in their lives. Furthermore, the choice of photos when one is presumably ‘seen at their best’ shares the image of the public, front-stage persona and poses this as the acceptable public identity. Through their presence in these shared moments captured on film, friends support and co-construct these identity performances.

SNS, such as Facebook, offer the chance to present “hoped-for, possible identities” (Zhao, et al., 2008, p. 211). The excerpts above show the difference between Maxine and Kelly’s identity performances. Maxine provides relatively static identity presentations because, unlike her peers, she did not change her profile picture often. In contrast, Kelly changes her profile pictures more frequently. While we could argue that reiteration of imagery from the school formal does provide a representation of a consistent subject positioning, Kelly acknowledges her profile photo changes often. Kelly had recently changed her profile picture from a photo at the school formal to a photo taken at a relative’s house because she liked the look of the photo:

I don’t really remember what it is at the moment. Oh no - I do remember - it’s just a picture of me at my cousin’s, like it’s just a nice picture in black and white and taken with a nice fancy camera, so, I just liked the picture.

We can read Kelly’s change to a photo taken at a family member’s house as also providing a nostalgic point and creating a sense of belonging with a different subset of Friends and a
different audience, by strengthening ties with family members who will recognise and appreciate the context.

6.2.3 Hiding in Plain Sight
Unlike the four participants who used photos from the formal, several participants had chosen different re-presentations of themselves with friends. Anna explains she and a friend posed for a photo where “it’s just me and my friend doing this weird bit at a sporting event. We were just stopping to take a photo, so it’s a bit blurry (laughs)”. In Anna’s photo, the contextual cues of a sporting event serve to constitute Anna and her friend as social, active, and sporty girls. Photographic cues such as ‘blurriness’, which is often associated with movement in imagery, support and reinforce these readings.

Mary, on the other hand, has chosen to use a posed photo that shows her and a friend pulling faces: “the one I’ve got right now is of me and my best friend. Um, we look like we’re in pain while we’re making funny faces (laughs)”. Like Anna, Mary’s chosen photo reinforces a reading of Mary as social. It also pre-empts and subverts negative readings of Mary’s facial expressions by presenting an overtly humorous performance. Furthermore, the choice of humorous poses, serves to constitute Anna and Mary as fun-loving, happy, carefree and confident.

Profile pictures may provide visual cues, and at the same time hide, or mask, the face and other expressive cues of the individual, thus allowing the profile owner to hide in plain sight. From the above excerpts, we could read both Anna and Mary as utilising masking techniques in their profile photos, through blurring, or humorous subversion. However, one participant, Tintin, is currently using an historic photo, which allows her to also hide in plain sight. Thus, she subverts Facebook discourses of ‘real’ profile representations by not providing an up-to-date re-presentation: “it’s kind of a young me, and I’m not even facing the camera”. The choice of an historic photo also invites the viewer into a nostalgic moment. While this choice potentially provides visual cues to Tintin’s younger identity, the presentation offered does not necessarily provide relevant contextual cues to current subject positions.

6.2.4 The Solo Performance
Using photos of individuals removes the possibility the audience may be influenced by other subjects in the photo. Jane and Emma have both chosen current photos of themselves alone as profile photos. Emma’s photo is a posed headshot, which also serves to minimise other
identity cues from photographic props and settings. In comparison, Jane’s photo is a casual shot taken by her friends while she was taking part in a cultural activity. She explains she chose that photo “because it’s me”, reflecting the kind of person she felt she was, “out there, and all like into my culture and stuff, so that’s pretty much what my photos are”. For Jane, the visual cues reinforce her positioning as extroverted and a ‘capable performer’ reflecting her desire to present a digital identity that reflects her offline identity. By using a photo taken by friends, Jane is negotiating and co-constructing a representation to a mixed audience which includes anchored offline contacts who are present in other contexts of her life (Zhao, et al., 2008).

6.2.5 Cover Photos

When I asked participants about their profile photos, I also asked about cover photos. Cover photos are the large images that act as a banner (behind your profile picture) across the top of your timeline (see Figure 6.2). According to the Facebook Help Centre, cover photos are “your chance to feature a unique image that represents who you are or what you care about” (Facebook, 2012c). Most participants reported the use of landscape photos although two participants included subjects in their photos. For instance, Mary used a non-identifiable photo of her and a friend. The image was of their torsos only, and Mary described it as artistic “because it looks quite cool”. However, Mary was quick to inform me that “we’re not showing cleavage or anything!”. Mary’s choice of the cropped torso imagery both reveals, and masks, representations of her physical embodiment, as it was unclear which body was hers. In explaining that there is no cleavage shown, Mary positions herself as ‘nice girl’, a subject position that will not be challenged by her cover photo choice. Notably, as discussed earlier (see Section 6.2.3), Mary also masked her physical presentation in her profile photo through “making funny faces”. This suggests Mary seeks to protect her re-presentation on Facebook, ‘hiding in plain sight’ in both photographs.

Only one participant reported using a cover photo with other identifiable subjects present. Jessica had chosen a picture of her sports team as a cover photo. This choice promotes a reading of Jessica’s subject positioning as active and provides cues to her interests, as well as furthering a sense of belonging. Just as another subject in the photo provides tacit validation of an identity performance, the multiple subjects of the sports team validate and serve to constitute Jessica’s ‘sporty girl’ identity. Nevertheless, landscape photos may still provide contextual cues for those who know the geographic region of the profile owner.
6.3 Behind the Compulsory Public Profile: The Publically Private

So far I have looked at the ways this group of young women have re-presented themselves through choices over information which is compulsorily ‘public’ on the Facebook profile. However, identity re-presentation does not stop with the minimum profile details. Identity work continues through the selection of taste and interest indicators, the textual cues of status updates, comments and ‘Likes’, through the negotiation of network dynamics, and through the linking with both their own and others’ photo albums (See Figure 6.3).

![Figure 6.3: The Extended Facebook Profile](image)

6.3.1 Controlling Image Re-Presentation

The reflection of self in photos was important to this group of young women. All espoused the desire to avoid, and indeed forbid, ‘bad’ photos to be associated with their profile identity. When I asked what might constitute a ‘bad’ photo, the participants initially struggled to explain, with Mary describing them as “just ones that don’t look nice”. However, further conversation elicited fuller responses:

Mary: I don’t really know how to explain it, like just bad pictures in general (laughs). . . . and ones where you’ve got funny expressions on when you’re not doing it on purpose.

Tintin: oh I think if I was sneezing or something or either going [pulls face].
Jessica: like if you’re swimming or something, and you just look disgusting, or if you’ve been pulling a really stupid face and they took a photo of it. Yeah that sort of thing, the stuff that you don’t really want up there.

‘Bad’ photos therefore, were those that the girls were not comfortable sharing publically. Kelly had a specific example of a ‘bad’ photo of her that a Friend posted to Facebook:

Um, It was like a photo from [sport] like of us kinda – like when I’m in the boat I’m not that bothered because it’s usually from quite far away, but like afterwards and stuff – and it’s not just me. Everyone in [our sports team] is like, ‘get the camera away from me right now’, but um yeah, it wasn’t that bad… I was just like, take it off, it’s not great.

For Kelly, the photo from her sports team shared a re-presentation that would previously have been restricted to others also engaged in similar activities. The athlete’s ‘game face’ during practice, with the embodied characteristics of sweat and physical effort, contradicts notions of traditional femininity (Krane, Choi, Baird, Aimar, & Kauer, 2004). It is possible that, in resisting a portrayal (and possible public exposure) of engagement with sports, Kelly attempts to avoid being read as a non-conforming feminine subject.

Discourses of traditional femininity also appear to play a role in Emma’s definition of what constitutes a ‘bad’ photo:

umm if it’s like a big group [photo] and I just don’t like it of myself then I’ll just like, untag it. But if it was like, a frumpy one of me that they just put up, I would ask them to take it down, but I wouldn’t be mad if they left it up because if it was just a joke it would be fine.

From the above excerpt, it appears that while Emma is prepared to resist discourses of traditional femininity by at times appearing ‘frumpy’, she is unwilling to be seen to do so publically, unless it is clear that it is a joke and her ‘resistance’ need not be taken seriously.

In the above extract, Emma mentions she would ‘untag’ photos that she is not comfortable sharing. Untagging, or breaking the link to their profile, was a common solution used by the girls in response to ‘bad’ photos posted by others. Significantly, all the girls claimed that the majority of their online photos were uploaded by their Friends or family, and then ‘tagged’ with identifiers to link to their timeline and photo albums. Tintin’s reply was typical of those I received:

I don’t normally put new photos on of me, so it would have to be a photo that a friend tagged or something. . . . Really most of my photos would be ones that people have tagged of me that other people have taken.
At first I was surprised that the girls were not uploading and posting many photos of themselves, until I realised that, for the most part, the photos taken by the participants would place them in the role of photographer. Thus, the girls required their friends to be complicit in the construction of personal images. Shared construction went both ways, with the girls also tagging others in photos as Jane explains: “if it’s a good photo you’ll tag them [friends] in it so people can see”.

I was interested in the way these young women used photo tagging in identity construction. Emma and Jessica further explained tagging and the way profile owners negotiate control of their digital images:

**Emma:** Sometimes friends will tag pictures of me . . . but if I don’t like the picture or photo I was tagged in, I just untag it. Or you can still be tagged in it and have it just not come up on your page. It will just come up who you are on your friend’s page. Sometimes I tag my friends in my pictures, but they can delete them if they want and then if someone wants to tag themselves in one of my pictures they can tag it, but it won’t come up until I approve it.

**Jessica:** . . . most of the time if you just don’t like it [the photo], because it’s ugly of you or something like that, you can untag it and it only stays on their page. But if it’s something that you really don’t want anyone to see, like it can’t even be on Facebook then yeah, you can ask them ‘can you take that photo off, it’s disgusting’ or, well, I’ve never really had anyone that hasn’t taken it off. . . . I just untag anything I don’t like. Like I don’t mind having [the photos] on their page, but I just don’t want them on my page (laughs).

I was intrigued that Jessica talked about photos that were so bad they could not “even be on Facebook”. This implies that photos must be considered very ‘bad’ indeed, if they are to be untagged or removed from Facebook. Nonetheless, Jessica and Emma indicate that they feel comfortable addressing any ‘bad’ photos that may appear. They take control of their online image representation, dissociating their profile pages from self-identified mismatches of identity in order to control the potential for their audience to view those performances.

While tagging allows friends to co-construct and re-present identity performances, the discussion of ‘bad’ photos shows that the participants did not always agree with the way Friends represented them on Facebook. Sometimes that is due to different readings of embodiment as Jessica explains:

Most of the time you’re always a little bit harsh on yourself and say that’s a disgusting photo, but other people are like, no it’s fine. . . . yeah you’re more critical of yourself and everyone else is like, ‘nah it’s a fine photo’ and you think ‘I look gross in that photo!’
Photos allow the body to be read as a text and present gender as an embodied performance (Renew, 1996). This quote from Jessica illustrates how women internalise societal pressures to re-present an idealised self. On Facebook, these representations are mediated through Friends who are collaborating in identity development, and providing a negotiated ‘truth’ (Mallan & Giardina, 2009). Nevertheless, attempting to control image representations can have repercussions.

