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Image Becomes Identity 2.0:
Contemporary Approaches to the
Construction of Human Identity

TESIS DOCTORAL

Yo soy mi imagen 2.0:
Aproximación a formas contemporáneas
de construir la identidad humana

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To my Cyborgito, with love

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Over the past decade, the *digital* became a seamless part of our daily lives. The transition that we used to experience moving from *actual* spaces of communication to *cyberspace* when internet was a novelty in our lives, today, does not apply anymore, we move from one to the other with the ease of moving from one room to the other. It is within this context that, we are introduced to the participatory architecture of Web 2.0 and to the concept of online social networking, and we move from the earlier *invisibility* of communicating in cyberspace to the *super-visibility* of today. With all of these factors in play, the way we define, understand and construct our identities undergo significant changes.

The self-conscious individual of our contemporaneity is excessively conscious of her/his appearance or manner, as it is constantly reflected in the *digital mirrors of Web 2.0*. We tend to build our images in the way that we want others to see us, hence slowly we losing the boundary between our images and our identities. As such, this dissertation posits a multi-faceted question that concerns whether the technological and sociological changes that we go through are reflected significantly in the way that we construct our identities.

More specifically, we raise the questions of whether we are slowly becoming the *void images* that we have created of ourselves as our real and digital identities converge. Is the *brand image* that we are carefully constructing and manipulating to represent us online becoming our *identity 2.0*? What is happening to our identities within our changed conception of cyberspace, with our new Web 2.0 tools that allow us to express ourselves freely and play with our identities in our newly-gained digital visibility?

Combining a review of classical theories of identity with a multi-disciplinary reading of the mediums of communication today, we evaluate the results of the *Digital Life Scale*, a survey carried out among 635 users of Facebook to verify the hypothesis of this research.

Keywords: Web 2.0, online social network, human identity, digital identity, cyberspace, invisibility, visibility, anonymity, nonanonymity, Facebook, brand identity, social media, digital image.



Durante la última década, el dominio *digital* se convirtió en una parte integral de nuestra vida cotidiana. Hoy en día, la transición que experimentábamos anteriormente mudando de los espacios actuales de comunicación al *ciberespacio*, cuando Internet era una novedad en nuestras vidas, ya no es aplicable, pasamos de uno al otro con la facilidad de pasar de una habitación a otra. En este contexto, conocimos la arquitectura participativa de la Web 2.0 y el concepto de las redes sociales online, y poco a poco, hemos pasado de la *invisibilidad* del ciberespacio a la *super-visibilidad* que tenemos hoy en día. Con todos estos factores en juego, nuestras formas de definir, entender y construir nuestras identidades han cambiado considerablemente.

El individuo de hoy en día acaba siendo en exceso consciente de su apariencia o forma, ya que están constantemente reflejadas en los *espejos digitales de la Web 2.0*. Tenemos tendencia a construir nuestras imágenes según la forma en que queremos que otros nos vean y poco a poco el límite entre nuestra imagen y nuestra identidad se pierde. Así, esta tesis planteaba una pregunta de facetas múltiples sobre si los cambios tecnológicos y sociológicos que se están dando se reflejan de manera significativa en la forma en que construimos nuestras identidades.

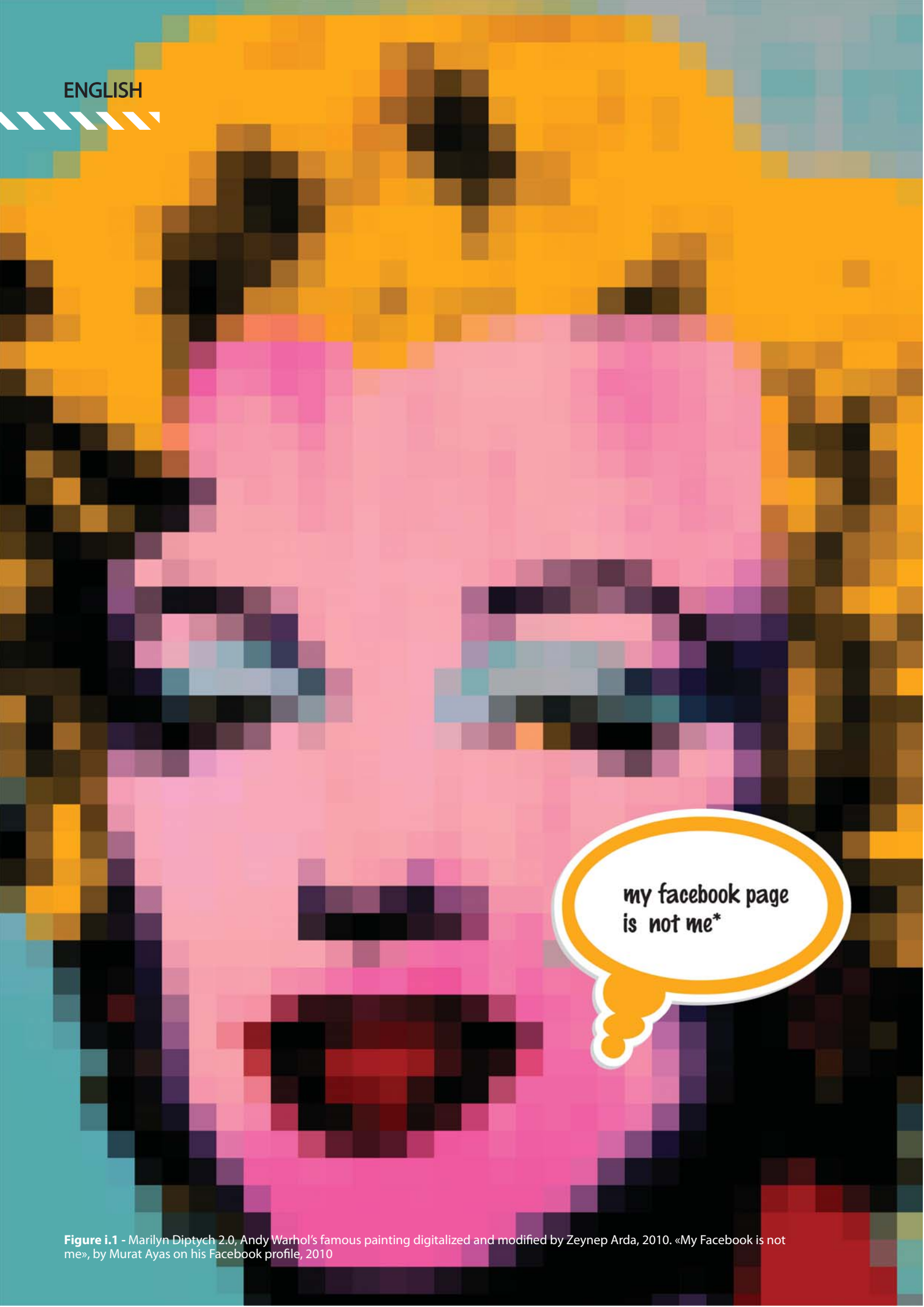
Más específicamente, ¿nos estamos convirtiendo, poco a poco, en las *imágenes vacías* que hemos creado de nosotros mismos, a medida que van convergiendo nuestra identidad real y nuestra identidad digital? La *imagen de marca* que cuidadosamente construimos y manipulamos para representarnos on-line ¿se está convirtiendo en nuestra *identidad 2.0*? ¿Qué está ocurriendo con nuestras identidades en relación con nuestra nueva concepción del ciberespacio, donde las nuevas herramientas Web 2.0 nos permiten expresarnos libremente y jugar con nuestra identidad mediante nuestra recién adquirida visibilidad digital?

Combinando una revisión de las teorías clásicas de la identidad con una lectura multidisciplinaria de los medios de comunicación, hoy en día, esta tesis evalúa los resultados de la *Encuesta sobre la vida digital*, una encuesta realizada entre 635 usuarios de Facebook para comprobar la hipótesis de esta investigación.

Palabras clave: Web 2.0, las redes sociales online, la identidad humana, la identidad digital, el ciberespacio, la invisibilidad, la visibilidad, el anonimato, el usuario no anónimo, Facebook, la identidad de marca, social media, la imagen digital.



ENGLISH



my facebook page
is not me*

Figure i.1 - Marilyn Diptych 2.0, Andy Warhol's famous painting digitalized and modified by Zeynep Arda, 2010. «My Facebook is not me», by Murat Ayas on his Facebook profile, 2010



If we are today condemned to our own image (condemned to cultivate our body, our look, our identity, and our desire), this is not because of an alienation, but because of the end of alienation and because of the virtual disappearance of the other, which is a much worse fatality. In fact, the paradoxical limit of alienation is to take oneself as a focal point [*comme point de mire*], as an object of care, of desire, of suffering, and of communication. This final short-circuiting of the other opens up an era of transparency (Baudrillard, 1993b: 55-56).

The term Web 2.0 was coined in January 1999, by Darcy DiNucci, a consultant on electronic information design. In her article, «Fragmented Future», DiNucci wrote:

The web we know now, which loads into a browser window in essentially static screenfuls, is only an embryo of the web to come. The first glimmerings of Web 2.0 are beginning to appear, and we are just starting to see how that embryo might develop. The web will be understood not as screenfuls of text and graphics but as a transport mechanism, the ether through which interactivity happens. It will appear on your computer screen, on your TV set, your car dashboard, your cell phone, hand-held game machines maybe even your microwave oven (DiNucci, 1999: 32).

Nonetheless, the term was popularized a while later by Tim O'Reilly, in 2003. In an attempt to revitalize the web after the dot-com collapse, it was made public at the O'Reilly Media Web 2.0 conference the next year. Though the term did not refer to any technical changes in the way web functioned, it did eventually cause substantial changes in the ways end-users perceive and use the web (O'Reilly, 2005; Burrows, 2007: 14; Graham, 2005). As defined on Wikipedia, which is a website of the same genre itself, «a Web 2.0 site gives its users the free choice to interact or collaborate with each other in a social media dialogue as creators of user-generated content in a virtual community, in contrast to websites where users are limited to the passive viewing of content that was created for them». When such websites started to appear, they were not first received to be very extraordinary. Early debates on the usage of Web 2.0 focused on aspects of social interaction – be it online networking, sharing talents and creating new relationships on Facebook; or creating online dialogues through the use of blogs; or even contributing collective knowledge by editing Wikipedia.



While some argued that developments of this kind signaled a new dawn for creativity, democracy, community and personal expression (Papacharissi, 2002b; Rheingold, 1993; Negroponte, 1998), the *father* of the web, Tim Berners-Lee called it a «piece of jargon» – precisely because he had already described the web in his vision as «a collaborative medium, a place where we [could] all meet and read and write» from the very beginning (Lanningham, 2006). But probably to his dismay, the concept did have an impact. As Web 2.0 facilitated the contribution of millions of users on several topics of interest, a subsequent outburst, an explosion of self-expression emerged. Everyone had something to say. It eventually started to change our relationship with the Internet – and gradually with our friends and with ourselves.

Facebook, one of the most affluent actors of the Web 2.0 scene, came into existence in February 2004, and as one of the participants of this research puts it, «it gave everyone a *face*». As of July 2010, it had more than 500 million active users all around the world. According to the *Socialbakers.com* data, Facebook has 748,794,000 users worldwide as of September, 2011. As Web 2.0 sites started to gain popularity, especially with a significant focus on online social networking, one ascending counter argument was that this sort of an interaction using the web as a medium of communication would ultimately create a desocializing impact. We were to spend more and more of our time shouting into a huge online abyss with nobody actually listening (Burrows, 2007: 18).

While the side-effects of Web 2.0 in the society can be many-fold, this research will focus on its particular effects on the individual, on how it has changed the perception of the social and the personal identity, how it has redefined the focus of self-construction and how (if this really is the case) we got so mesmerized by our own digital reflection that we ended up dissolving into the screen, like Narcissus drowning in his own reflection.

When one talks about reflections, one should always keep in mind the characteristics of the medium. Narcissus saw his reflection on the surface of the water. The surface that gave him his self-image was not as smooth as that of a mirror and Narcissus had to adjust and interpret his perception to be able to claim the image as his own. As he lacked the experience to do so, he never knew that it was his reflection. In terms of image and identity, the Web 2.0 social network also has its own peculiarities and the reflection should only be judged after one thoroughly understands the characteristics of the medium. The online social network is a mirror that digitally processes one's identity and that carefully edits the image upto the point that it becomes perfectly presentable – which is not necessarily the exact reflection of the actual or the real, while it neither is imaginary nor symbolic.