### 6.3.2 The Repercussions of Attempts to Control Image Representations

Maxine expanded on the consequences of attempting to control photos posted online. For instance, Maxine found that requests to remove photos were not always well received by Friends:

I did [ask] one friend like ‘please please can you [remove that photo]’ and then like the next week she was really quiet and you could tell she was really bothered that she had to go out of her way to delete photos - which kind of just annoys me even more because technically you’re uploading a photo of me so I have the right to say to take it down. But that doesn’t happen in Friendworld you know, it’s a lot different. . . . I realised that if I continued to ask people to delete pictures it would just actually affect my friendships in real life because they’d be like ‘oh why is Maxine being so nit-picky’ and blah blah blah like that, you know. So now, I just untag myself and I ignore that that picture’s even online.

Maxine’s use of the term ‘Friendworld’ encompasses the unspoken rules and discourses of friendship on Facebook. Asking a Facebook Friend to remove a photo is a public statement of disagreement with that Friend’s reading and re-presentation of your identity. It is clear that Maxine feels an inability to control her Facebook image representation, as she further elucidates:

**Maxine:** I can untag those, but it does bother me that other people can see it, especially like, a really bad photo of me at the formal is on a girl’s profile . . . [and her friends] can all see that photo of me and she refuses to take it down now. So, it’s just move on, get over it, that photo is not there.

**Keely:** Can you report it to Facebook?

**Maxine:** I guess so, but that’s kind of like a serious thing to do if I did and people might talk about it, because… at this school most people are the sort of people that if something bad happens, just it’s that kiwi thing to just brush it off. So if you do report it, or if you like told a teacher, people would be like ‘whoa this person’s taking it way too seriously’. I have that so many times when I’m trying to stand up for myself, but then people just see it as me being aggressive and so now I’ve just given up.
Maxine feels frustrated at the way her attempts to control her online images are misread and resisted by others. One reading is that Maxine’s attempts to be assertive and protect her digital identity run counter to discourses of idealised femininity, which favour passive compliance, subservience, and avoidance of conflict (Renew, 1996). In this case, Maxine’s behaviour represents a non-conforming model of femininity, which her Friends challenge. Consequently, Maxine has complied with the social construct of femininity that her Friend group rewards.

An alternative reading takes note of Maxine’s description of “that kiwi thing”. Here Maxine appears to draw upon discourses of national identity to explain the reaction of others when she attempts to control her online representation. Braun (2008) outlines how her participants drew upon cultural characteristics to describe sexual behaviours. ‘Kiwis’, or New Zealanders, were characterised as possessing a laissez-faire, “she’ll be right” attitude which incorporates the belief that “we do not worry about things that can or do go wrong” (Braun, 2008, p. 1819). Braun notes that, “in such a ‘laid-back’ culture, responsibility and concern are potentially constructed as overcautious and the behaviour of someone ‘uptight’” (p. 1822). Maxine appears to feel her Friends challenge her non-conformance to the stereotypical ‘Kiwi’ characteristics, and construct her actions as signifying aggression. Thus, Maxine reports she has “given-up” her non-conforming behaviour, and appears resigned to representing the construct of national identity, and associated behaviours that her Friends group expects.

### 6.3.3 The Potential for Negative Readings of Performance

The participants noted that challenging others’ representation of your subject position risks being construed as ‘annoying’ or ‘attention-seeking’. Kelly explained that publically asking for a photo to be removed often garnered more attention:

> The worse thing is when people comment about bad photos of themselves and they’re like ‘TAKE THIS DOWN’ in capital letters and all it does is push it to the top of the newsfeed and then everyone sees it and I’m like, why not just do it quietly and it will be gone.

The behaviour Kelly describes could be read multiple ways. By publically requesting a photo removal, the individual invites others in the network to actively engage in identity co-construction and reject or validate the re-presentation offered. Alternatively, there is a risk of others reading this behaviour as attention-seeking.
6.3.3.1 Attention-seeking Behaviours

There was general antipathy among the interviewees to behaviours construed as attention seeking on Facebook. The student participants described two main types of attention-seeking behaviours: that of the ‘excessive Friend-er’; and that of the ‘melodramatic poster’. Surprisingly, excessive adding of Friends was seen as a lack of commitment to safety rather than an indication of popularity as Maxine explains:

If you do have over 1000 friends then people know that you’re the sort of person that just accepts anybody and there are a few of those people on Facebook. . . . It’s like not really caring about your safety at all if you’re just accepting randoms, especially people who accept other people from different countries. Like you see it sometimes and you’re just like ‘why? What are you doing?’ . . . ‘you don’t know that person. I know you don’t know that person’.

Maxine’s statement was typical of the participants’ attitudes. Membership of SNS, such as Facebook, implies subscription to discourses of connected networks, yet the strength of the risk discourse in society means that international Friending has come to be read as risky behaviour. Maxine’s comments illustrate the societal pressures placed on those who perform counter to dominant discourses.

6.3.3.2 Melodramatic Performances

Discourses of risk also influence views of what constitutes acceptable behaviour and posts on Facebook. On Facebook, the concepts of public and private are blurred. Basic profile information is compulsorily public and access is unlimited, yet profile owners can be privately public (Gal, 2002) by limiting or subverting identity presentation. On the other hand, access to the extended Facebook profile is controllable through judicious use of account settings. Users can connect and co-construct identity in a shared network, but may also control aspects of identity presentation through their interactions and behaviours. In the following excerpt, Kelly is iterating notions of public and private behaviour as she discusses behaviours that become annoying on Facebook:

. . . like posting statuses that are obviously meant to get people to comment and stuff, like ‘oh, so and so said’ . . . They won’t mention the name of the person of course, because then everyone’s got to ask ‘who are you talking about?’ and that’s what they want. That’s the point. It’s attention-seeking.

I’ve seen bad fights on Facebook . . . and I was thinking, ‘do you not understand everyone can see this? I don’t even know you that well and I can read everything about what’s happening right now’. And it’s like, ‘moderate yourself a little bit’. Especially since I’m a big believer in the fact that if something is online you can’t ever get it back. Because it’s out there forever and you can delete it, but somehow, somewhere, there could still be a copy, or
you know how you can print screens and all that… you’ve got to be so conscious of everything.

Kelly’s comments were typical of those from the other participants. Kelly distances herself from an ‘attention-seeking’ identity and recognises the permanent nature of digital information. Overall, participants derided ‘melodramatic posters’ and the posting of ‘dramas’ on Facebook, with comments that these sorts of posts should be kept more private. The participants recognise that identity is performed; not only through what you do, but also through what you are seen as not doing. This was reinforced by those who noted that attention-seeking behaviour “happens more in the younger age groups” (Jessica), thus positioning themselves as ‘mature’ and ‘responsible’.

6.3.4 ‘Friending’ and Identity Performance

While the participants found attention-seeking ‘melodramatic’ behaviours annoying, they varied in the way they chose to address this. For instance, Anna tries to ignore such posts, but admits, “then I end up reading it and I end up trying to figure out who it’s about”. Maxine, on the other hand, chooses to remain Friends, yet ‘unsubscribe’ from posts by these Friends as a way of controlling what she reads, “. . . especially if they’re having little rants on their Facebook page all the time”. Most participants were reluctant to take the ultimate step of ‘de-friending’ somebody. Maxine is reluctant to defriend people on Facebook because she does not want to create more drama:

I’ve never de-Friended somebody. I have people even still on my friend list that I genuinely really don’t like and I’ve had massive arguments with . . . probably because I don’t want to, you know, create even more drama. . . . But I would probably de-Friend someone if I hadn’t seen them in ages.

Similarly, Emma believes that de-Friending should only be used as a last resort and had been de-Friended herself:

[After our fight] she like deleted me so we weren’t friends anymore, but no one does that now because it’s immature to do that. Well I think it is, unless it’s something really serious. . . . [Because] you can change friend settings so that they become an acquaintance, so their stuff doesn’t come up on your home page as much. I’ve done that to a few people that I just know a little bit and that I don’t really care about seeing their stuff. But if someone was posting stuff about me, like saying stuff about me, then probably I would like delete them as a friend.

De-Friending challenges normative assumptions about the conduct of friendship. The above excerpt from Emma shows she positions herself as ‘mature’ through non-action, that is, by not de-Friending others. Instead, Maxine and Emma show a preference to use the affordances
offered by Facebook as a way of controlling postings from others on their profile pages. Through profile construction, selection of linked imagery and careful use of status updates, Emma and Maxine avoid the act of de-Friending, thus, maintaining their identities as online Friends and reconstructing the normative discourses of friendship.

### 6.4 Performative Interactions

Status updates and communicative interactions are performative actions. Anna, for instance, describes posting to encourage her sports team members and Friends:

> Lately for one group I’m like ‘oh great job girls’. Or if like an event happens I’ll just be like, ‘everyone did awesome’. I put like more encouraging statuses, like ‘if you’re having a bad day, don’t worry, smile’ . . . I just post sometimes on my page and then I go onto our group page and write it again.

Such posts allow Anna to position herself as a supportive leader and friend. These supportive comments reinforce a positioning of Anna as caring, mature and responsible, which strengthen Anna’s identity as a leader.

#### 6.4.1 Infrequent Posting

Other participants did not post often. Kelly described the changes in her posting behaviours:

> I used to be a really obnoxious poster of like everything. Like ‘OMG, had a good day today LOL LOL LOL’ or like really stupid stuff, but now I don’t actually post status updates that often. . . . I only post statuses if I’ve got something actually meaningful to say just because [laughs] like, it gets obnoxious.

Kelly shows an awareness of the unspoken ‘community guidelines’ of Facebook, which position excessive behaviours as ‘attention-seeking’. Her changed behaviours reflect an awareness of the invisible audience for her posts and the possibility of being read as ‘attention-seeking’.

Mary is also concerned at being read as ‘attention-seeking’. She had not posted in almost a year: “the last time I posted a status was ten months ago, like after my birthday party then I just thanked everyone for coming”. Mary explains why:

> because I don’t want to be one of those annoying people who always posts statuses, or like, just ones that no one cares about or anything. And I don’t want them to know heaps about me that they don’t need to know.

Mary thus controls her status posts to avoid being read as ‘attention-seeking’, and as a form of privacy control. She acknowledges that the potential audience for her posts was a factor:
“when I post stuff, I like, think about would I mind if the whole world knew because there’s heaps of ways randoms can find out”. Again, the use of ‘randoms’ acknowledges the potential for the unknown invisible audience to observe identity performance.