As the last frontier in the commodification of the human beings, Web 2.0 identity is carefully polished and packaged to sell and the contemporary Narcissus is confused by his identity once he gets used to gazing upon this digital reflection. And, as any image formed on this surface is pre-edited and perfected for the digital self-presentation, it is almost impossible to know where the identity ends and where the image begins. So, slowly but surely, the identity *dissolves* into the Web 2.0 mirror.

Curiously our earlier relationship with the screen, as a very popular scholar on the subject of cyberspace, Sherry Turkle, suggested was that of stepping through the looking glass (1995: 9). However I precisely use the verb *dissolve*, for in my belief our latest confrontation with the digital has not been one in which we have consciously took a step from one side of the screen to the other, but one where the distinction between the actual space and the screen has disappeared. Together with this merge the distinction of our actual and digital selves also disappeared, not to name several other boundaries that have melted away which used to keep many dual relationships and binary oppositions alive. This merge gives us several dimensions to investigate on the visual/virtual frontier of the human identity and various debates that I will try to develop throughout this dissertation.

Justification and Relevance of the Topic

Today, seeing ourselves in the digital reflections of our Facebook and Twitter profiles is an undeniable part of our daily lives. In terms of constructing our social relationships and activities, it comes to mean almost more than what face-to-face communication means to us: short, casual, no-compromise, no-fuss communication at the touch of our fingertips. But this *cheapening* of the social, designates to something more. *We* become the (only) focus of *our* own social life and the *social* slowly dissolves. The way we *socialize* starts to tend more towards a relationship of voyeurism/exhibitionism, which also indicates an excess in the amount of importance that we place on ourselves. As Baudrillard suggests, putting ourselves in the focus of everything and losing perspective on everything else is drifting us away from ourselves (2000: 70). With no *Other* to define where we end, with no reference point to know where we stand – we do not end up in a process of *alienation* but that of *annihilation* of the self.

Putting it in another perspective, we may observe that the screen had a substantial effect on the disappearance of the self, but probably not so much as the *network*. What Web 2.0 brought about is a plane of networking on which each node becomes an undistinguishable unit, nonetheless with a self-consciousness that convinces one to be *the* center – in a plateau that reminds us of Deleuze and Guattari's but which at the same differs from it substantially. In the schizophrenic society which was also connotated with the invisible world of fantasies that the early cyberspace provided us with, Deleuze

and Guattari's idea of *self as a multiplicity* was very relevant. Cyberspace as such was the plateau where each and every human being was given the possibility of being any «one» that they desire to be, by being able to choose from the multiplicity – it was the plateau where «one [could] be many» (Turkle, 1995: 12). However on the new plateau of the online social network, we absorb the multiplicity and the play of identities to step up for a new role – that of the protagonist.

With Web 2.0 our idea of the web has changed substantially in comparison with the early days of the medium when the online communication meant more of invisibility, anonymity and pseudonymity in our social life online. The advent of online social networks made it possible to *see through* people in ways not anticipated before and thus to create new performance arenas for the expression of self identity. Today, though the possibility of anonymity is not eradicated completely and there is a new perspective for *shopping-to-be*, we have several reasons to kind of prefer to use our real names and real *faces* on these networks. The earlier flight off of the body landed back in the flesh once again and we became virtually visible as Facebook gave us a *face*.

The intention of the author is to search and identify the similar, and even the syncretic tendencies, that are at work in the two respective worlds, online and *offline*, and the significant implications that these tendencies could present on the identity formation process of the contemporary individual. In this approach, one significant concern not to be understated is the relative and earlier *invisibility* of the online worlds, where the user is free to choose an «avatar» to represent himself/herself or even create an identity from scratch. Nonetheless, the actual physical and digital spaces that we live in today, imply that the individual is more and more *visible* everyday, where the human being is very much influenced by the visual perception of the physical aspects and the representation of the socio-economic levels. One should also note that in the last decade we have almost stopped referring to our computer-mediated communications as «virtual». Hence, the principal focus of the thesis will be centred on the identity and how it is related to the *new* contemporary tools that are provided and that characterize these two interrelated worlds.

The significance of this segment of the research lies in distinguishing the roles of «avatars», «masked online identities» and «blended identities» in comparison with the «actual identity» of the individual. How does the comfortable invisibility of an «avatar» help or obstacle a human being in his course of self-realization? In the earlier days of cyberspace, the *invisible* nature of the online daily life and the possibility it provided for disembodiment were the highlights of this type of socialization, which gave the individual the option of communicating *without* her/his physical self, the body and the image – or not. The provision of this possibility, which is not at all the case for the social interaction carried out in the urban space, or in the highly visible digital space today, not only changes the manner of communication but also the self-perception of the individual.

Enter Web 2.0, we lose invisibility together with anonymity, and suddenly we see no harm in telling small stories of ourselves on our digital profiles. We write about marital or single statuses on Facebook, gossip on Twitter, update the world on our family situations and post personal pictures for all to see, without getting excited over the fact that «there is no sure way to delete any of it» (Rosenblum, 2010). The photos that we used to keep in personal boxes and albums as a memory aid to our own narratives and shared on certain occasions with the friends and family that had the privilege of visiting the private space, the *home* – today do hit the *homepage* instead. In this unexpected transition and without even realizing it consciously, we also start to believe the stories that we tell about ourselves. Suddenly we are all celebrities and we get carried away with our own live broadcasts. Online social networks become the showcase of snapshots from our lives, the places that we go to, with whom we are friends, what we wear and where we go out to have a drink. Everyone shapes up to her/his best for the profile picture to share with the world. What we build in these platforms exceed being our identity, become more of a reputation or an image. Building our identities becomes a question of impression management. Building our images becomes more important than building our identities – as it becomes what matters the most. Is this transition really new? Was it not always already the case? Is this only a change of scenery? Are we just witnessing a fresh technological version of the Debordian *spectacle* and living a yet another dimension of the ever-aging «All that once was directly lived has become mere representation» (Debord, 1967: 12)?

As Sean Parker friskily expresses it in *The Social Network*(2010), the movie that tells the story of how Facebook first started in 2004, «We lived in farms, then we lived in cities, and now we're gonna live on the Internet!» What was once lived in the street, in the physical space, socializing with our physical identities, communicating with our physical appearances are today visible to a larger public on our *FacebookTV*. As one Facebook user that participated in this research puts it straight out: «Being on Facebook, one accepts being an object of voyeurism and displays a certain level of auto-eroticism (to be specific; self-portraits taken at an arms length)». He goes on to define Facebook as a «a social toy [which] helps us share and spread our banality».

Traditionally speaking, the social circle where the personal identity was to be formed was limited to the private realm, and being *out in the public* was considered to be in the midst of a milieu of strangers, it was hardly ever an occasion to express the *true self*. Even though the social tendency was towards believing in a unified identity, or a «saturated» identity following Gergen's lead, the way this identity was expressed in the public and private realms differed substantially (1991). Nonetheless the identity was disintegrated and virtualized with the introduction of mass communication through the television, and later through the Internet, leading to Turkle's definition of the de-centralized identity in the screen (Turkle as cited in Stone, 1995: 59). Though the *always-already* virtuality of the self is open to question, this advance called for a new perspective on the self, that of scattered multiple identities. Some of these

multiple identities existed solely as virtual identities in the cyberspace and yet were deemed important for the pleasure and the realization of the actual self. The self was able to disengage itself from its visibility and take on a virtual identity which was to communicate behind the screen.

But in our contemporaneity, the virtual side is so indispensably a part of our daily lives that we don't even notice the transitions from one to the other and it is quite complicated to talk about a decentred or dispersed identity. The debates have changed radically from the early days of the Internet, the bulletin boards, the ICQ and the MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) as the human beings migrated into Web 2.0. The world wide web, jokingly referred to in the early days as the «World Wide Wait», has evolved beyond all recognition in the last five years (Burrows, 2007: 14).

Towards the end of 1990s, the identification by Turkle, of the computer as a «second self», was a consideration that identity-transforming relationships were almost always «one-to-one, a person alone with a machine» (1995). Turkle admits, as we all do, that today this is no longer the case. We have a huge social life going on online, one that even exceeds the actual one from time to time. The online identity, which was defined as a «multiplication of the actual self» by Turkle is today nothing more than an extension of our actual identities. Nonetheless, this *re-unified* identity is by no means *a saturated self* but



Figure i.2 - What's happening in 60 seconds in the wired world?

more likely a crisis of «multiphrenia», the condition, largely attributed to technologies that increase social contact, of being simultaneously drawn in multiple and conflicting directions, as it was defined by Gergen in the *Saturated Self*(1991). What is being defined here takes us over to Erikson's concepts of identity crisis, probably in a form that applies an identity crisis in adolescence to the length of adulthood and even a lifetime, which in a way achieves the eternal youth that we so desperately seek on the outside, while on the inside leaves us as *incomplete* projects of ourselves – far from the self realization that we seek in our own depths.

Hence, this research hopes to analyze some of the social ingredients that have lead the digital life to assume the importance it has today, keeping its focus on the consequences of these transformations on how the contemporary human being relates to himself and to his social environment. Though the attempt here is neither to valorize this age, nor to condemn it, in the contemporary literature this relationship is mostly considered to be a *diseased* one. For the sake of this research, I prefer to use the term as *dis-ease*, as it better fits my research objectives, defining it as an uncomfot with oneself with regard to the contemporary circumstances and the tools of the society, instead of an illness that needs a cure.

My earlier research on the subject, *From Space to Cyberspace*(2000), was trying to follow the traces of this *dis-ease* in the social life of human beings, starting from the urban paranoia of life in the industrial city and moving onto the schizophrenia at the turn of the millenium with the Information Age. The journey of disorders, as was investigated in this previous research was one that defined the path through which «the individual» was transformed to «a man of the crowd», and then into a «terminal of multiple networks» scattered and dispersed through the capillaries of the communication network. Oversimplifying the notion of «disorder», this analysis of the process was predicated on the way human subject was identified and named, every now and then, by the subsequent effects of eras that brought about substantial change, be that the pre-capitalist, modern or the postmodern. Postmodern is used from time to time to refer to today's world, which is thickly inhabited and influenced by the computer and the communication technologies, although it does not signify an era, in the same manner that the others do. Postmodernism is still a stage in the course of modernity, if we are to consider Habermas's definition of modernity as «an incomplete project».

Today we are looking at a new picture, which can be investigated under the ages old/new neurosis of extreme self-love: Narcissism. We do have a general idea of what narcissism is, nonetheless, this thesis will move towards a definition of contemporary narcissism – which could be seen as a consequence of the latest technological developments and the advances in human communication, if not the primary source.



In her book, *Life in the Screen*, Turkle catches an early glimpse of the disease, in the early stages of digital communication, in the pre-Web 2.0, pre-Facebook age of social interaction mediated through computers:

... in a new variant on the story of Narcissus, people are able to fall in love with the artificial worlds that they have created or that have been built for them by others. People are able to see themselves in the computer. The machine can seem a second self, a metaphor first suggested to me by a thirteen-year-old girl who said, «When you program a computer there is a little piece of your mind, and now it's a little piece of the computer's mind. And now you can see it». An investment counselor in her mid-forties echoes the child's sentiment when she says of her laptop computer: «I love the way it has my whole life on it» (1995: 30-31).

The reference to narcissism as a condition of the contemporary human being was made even earlier by Christopher Lasch (1979). Above we have defined some of the conditions that were recently introduced to the current society. But let's take a pause to observe the similarities with the society that Lasch defined to be «narcissistic» in the 1970s:

The psychoanalytic description of the pathological narcissist, whose sense of selfhood depends on the validation of others whom he nevertheless degrades, coincides in many particulars with the description of the performing self in literary criticism and in the sociology of everyday life. ... The pathological narcissist reveals, at a deeper level, the same anxieties which in milder form have become so common in everyday intercourse. The prevailing forms of social life, as we have seen, encourage many forms of narcissistic behaviour. Moreover, they have altered the process of socialization in ways that give further encouragement to narcissistic patterns by rooting them in the individual's earliest experience (1979: 94).