6.4.2 Sharing as a Performance

The potential audience was a factor in Jane’s decisions about what to share on her profile. Jane explained that she would not discuss “private life stuff” on Facebook, because “some people don’t need to know”. Other topics were discussed with Friends using personal communications such as Facebook chat and messaging features. Jane explained that messages were better than status updates for conversations with Friends, because “it clogs up your Wall and then other people can see what you’re talking about so then some people join in when they’re not really wanted to.” Messaging and Chat features are therefore a way for Jane and her Friends keep conversations private and between members of a known audience.

While keeping some topics ‘private’, Jane also uses Facebook to keep her extended family informed and involved in her life. Consequently, she posts frequently as she explains:

[about] how I’m feeling if it’s a good day, what my [immediate] family’s doing or I’ll post status updates to let my [extended] family know what we’re doing, and . . . just like opinions on politics . . . just like everyday topics really that you talk about outside of social networking.

Jane’s status posts emphasise the importance of sharing as a way of becoming, and remaining connected with extended family. She has positioned herself as an informant on the everyday happenings of her immediate family, which challenges discourses of childhood and the positioning of young people as less informed and less powerful. Furthermore, topics such as political discussions inform a reading of Jane as politically aware, mature, and further support her positioning as young adult.

6.4.3 Inviting Validation of Identity Performance

Any changes to the Facebook profile, such as changes to profile imagery, or the posting of photographic, written or linked updates, invites commentary from Friends. As Kelly notes:

If you post on Facebook directly to someone’s wall then you’re eliciting a response from them. . . . Because you are being yourself to a certain extent, the community is mirroring your social interactions in real life and if those are strong then it will be on Facebook as well.

Kelly acknowledges that using Facebook invites attention and feedback on enactments of identity. She also acknowledges that Facebook profiles reflect only what the profile owner has
chosen to reveal. Notably, Kelly’s reading of Facebook reiterates the ambiguous notion of online spaces as distinct from offline “real life” spaces (Sunden, 2003), yet simultaneously echoes how offline characteristics are replicated online (boyd, 2008a; Valentine & Holloway, 2002). For Kelly, Facebook is distinct, yet reflects her offline life. Through inviting commentary from Friends, profile owners can gain validation of their identities and indications of their popularity both online and offline.

The participants tended to comment that feedback on posts was not overly important, although Anna was typical when she stated: “but I like it when people *Like* my status”. On the one hand, Anna claims she does not require validation, and on the other, she appreciates validation:

```
 if no one likes it [a post] then ‘remove’ [laughs] . . . I’m like ‘okay no one liked that status’ [laughs] and I’ll just put another one up or something.
```

Posts that have not received validation challenge discourses of popularity. By removing those posts, Anna is able to maintain a performance of ‘popular’ with only validated posts remaining on her timeline for Friends to view. Through removing, then posting anew, Anna is able to experiment with acceptable performances that will draw a positive response.

### 6.5 Summary

Identity performance and re-presentation on Facebook requires the Facebook user to make choices about what information to reveal, or not reveal. At the beginning of the chapter, I shared a quote from Maxine, which acknowledges the limited representations shown through Facebook profiles. As Maxine notes, her Facebook Friends may gain some understanding of her digital identity, and she is comfortable with the limited presentations Facebook allows. The decisions Maxine makes as to which information to share, and to whom, controls aspects of her identity performance for her online Friends. For the participants, discourses of risk permeated their Facebook experiences and the performative decisions they made. Control of their digital identity was important and shown through the careful steps the girls took to control the data linked to their profiles on Facebook. While status posts and other updates on their Timeline/Profile page could be controlled, it was more difficult to control what others posted.

The girls in this study used Facebook’s technical affordances, such as untagging, to remove links to their profile pages when Friends posted ‘bad’ photos. However, they seemed reluctant to risk challenging discourses of friendship by directly insisting ‘bad’ photos were removed
from the site. Consequently, ‘bad’ photos may remain on Facebook even though the tag, or public link to the personal profile page has been removed. The unlinked photos, when not publically acknowledged, are still visible on the Friend’s page and can hold hidden meaning for close friends who know the person and the story behind the image.

As the participants construct and develop their compulsorily public and restricted profiles, they are living with the notion that, whether active online or not, their profile creates a temporally fixed “identity reference point” (McMillin, 2009, p. 185) by which others can judge future identity performances. Consequently, there is pressure on the participants to continuously adapt and control their online identity presentation. Perhaps this is why the participants either limit data on Facebook, or keep their data protected with security settings. Students use the security and privacy measures to protect themselves against identity theft or physical harm. I suggest that security and privacy measures are equally important in protecting the individual’s performance of identity.
Chapter Seven: The Finale

So what does the educational use of Facebook mean for student identity negotiation? Reflecting Goffman’s dramaturgical metaphor, I offer here the finale to this thesis, the last act in this research study. This final chapter brings together the two previous findings chapters. In Chapter Five, I outlined the way this class is utilising Facebook to create an online learning community. Students use the page to seek information, clarify points and gain help from the teacher and other ‘members’ of the page. In Chapter Six, I outlined the way these students craft and perform identity on Facebook, through selective use of privacy and security settings, through their interactions, and through choices of which information to reveal. In this chapter, I outline the key findings from my research in light of my research questions. I discuss the implications of using online SNS, such as Facebook, to expand the learning environment. I then identify further research opportunities before offering my concluding thoughts.

7.1 Using Facebook in an Educational Setting

When I began this research, I wondered why teachers used the publically available Facebook platform instead of the mediated, educational Moodle platform. I was curious as to what affordances the teacher and students felt Facebook offered that Moodle did not. Furthermore, I wanted to know if Facebook had replaced Moodle as an online learning environment. I also wanted to understand why students participated, or chose not to participate on the class’ Facebook page. In the following sub-sections, I address these questions and the implications that arise from the educational use of Facebook.

7.1.1 Perceived Affordances Dictating Use

Facebook was not developed for educational use. Yet, the participating class used Facebook even though the school offered the Moodle platform as a Learning Management System (LMS). For this class, it was not a case of either/or, but in fact both platforms that were being utilised, with the use of each defined by the perceived affordances they seemed to offer. Johnson, et al., (2011) report that many schools feel technical infrastructure issues prevent students from accessing LMS from outside the school network. Similarly, my participants felt that resources on Moodle were difficult to access, even within the school network. In contrast, Facebook is seen as easier to access from a variety of devices, including phones. Given her critiques of Moodle’s accessibility, it was interesting that Ms Jones still used Moodle as well as the Facebook page. Ms Jones perceived there was an inability to place Word documents and PowerPoints on Facebook and this was her reason for continued use of Moodle as a
repository for these files. The perceived affordances, however, do not necessarily match the ‘reality’. At least one of the students disagreed with Ms Jones perception. Indeed, a quick internet search turned up several resources that showed how to place, or link, these files to Facebook. Nonetheless, Ms Jones was also correct in that to do so requires further manipulations of files to make this possible, as well as time and technical knowledge. In this case, Ms Jones’ perceptions drive the use of Moodle as a repository.

I question, however, who is acting, and who is reacting in advocating the educational use of Facebook. Is it the teacher’s or students’ discursive construction of these two platforms that has dictated use? I suggest that it is difficult to know whether Ms Jones’ use of Facebook and Moodle shaped the way students used these two platforms for learning, or whether she was reacting to the students’ previous ways of using these platforms. It is possible that the infrastructure and accessibility issues are some reasons that students, such as Jessica, did not fully take advantage of Moodle’s features. However, it is difficult to discern who has driven the use of Facebook as an online learning environment. Although Ms Jones states the Facebook page allowed her to circumvent Friend requests from students, if students were not already present on Facebook the issue would not have arisen. Many of the student participants were using Facebook for informal educational use such as co-curricular group activities and sports teams. Thus, there was already an acceptance of using Facebook for school-related activity by some members of the student cohort.

7.1.2 Risk, Collapsed Contexts and Blended Audiences

Goffman’s metaphor of stages, performances and identity presentations allows the ‘performer’ to recognise the audience observing the identity performance (Goffman, 1959). When I began this research, I thought of Facebook as consisting of front- and back-stages (Goffman, 1959). I now consider the publically private and privately public aspects of Facebook to be multiple front-stages where individuals perform to multiple audiences. This has implications for both students and teachers when using Facebook for educational purposes. For instance, Ms Jones felt that a subject-related page would allow her to maintain boundaries between her personal profile and her students. In this way, Ms Jones sought to maintain separate front-stage performances and thus, keep the audiences from different contexts distinct. She separates her dual digital identities, and in so doing, lessens the tensions inherent in performing her identity to multiple and merged audiences (Goffman, 1959).
On the other hand, students face tensions as they utilise one Facebook profile for both personal and educational use. They face collapsed contexts and blended audiences as they interact as multiple identities across multiple front-stages (Donath & boyd, 2004; Kendall, 2007; Marwick & boyd, 2011). For students, control of their identity performances for various Facebook audiences requires knowledge of, and judicious use of, the Facebook security and privacy settings. Like Holmes (2009), I found that my participants were cognisant of perceived threats and appeared comfortable with using the various settings to protect themselves. Nonetheless, the continuing development of Facebook ensures this is an on-going task. For instance, Facebook regularly modifies account features, which make it necessary to continually check and readjust account settings for maximum security.

Adultist and media discourses often construct Facebook, and other SNS, as a threat to personal security (Mesch, 2009). I am aware that in focussing on account settings I am potentially re-producing discourses of risk. Nonetheless, account settings play a key role in the separation of audiences and contexts and therefore student identity negotiation on Facebook. Student participants reported an awareness of discourses of risk with participants adapting their Facebook account settings (security and privacy settings) as one response. A commonly stated desire was to maintain control over their digital identities and information, as well as their personal security. While most participants acted by limiting the information shared publically, some deliberately subverted Facebook’s requirements. For instance, Jane provides an incomplete name to protect her from identity theft. As a result, she limits the chances of unknown audiences finding and observing her profile.

Goffman notes that audiences create expectations of public front-stage performances (1959). An awareness of audience thus shapes the students’ identity performances and negotiations on Facebook. The educational use of Facebook blends different social spaces and potentially different audiences. The subject page introduces the formal educational structure of the classroom to what is usually constructed as an informal space for young people. Although account settings allow the students to keep their publically private ‘extended profile’ (see Figure 6.3) separate from their subject page identity performance, their privately public profile and their performative interactions on the subject page still constitute an identity performance that may be read by others. Further tensions are created as audiences blend when users of a Facebook subject page are friends, Friends, and classmates. The collapsed contexts of Friends/friends/classmates constitute the overlapping middle region that blurs the boundaries between public and private (Ford, 2011, see Figure 7.1). Separating these
performances relies on an individual student’s knowledge of Facebook account settings and how to use these to selectively share their information. Moreover, the public status of the page provides opportunities for an invisible audience that is unknown to those posting on the page. For some users, an awareness of a potentially unknown audience may fuel discourses of risk and inhibit use of the page.

Figure 7.1: Revisiting the Public-Private as a Continuum.
Based on: Ford, S.M. (2011). Reconceptualising the public/private distinction in the age of information technology. Information, Communication & Society, 14 (4), 550-567. [See Figure 2.1 for the full diagram]

7.1.3 Power Relationships and the Learning Community
For this class, the teacher and most students discursively constructed the Facebook page as beneficial, ‘common-sense’ and a positive opportunity for a collaborative learning community. Nonetheless, I would suggest that the Facebook page does not fully reach this ideal. In society, power and knowledge are connected (Cazden, et al., 1996; Foucault, 2002). A collaborative learning community would suggest a flattening of hierarchical power relationships between teacher and students. Indeed, a collaborative learning system can empower students as it positions them as knowledgeable. Yet not all participants were able to exercise the same levels of power. Their relative knowledge and positioning within the education field, and the status these positions confer, differentiates the teacher and students (Cazden, et al., 1996). Their interactions on the page mimicked classroom interactions as the posts clarified points from class, were assignment-oriented, or involved sharing resources. The student participants recognised the power hierarchy, deferring to Ms Jones’ greater knowledge of topics. Although Ms Jones seeks to shift the power relationship and wishes to be seen as “a human being” rather than just teacher, she cannot step outside the discursive construction of her identity as ‘teacher’. Digital identities cannot be separated from their offline embodiments (Sunden, 2003). The hierarchy of power relations between teacher and students that are inherent in the school environment were replicated online. Indeed, in
exercising her power to maintain the page and control membership and content, Ms Jones reinforced her authoritative positioning as teacher.

Nonetheless, Ms Jones did not draw upon her authority as teacher to dictate participation on the class’ Facebook page. Instead, she constructed use of, and participation on, the Facebook page as voluntary and non-essential. Participation is therefore a ‘choice’ the students make, which positions students as self-motivated and self-directed learners. Some students similarly reiterated the view that use of the page was non-essential. Conversely, other students such as Mary and Tintin, felt the need to stay informed even when using the page felt like an imposition into their ‘private’, or Friends-only, front-stage space. These students therefore faced conflicting discourses and discursive positionings. Taking-up a position of ‘engaged, self-motivated learner’ created tensions as they also sought to maintain separation between their varying front-stage performances and multiple audiences (Goffman, 1959). From the research findings, it is difficult to assess why this is so. It may be possible that those students who viewed the subject page as an encroachment presented differing identities in different front-stage performances and therefore wanted to keep these performances more clearly separate to avoid challenges to their identity presentations. Alternatively, perhaps these students wished to keep their curriculum work framed within the constructs of the traditional educational structure of a school, such as face-to-face interactions within a classroom environment. Nevertheless, power differentials again come to the fore as students juggled competing front-stages, confined to one profile identity on Facebook, whereas their teacher was able to occupy two subject positions on Facebook, as ‘Ms Jones’ and as ‘subject page’. In doing so, Ms Jones manages to separate her audiences and identity performances by occupying multiple, but segregated front-stages.

Poststructuralism views language as shaping, and shaped by, discourses (St. Pierre, 2000). In posting on the Facebook page with the class’ ‘subject page’ name as an identity marker, Ms Jones reinforces discourses around her identity as a teacher and school representative. At the same time, the Facebook page does allow students to exhibit moments of agency in choosing whether to participate, or not. They write themselves into being through their interactions, perhaps in ways that challenge the dominant discursive constructions of teacher and student (Herring, 2007). For instance, students may share links and information and in those moments of agency, position themselves, not the teacher, as the disseminator of knowledge. As ‘senior students’, the participating students took-up the discursively allowable behaviours, such as mentorship and leadership that this positioning represented, which then allowed them to
exercise agency and power when choosing to respond to queries by younger students. Indeed, multiple discourses construct the participating students who occupy multiple subject positions and these discursive positions are fluid (Herring, 2007). In other words, the students exercised moments of agency, leading to brief shifts in power relationships.

7.1.4 What about the Non-Facebook Users?
Although Ms Jones espoused the discourse of the ‘connected teen’, that “they’re all on it”, not all the student participants were members of Facebook. There are differences between SNS users and this has implications for the SNS, or online LMS, that teachers choose to use. For instance, equitable access for all students is a concern and ideally mitigated where possible. Notably, several participants had moved away from, then back to using Facebook. Susan was one student who resisted the discursive positioning of Facebook and young people by Ms Jones. Instead, she re-presented her parents’ emphasis on risk discourses. She also resisted, subverted and challenged this construction through use of her friends’ Facebook profiles to access information about her cohort. Susan therefore offered glimpses of multiple context-dependent identities. She took-up, resisted and challenged risk discourses for different front-stage performances. By respecting her parents’ wishes, Susan positions herself, and is positioned, in opposition to normalising discursive constructions of ‘connected teens’ as Facebook users (Davies, B., 2000; St. Pierre, 2000). She takes-up instead, a ‘good girl’ identity. Nonetheless, Susan also resists the construction of Facebook as a threat, by using friends’ profiles to observe interactions between her friends. She also takes-up her peers’ discursive constructions of Facebook, as she considers joining Facebook to connect with friends after leaving school.

Young people who resist the normative discursive constructions of ‘teens’ may face sanctions from their peers (Jones, 1993). As a non-Facebook user, Susan avoided sanctions by conforming to the expectations of her peers that she will want to use Facebook. At the same time, her status as a non-Facebook user allows her to challenge peer discourses and position herself as obedient daughter. Susan thus attempts to juggle multiple subject positions and competing discursive constructions of Facebook by separating her front-stage performances and audiences. Furthermore, Susan exhibits agency in her choices of Facebook use. She is able to access the public subject page without ‘risking’ joining Facebook and positions herself as an observer of the Facebook page, rather than active Facebook participant. In doing so, Susan becomes part of the invisible audience of the class’ Facebook page. Likewise, her use of her friends’ Facebook profiles allows her to become the unknown audience for her friends’
online Friends’ identity performances. Class members, like Susan, who do not use Facebook, contribute to the potential and unknown audience that the Facebook-using participants must consider when performing identity online (Brooks-Young, 2010).

7.2 The Impact on the Students’ Identity Negotiations

The use of a Facebook page for education, and the subsequent blended audiences, holds implications for the students’ identity negotiations. An awareness of audience, or potential audience, and the social expectations that the audience members hold of each other shapes identity performance (Goffman, 1959). The acknowledged presence of the teacher and younger students influenced the behaviour of many of the participating students, who moderated their language and performances on the subject page. For some Facebook-using students, an awareness of audience may also lead to observational, rather than interactive, use. As such, these students likewise become part of the oft forgotten invisible audience observing others’ performative interactions (Brooks-Young, 2010).

Through experimentation and observation of other users, these young people are able to gain an understanding of the normative discourses of Facebook use. They may then act in ways that serve to re-present and reproduce these discourses through their own discursive practices. Actions and interactions are performative, and the collaborative construction of shared meanings created through interactions leads to negotiated and co-constructed identities (Goffman, 1967; Mallan & Giardina, 2009). Digital identity is crafted through performative acts, such as the choices made when constructing a profile on Facebook. On Facebook, profile construction provides opportunities for sharing of identity markers, such as personal identifying details, expressions of taste and culture, and representative imagery. Each choice is a performative act in the construction of identity. Furthermore, the SNS profile structure and provided fields construct the individual’s digital identity in the same way social discourses construct subject positions, by limiting options (Cover, 2012).

It can be argued that the online identity becomes a representation of the embodied identity in the offline world. The choice of imagery associated with the profile, as a profile picture, a cover photo, or acknowledged in photo albums and via identity tags, is one way of showing embodied identity. Images are a way of showing, rather than telling, identity cues (Hum, et al., 2011). The student participants were aware that their profile and cover photo images were public and thus chose these representations carefully. Their choice of imagery can be read as representing desired identities and subject positions (Goffman, 1959, 1967). While most
photographic representations may be controlled through account settings and untagging. Profile and cover photos are public on the individual Timeline. Notably, all the participants chose photos as profile pictures, even though it is possible to use avatars or alternative representative imagery. As the image that accompanies all posts and comments, the profile picture is the most prominent image representation of identity performance. Kelly, for instance, talked about profile photos as a selective reflection of identity and spoke of audience expectations surrounding the photos chosen.

Selected imagery as a representation, is therefore, discursively constructed by the audience who expect to be shown flattering portrayals, and also by the individual who desires to show a flattering image (Goffman, 1959, 1967). The audience then validates the selected identity by Liking and/or commenting positively on the picture (Goffman, 1959, 1967). The individual is subject to and subject of normalising discourses that construct particular ways of being for young people. For those students who chose photos that also included others, for example at the school formal, the inclusion of friends in photos indicates support for the portrayed identity, reinforcing the perceived ‘authenticity’ of the image. Alternatively, photos may also camouflge current identity cues through ‘masking’ poses such as facing away from the camera, or through photographic techniques, such as blurring of the image. For instance, Anna used a blurred sporting photo, and Tintin, an historic photo of herself as a child. Thus, some individuals may subvert discursive constructions of the profile photo as an ‘authentic representation’ of identity and hide in plain sight by providing imagery that does not necessarily indicate current subject positions.

Nonetheless, for students who portray alternative subject positions and re-present alternative discourses, there may be societal sanctions (Jones, 1993). Individuals therefore negotiate their identity performances subject to potential policing by their blended audience. For this participant group, behaviour on the Facebook page was mediated through discursive constructions of acceptable behaviour, both in the classroom and on Facebook. As members of the class know each other offline, they provide “anchored relationships” (Zhao, et al., 2008). As such, these classmates and the teacher are in a position to monitor and compare each other’s offline and online identity performances. Even if students segregate their personal profile from non-Friends on Facebook, the public status of the subject page means that the compulsory public aspects of their profile, as well as their performative interactions on the class page, are available to be read by a public audience. For those students who are
also online Friends with their classmates, there are further connections that require negotiated constructions of performances.

The tensions caused by a blended audience influence the use of the page. For instance, Mary draws on discourses of risk as an explanation for her infrequent posts. Yet we could also read infrequent posting as uncertainty over her ability to perform her identity in an ‘acceptable’ manner for her peers. Taken with Anna’s explanation of removing posts that receive no feedback, we can read these participants’ awareness of actions and interactions as performative indicators of identity. By limiting information, or even removing posts that have not been validated by Friends, these two participants control their online identity presentations to avoid negative readings by their audience. Similarly, while most students felt comfortable with public interactions, such as asking questions on the class’ Facebook page, some did not. For those students, like Tintin, who are concerned about her peers’ reading of her posts, asking questions on the page is difficult and she instead addresses questions directly to the teacher through private messaging. In this way, Tintin avoids a ‘public’ performance of identity online in front of her peers and any unknown audience and can maintain her desired identity(ies) in front of her friends (Goffman, 1959).