It could be discussed that Web 2.0 has altered the process of socialization in ways that further encourage narcissism. In such a way that, on the web, identity is no longer constructed on how the individual thinks and feels about himself. Rather, it is constructed on how the individual would like to *appear* in the eyes of others. It is constructed on the idea of which *brand identity* would best fit the individual to achieve the *social status* s/he would like to achieve. Identity construction is impression management. The sort of anxiety Lasch defined for his «new» narcissist back then, could be our starting point in trying to understand the motivation behind the one of today.

The new narcissist is haunted not by guilt but by anxiety. He seeks not to inflict his own certainties on others but to find a meaning in life. Liberated from the superstitions of the past, he doubts even the reality of his own existence (Lasch, 1979: xvi).

To be able to confirm the role of our online identities/images in the *reality* of our existences, this research tends to approach the issue in two paths that seem quite opposite in the first glance. On one



Figure i.3 - Cover of the TIME Magazine, December 26th, 2006. Person of the Year: YOU. The World Wide Web became a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter.

hand, the contemporary highlights with regard to the physical/visual identity and the perception of brands as a way of self-expression is to be investigated, as well as the level of identification with the brand identity to be able to have an approximation of its role in relation to personal identity. On the other hand, the salient issues in the virtual/invisible world, with an already old-fashioned term, the cyberspace are to be investigated, with emphasis on Web 2.0 and the possibilities it brought about – as well as the current visibility it suggests – the social networks, the participatory web, online communities and online role-playing games. The investigation takes two so-called opposite paths to be able to reach a modest conclusion about whether these two identities, the digital and the visual tend to merge in our contemporaneity. Yet this point had already been pointed out by Baudrillard as Internet arrived in our lives:

There is no separation any longer, no empty space, no absence: you enter the screen and the visual image unhindered. You enter your life as you would walk on to a screen. You slip on your own life like a data suit (2002: 177).

The changes in the modalities of daily communication is just a *change* for most of the higher age groups, nonetheless, in earlier stages of personal development it suggests more substantial effects on self perception. Different age groups and different cultures tend to have different tendencies when it comes to their online identities, and this thesis intends to identify some of these tendencies through the execution and evaluation of a comprehensive survey on the subject, called the *Digital Life Scale*. In a world where reality was already overtaken by the image and the illusion, the latest changes indicate only a shift in the direction and the focus of the impact: What is inevitably under our careful observation this time is the self, the personal identity of the human being that becomes the center of attention due to excess of self-consciousness fueled by the online protagonism.

In its very general definition as a pathology, narcissism is the distorted ego-centric perception of the world where the individual sees himself/herself as the center of it. Curiously, Lasch's 1979 attempt to

define the culture of narcissism provides us with an almost perfect-fit description of the current situation once again. Hence a premature conclusion could be the narcissist society giving birth to the Age of Facebook as the ultimate expression of self-consciousness applied with the state-of-art technology.

The self-consciousness that mocks all attempts at spontaneous action or enjoyment derives in the last analysis from the waning belief in the reality of the external world, which has lost its immediacy in a society pervaded by «symbolically mediated information». ... To the performing self, the only reality is the identity he can construct out of materials furnished by advertising and mass culture, themes of popular film and fiction or fragments torn from a vast range of cultural traditions, all of them equally contemporaneous to the contemporary mind. In order to polish and perfect the part he has devised for himself, the new Narcissus gazes at his own reflection, not so much in admiration as in unremitting search of flaws, signs of fatigue, decay. Life becomes a work of art, while «the first art work in an artist», in Norman Mailer's pronouncement, «is the shaping of his own personality» (Lasch, 1979: 90-91).

Hence the human being is understood as that agent which constructs itself as a self through giving its life the coherence of a *narrative*. Nonetheless, at the turn of the century, or even a little earlier, the rise of design as a social phenomenon has changed the way human beings tackled the issue of self-narrative as a form of identity construction and experience. The discourse slowly left its place to «the visual design process» of the self – both to be experienced on the personal level and hence to be presented and shared on the social level almost as a marketing practice. The change can also be observed at work in the business world. The basic McCarthy rule of marketing mix defined the «4P» to be «Product, Price, Place and Promotion». With the rise of the design society, the 4P became «People, Place, Plan, Project» (Morace, 1996). However defined once again by Idris Mootee under the Web 2.0 influence, the new 4P is: «Personalization, Participation, Peer-to-Peer and Predictive Modeling». One should carefully note that «Product» is no longer listed, neither in the second update, nor in the third. This point is expressed concisely by Hal Foster as «the package [becoming] almost as important as the product» in *Design and Crime*:

For today you don't have to be filthy rich to be projected not only as designer but as designed – whether the product in question is your home or your business, your sagging face (designer surgery) or your lagging personality (designer drugs), your historical memory (designer museums) or your DNA future (designer children). Might this «designed subject» be the unintended offspring of the «constructed subject» so vaunted in postmodern culture? (2002b: 17).

The package signifying more than the product, the image taking over the actual product sounds too familiar indeed. Revisiting *No Logo*, Naomi Klein's handbook on the contemporary power of brands we read:

I decided to write *No Logo* when I realized these seemingly disparate trends were connected by a single idea – that corporations should produce brands, not products. ... The astronomical growth in the wealth and cultural influence of multinational corporations over the last fifteen years can arguably be traced back to a single, seemingly innocuous idea developed by management theorists in the mid-1980s: that successful corporations must **primarily produce brands, as opposed to products** (2000: xvii, 3, *emphasis added*).

Handling the issue from a Ricoeurian perspective, who argued that we make use of stories, from literature and popular culture, to help us assemble the narrative of our own lives, we could oversimplify our attempts to create online identities to cut-paste collages of our favorite cultural content (Gauntlett, 2007: 17). We share music that we like, link videos from our Youtube accounts, quote our favorite authors and philosophers, jot down lyrics from Lady Gaga to deliver messages of how we *feel* on our status. Borrowing from the already available narrative, we build and share an online identity, which is also called «tending the Brand of You» by the *Wired* contributor Evan Ratliff (2010).

Nonetheless, we do tend our brands for the sake of our social lives, not for telling ourselves who we are – or *do we?* Within his concept of the *performing self*, Goffman would put it as, «although the object of the self-narrative is a single self, it would be a mistake to view such constructions as the product or possession of single selves ... in understanding the relationship amongst events in one's life, one relies on discourse that is born of social interchange and inherently implies an audience» (Rose, 1998: 37). Fortunately, Web 2.0 came along with tools such as Facebook, Twitter and arrived right on time and has amplified our audience online. How was the identity to ever survive in that claustrophobic circle of family and a limited number of friends with so little feedback? How and why would we have constructed *brand identities* back then?

Immodesty thrives on Facebook and Twitter because they enable what social scientists call self-enhancement – the human tendency to oversell ourselves. But they also nurture a sense of mutual admiration that the offline world often does not. Social networking tends to create self-reinforcing spirals of reciprocal kindness. You like my cat pictures, so I celebrate your job promotion (Ratliff, 2010: 21).

Ratliff goes on to explain, how the online social network nurtures and encourages our online self-narratives and keeps the online world in its orbit:

In fact, James Fowler, a political scientist at UC San Diego who studies social networks both online and off, has shown that positive networks built on cooperation and altruism tend to thrive, while negative ones tend to dissolve. «Apparently, evolution favors behaviors that cause us to disconnect from mean people», he says. And why not? In a modern world that

bombards us with reasons to feel bad about ourselves, maybe there's room for a little extra public celebration when things go well. Online, we're safe to note our achievements, our loves, our tiny daily triumphs in a bid for a little positive feedback. So go ahead and, as marketing gurus say, tend the Brand of You. Just don't be me-first. Roll as many logs to others as you do back to yourself. Promote those deserving friends too humble to promote themselves and you'll be tending the entire social-network ecosystem (Ratliff, 2010: 22).

Having set the basis for suspecting an elevated contemporary narcissism as the Web 2.0 tools provide us with several online mirrors to check ourselves out on a daily basis, it is curious to remember an old eastern tradition. Elif Shafak mentions this tradition as she gives a speech on story-telling on the famous series of *TED Talks*: Covering the mirrors with thick velvet or hanging them on the wall with their backs facing out. It's an old Eastern tradition based on the knowledge that it is not healthy for a human being to spend too much time staring at his own reflection (Shafak, 2010).

We are surrounded by mirrors, we have always already been surrounded by mirrors, we cannot escape real or metaphorical mirrors, and as social and visual beings, it has always reflected on our identities. It is worth noting here that we have always been conscious of having an «identity». In a creative research using Lego models to represent personal identity carried out by David Gauntlett in 2007, one of the basic conclusions was that the participants were readily familiar with the notion of having «an identity», which could be communicated in some way, using Lego pieces or some other visual material. The notion of identity was already accepted by all participants and unsurprisingly their concerns were along

the lines of «What will I show?» and «What will I use?» (Gauntlett, 2007: 186). «Identity» is not merely an external theoretical construction of philosophers or sociologists, but is already embedded in everyday life and is part of our everyday awareness of ourselves. Therefore, when investigating online identities, the point that people are constantly aware of their online representations as they build their Facebook profiles or microsites has to be considered. Mostly stemming from the «selling» instinct of the consumer society and the «Generation Me», the identities do tend towards marketing tools and eventually we can talk about a *brand identity* that we construct in order to be better appreciated online – and offline.



Figure i.4 - «You are what you carry». We all carry various burdens, though who knows what's heavier: philosophical primates, or our actual purses, bags, and laptop cases. Georgia-based photographer Jason Travis examines both in his ongoing «Persona» series (2009), in which he photographs artists, musicians, filmmakers and other hip Atlantans, along with images of what they carry on in their daily lives.

Over centuries people have socialized on the street, face-to-face with others. In the last couple of decades we were introduced a new medium in which to socialize which did not require our physical presence. Today, from academic research to chatter between friends we discuss the presence of online social networks in our lives: Exhibitionism, voyeurism or simply the need to socialize? Howard Rheingold, in a recent interview replies:

Rephrase the question substituting the «online social networks» with «actual daily life». Sociologists have long been discussing how human beings act and perform to change how they are perceived by others. If we are to consider the online version of this performance, yes, Twitter, blogs and the alike are tools that help people communicate their narcissistic façades. What we need to know in this process of the democratization of communication is how to pick out the useful and the authentic information within this mess of fraud and quackery. Human beings are very good at sniffing what is fake while they are communicating face-to-face. Now what they need to master is how to do that in the virtual world. ... We are in a period of transition, of adaptation and regulation. People have to find out what is valuable in the online socialization and where to draw the line (Tuna, 2010).

So here we are once again, at yet another transition, this time learning how to live online, as our digital and actual identities merge into one.

The Hypothesis of the Research

In our contemporaneity, today, the process of constructing an identity became even more complicated than it used to be, before the explosion and the overall implantation of Web 2.0. Besides the traditional bases which still persist in the construction process of identity – such as the family, friends, the religious and national aspects of one's self – today we have new tools which allow us to *play* with our identities. Web 2.0, our ultimate tool of *self-expression*, is changing our first conception of cyberspace which was dominated by the idea of invisibility, and instead it is giving us a *super-visibility* together with our digitally-mastered identity.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, when Turkle had defined the *de-centralized identity*, she was talking about a parallel multiplicity of identities. But today we are immersed in a process where our *identity on the screen* is more and more part/reflection of our *true selves*, of our *real selves*. And yet, our *identity on the screen* is (1) our reflection of the narcissistic society, (2) a reflection of the narcissistic society on us, (3) a reflection of the narcissistic society that we have inside, (4) a reflection of the narcissistic society in which we live, almost as an image manipulated for self-marketing.

Hence the hypothesis of this dissertation is to be able to reply the multi-faceted question whether we are slowly becoming the *void images* that we have created of ourselves as our *real* and *digital* identities converge: ***[The brand] image [that we have carefully constructed and manipulated] becomes [our] identity 2.0.***

Research Objectives

To be able to reach a humble conclusion on the hypothesis set by this research, the following objectives are planned to be covered:

- To investigate the phenomena that effect the construction of human identity today on two «layers»: Our changing relationships with our actual selves and how we re-construct who we are with the digital identities/images which we choose to express and communicate ourselves.
- How our reflection on the screen started to change with the advent of the online social networks and at what point (if ever) we have lost the boundary that separated the reflection and the real.
- To investigate the processes of self-construction and whether the opportunity cyberspace provided us to play with identities has had/is having any positive effects on the final objective of self-realization.
- To trace the phenomenon of identity crisis / dis-ease throughout the transformation of interpersonal communication, be that in the street or in cyberspace.
- To understand the basis of the «narcissistic society» and how it is effecting (if it does) the evacuation and two-dimensionalization of identity.
- To reach an understanding of how the online presence and nonanonymity on popular social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Tuenti are effecting the way we relate to our own identity and how the significance given to online image and identity is causing us to construct ourselves as brands (images) that sell.

Chapter Breakdown

This dissertation comprises six chapters, based on the academic interest on the subject and the research objectives delineated above, developing the theoretical framework of the research and evaluating the data collected within this structure.

The first chapter, «Mirrors of Identity», tries to cover the theories developed on identity and later on the self, borrowing from psychology, sociology, philosophy, semiotics and media studies. Starting as early as Lacan's mirror stage, all throughout our lives we identify, define and re-define ourselves in the social settings we pass through. On the path to an idealistic self-realization, we meet several phases of identity crisis arising from the conflicts we encounter between our ideal and ought selves, as well as our public and private selves. On the axis of the imaginary, the symbolic, the virtual and the real, this chapter tries to identify where our insides and outsides merge and diverge. Investigating the transformations of the identity in the city, the screen and the network, the chapter is concluded with the way the consumer society is involved in the construction of our social identities.

The second chapter takes an unexpected turn to investigate how our relationship with the space has reflected upon our bodies and our perception. Starting from how the urban space has evolved with technology and the dissatisfactions brought about by its transformations, the conception of cyberspace as an *actual* space of human communication and with it the flight *off* of the body, this chapter intends to give all the background information for the metamorphosis of the human identity through the changes in the modes of communication as well as in the perception of time and space.

The third chapter of the dissertation, «Self in the Screen to Self 2.0», tries to give a retrospective of the journey that the human being has made through its spaces of communication in the last two decades. With special emphasis on our earlier and current life on the screen, the consequences of the arrival of Web 2.0 and the network into our daily lives will be investigated to be able to make sense of the way we currently reflect our identities onto the screen and the city in a similar / different manner. We perform different roles, trying to manipulate our images in the eyes of others, both online and offline. Throughout this chapter we will be trying to investigate how the change of perception on the axis of reality/virtuality and public/private turns out to have a drastical effect on our construction of our selves and self-images.

The fourth chapter approaches the issue from a dis-eased perspective, in this chapter called «Identity Crisis», the dystopic views that are associating the human identity with several metaphors of diseases throughout its evolution over the decades are investigated. From the hysteria and urban paranoia of the early industrial city, to Deleuze and Guattari's capitalist schizophrenia and to the earlier and the current debate on the narcissistic individual, the objective is to observe the changes in the perception of the boundaries that separate us from the others, the blurring of the boundaries between the inside and the outside, which eventually lead us to the disappearance of the other as a reference point. On this line we also include a section on the *flâneur* of the late nineteenth industrial metropolis and Facebook attempts to give a philosophical perspective on the changing conception of well-being of the social individual of our day.

The fifth chapter, «The Brand Self» gives a brief overview of the consumer society and the role of brands in our lives, as well as how they are constructed and presented. Beginning with the transformation (and the evacuation) of communication, I discuss how the human being is reduced to a two-dimensional image. Investigating the continuum of self/self-image/image, the way social media changes communication and self-marketing is analyzed in this section. The contemporary tendency to *brand* ourselves is one of the main factors effecting the self-presentation 2.0, while understanding our audiences is also very important in such impression management.

The sixth chapter, «The Digital Life Scale Findings», is dedicated to the detailed evaluation of the data obtained through the application of the survey of the same name. A total of 946 participants from all over the world responded questions on the way we present ourselves online and the identities we create for ourselves, besides sections on self-esteem and narcissistic tendencies. This chapter consists of the evaluation of the data compiled from this sample with the objective of reaching conclusions on the significance of the presentation of the self online and the correlations between our online stories, self-esteem and narcissistic tendencies.

Research Methodology

Intending to dissect and undertake such a complex and multi-disciplinary hypothesis, I have made use of several distinct instruments trying to reach a deconstructivist combination of all the data gathered to the highest extent possible within the reasonably limited time of this research. Future research could be expanded to reach more specific conclusions on several of the paths delineated in this study on how human beings relate socially with one another and with their own selves in our contemporary society.

Facebook, narcissism and several diseases concerning the identity of contemporary individual are hot topics both in the academic literature and the popular media. Nonetheless, there is no comprehensive study to cover what these issues come to mean to the individual and whether the new technologies help construct happier and healthier human psychologies. Starting off from the classical theories of positive mental health and researching through possible pathologies regarding the self, self-image and the image, this thesis intends to compile all the relevant factors to be able to bring an academic touch to the daily chatter on Web 2.0 and its side effects.

The concept of human identity is definitely a quantitative and subjective issue, concerning each and every individual separately, but as in all previous eras, our personal judgments are often shadowed by the mainstream trends – even when we are focusing on our own selves. Our age is not different in terms

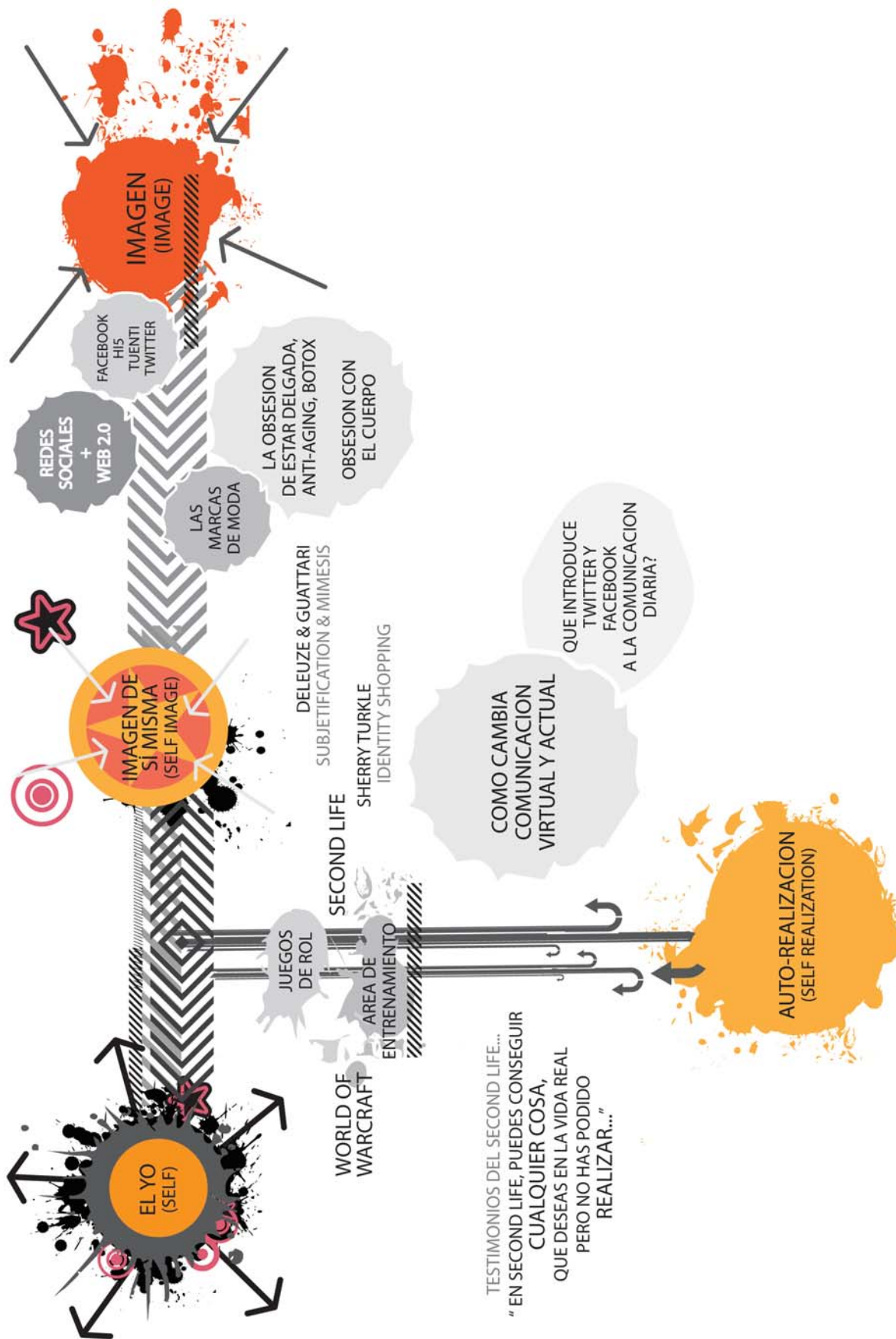


Figure i.5 - A schema of the relationship between image, self-image and identity, together with the current trends effecting the relationship between all three, as discussed in this article. Zeynep Arda (2009).

of its sociological influences. Hence this dissertation was designed in a way to start from how we construct our images of ourselves and upto which point we are susceptible to external influences. Constructing a theory of the influence of Facebook on our daily lives and on how we relate to ourselves through the use of real data and statistical methods, this thesis brings some of the mainstream currents to academic attention.

Nonetheless, some points should be clarified regarding the range of this dissertation. In the research framework that we have defined, as we investigate «identity» we refer to an *urban* concept, a self-concept of the dweller of the modern metropolitan, an understanding of one's very own self. With full awareness of the digital divide between several parts of the society and of the world, in this dissertation we are talking about the technology-savvy population and not trying to look for the extreme cases such as how Web 2.0 affects the identity construction in the African tribes. Our subject here, is the self-conscious individual of the contemporary city. Nonetheless, we are not trying to give a complete analysis of identity as we would in the field of psychology. Instead this thesis is treating the identity within the perspective of communication and the social interactions.

And yet, another significant point is that we cannot imply the same hypothesis onto all different types of social media users. It is important to identify that there are three main perspectives onto social media and this dissertation is treating only one of them. First, there are people that do not care about and do not use Web 2.0 and other digital tools. This group of people do not have Facebook or Twitter accounts, or they are dormant users, as they do not feel the necessity for this kind of communication. Nevertheless, we could say that even this group is affected partially by social media, as the majority of their contacts use such tools in their communications, and this group is disconnected from them in a sense.

Then there is a second group of people who use these tools, simply as the *tools* that they intend to be and nothing more. They have Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, LinkedIn or Youtube profiles, they upload photos or videos only to share with a couple of close friends – as they would in real life. They have Twitter accounts and they use it for checking out what is new in the fields that they follow and not to tweet what they ate for breakfast or which route they took driving to work. And they have LinkedIn or other business-related accounts to manage and maintain their business networks. For them Web 2.0 is a platform of applications.

The third group of people is our main focus in this dissertation. This is the group that has gone mainstream in terms of social media. They have all types of online social network accounts and they make the most out of it. They socialize and they lifecast on Facebook, Twitter or Tuenti, they receive feedback on how they look or what they do as they show off their social capital. «This is who I am, this is

my home, this is my life and these are the people that I spend it with» is their perceived message. This research is focused on this mainstream behaviour that constructs and maintains what we call social media today and not on the *contemporary marginals* that do not want to be *out there*.

One last note about this research is that it does not claim to review all the latest academic investigations on the rise of Facebook. Instead, it is researching the classical theories of self-presentation, communication and identity crisis, to be able to deduct what are the changes and transformations in the society that bring us today to Facebook and the way that we employ it. In an almost deconstructivist manner, it borrows concepts from philosophers and authors to explain identity in the age of Facebook. Some of the cited authors have lived and died long before Facebook had entered our lives. Nonetheless, the concepts that they have discussed concerning identity are fit to explain current phenomena, which also indicates that what is being changed with these novelties is the way identity is constructed and perceived and not at all its essence *per se*. Human beings are human beings as always and identity in its essence is the same as always, hence we have relocated concepts that existed long before Facebook to prove our point.