### 7.3 Implications

There are implications for students who are absent from a Facebook page used for educational purposes, or who restrict their interactions and position themselves as part of the invisible audience. These students are excluded from the interactive and potentially collaborative nature of the page. Therefore, teachers considering the use of Facebook should ideally think about the nature of the online forum they use for the classroom. While the public page does allow non-Facebook users to observe interactions, the potential for a wider public audience to also observe may constrain the online interactions of those students participating on Facebook. Educators wanting to use Facebook may therefore wish to consider alternative Facebook features. For instance, at the time of writing, Facebook Groups have a range of privacy settings that allow more audience control: postings and membership of Secret Groups are invisible except to group members, while postings to Closed Groups is available to members only, but membership is visible to the public.

By utilising the affordances offered through Facebook Groups, some students may be more comfortable in using the learning opportunities these learning communities provide. Nonetheless, there is a potential risk that, in populating the social space of young people,
educators may end up driving young people away from participating, rather than engaging them. For instance, Mary’s discomfort with what she saw as an intrusion by the school into a social space influenced her non-participation on the page (see Section 5.3). Educators therefore should consider how to address students’ concerns around potential surveillance of their activities. Although many students reported they were comfortable utilising Facebook’s account settings to limit access to their information, Facebook regularly changes these settings without warning users. As the students reported piecemeal education regarding internet safety since Year 9, it would be prudent that some discussion of security settings was conducted in classes planning an educational use of Facebook. Potentially, this may go some way towards a collaborative approach as teachers and students share their varying levels of knowledge. If the students are to feel comfortable with using, and thus performing identity on, the class page, there needs to be shared understandings between students and teachers over what can and cannot be seen of private profiles. Students and teachers need to be confident in their trust of their Facebook account settings and each other’s undertakings to respect boundaries. I would suggest that some thought should be given to a collaboratively constructed contract between all class members which details desired online behaviours. Although I acknowledge this may further support the traditional classroom power structures, the contract would be negotiated between, and provide a voice for, all members.

It seems difficult to conceive of a class-based educational page that can challenge power differentials. Based on this study, I would suggest that educators encourage a more collaborative approach by making the page, or group, administration more transparent. Students should be involved in decision-making over page rules and transgressions, and there should be open discussions of who can participate on, and observe, the forum. Open discussion may also allow teachers and students to consider extra resources required. Should some students be unable to, or choose not to, participate on the chosen platform, then the involvement of the whole class may allow for consideration of alternate possibilities that can provide equitable results for all students. One option may be that the teacher gains an exemption from school Facebook bans to provide Facebook access for all students via the school network. Providing access to Facebook would benefit all the students using the forum, including those who may otherwise have been excluded. Administrator rights, or use of a generic profile, would enable those students who are reluctant to create their own profiles, to have access to the interactive discussions, whilst providing some degree of anonymity in their online identity performances.
Chapter Seven: The Finale

Professional practice journals urge teachers to consider utilising SNS for educational purposes (Interface, 2013; Lepi, 2012; New Zealand Teachers Council, 2013) and there is increasing research on the use of SNS by tertiary providers (Hew, 2011; Madge, et al., 2009). However, the rapid progress of technological advances means it is difficult for educators’ professional development to keep pace. The result is that teachers, like Ms Jones, are discovering these learning opportunities for themselves. Consequently, there may be gaps in the knowledge of the teachers who are early adopters of technology. As Clark et al., (2009) found, teachers and students may perceive differing affordances for technologies. Hammond (2010) has also noted that perceived affordances dictate potential use. For teachers, a lack of relevant professional development to address any gaps in knowledge may therefore mean that the affordances of these platforms are not being maximised.

This study also suggests that teachers may need to consider how the online LMS is used. In using Social Networking Sites (SNS) as educational resources, teachers may position, as Ms Jones did, students as self-motivated to use the SNS. Yet, given that some participants reported the benefits of the Facebook page as excusing them from remembering details, or remembering to check Moodle, I question whether this potentially teaches students to not be responsible. Does this use of a Facebook page devolve responsibility to the teachers to push information to students, rather than encouraging students to seek it out themselves? If the aim is to encourage a love of learning that extends beyond the school gate, then it seems necessary to consider the learning skills and habits that the use of Facebook, and other SNS, encourages and how these may affect students beyond the school gate.

7.4 Limitations

This research has focussed on the self-reported experiences of a small group of students from one urban, mid-decile, New Zealand school, and their teacher, who are using a Facebook page in a particular way for educational purposes. Therefore, like most qualitative research, the findings cannot be generalised beyond this particular group of research participants, in this specific social, cultural and historical context.

Throughout this thesis, I have attempted to use the participants’ voices where possible, although in including quotes, I have edited for what I considered to be identifying speech patterns if necessary. Yet, language is discourse and there are often unspoken discursive formations that underlie the responses and the language used (Cameron, 2001). For that reason, a discourse analysis approach to the interview responses was part of the overall
analysis. I paid attention, to not only what the participants said, but also how they said it. Nonetheless, this is my discursive reading of their responses, affected by my thoughts, experiences and positioning and as such, other readings are possible. Furthermore, more data was collected through the interviews than was possible to include in this thesis. Therefore, my judgment and choices about which themes to focus upon also shaped this thesis.

Identity presentations are formed through interactions. Furthermore, interviews are the “joint production of an account by interviewer and interviewee through the dynamic interaction between them” (Alldred & Gillies, 2012, p. 140). As such, my interactions with participants in the class and in the interviews may have shaped the participants’ responses and my readings of those. Interviews carry expectations of behaviours from both researcher and participant. As a reflexive researcher, I attempted to address power differentials through various means, such as my choice of clothing, manner of speaking, choice of interview locations and so on. Nevertheless, I cannot escape the discursive construction of interviewer and my position as a middle-aged female researcher, which may have affected the participants’ responses as they performed their identity in the interviews. Furthermore, the interview structure in itself invites participants to conform to certain subject positions. It occurs to me that, while I felt I was empowering students by conforming to their choice of the school as interview location, at the same time interviewing within the school may have encouraged students to perform their identities in a manner conforming to school discourses.

My novice status as a researcher makes it probable that I missed opportunities that a more experienced interviewer and researcher may have noticed. Whilst I attempted to address this through planned interview questions, I am also aware that, as I analysed the interviews I noticed missed opportunities, such as further details on photo choices. Nonetheless, I view these missed opportunities as providing further opportunities for research (Nairn, et al., 2005).

The findings of this thesis therefore, are contextually relevant, applying to this group of students, taught by this teacher, at this point in time. Given the fluid nature of identity, the same study with the same group of students may provide different results if repeated. Another group of students may provide quite different findings, as may another researcher.

7.5 Contributions and the Importance of This Research

In this thesis, I utilised poststructuralist theory to explore identity, and Goffman’s dramaturgical metaphor to support conceptualisations of public and private spaces. Some
explorations of SNS identity from the United States (US) appear to rely on Goffman’s theoretical framework (see for example boyd, 2008). However, researchers such as Thomas (2007), Morrison (2010) and Stern (2007) have drawn upon poststructuralist frameworks in their explorations of SNS identity. Subsequently, I join these researchers in using poststructuralism to explore digital identity, whilst bridging the gap to other research through the inclusion of Goffman’ theories. Doing so has allowed me to recognise the fluid nature of identity, as well as the fluid nature of the public/private continuum.

While rapid technological changes will result in changing technology and platforms, it is likely that the underlying human interactions and identity performances will still be valid whichever platform is utilised. For instance, Goffman’s work on identity performance through interactions was published in 1959, before the popularity of personal computing and mobile technology, where remote interactions were via landline telephones, or radio. Yet, his theory translates well into the modern day as it sits alongside poststructuralist theories of performative identity. While the tools may have changed, the performative nature of interactions has not.

There is a growing body of literature that looks at the use of technology and SNS in education (see for example, Hew, 2011). Similarly, there is a broad expanse of literature that examines identity and SNS (see for example, boyd, 2008b; Cassell & Cramer, 2008). Furthermore, the predominance of literature examining identity and SNS was either based on single campus populations, or older youth. I also noted that the majority of this research was conducted in the US and therefore the relevance of findings to New Zealand was unknown. This thesis is also based on a single educational site. However, I have situated this thesis between the two bodies of literature in order to examine the way students negotiate identity when a SNS, in this case Facebook, is used for education. Given the increasing recommendations for use of SNS for education (see for example, New Zealand Teachers Council, 2013), I feel that the effects on students need to be explored, beyond the potential benefits to educational achievement. This thesis provides an example of the way Facebook is used in one New Zealand classroom, and explores how New Zealand students negotiate their identity presentations on Facebook. In doing so, this thesis contributes to both fields of literature.

7.6 Recommendations for Further Research

As I conclude this research study, I find that I now have more questions than I started with and I outline these here as opportunities for future research. For instance, in this thesis I
included the perspectives of one non-Facebook user in the classroom. I also included the two students who had recently reactivated their Facebook accounts. However, the teacher reported that younger classes had larger numbers of students who were not participating. Future research on the use of Facebook by teachers for educational purposes would benefit from exploring why younger students may, or may not be, participating on a subject page. It would be interesting to explore whether the cybersafety talks at the school affect the participation of younger students. Do these cybersafety lessons encourage discourses of risk and discourage participation? Exploring the ways the different year levels in the school are negotiating their identity would further inform knowledge on SNS use by young people in New Zealand.

Opportunities exist for further research on the choice of image representations by the students for their profile and cover pictures. Boyle and Johnson (2010) found that over 75% of MySpace users displayed biographical photos of themselves. Similarly, all my participants who used Facebook chose biographical photos for their profile pictures. Yet the majority chose landscape scenes for their cover photos. Only two participants used images with them present as cover photos and both these images included other people. Possibly the choice of landscape photos as cover photos may be normalised on Facebook. Alternatively, the choice of landscapes may be an agentic choice to limit further personal identifiers being re-presented. I now recognise I missed an opportunity to explore the participants’ choices in cover photos in more detail. I feel there is opportunity for further research into the way profile and cover images are discursively constructed on Facebook, how young people recognise these discourses, and how this may influence the decisions young New Zealanders make when selecting imagery. I would also suggest that further research may wish to focus on cultural representations of identity on SNS in New Zealand. Are there differences in SNS use between students from different cultures? Will differing cultural practices affect the way students negotiate their identity on SNS?