Readers of my dissertation are always free to disagree with the arguments presented here, as we all know scientific understanding is advanced through researchers having the freedom to make any kind of claim, as long as it is concrete enough for others to test it and potentially disagree with it. Below I will be explaining the methods used in this research to weave together the independent threads of different fields.

Review of the Current Literature and Personal Observation

The methodology utilized consists of various instruments of research. Beginning with a review of the literature and the web for current information and theoretical basis, the dissertation also owes to personal time and observation in *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life*, as well as investigation of several other popular online networks and online multi-player games. Even though at the very beginning Facebook was not considered as the absolute core of the investigation by the researcher, following attempts to construct and refine the hypothesis have oriented the research automatically to the most popular of all online social networks. This orientation was confirmed with the quantitative survey carried out, as a vast majority, 83.1% of the participants have pointed in the direction of online social networks and especially Facebook, by filling in the section on Facebook as the social networking site that they most-frequently visit.

Twitter was investigated parallelly, in an attempt to understand its peculiar popularity. Similar to Facebook's mass communication, or in better words, communication without a specific, intended recipient, Twitter's tweets were found out to amplify online presence, mostly attached to one's actual

identity and usually ending up in commercial ends. Having reached the level of research that satisfied the objectives of current research, the focus of analysis was once again directed to Facebook to bisect what David Kirkpatrick calls the «Facebook effect» exhaustively.

Virtual worlds of massive multi-player online role-playing games (MMORPGs) proved to have lost their earlier significances as spaces of «flight off of the body and unlimited freedom of creating anonymous identities», shrinking back to being «only a game», though they were valued higher at the very beginning of this investigation. Earlier fascination with cyberspace as a «core of anonymous, invisible communication, where one is free to be whoever s/he chooses to be» (Arda, 2000), was observed to have calmed down, as Web 2.0 redefined internet uses and the mainstream online tendency shifted to communicating with our actual identities and combining digital and actual lives in a «lifemix».

Having opted for *World of Warcraft* as the current and most popular representative of the earlier MMORPGs in our contemporaneity, a substantial amount of time was dedicated to create an avatar *and* an identity and communicate within this environment and thanks to this research today «Reinamaga» has several «avatar friends» from Spanish cities that she has never visited – who have helped her understand what this virtual world was about.

In a similar manner *Second Life* was also considered as part of the research which, by its abundant number of subscribers, is not considered as a «game», but instead as a *window* to vast opportunities. Though its internal logic is similar to the earlier MUDs in terms of avatar and world construction, its 3D visual components and limitless possibilities for creativity have resulted in the creation of a *replica* world. As is the case in the *first life*, consumption is the king in this virtual community. The evaluations of *Second Life* were reached through testimonials of other people, while most of the literature on the other three, *Facebook*, *Twitter* and *World of Warcraft* were confirmed through hands-on experience and observations. Very little personal observation in *Second Life* was actually carried out, as all of these «worlds» require substantial amounts of time dedicated exclusively to them, to reveal their «secrets» to their users/researchers.

Preliminary Facebook Survey

Throughout the process, Facebook resulted to be significant, as a medium of communication, hence fulfilling perfectly its *raison d'être*, as it allowed the author to reach a wider and more universal sample to obtain more reliable results. Through August and September of 2010, Facebook was used as a tool to carry out a preliminary mini survey, to reach a general understanding of its perceived use, pros and cons through the testimonials of its own users.

On August 28th, 2010, the generic question «What do you think of Facebook?» was sent out one by one to 670 users of this social network. Instead of a random sampling, to be able to get more or less sincere replies, «Friends» and «Friends of Friends» were selected as the target audience. The participants were sent a personal Facebook message, an *email* utilizing the Facebook platform, together with a personal note, using a very personal tone. The potential participants were addressed the way that they would be addressed by the author in the actual daily life. The question was asked in English, Turkish and Spanish and a total of 391 replies were received from all around the world, the latest being sent on November 2nd, 2010. All the replies were collected to be used in basically two ways:

1- To use as a creative and participatory check-list before the actual Digital Life Scale was presented to its relevant participants. The pre-survey of one single question was asked in an informal and friendly manner, which is supposed to be the form of communication that takes place in Facebook. The question was sent to all the participants in the form of a private message, instead of a public comment on the Facebook Wall of the author or in the form of a forum. This conscious decision was based on two basic assumptions. We live in the era of netiquette, nonetheless some social manners are quite well-maintained and it is generally considered rude not to answer your emails. People are more likely to respond to a message if the message is sent to them personally, as is the case in emails, CC (carbon copy) receivers are not required to reply messages. The second assumption was that people are more likely to respond sincerely and based on their own personal thoughts in a one-to-one communication, as they would not be biased by the ideas of others or the side effects of a group behaviour.

2- To quote the replies of actual Facebook users and their terminology, based on the belief that it would add a more «real» tone to this research and to this approximation of the social life that takes place on the web. This assumption has proved to be very useful as several of the participants have taken their time to give a very elaborated account of their personal perspective on the issue, using very creative definitions and metaphors. It should be mentioned at this point that the method applied was not a thorough discourse analysis, but only a general review of the actual perspective on the medium.

The Digital Life Scale

After the preliminary survey carried out on Facebook, a comprehensive quantitative survey was prepared and conducted in December, 2010. The objective was to investigate the user behaviour with regard to our digital lives and the identities that we construct on the web, be it an avatar in *World of Warcraft* or *Second Life* or a *real* profile on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Tuenti*.

The survey methodology was selected with the intention of adapting to the medium. The survey was called The Digital Life Scale to create a general perception of the issue and to avoid any focus or negative-bias that could be created by using the titles «Self-Esteem Scale» or «Narcissistic Personality

Inventory» in the title. It was conducted online, using the Lime Survey digital system, and it was backed up with the hosting support given by Universitat Jaume I, the survey was placed at the domain «<http://digitallife.uji.es>». Considering the actuality of the subject, placing the survey at a subdomain of the university website has been a deliberate choice. The objective was to give the survey a serious aspect and to distinguish it from the «Facebook quiz» attitude which is a very popular application of this online social network.

The survey was designed to have three main sections, besides a fourth section of introductory questions for gathering basic socio-demographic data about the survey sample:

1- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale:

Developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg, this instrument consists of 10 items intended to measure «global self-esteem» in the sense described by Rosenberg as:

«When we characterize a person as having high self-esteem ... we mean that he has self-respect, considers himself as a person of worth. Appreciating his own merits, he nonetheless recognizes his faults ... that he hopes and expects to overcome his defects ... The term «low self-esteem» ... means that the individual lacks respect for himself, considers himself unworthy, inadequate, or otherwise seriously deficient as a person» (1979: 54).

Rosenberg had written the Self-Esteem Scale taking the «direct approach» and with consideration on the ease of administration, economy of time, unidimensionality and face validity (Wylie, 1989: 25). All of these qualities were parallel to the objectives of the survey developed for this dissertation and were further considered in the other sections as well. The online nature of the survey, together with its ambitious objective of measuring several aspects of the issue required each component of the survey to be unidimensional in itself to conduct to reliable results in the overall evaluations.

Originally used with a 4-point scale by Rosenberg in his 1965 study of 5,024 high school students in New York, in this study the same format was used to maintain the consistency and the reliability of the scale in the different translations and adaptations. The Spanish version translated and validated by Martín-Albo, Núñez, Navarro & Grijalvo in 2007 was used, as well as the Turkish version by Uyanik Balat and Akman that was developed in 2004.

The typical format of a four-level Likert item ranging from «strongly agree» to «strongly disagree» was used for the evaluation. One of the objectives in keeping the scale consistent in all sections of the survey was the switching of the independent and dependent variables to get both perspectives in the evaluation of the results. On random sample used in the research the effect of low self-esteem or high

narcissistic regard has been measured with respect to online representation attitude and vice versa, the effect of the significance given to online representation based on low or high self-esteem or a high narcissistic regard.

Having proven its reliability throughout the long years of its use in psychology, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale was used to get a direct and quick evaluation of the survey participants in terms of their self-esteem, which would later be compared with their behavior online.

2- Narcissistic Personality Inventory (NPI):

In line with the objective of measuring inclination towards an evacuated brand identity replacing the actual identity of the human beings, narcissism was selected as an indicator of detachment from self. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory, originally developed by Raskin & Terry (1988) as a forty-item forced choice inventory is the one that is most commonly employed in social psychological research. The NPI was formulated based on the clinical criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD), as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-III, nonetheless it was designed by Raskin & Terry to measure similar features in the overall population: It is neither a diagnostic instrument for a personality disorder, nor people who score very high on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory necessarily meet the criteria to be diagnosed with NPD.

Despite the overall acceptable reliability exhibited by the full scale, research on its factor structure has shown to roughly map NPD. Hence, according to the objectives of this dissertation, the NPI has been partially used to measure an extent of «superficiality» as well as a discrepancy between demonstrated self-esteem and the narcissistic lack of it.

The original inventory regards seven factors of narcissism: superiority, exhibitionism, entitlement, vanity, authority, exploitativeness and self-sufficiency. Nonetheless, evaluating results of recent research where NPI has been utilized, Pinsky and Young claim it is important to consider which of the highly-scored traits are dominant in the person. In their opinion, an overall score that reflects more points on vanity, entitlement, exhibitionism and exploitativeness is more cause for concern than someone who scores high on authority, self-sufficiency and superiority (Pinsky & Young, 2009: 254).

Hence in using the NPI as part of this research, the only objective is to have a basis to build on. Narcissism is a very pervasive subject in our contemporaneity and there is possibility that it could be identified as a partial responsible for feelings of emptiness, difficulty with interpersonal functioning or inability to see any perspective other than our own that seem to prevail in our societies today. As it is very difficult to generalize, and making a generalization with no real evidence would be oversimplified,

not to mention academically inadequate, I would like to use the quantitative results obtained from conducting this inventory, evaluating it together with ways we express ourselves using the Web 2.0 tools.

Another point that should be pronounced on the methodology is that this section of the survey was not called openly as the Narcissistic Personality Inventory in the online survey, not to create a negative biased opinion of the participants even though it is quite obvious where the questions do lead us. This point should not to be taken as a deception on the sample as the objective is at all points to obtain unbiased data and to reach an overall understanding of the human condition in our contemporaneity with regard to Web 2.0, and not trying to reach conclusions on the psychological conditions of each of the participants.

3- Presentation of the Self Online

This section consists of a selection of questions on the online attitude of the individuals, on the online social networks or multi-player games. With a particular focus on the level of involvement in these mediums mentioned, it includes questions on self-image, interpersonal communication and self-expression. Depending on the type of the question, the answers are expected to be given either on a Guttman or a Likert scale.

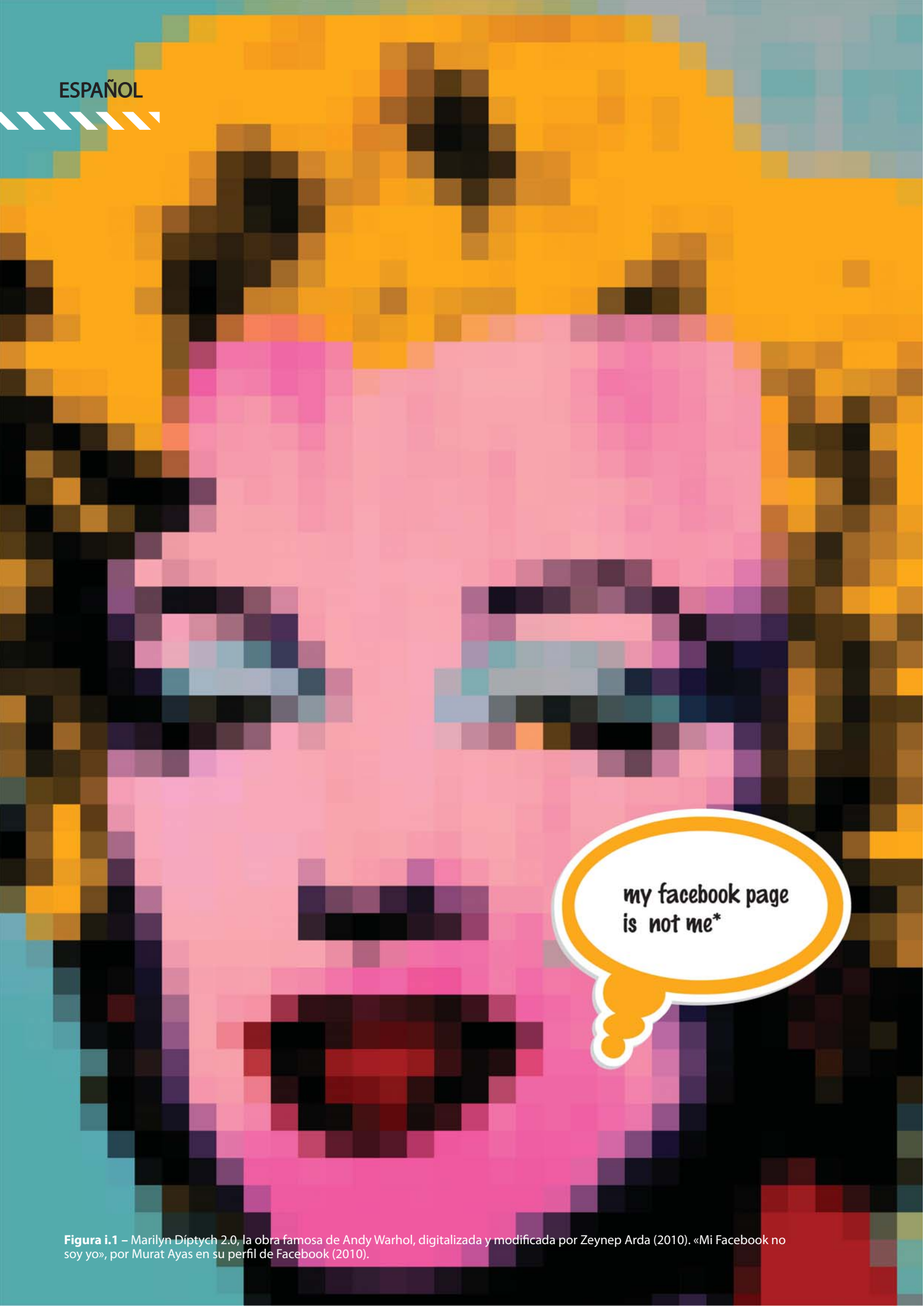
At the end of the introductory questions, the participants are asked to select between *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *World of Warcraft* or *Second Life* to reply the Online Representation questions on the online network or game which they most frequently use. As the previous two sections are applied to all the participants, the choice they make at this point gives us a possibility to compare the results of these tools within themselves as well as comparing the involvement in each one of them with the results obtained by the participants in the NPI and self-esteem sections.

Having the results of all of the research tools, the dissertation will be concluded with an overall evaluation of the findings and an attempt to justify the original hypothesis. For a subject so actual, we do not dispose of tools with proven reliability, nor proven theories. Nonetheless the research attempts to reach its objectives with a deconstructivist combination of all instruments that are available despite setbacks and inevitable limitations. One of the most obvious limitations of this research carried out could be that the process is an «intervention». As was mentioned by some of the participants in the preliminary Facebook survey, people neither actually think about how they are effected by the medium, nor realize it unless deliberately asked about it. Hence with every question they receive on the subject, starting with the earliest and the most general, «What do you think about Facebook?», participants are aware of the fact that they are taking part in a research.

The dissertation includes a final and comprehensive section of references that covers all the literature consulted and cited in this research as well as the popular publications and web resources used. This section is organized under different headings, such as, «Identity Offline», «Urban Space and Physical Interaction», «Online Interaction», «Video Games and Virtual Worlds», «Web 2.0 and Online Social Networks», «Brand Identity» and «General Resources» to facilitate its use for readers of different academic backgrounds and different interests.



ESPAÑOL



my facebook page
is not me*

Figura i.1 – Marilyn Díptych 2.0, la obra famosa de Andy Warhol, digitalizada y modificada por Zeynep Arda (2010). «Mi Facebook no soy yo», por Murat Ayas en su perfil de Facebook (2010).



Si hoy en día estamos condenados a nuestra imagen (a cultivar nuestro cuerpo, nuestro *look*, nuestra identidad, nuestro deseo), ello no se debe a la alienación, sino más bien al final de la alienación y de la desaparición virtual del otro, lo que es una fatalidad mucho peor. De hecho, la definición de la alienación es tomarse a sí mismo como punto de mira, como objeto de cuidados, de deseo, de sufrimiento y de comunicación. Este cortocircuito definitivo del otro inaugura la era de la transparencia. (Baudrillard, 2000: 70).

El término Web 2.0 fue acuñado en enero de 1999, por Darcy DiNucci, una consultora en el diseño de la información electrónica. En su artículo, «El futuro fragmentado», DiNucci escribió:

La web que conocemos ahora, que se carga en una ventana del navegador en pantallas esencialmente estáticas, es sólo un embrión de la web que está por venir. Los primeros destellos de la Web 2.0 están empezando a aparecer, y estamos empezando a ver cómo el embrión puede desarrollarse. La web se entiende no como pantallas llenas de texto y gráficos, sino como un mecanismo de transporte, el éter a través de lo cual pasa la interactividad. Aparecerá en la pantalla del ordenador, en el televisor, el salpicadero del coche, tu teléfono móvil, consolas de juego, tal vez en tu horno de microondas (DiNucci, 1999: 32).

Sin embargo, el término fue popularizado un poco más tarde por Tim O'Reilly, en 2003. En un intento de revitalizar la web después de la caída de las «puntocom», la Web 2.0 se hizo público en la conferencia organizado por O'Reilly Media el próximo año. Aunque el término no aludió a los cambios técnicos en el funcionamiento de la web, con el tiempo llegó a provocar cambios sustanciales en las formas que los usuarios finales perciben y utilizan la web (O'Reilly, 2005; Burrows, 2007: 14; Graham, 2005). Tal como se define en la Wikipedia, que es un sitio web del mismo género también, «un sitio Web 2.0 ofrece a sus usuarios la libre elección de interactuar o colaborar entre ellos, en un diálogo de *social media* como creadores del contenido generado por los usuarios en una comunidad virtual, en contraste con los sitios web donde los usuarios se limitan a la observación pasiva de los contenidos que ya están creados para ellos». Cuando dichos sitios web comenzaron a aparecer, al principio no fueron recibidos como algo extraordinario. Los primeros debates sobre el uso de la Web 2.0 se centraron en los aspectos de la interacción social – sean redes sociales online, compartir talentos y crear nuevas relaciones en

Facebook, o la creación de diálogos online a través del uso de los blogs; o incluso la aportación de los conocimientos colectivos mediante la edición de Wikipedia.

Mientras algunos sostenían que este tipo de evolución señalaba un nuevo amanecer para la creatividad, la democracia, la comunidad y la expresión personal (Papacharissi, 2002b; Rheingold, 1993; Negroponte, 1998), el *padre* de la Web, Tim Berners-Lee la llamó una «pieza de jerga» – precisamente porque él ya había descrito la web en su visión como «un medio de colaboración, un lugar donde [podíamos] quedar, leer y escribir» desde el principio (Lanningham, 2006). Pero, probablemente, a su pesar, el concepto ha tenido un impacto sustancial. Como Web 2.0 facilitó la contribución de millones de usuarios sobre diversos temas de interés, un arranque subsiguiente, una explosión de auto-expresión surgió. Todo el mundo tenía algo que decir. Con el tiempo, esta nueva definición de la web empezó a cambiar nuestra relación con Internet – y poco a poco con nuestros amigos y con nosotros mismos.

Facebook, uno de los actores más opulentos de la escena de Web 2.0, se creó en febrero de 2004, y como uno de los participantes de esta investigación dice, «se les dio a todos una *cara*». A partir de julio de 2010, había más de 500 millones de usuarios activos en todo el mundo. Según los datos de *Socialbakers.com*, Facebook ha alcanzado en septiembre de 2011 los 748.794 millones usuarios en todo el mundo. Cuando los sitios Web 2.0 empezaron a ganar popularidad, sobre todo con un enfoque significativo en las redes sociales online, un argumento ascendente en contra era que este tipo de interacción a través de la web como un medio de comunicación, iba a crear un impacto desocializante en última instancia. Íbamos a pasar cada vez más tiempo gritando en un gran abismo online, mientras en realidad nadie nos escuchaba (Burrows, 2007: 18).

Aunque los efectos secundarios de Web 2.0 en la sociedad pueden ser de varias clases, esta investigación se centrará en sus efectos concretos sobre el individuo, sobre cómo ha cambiado la percepción de lo social y la identidad personal, cómo se ha redefinido el enfoque de auto-construcción y cómo (si éste es realmente el caso) llegamos a estar tan hipnotizados por nuestros propios reflejos digitales que terminamos disolviéndonos en la pantalla, al igual que Narciso hundiéndose en su propio reflejo.

Cuando se habla de las reflexiones, siempre hay que tener en cuenta las características del medio. Narciso vio su reflejo en la superficie del agua. La superficie que le dio su propia imagen no era tan suave como la de un espejo y Narciso tuvo que ajustar e interpretar su percepción para poder reclamar la imagen como la suya. Como no tenía la experiencia para poder hacerlo, nunca supo que era su propio reflejo. En términos de imagen e identidad, las redes sociales también tienen sus propias peculiaridades, y la reflexión debe de ser juzgada sólo después de que uno entienda profundamente las características

de tal medio. La red social online es un espejo que procesa digitalmente la identidad y que edita cuidadosamente la imagen hasta el punto de convertirse en algo perfectamente presentable – aunque no sea necesariamente el reflejo exacto de lo real o lo verdadero, mientras tampoco es ni imaginario ni simbólico.

Como la última frontera en la auto-transformación de los humanos en productos de consumo, la identidad Web 2.0 está cuidadosamente pulida y envasada para facilitar la venta y el Narciso contemporáneo se confunde con su identidad una vez que se acostumbra a mirar a esta reflexión digital. Y, como cualquier otra imagen que se forma en esta superficie está pre-editado y perfeccionado para la presentación digital de la persona, es casi imposible saber dónde termina la identidad y dónde empieza la imagen. Así, poco a poco, pero con seguridad, la identidad *se disuelve* en el espejo de la Web 2.0.

Curiosamente nuestra relación anterior con la pantalla, como sugirió Sherry Turkle, una erudita muy popular sobre el tema del ciberespacio, era el dar un paso a través del espejo (1995: 9). Sin embargo, yo prefiero usar el verbo *dissolver*, ya que en mi opinión en nuestro último enfrentamiento con lo digital, no hemos dado un paso de un lado de la pantalla al otro conscientemente, sino en este enfrentamiento la distinción entre el espacio real y la pantalla ha desaparecido. Junto con esta fusión la distinción entre nuestros yo-es reales y digitales también ha desaparecido; muchos otros límites – antes utilizados para mantener vivas muchas relaciones duales y oposiciones binarias – también se derritieron. Esta fusión nos da varias dimensiones para investigar en la frontera visual/virtual de la identidad humana y varios debates que voy a tratar de desarrollar a lo largo de esta tesis doctoral.

Justificación e interés del tema de investigación

Hoy en día, vernos a nosotros mismos en las reflexiones digitales de nuestro Facebook y los perfiles de Twitter es una parte indiscutible de nuestra vida cotidiana. En cuanto a la construcción de nuestras relaciones y actividades sociales, la digital empieza a significar casi más de lo que la comunicación cara a cara significa para nosotros: corta, informal, sin compromisos, sin complicaciones la comunicación digital está a golpe de click. Sin embargo, este *abaratamiento* de lo social, designa a algo más. *Nos convertimos* en el único foco de *nuestras* propias vidas sociales y lo *social* se disuelve lentamente. La forma en la que *socializamos* comienza a inclinarse más hacia una relación de voyerismo /exhibicionismo, y esta tendencia también indica un exceso en la importancia que nos damos a nosotros mismos. Como sugiere Baudrillard, poniéndonos en el centro de todo y perdiendo la perspectiva sobre todo lo demás nos está alejando de nosotros mismos (2000: 70). Sin ningún *Otro* para definir dónde terminamos, sin ningún punto de referencia para saber dónde estamos posicionados – no acabamos en un proceso de *alienación*, sino en uno de *aniquilación* de nosotros mismos.