Similarly, the participating school for this thesis was a mid-decile school. There are opportunities for further research into SNS use by low-decile and high-decile schools to further inform the body of knowledge in the New Zealand context. Are there differences in the way young people of differing socioeconomic backgrounds utilise SNS and perform identity? Perhaps Bourdieu’s theory of cultural capital, as well as his theories of taste and distinction may be useful in explaining differences, or similarities (Bourdieu, 2010).
As the participants in this research were all females, I have to wonder what identity performances an all-male class may have offered. Similarly, would gender play a role in online identity performance on a subject page, if the class were co-educational? Would an acknowledged mixed gender audience affect students’ identity performances? Further research focussing on gender differences in the performance of identity on SNS may be useful to educators.

As the use of e-learning becomes more popular, further research may also wish to investigate the possibilities of SNS use for those students who are removed, for whatever reason, from formal educational settings. What opportunities could Facebook use provide for young people who have left the school environment, but still wish to learn? Would the use of SNS, like Facebook, increase educational engagement and learning with young people deemed educationally at-risk? Online learning opportunities are increasing, for example, through open and free tertiary courses via sites such as Coursera, Udacity, MOOC, and the Khan Academy. It seems logical that the use of online learning environments should be explored at the earlier levels of education.

7.7 Concluding Thoughts

The increasing interest in the use of SNS for education has heightened the need for research in this field specific to the New Zealand educational context. In this thesis, I aimed to answer core research questions about the way young people negotiate identity on a Facebook page when it is being used for educational purposes. As part of that key question, I also wanted to know why Facebook was chosen and what affordances made Facebook preferable to educational platforms, such as Moodle. I wanted to identify the implications of blurring boundaries between school and home, between public and private contexts. Furthermore, I wondered why students chose to participate, or not, on the class’ Facebook page.

I found that the use of Facebook and Moodle was determined by the perceived affordances of each. Furthermore, as Johnson, et al., (2011) found, issues with technical infrastructure and accessibility influenced the perceived affordances of Moodle. The perceived popularity of Facebook with the student cohort further influenced the teacher’s decision to use Facebook. Nonetheless, the use of Facebook for educational purposes blurs the boundaries between school and non-school and between public and private.
Chapter Seven: The Finale

The students’ online identities are anchored through the presence of offline networks of classmates and friends. Digital presentations on the class’ Facebook page re-present just one of the many subject positions each student occupies: as students, leaders, role models, young women, sisters, sports people, teammates, members of cultural groups, employees and so on. In negotiating their identities, students need to juggle their multiple front-stage performances to different audiences, as well as to blended audiences (Donath & boyd, 2004; Goffman, 1959; Kendall, 2007; Marwick & boyd, 2010). They face tensions crafting their identities to meet the expectations of the various groups within a blended audience.

Notwithstanding limitations, this study provides insights, not only into the way a New Zealand class is using Facebook for education, but also into the way young New Zealanders negotiate their identity presentations on Facebook. Overall, these students appeared to negotiate the tensions associated with educational use of Facebook through a range of strategies. They seemed adept at utilising security and privacy settings to minimise access to their publically private extended profiles.

Social Networking Sites are themselves discursively constructed. Therefore, the media chosen for knowledge dissemination can shape the meaning created. A move to digital learning environments is not confined to the high school. The development of digital learning environments offers students and educators opportunities beyond the traditional classroom and school location. It is important, however, that researchers and educators are reflexive and aware of our assumptions about education, learning, and students before we join the rush to adopt new technologies. As we introduce new pedagogical changes, we need to consider the effects of these changes on students and educators.
References


Holmes, J. (2009). Myths and missed opportunities: Young people's not so risky use of online communication. *Information, Communication and Society, 12*(8), 1174-1196. doi: 10.1080/13691180902769873


Madge, C., Meek, J., Wellens, J., & Hooley, T. (2009). Facebook, social integration and informal learning at university: 'It is more for socialising and talking to friends about work than for actually doing work'. Learning, Media, & Technology, 34(2), 141-155. doi: 10.1080/17439880902923606


Nairn, K., Munro, J., & Smith, A. B. (2005). A counter-narrative of a 'failed' interview. *Qualitative Research, 5*(2), 221-244.


Appendices

Appendix A: Information Sheets and Consent Forms

[Reference number: 11/242 – September 2011]

Working Title: Which face? Negotiating identity on social networking sites

INFORMATION SHEET FOR STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN INTERVIEWS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the project about?
Schools are increasingly looking to support student learning through the use of social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook. The purpose of this project is to look at the way young people are experimenting with, performing, and reading identity using SNS that are used by their schools for educational purposes. The study will interview Year 12 to 13 students about their use of SNS and observe the types of interactions which occur on the class profile.

In particular, I am interested in the way you use the SNS this class also uses. I am interested in the benefits or risks you see in using SNS for education and I would like to gain your opinions on these issues.

I am also interested in the way students use the class profile and ‘wall’ to interact with the teacher and other students. With your permission, I would like to look at the types of queries and comments which have been made on the 2011 class ‘Wall’ (for example, queries about assignments, homework, clarification of teaching points etc.).

This research project is part of the requirements for my Master of Arts Thesis at the University Of Otago College Of Education where I am a Post-Graduate student.
What will I be asked to do?

Part One:
If you are interested in taking part in this research, you will be asked to take part in a small group interview with 3-5 other students at either the school or the university. This will probably take about 60 to 90 minutes. About two weeks later, you will then be invited to take part in a one-to-one interview which will follow the themes that arose during the group session. This interview will explore your opinions on issues raised during the group session. It is expected this interview will take about 45 minutes.

Part Two:
You will also be asked to give permission for me to look at the class page or profile for the 2011 year. I will take screenshots of the interactions, but I will immediately remove all identifying markers such as student names and photos. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.

As a token of my thanks for your participation, you will be given a $25 retail voucher (e.g. a Booksellers voucher).

Can I change my mind and withdraw from the project?
You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?
The interviews will be conversations based around a set of questions that are attached to this information sheet. Topics will include the extent you use SNS and why; how much information you share about yourself and others, and how you feel about this; and the benefits and risks you see in using SNS for educational purposes.

This project involves an open-questioning technique. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded that you do not have to answer any particular question if you do not want to and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.
With your permission, I will make an audio recording of the interviews which will be used to type up a transcript of what has been said. This will then be available for you to check and comment on before it is analysed and written up. To ensure you are not identifiable, only code names will be used in any written work and you may choose your own code name, or pseudonym, if you like.

With your permission I will also take screenshots of the class page/profile and the interactions between students and the teacher. All identifying markers such as student names and photos will be removed immediately. The themes of interaction will be generalised and will not be attributed to individual students. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.

If you would like to see a copy of the results once this project is finished, please feel free to contact us and we will provide you with a copy.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to your interview transcript and the screenshots. These will be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, as required by the University's research policy. After this time all data will be destroyed.

While I will take all reasonable precautions, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed and I advise caution if sending sensitive material electronically.

What if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about my project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Keely Blanch (student researcher) OR Dr Susan Sandretto (Supervisor)
Telephone: (03) 479 5975 University of Otago
College of Education Telephone: (03) 479 8820
Email: blake629@student.otago.ac.nz Email: susan.sandretto@otago.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Working Title: Which face? Negotiating identity on social networking sites

CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN INTERVIEWS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

3. The interviews will be audio-recorded and the recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project, but the interview transcripts will be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, after which they will be destroyed;

4. This project involves interviews using conversational open-questioning techniques. The general line of questioning will be about the way I use social networking sites, my experiences using them and what I think of social networking sites. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.

5. The screenshots of the class page/profile will also be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, after which they will be destroyed.

6. I will receive a retail voucher as a ‘thank you’ for taking part in this project.

7. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand), but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

........................................................................................................ (Name and Signature of participant)  .................................................. (Date)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the project about?
Schools are increasingly looking to support student learning through the use of social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook. The purpose of this project is to look at the way young people are experimenting with, performing, and reading identity using SNS that are used by their schools for educational purposes. The study will interview Year 12 to 13 students about their use of SNS and observe the types of interactions that occur on the class profile.

In particular, I am interested in the way your son/daughter uses the SNS this class also uses. I am interested in the benefits or risks he/she sees in using SNS for education. I would like to gain their opinions on these issues.

I am also interested in the way students use the class profile and ‘wall’ to interact with the teacher and other students. With your permission, I would like to look at the types of queries and comments which have been made on the 2011 class ‘Wall’ (for example, queries about assignments, homework, clarification of teaching points etc.).

This research project is part of the requirements for my Master of Arts Thesis at the University Of Otago College Of Education where I am a Post-Graduate student.
What will the participants be asked to do?

Part One:
If you allow your son/daughter to take part in this research, he/she will be asked to take part in a small group interview with 3-5 other students at either the school or the university. This will probably take about 60 to 90 minutes. About two weeks later, they will then be invited to take part in a one-to-one interview which will follow the themes that arose during the group session. This interview will explore their opinions on issues raised during the group session. It is expected this interview will take about 45 minutes.

Part Two:
You will also be asked to give permission for me to look at your son’s/daughter’s interactions on the class page or profile for the 2011 year. I will take screenshots of the interactions, but I will immediately remove all identifying markers such as student names and photos. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.

As a token of my thanks for your son/daughter’s participation, they will be given a $25 retail voucher (e.g. a Booksellers voucher).

Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?
Students may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and there will be no disadvantage to those who withdraw.

What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?
The interviews will be conversations based around a set of questions that are attached to this information sheet. Topics will include the extent students use SNS and why; how much information students share about themselves and others, and how they feel about this; and the benefits and risks students see in using SNS for educational purposes.

This project involves an open-questioning technique. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that your son/daughter feels hesitant or uncomfortable they are reminded that they do not have to answer any particular question if they do not want to, and also that they may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage of any kind.
The interviews will be audio-recorded and these will be used to type up a transcript of what has been said. This will then be available for students to check and comment on before it is analysed and written up. To ensure students are not identifiable, only code names will be used in any written work and students may choose their own code name, or pseudonym, if they like.

I will also take screenshots of the class page/profile and the interactions between students and the teacher. All identifying markers such as student names and photos will be removed immediately. The themes of interaction will be generalised and will not be attributed to individual students. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.

If you would like to see a copy of the results once this project is finished, please feel free to contact us and we will provide you with a copy.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to the interview transcript and the screenshots. These will be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, as required by the University’s research policy. After this time all data will be destroyed.

While I will take all reasonable precautions, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed and I advise caution if sending sensitive material electronically.

**What if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions about my project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Keely Blanch (student researcher) OR Dr Susan Sandretto (Supervisor)
Telephone: (03) 479 5975 University of Otago
College of Education Telephone: (03) 479 8820
Email: blake629@student.otago.ac.nz Email: susan.sandretto@otago.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Working Title: Which face? Negotiating identity on social networking sites
CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF STUDENTS PARTICIPATING IN INTERVIEWS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My son's or daughter's participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. My son/daughter can withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

3. The interviews will be audio-recorded and this will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project, but the interview transcripts will be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, after which they will be destroyed;

4. This project involves interviews using conversational open-questioning techniques. The general line of questioning will be about the way my son / daughter uses social networking sites, his/her experiences using these sites and what he/she thinks of social networking sites. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that my son / daughter feels hesitant or uncomfortable he/she may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.