Poniéndolo en otra perspectiva, podemos observar que la pantalla tuvo un efecto sustancial sobre la desaparición del yo, pero probablemente no tanto como la *red*. Lo que la Web 2.0 provocó es un plano de la creación de redes en lo cual cada nodo se convierte en una unidad indistinguible, sin embargo, con una conciencia de nosotros mismos que nos convence a cada uno de ser *el* centro – en una meseta que nos recuerda la de Deleuze y de Guattari, pero que se difiere de la misma de forma sustancial al mismo tiempo. En la sociedad esquizofrénica, que estaba connotada por el mundo invisible de las fantasías que el ciberespacio nos ha proporcionado, la idea de Deleuze y Guattari, el *yo como una multiplicidad* fue muy relevante. El ciberespacio, como tal, era la meseta donde se les dio a todos los seres humanos la posibilidad de ser «cualquiera» que desean de ser, la posibilidad de elegir entre la multiplicidad – era la meseta, donde «uno [podía] ser muchos personajes» (Turkle, 1997: 19). Sin embargo en la nueva meseta de las redes sociales online, hemos dejado de lado la multiplicidad y el juego de identidades para alcanzar un nuevo papel – él del protagonista.

Con Web 2.0, nuestra idea de la web ha cambiado sustancialmente en comparación con los primeros días del medio, cuando la comunicación online significaba más la invisibilidad, el anonimato y el seudónimo en la vida social online. El adelanto de las redes sociales permitió *ver a través de* las personas de maneras no previstas anteriormente, y por lo tanto, permitió crear nuevas áreas de desarrollo de la expresión de la identidad propia. Hoy en día, aunque la posibilidad de guardar el anonimato no está erradicada por completo y hay una nueva perspectiva para *consumir-para-ser*, tenemos varias razones para preferir usar nuestros nombres y rostros reales en estas redes. Lo que una vez fue el vuelo fuera del cuerpo, aterrizó nuevamente sobre nosotros y nos convirtió en seres virtualmente visibles cuando Facebook nos dio una *cara*.

La intención del autor es buscar e identificar las tendencias similares, e incluso las sincréticas, que están en vigor en los dos mundos paralelos, online y *offline*, y las importantes implicaciones que estas tendencias podrían presentar en la formación de la identidad del individuo contemporáneo. En este enfoque, una gran preocupación que no debemos subestimar es la *invisibilidad* relativa que pertenecía a los antiguos mundos online, donde el usuario estaba libre de elegir un «avatar» para representarse, o incluso crear una identidad a partir de cero. Sin embargo, los espacios físicos reales y digitales en los que vivimos hoy en día, implican que el individuo está cada vez más *visible*, el ser humano está muy influenciado por la percepción visual de los aspectos físicos y la representación de los niveles socio-económicos. También hay que destacar que en la última década, casi hemos dejado de calificar nuestras comunicaciones por el ordenador como «virtuales». Por lo tanto, el principal objetivo de la tesis se centra en la identidad y la forma en que se relaciona con las nuevas herramientas *contemporáneas* que se proporcionan y que caracterizan a estos dos mundos interrelacionados.

La importancia de este segmento de la investigación radica en distinguir los roles de «avatares», «las identidades ocultas online» e «identidades combinadas» en comparación con la «identidad real» de la persona. ¿De qué manera la cómoda invisibilidad de un «avatar» ayuda a un ser humano o le obstaculiza en su camino de auto-realización? En los primeros días del ciberespacio, la naturaleza *invisible* de la vida cotidiana online y la posibilidad que ésta facilitaba la desencarnación eran los aspectos más destacados de este tipo de socialización, que dio a la persona la opción de comunicarse *sin* su físico, el cuerpo y la imagen – o no. El suministro de esta posibilidad, que no era en absoluto el caso de la interacción social realizada en el espacio urbano, o en el espacio digital muy visible hoy en día, no sólo cambia la forma de comunicación, sino también la auto-percepción del individuo.

Una vez entró la Web 2.0, perdimos la invisibilidad, junto con el anonimato, y de repente, contar historias pequeñas de nosotros mismos en nuestros perfiles digitales no parece nada malo. Escribimos sobre nuestro estado civil en Facebook, cotilleamos en Twitter, informamos al mundo sobre las situaciones familiares y publicamos fotos personales para que todos lo vean, sin preocuparse por el hecho de que «no hay forma segura de eliminar nada de eso» (Rosenblum, 2010). Las fotos que una vez guardábamos en cajas personales y en los álbumes como ayuda de la memoria para nuestras propias narrativas y compartíamos en ciertas ocasiones con los amigos y familiares que tuvieron el privilegio de visitar nuestro espacio privado, la *casa*[home] – hoy en día, llegan a la *página de inicio*[homepage] en cambio. En esta transición inesperada y sin darnos cuenta conscientemente, también empezamos a creer las historias que contamos sobre nosotros mismos. De repente, todos somos famosos y nos dejamos llevar con nuestras propias emisiones en directo. Redes sociales online se convierten en el escaparate de las instantáneas de la vida: los lugares que visitamos; de quienes somos amigos, la ropa que nos ponemos y los locales que frecuentamos para tomar una copa, se convierten en información pública. Todo el mundo se arregla para tener la mejor foto de perfil posible, para compartirla con todo el mundo. Lo que construimos en estas plataformas supera el ser de nuestra identidad, para convertirse más en el ser de una reputación o una imagen. La construcción de nuestras identidades se convierte en una cuestión de gestión de las impresiones. La construcción de nuestras imágenes resulta más importante que la construcción de nuestras identidades – ya que la imagen se convierte en lo que más importa. Es esta transición realmente algo nuevo? ¿No ha sido siempre así? ¿Es sólo un cambio de decorado? Estamos simplemente presenciando una nueva versión tecnológica del *espectáculo* Debordiano y viviendo una vez más «todo lo que una vez fue vivido directamente [transformándose] en plena representación» (Debord, 1967: 12)?

Sean Parker lo expresa alegremente en *La Red Social*(2010), la película que narra la historia de cómo Facebook comenzó en 2004, «Vivíamos en las granjas, luego en las ciudades, y ahora vamos a vivir en Internet!» Lo que una vez vivíamos en la calle, en el espacio físico, la socialización con la identidad física, la comunicación con la apariencia física son hoy en día visibles para un público mucho más amplio en

nuestro *FacebookTV*. Un usuario de Facebook que participó en esta investigación se expresa sinceramente: «Al estar en Facebook, uno acepta ser objeto del voyerismo y muestra cierto nivel de auto-erotismo (concretamente, auto-retratos tomados a la distancia de los brazos)». El participante sigue con su definición de Facebook como «un juguete social [que] nos ayuda a compartir y difundir nuestra banalidad».

Tradicionalmente, el círculo social donde el individuo formaba su identidad personal fue limitado a la esfera privada, y estar *fuera en público* se consideraba estar en medio de extraños, y esto casi nunca fue una ocasión para expresar el *yo verdadero*. A pesar de que la tendencia social era creer en una identidad unificada, o en una identidad «saturada» siguiendo la teoría de Gergen, la forma de expresión de esta identidad en el ámbito público y privado era sustancialmente diferente (1991). No obstante, la identidad se desintegró y se virtualizó con la introducción de la comunicación de masas a través de la televisión, y más tarde a través de Internet, con lo cual Turkle definió la identidad de-centralizada en la pantalla (Turkle, citado en Stone, 1995: 59). A pesar de la virtualidad *eterna* del yo es discutible, este avance pidió una nueva perspectiva sobre el yo, la de las múltiples identidades dispersas. Algunas de estas identidades múltiples existieron sólo como identidades virtuales en el ciberespacio y, sin



Figura i.2 – ¿Qué pasa en 60 segundos en el mundo interconectado?

embargo, se consideraron importantes para el placer y la realización del verdadero yo. El yo, entonces fue capaz de desvincularse de su visibilidad y asumir una identidad virtual, que comunicaba desde detrás de la pantalla.

Sin embargo, hoy en día, la parte virtual está tan fundamentalmente integrada en nuestra vida cotidiana que no nos damos cuenta de las transiciones de una a la otra y es muy complicado hablar de una identidad descentrada o dispersa. Los debates han cambiado radicalmente en comparación con los de los primeros días de Internet, los tableros de anuncios, el ICQ y el MUD (Multi-User Dungeons), cuando los usuarios emigraron a Web 2.0. La World Wide Web, a la que nos referíamos bromeando en sus primeros días como el «World Wide Wait» [Esperar por todas partes], evolucionó más allá de todo reconocimiento en los últimos cinco años (Burrows, 2007: 14).

Hacia el final de la década de 1990, la identificación por Turkle, del ordenador como un «segundo yo», era una consideración de las relaciones que transformaban la identidad eran casi siempre «uno a uno, una sola persona con una máquina» (1997). Turkle admite, como todos nosotros, que hoy en día esto ya no es el caso. Tenemos una gran vida social online, que incluso supera a la real de vez en cuando. La identidad online, que se definió como una «multiplicación del yo verdadero» por Turkle, hoy en día, no es más que una extensión de nuestra identidad actual. Sin embargo, esta identidad *re-unificada* no es *un yo saturado*, sino más probablemente, una crisis de «multifrenía», una condición atribuida en gran parte a las tecnologías que aumentan el contacto social, una condición de estar arrastrado en direcciones múltiples y contradictorias al mismo tiempo, tal como fue definido por Gergen en *El Yo Saturado* (1991). Lo que se estamos elaborando aquí nos lleva a los conceptos de crisis de identidad definido por Erikson, probablemente en una forma que una crisis de identidad que normalmente observamos en la adolescencia se extiende a la longitud de la edad adulta e incluso toda una vida. De alguna manera, así podemos conseguir la eterna juventud que estamos buscando tan desesperadamente en el exterior, mientras esta crisis en el interior, nos deja como proyectos *incompletos* de nosotros mismos – muy lejos de la auto-realización que buscamos en nuestra propia profundidad.

Por lo tanto, este trabajo pretende analizar algunos de los ingredientes sociales que han llevado a asumir la importancia que la vida digital tiene hoy, manteniendo su enfoque en las consecuencias de estas transformaciones en la forma en que el ser humano contemporáneo se refiere a sí mismo y a su entorno social. Aunque el intento aquí no es ni valorar este siglo, ni condenarlo, en la literatura contemporánea esta relación está considerada a menudo como *enfermiza*. En esta investigación, yo prefiero usar el término como *dis-ease* [malestar], ya que se ajusta mejor a los objetivos de mi investigación, definiéndolo como una incomodidad con uno mismo con respecto a las circunstancias actuales y las herramientas de la sociedad, en vez de una enfermedad que necesita una cura.

Mi investigación anterior sobre el tema, *Desde el espacio al ciberespacio*(2000), se trataba de seguir las huellas de esta *dis-ease* en la vida social de los seres humanos, partiendo de la paranoia de la vida urbana en la ciudad industrial y pasando a la esquizofrenia en los principios del nuevo milenio con la Era de la Información. El viaje a través de los trastornos, como fue investigado anteriormente en dicho trabajo, fue el que definió el camino en el que «el individuo» se transformó en «un hombre de la multitud», y más tarde en una «terminal de múltiples redes», esparcido y disperso en las capilares de la red de comunicaciones. Simplificando el concepto de «trastorno», el análisis del proceso se basaba en la forma en que el sujeto humano se identificó y se nombró, entonces, por los efectos posteriores de las épocas que se produjo un cambio sustancial, sea la pre-capitalista, moderna o la postmoderna. El término postmoderno se utiliza de vez en cuando para referirse al mundo de hoy, que está densamente poblado e influenciado por el ordenador y las tecnologías de comunicación, aunque el postmodernismo no indica a una época, de la misma manera que hacen los demás. El postmodernismo es todavía una etapa en el curso de la modernidad, considerando la definición de Habermas de la modernidad como «un proyecto incompleto».

Hoy en día, tal vez, estamos viendo una nueva imagen, que puede ser investigada dentro de la definición de una neurosis vieja/nueva del amor extremo de uno a sí mismo: el narcisismo. Tenemos una idea general de lo que es, sin embargo, esta tesis trata de elaborar una definición de narcisismo contemporáneo – que podría ser visto como una consecuencia de los últimos avances tecnológicos y los avances en la comunicación humana, sino la fuente primaria de éstos mismos.