5. The screenshots of the class page/profile will also be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, after which they will be destroyed.

6. My son/daughter will receive a retail voucher as a ‘thank you’ for taking part in this project.

7. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand), but every attempt will be made to preserve my son’s/daughter’s anonymity.

I agree for my son/daughter to take part in this project.

........................................................... ...........................................................
(Signature of parent/guardian) (Date)

............................................................................
(Name of student)
This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Working Title: Which face? Negotiating identity on social networking sites

INFORMATION SHEET FOR NON-INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and find out about the project. Please read the following information carefully before deciding whether or not you would like to participate.

What is the project about?
Schools are increasingly looking to support student learning through the use of social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook. The purpose of this project is to look at the way young people are experimenting with, performing, and reading identity using SNS that are used by their schools for educational purposes.

I am interested in the way students use the class profile and ‘wall’ to interact with the teacher and other students. With your permission, I would like to look at the types of queries and comments which have been made on the 2011 class ‘Wall’ (for example, queries about assignments, homework, clarification of teaching points etc.).

This research project is part of the requirements for my Master of Arts Thesis at the University Of Otago College Of Education where I am a Post-Graduate student.

What will I be asked to do?
You will also be asked to give permission for me to look at the class page or profile for the 2011 year. I will take screenshots of the interactions, but I will immediately remove all identifying markers such as student names and photos. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.

Can I change my mind and withdraw from the project?
You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.

What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?
With your permission I will take screenshots of the class page/profile and the interactions between students and the teacher. All identifying markers such as names and photos will be removed immediately. The themes of interaction will be generalised and will not be attributed to individual students. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.

If you would like to see a copy of the results once this project is finished, please feel free to contact us and we will provide you with a copy.

Only my supervisor and I will have the screenshots. These will be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, as required by the University's research policy. After this time all data will be destroyed.

While I will take all reasonable precautions, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed and I advise caution if sending sensitive material electronically.

What if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about my project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Keely Blanch (student researcher) OR Dr Susan Sandretto (Supervisor)
Telephone: (03) 479 5975 University of Otago
College of Education Telephone: (03) 479 8820
Email: blake629@student.otago.ac.nz Email: susan.sandretto@otago.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Working Title: Which face? Negotiating identity on social networking sites

CONSENT FORM FOR NON-INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

3. The screenshots of the class page/profile will also be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, after which they will be destroyed.

4. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand), but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

...............................................................................

(Name and Signature of participant)    (Date)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Working Title: Which face? Negotiating identity on social networking sites

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF NON-INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet and find out about the project. Please read the following information carefully before deciding whether or not you would like your son or daughter to participate.

What is the project about?
Schools are increasingly looking to support student learning through the use of social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook. The purpose of this project is to look at the way young people are experimenting with, performing, and reading identity using SNS that are used by their schools for educational purposes. The study will interview Year 12 to 13 students about their use of SNS and observe the types of interactions that occur on the class profile.

I am interested in the way students use the class profile and ‘wall’ to interact with the teacher and other students. With your permission, I would like to look at the types of queries and comments which have been made on the 2011 class ‘Wall’ (for example, queries about assignments, homework, clarification of teaching points etc.).

This research project is part of the requirements for my Master of Arts Thesis at the University Of Otago College Of Education where I am a Post-Graduate student.

What will the participants be asked to do?
You will also be asked to give permission for me to look at the class page or profile for the 2011 year. I will take screenshots of the interactions, but I will immediately remove all identifying markers such as student names and photos. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.
Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?
Students may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and there will be no disadvantage to those who withdraw.

What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?
I will take screenshots of the class page/profile and the interactions between students and the teacher. All identifying markers such as names and photos will be removed immediately. The themes of interaction will be generalised and will not be attributed to individual students. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.

If you would like to see a copy of the results once this project is finished, please feel free to contact us and we will provide you with a copy.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to the screenshots. These will be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, as required by the University's research policy. After this time all data will be destroyed.

While I will take all reasonable precautions, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed and I advise caution if sending sensitive material electronically.

What if I have any questions?
If you have any questions about my project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Keely Blanch (student researcher) OR Dr Susan Sandretto (Supervisor)
Telephone: (03) 479 5975
College of Education
Telephone: (03) 479 8820
Email: blake629@student.otago.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Working Title: Which face? Negotiating identity on social networking sites

CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS OF NON-INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My son’s or daughter’s participation in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. My son/ daughter can withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

3. The screenshots of the class page/profile will also be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, after which they will be destroyed.

4. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand), but every attempt will be made to preserve my son’s/ daughter’s anonymity.

I agree for my son/ daughter to take part in this project.

................................................................. ............................................................
(Signature of parent/guardian) ............................................................ (Date)

.................................................................
(Name of student)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Working Title: Which face? Negotiating identity on social networking sites

INFORMATION SHEET FOR TEACHERS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the project about?
Schools are increasingly looking to support student learning through the use of social networking sites (SNS) such as Facebook. The purpose of this project is to look at the way young people are experimenting with, performing, and reading identity using SNS that are used by their schools for educational purposes. The study will interview Year 12 to 13 students about their use of SNS and observe the types of interactions that occur on the class profile.

In order to help my understanding, I would like to talk to you, as the Teacher, about your experiences using SNS (for example, Facebook, Bebo, Twitter or MySpace).

In particular, I am interested in the way you use the SNS this class also uses. I am interested in the reasons this site was appropriated as an educational tool and the experiences you have had using this site for both personal and teaching-related activities. I am also interested in the benefits or risks you see in using SNS for education. I would like to gain your opinions on these issues.

I am also interested in the way students use the class profile and 'wall' to interact with the teacher and other students. With your permission, I would like to look at the types of queries and comments which have been made on the 2011 class 'Wall' (for example, queries about assignments, homework, clarification of teaching points etc.).

This research project is part of the requirements for my Master of Arts Thesis at the University Of Otago College Of Education where I am a Post-Graduate student.
**What will I be asked to do?**

Part One:
If you agree to take part in this research, you will be asked to take part in a loosely-structured interview which will discuss your expectations, experiences and opinions around using SNS, particularly for educational purposes. It is expected this interview will take about 45 to 60 minutes.

Part Two:
You will also be asked to give permission for me to look at the class page or profile for the 2011 year. I will take screenshots of the interactions, but I will immediately remove all identifying markers such as names and photos. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.

As a token of my thanks for your participation, you will be given a $25 retail voucher (e.g. a Booksellers voucher).

**Can I change my mind and withdraw from the project?**
You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and there will be no disadvantage to you.

**What data or information will be collected and what use will be made of it?**
The interviews will be conversations based around a set of questions that are attached to this information sheet. Topics will include the extent you use SNS and why; issues involved in the use of this SNS for teaching purposes; issues surrounding the amount of information that is shared both by yourself and students; and your opinions on the extension of teaching time into the home environment.

This project involves an open-questioning technique. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. Consequently, although the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee is aware of the general areas to be explored in the interview, the Committee has not been able to review the precise questions to be used.

In the event that the line of questioning does develop in such a way that you feel hesitant or uncomfortable you are reminded that you do not have to answer any particular question if you do not want to, and also that you may withdraw from the project at any stage without any disadvantage to yourself of any kind.
The interviews will be audio-recorded and these will be used to type up a transcript of what has been said. This will then be available for you to check and comment on before it is analysed and written up. To ensure you are not identifiable, only code names will be used in any written work and you may choose your own code name, or pseudonym, if you like.

I will also take screenshots of the class page/profile and the interactions that take place. All identifying markers such as names and photos will be removed immediately. The themes of interaction will be generalised and will not be attributed to individuals. I am only interested in looking at the way the class page/profile is used.

If you would like to see a copy of the results once this project is finished, please feel free to contact us and we will provide you with a copy.

Only my supervisor and I will have access to the interview transcript and the screenshots. These will be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, as required by the University’s research policy. After this time all data will be destroyed.

While I will take all reasonable precautions, the security of electronically transmitted information cannot be guaranteed and I advise caution if sending sensitive material electronically.

**What if I have any questions?**

If you have any questions about my project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Keely Blanch (student researcher) OR Dr. Susan Sandretto (Supervisor)
Telephone: (03) 479 5975 University of Otago
College of Education Telephone: (03) 479 8820
Email: blake629@student.otago.ac.nz Email: susan.sandretto@otago.ac.nz

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Working Title: Which face? Negotiating identity on social networking sites

CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. The interviews will be audio-recorded and the recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project, but the interview transcripts will be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, after which they will be destroyed;
4. This project involves interviews using conversational open-questioning techniques. The general line of questioning will be about the way I use social networking sites, my experiences using them and what I think of social networking sites. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops. In the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. The screenshots of the class page/profile will also be retained in secure storage for five years after the completion of the project, after which they will be destroyed.
6. I will receive a retail voucher as a ‘thank you’ for taking part in this project.
7. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand), but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

...............................................................................

…………………………

(Name and Signature of participant) (Date)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Working Title: Which face? Identity negotiation on social networking sites.

SCHOOL CONSENT FORM

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:-

1. Participation of the school, staff and students in the project is entirely voluntary;

2. Participants are free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;

3. Any school or individual identifying information will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project, but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for five years, after which it will be destroyed;

4. The student and staff participants will receive a retail voucher as a ‘thank you’ for taking part in this project.

5. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand), but every attempt will be made to preserve the anonymity of participants.

On behalf of the school I agree to your presence at school in order to conduct the above research project.

............................................................................       ............   ___/___/2011

(Signed)

...........................................................................................................(Name)

...........................................................................................................(School)

This study has been approved by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (ph 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix B: Interview Questions

Group Interview Questions

As you know I’m looking at Facebook…

- What do you use Facebook for?
- What other sort of things can Facebook be used for?
- Why do you use Facebook?
- What advantages are there to using Facebook?
- What disadvantages could there be to using Facebook?
- How do you decide what sort of information to put up on Facebook?
- Who do you think might look at your profile and wall?
- Do you know of any ways to stop people looking at your pages/posts if you don’t want them to?
- What do you think about using Facebook as a class resource?
- One of the things I’m looking at is identity…..
  o What do you think identity is?
  o How do you think you show your identity in person/face to face e.g in town, to your friends, school?
  o How can you show your identity online on Facebook?
  o Do you think you show your identity the same way in person/face to face and online?
- Have you any other thoughts or comments you’d like to make?
- Any suggestions for things I could do better or differently in future group interviews?
(FB Using) Student Interview Questions

As a background –

- When did you first start using facebook? Why did you originally join?
- What other social networking sites do you personally use? And why? (Prompts – Youtube, Flickr, Tumblr, Pinterest, Bebo, Myspace)
- Is Facebook part of your daily routine? How often would you login to Facebook?
- What is your main reason for logging into Facebook?
- What is the first thing you look at when you log in?
- Where do you usually login? (at home, school, workplace, etc.)
  - How do you access Facebook e.g. phone, laptop, home PC, school PC?
- How much time do you estimate you are online in an average week?
  - How much of that time do you estimate would be spent checking Facebook?
- We talked about games in the group interview and some people said they did use games. What about you personally?

Facebook of course is being used by your class.

- Whose idea was it to use Facebook for school? Why do you think the teacher decided to use facebook? And why do you use facebook for schoolwork?
- What sort of things would you use the class facebook page for? How often do you check the school/teacher postings? What makes you check them?
- Facebook is usually for socialising and fun. How do you feel about using facebook for schoolwork?
- What proportion of your facebook use do you estimate would be for educational purposes?
- What expectations do you think your teacher has about your use of facebook for class? Can you use facebook at school?
- When you started using facebook for school, what kind of issues were raised, for example did the teacher and class talk through internet safety issues?
- Did this change the way you thought about your online privacy? In what way?
- Did you ever think about creating a second profile to access the class page so that it was separate from your usual profile?
- Have you ever been tempted to check the teacher’s profile? Do you think she ever checks yours?
- I’ve noticed Ms J sometimes asks people on facebook to pass messages to other students. How do you feel about that?
- Are many of your classmates on your friends list?
- Do you think there are any differences in the way you write when you post on the class page and the way you post on your personal pages? For example, do you write more formally because it’s your teacher than you would to your friends? Or do you think it reflects the way you talk in class to the teacher?
- Has talking to Ms J on facebook changed the way you relate to her in class?
- So how do you think using facebook for class has affected your learning?
- Do you think your parents ever check the facebook class page?
Is there any changes you would make to how the class uses facebook?
Overall, How do you feel about using facebook for school?

Looking more specifically at the ways you think about facebook and use Facebook…
Part of facebook is creating a profile with information about yourself.

What sort of information have you put on your profile? What sort of information would you not put on?
Could you describe your profile picture and cover photo on your timeline? Of you alone, or part of a group, or of something else eg pet? Taking part in an activity, or posed/static shot?
How often do you change your profile information and pictures, and why?
Do you think others looking at your profile see you the way you see yourself?
Is there anything you would change about the way your wall/profile looks? what would it be?

When you’re communicating online you don’t really know what the other person is really like offline and this means people can pretend to be however and whoever they want to be.

So, How do you represent yourself when you go online? So how do you create an identity for yourself?
When you are deciding what to share on facebook is there a particular way you’d like people to think of you? (Have you ever been tempted to exaggerate in the information you share? For example, saying you’re older than you are?)
In terms of other people, how can you tell if you are seeing genuine or authentic representations of others?
What sort of unspoken rules are there around using facebook?

Part of social networking site use is the ability to form networks of friends.

Is there pressure to have a lot of friends on facebook? how many approximately do you think you have?

In the group interview we talked about facebook friends and they were described as ‘people you know’ rather than close friends.

How do you decide who ‘friend’ on facebook? Are you ‘friends’ with any relatives? Why/why not? E.g. judge by looks, their profile, their friends lists…
Has facebook changed how you communicate with your close friends? Do you communicate the same way you do offline?
Sometimes people ‘de-friend’ others. What sort of reasons would make you consider ‘de-friending’ a contact? Have you ever…?

One of the features SNS have introduced is the ability to post photos and tag the people in them.

How important are features like photos/tagging to you? Do you post photos of yourself often? Do you photoshop or adjust pictures of yourself before posting?
• What if a ‘friend’ posts photos of you that you don’t like? What sort of photos would you NOT want posted?
• Another feature of SNS is ‘groups’. If you join ‘groups’, how do you decide which groups to join? Do you check what ‘groups’ your ‘friends’ have joined?
• Have you ever had any negative experiences from using SNS?

Thinking of the information you post…
• What sort of information do you share on your status updates? Are there things you wouldn’t discuss on facebook?
• do you think about who might be reading your status updates and comments and viewing your profile pictures etc? eg teachers, parents, relatives
  o How does that affect what you share? Eg ‘coded’ talk that only your friends would understand
• Do you share all your information and posts with your ‘friends’ or do you maintain different groups of ‘friend’-ship?
• How important is positive feedback from your friends to things you post? Does this help you decide what to post/share?
• Do you use the messaging feature on facebook with your friends? What sort of things would you discuss? E.g. fashion, boys/girls, sport… Why via IM rather than on wall posts?

Overall what are some of the advantages and disadvantages you can think of from using facebook?

Are there any other comments you might like to make?
Are there any suggestions you could make for me for future interviews?
(Non FB Using) Student Interview Questions

Even though you don’t use facebook I’m very interested in what you have to say.

- What do you think facebook is for?
- In the group interview it came out that lots of people are deleting their facebook profiles. Why do you think that is?
- Can I ask why you, personally, don’t use facebook now?
- Have you used facebook before? Have you deleted your account completely, or have you deactivated it so you can come back later?
- Do you use any other social network sites, for eg. such as Twitter, Google+, Youtube, Flickr, Myspace, Bebo, Pinterest, Tumblr?
- Are many of your friends (still) on facebook?
- Is there a difference in the way you interact with your friends now you don’t use facebook?
- Do you ever look at your friends, or other people’s facebook profiles?

Ms Jones uses facebook to communicate with the class -

- Do you think there are any differences in the way information is shared between those who use facebook for this class and those who don’t?
- One of the things that came out in the group interview was that facebook meant you could ask Ms J questions at any time. How do you work around asking the teacher questions if you’re not using facebook?
- Does the class use any other sites for learning? Do you use the school Moodle site?

One of the things to think about when you’re on facebook is who is looking at your information, but do you ever think of what information about you may be on facebook?

For instance, in the group interview there was talk about photos being posted of things like school sports day. How would you feel if photos are posted of you on facebook? What would you do?

What would you say are the advantages to using facebook?, - personally and school use

What are the disadvantages?

What are the advantages to NOT using facebook? Are there any disadvantages to not using facebook?

Can you ever see yourself using facebook (again)? Why? When?

Have you any other comments to make?

Have you any other suggestions for me for future interviews?
Teacher Interview Questions

As a bit of a background…

- When did you first start using social networking sites?
- Why did you originally join?
- Which social networking sites do you personally use? And why?
- Is facebook part of your daily routine? How often would you login to facebook?
- What is your primary reason for logging into facebook?
- How much time would you estimate you use monitoring the class page?

Thinking about the educational context now…

- Where did the idea to use a social networking site for educational purposes come from? Eg School, teacher or student driven?
- What sort of information or help did you have setting this up?
- What did you hope to achieve by using a social networking site with your class?
- Why did you decide to use facebook in particular? Did you consider any other networks? For instance Google +?
- What other educational online communities does your school use with students (for e.g. Moodle)?
- Why did you choose to use facebook instead of the school provided site/Moodle? Do you use both?
- Some schools have reportedly banned facebook use in the school. Is facebook accessible on the school computers?

In terms of this year’s participation rates, has it been consistent with other years? If different, why do you think that is?

- Some students have said they no longer use facebook, so how do you provide alternative access to the knowledge shared on the class page? Do you think students miss out if they’re not on facebook?

Thinking about the way facebook is used for entertainment as well as educational purposes…

- What sort of factors did you consider when setting up the class forum on facebook? [QUESTION MAY BE REDUNDANT IF ANSWERED EARLIER]
- What sort of discussions did you have with the students about using social networking sites? About cybersafety awareness?
- Do you, or the school, have any policies around the use of facebook for class purposes?
- How were these policies made clear to students? Other Staff?
- For example, Does the school have a policy in the event a teacher witnesses inappropriate behaviour on a student’s personal SNS page? Or evidence of inappropriate behaviour on the class page?
- Are you able to access student’s personal profiles using the teacher/class profile?

I notice that as a page, the class page is open to the public. What made you choose this option rather than a group set-up?
• What limitations, for e.g. in terms of privacy settings and access, have you used for the class forum/profile?
• What do you primarily use the class facebook page for? e.g Answering queries, posting reminders…
• Do you have expectations over literary standards on the class page? Or is it informal?
• Are there any particular features of this site that you think make facebook easier to use for educational purposes?
• Are there any features which make it more difficult to use facebook for educational purposes?
• Have there been any disadvantages from using facebook for learning? What potential risks do you think there might be for yourself or your students from the class use of facebook? Eg privacy, identification with school and thus geographic location
• What benefits or advantages have you seen from the use of facebook?
• If you could improve facebook for more effective learning, what would you like to do?

Are there any other comments you would like to make?
Have you any suggestions for me for future interviews?
Appendix C: Where to go for Help Pamphlet

Places you can go for help...
Your school counsellor ______________ can help you with many problems and can be contacted _________________.

But if you would like to talk to someone else you could contact one of the following services –

**Youthline**

Youthline provides a whole range of services designed for young people.

There are heaps of ways to get in touch and involved with Youthline, whether it be for support if you are wanting to talk things over, or through our volunteering and development programmes.

**Helpline 0800 37 66 33**

**Free TXT 234**

**Email/MSN** talk@youthline.co.nz

**Check us out on Facebook and Bebo!**

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**Ever feel you need someone to talk to?**

Someone you can tell stuff to and not worry about getting into trouble?

0800WHATSUP is a free phone counselling service for anyone aged 5 to 18.

We’re available from 12noon to midnight, seven days a week, every day of the year. We’ll listen and help you solve your problems — and no problem is too big or too small, you can even just call us for a chat. The person you talk to isn’t allowed to tell anyone what you say and you don’t have to tell them anything you don’t want to, not even your name.

If you want to talk to the same person again sometime, just ask. If the lines are busy when you ring, just try again in a bit!

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

**YouthLaw Tino Rangatiratanga Taitamariki** is a community law centre for children and young people throughout Aotearoa/New Zealand. This site provides information about how the law can help you to overcome issues that may be affecting you.

[http://www.youthlaw.co.nz](http://www.youthlaw.co.nz)

Phone 0800 UTHLAW

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Sometimes interactions on the net can take a bad turn. If you’re worried or uncomfortable about something, it’s important to talk with someone you trust about it. Maybe you've run across some images that were upsetting. Maybe you gave personal information out to someone who is starting to get pushy with you. Maybe you are spending most of your waking hours online and can’t seem to stop yourself, or perhaps you are worried about a friend's online actions.

You can give us a call for free on 0508 NETSAFE. If you don't feel you can talk to your parent or caregiver, and you are at school, there may be a teacher or counsellor there you can talk to, or a local group you can call that supports young people. You are not alone, and help is available.

------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Don’t forget you can also get help from the **NZ Police** if you feel unsafe either online or offline.

You can also contact me:

Keely Blanch

Phone (03) 4795975