En su libro, *La vida en la pantalla*, Turkle captura un primer indicio de la enfermedad, en las primeras etapas de la comunicación digital, de la interacción social reproducida por ordenadores, en la edad pre-Web 2.0 y pre-Facebook:

... en una nueva variante de la historia de Narciso, la gente es capaz de enamorarse con los mundos artificiales que ha creado o que ha construido para otros. Las personas se pueden ver a sí mismas en el ordenador. La máquina puede parecer un segundo yo, una metáfora que me sugirió una chica de trece años de edad: «Cuando programas un ordenador, hay un pequeño fragmento de tu mente que ahora es un pequeño fragmento de la mente del ordenador. Y lo puedes ver». Un consejero financiero de cuarenta años se hace eco de esta sensación cuando habla de su ordenador portátil: «Me encanta la forma en que contiene toda mi vida en él» (1997: 41).

Mucho antes, Christopher Lasch hizo una referencia al narcisismo como un estado cultural del ser humano contemporáneo (1979). La cita de Turkle, define algunas de las condiciones más recientes en la sociedad digital. Con Lasch vamos a dar un paso atrás para observar las similitudes con la sociedad que él definió como «narcisista» en los setentas:



Figura i.3 – Portada de la revista TIME, 26 de diciembre de 2006. Persona del Año: TU. La Web se convirtió en una herramienta para unir las pequeñas contribuciones de millones de personas y hacer que estas tienen una importancia.

La descripción psicoanalítica del narcisista patológico, cuya sensación de mismidad depende de la validación de otros –a quienes, sin embargo, degrada– coincide en muchos sentidos con la descripción del *self* como intérprete que propone la crítica literaria y la sociología de la vida cotidiana. ... El narcisista patológico demuestra en un nivel más hondo las mismas ansiedades que, algo más atenuadas, se han vuelto moneda corriente en la interacción diaria. Las formas predominantes en la vida social incentivan, como hemos visto, múltiples formas de comportamiento narcisista. Además, han alterado el proceso de socialización de manera que alientan aún más los patrones narcisistas, al enraizarlos en la experiencia individual temprana (1999: 124).

Se puede discutir que la Web 2.0 ha cambiado el proceso de socialización de manera que fomente aún más el narcisismo. De tal manera que, en la web, identidad ya no está construida sobre cómo el individuo piensa y siente acerca de sí mismo. Por el contrario, se construye sobre cómo el individuo desea *aparecer* a los ojos de los demás. Más bien, está construido sobre la idea de que *identidad de marca* se pega mejor a la persona para alcanzar el estado social que le gustaría alcanzar. Construcción de la identidad es la gestión de las impresiones. El tipo de ansiedad que Lasch define por su «nuevo» narcisista en su día, podría ser nuestro punto de partida para tratar de entender la motivación detrás de él de hoy.

El nuevo narcisismo está obsesionado, no por la culpa, sino por la ansiedad. No busca infligir sus propias certezas a otros, sino encontrar un sentido a la vida. Liberado de las supercherías del pasado, duda incluso de la realidad de su propia existencia (Lasch, 1999: 16).

Para poder confirmar el papel de nuestras identidades/imágenes online en la *realidad* de nuestras existencias, esta investigación tiende a abordar el tema en dos caminos que pueden parecer contrarios en la primera vista. Por un lado, se van a investigar los aspectos más destacados hoy en día, en relación con la identidad física/visual y la percepción de las marcas como una forma de auto-expresión, así como

el nivel de identificación con la identidad de la marca para poder tener una aproximación de su papel en relación con la identidad personal. Por otro lado, se van a investigar las cuestiones más destacadas en el mundo virtual/invisible, con un término ya pasado de moda, el ciberespacio, con énfasis en la Web 2.0 y las posibilidades que produjo – así como la visibilidad actual que sugiere – las redes sociales, la web participativa, las comunidades online y los juegos de rol. La investigación coge estas dos ramas casi contradictorias para poder llegar a una conclusión modesta acerca de la posible fusión de estas dos identidades, la digital y la visual en nuestra contemporaneidad. Sin embargo, este punto ya había sido señalado por Baudrillard cuando Internet empezó a afectar nuestras vidas:

Ya no hay separación, ni vacío, ni ausencia: uno entra en la pantalla, en la imagen virtual sin obstáculo. Uno entra en su propia vida como en una pantalla. Uno enfila su propia vida como una combinación digital (2000: 204).

Los cambios en las modalidades de la comunicación cotidiana son sólo *unos cambios* para la mayoría de los grupos mayores de edad, sin embargo, para los usuarios que están en las primeras etapas de su desarrollo personal, sugieren efectos más importantes en la percepción de uno mismo. Distintos grupos de edad y culturas diferentes tienen tendencias diferentes en relación con sus identidades online, y esta tesis intenta identificar algunas de estas tendencias a través del empleo y evaluación de un estudio exhaustivo sobre el tema, llamado la *Encuesta sobre la vida digital*. En un mundo donde la realidad ya fue superada por la imagen y la ilusión, estas novedades más recientes indican sólo un cambio en la dirección y el enfoque del impacto: Esta vez lo que está, inevitablemente, bajo nuestra mirada cuidadosa es el yo; la identidad personal se convierte en el centro de atención debido al exceso de la conciencia de sí mismo impulsada por el protagonismo online.

En su definición muy general como una patología, el narcisismo es la percepción distorsionada y egocéntrica del mundo en el que el individuo ve a sí mismo como el centro de él. Curiosamente, el intento que Lasch hizo para definir la cultura del narcisismo en 1979, nos proporciona una descripción casi perfectamente ajustada a la situación actual. Por lo tanto, podemos llegar a una conclusión prematura de que la sociedad narcisista dio a luz a la era de Facebook como la máxima expresión de la conciencia de uno mismo, aplicada con la tecnología de última generación.

La insegura conciencia de sí mismo, que frustra cualquier intento de acción o goce espontáneos, deriva en última instancia de la creencia desfalleciente en la realidad del mundo exterior, el cual ha perdido su inmediatez en una sociedad permeada por «información simbólicamente mediatizada» ... Para el *self* intérprete, la única realidad posible es la identidad que pueda forjarse a partir de materiales aportados por la publicidad y la cultura de masas, por los temas que tratan el cine y la literatura de consumo popular y por diversos fragmentos arrancados a un vasto espectro de tradiciones culturales, todas ellas igualmente

contemporáneas para la mentalidad contemporánea. Para pulir y perfeccionar la parte que ha ideado para sí mismo, el nuevo Narciso contempla su propio reflejo, no tanto con admiración como buscando incansablemente alguna imperfección, algún indicio de fatiga o deterioro. La vida se vuelve una obra de arte en tanto cuanto, señala Norman Mailer, «la primera gran obra de un artista es el modelamiento de su propia personalidad» (Lasch, 1999: 120-121).

En este contexto, definimos el ser humano como el agente que se construye a sí mismo dando su vida la coherencia de una *narración*. Sin embargo, en el cambio de siglo, o incluso, un poco antes, la subida del diseño como un fenómeno social cambió la forma en que los seres humanos abordaron el tema de la auto-narrativa como una forma de construcción de la identidad y la experiencia. El discurso dejó lugar, poco a poco, al «proceso de diseño visual» del yo – tanto para ser experimentado en el ámbito personal, como para ser presentado y compartido en el ámbito social casi como una práctica de marketing. Se puede observar este cambio también en el dominio profesional. La regla básica de McCarthy, de «marketing mix» definió las «4P» como «Producto, Precio, Lugar [Place en inglés] y Promoción». La subida de la sociedad de diseño, dio lugar a una nueva definición de las 4P, concretamente a «Gente [People], Lugar [Place], Plan y Proyecto» (Morace, 1996). Sin embargo, refinada una vez más por Idris Mootee bajo la influencia de la Web 2.0, las nuevas 4P son: «Personalización, Participación, Peer-to-Peer y Maquetación Predictiva». Uno debe darse cuenta que el «Producto» ya no aparece, ni en la segunda actualización, ni en la tercera. Hal Foster expresa este punto concisamente, como «el paquete [ha llegado a ser] casi tan importante como el producto» en su libro *Diseño y Crimen*:

Hoy en día no hace falta ser asquerosamente rico para proyectarse no sólo como diseñador, pero también como diseñado – si el producto en cuestión es tu hogar o tu negocio, tu cara caída (cirugía de diseño) o tu personalidad rezagada (drogas de diseño), tu memoria histórica (museos de diseño) o tu futuro ADN (niños de diseño). ¿Este «individuo diseñado» podría ser el hijo no deseado del «individuo construido», tan fanfarronada en la cultura posmoderna? (2002b: 17).

Efectivamente, el paquete que significa más que el producto, la imagen asumiendo ser el producto real, todo eso suena demasiado familiar. Una relectura de *No Logo*, el manual escrito por Naomi Klein, sobre el poder actual de las marcas, nos revela:

Decidí escribir *No Logo*, cuando me di cuenta de estas tendencias aparentemente dispares estaban conectados por una sola idea – que las empresas deben producir marcas, no productos. ... Es legítimo decir que el astronómico crecimiento de la riqueza y de la influencia cultural de las empresas multinacionales que se ha producido durante los últimos quince años tiene su origen en una idea única, y al parecer inofensiva, que los teóricos de la gestión de empresas elucubraron a mediados de la década de 1980: que las empresas de éxito **deben producir ante todo marcas y no productos** (2000: xvii, 3, *énfasis añadido*).

Investigando el tema desde una perspectiva Ricoeuriana, quien argumentó que hacemos uso de historias, de la literatura y de la cultura popular, para que nos ayuden a montar el relato de nuestras propias vidas, podemos simplificar nuestros intentos de crear identidades online a cortar y pegar unos collages de nuestro contenido cultural favorito (Gauntlett, 2007: 17). En las redes sociales online, compartimos música que nos gusta, enlazamos videos de Youtube, citamos nuestros autores y filósofos favoritos, anotamos las letras de Lady Gaga para comunicar nuestros *sentimientos*. Los préstamos de la narrativa ya disponible, construimos y compartimos una identidad online, lo que Evan Ratliff, el colaborador de la revista *Wired*, llama también como «promocionar tu Propia Marca» (2010).

Sin embargo, promocionamos nuestras marcas por el bien de nuestras vidas sociales, no para decirnos a nosotros mismos quienes somos – o *sí*? Dentro de su concepto del *yo actuado*, Goffman lo pondría como, «aunque el objeto de la auto-narración es un yo único, sería un error considerar tales construcciones como el producto o la posesión de un solo yo ... en la lectura de la relación entre los acontecimientos en la vida de uno; uno se basa en el discurso que nace de intercambio social y sí, implica intrínsecamente una audiencia» (Rose, 1998: 37). Afortunadamente, la Web 2.0 llegó con herramientas como Facebook, Twitter y llegó justo a tiempo para amplificar nuestra audiencia online. ¿Cómo iba a sobrevivir la identidad en ese círculo claustrofóbico de la familia y con un número limitado de amigos con tan poco comentarios y feedback? ¿Cómo y por qué íbamos a construir *la identidad de marca* por aquel entonces?



Figura i.4 – «Eres lo que llevas». Todos llevamos cargas diversas, y quien sabe que pesa más: los primates filosóficos, o nuestras carteras, bolsos y maletines reales. Un fotógrafo de Georgia, EEUU, Jason Travis, examina los dos asuntos en su serie de fotografías «Persona» (2009), en lo cual retrata artistas, músicos, cineastas y otros residentes de Atlanta, juntos con imágenes de lo que llevan con ellos en sus vidas cotidianas.

Inmodestia prospera en Facebook y Twitter, ya que estos permiten, lo que los científicos llaman auto-mejora – la tendencia humana a exagerar nosotros mismos. Pero las redes sociales también cultivan un sentimiento de admiración mutua que el mundo actual a menudo no hace. Las redes sociales tienden a crear espirales de bondad recíproca que se refuerzan a sí mismos. Te gustan las fotos de mi gato, entonces yo también voy a felicitarte por tu ascenso en el trabajo (Ratliff, 2010: 21).

Ratliff continúa a explicar, cómo las redes sociales online dan ánimos y alimentan nuestros cuentos digitales de nosotros mismos y mantienen el mundo online en su órbita:

De hecho, James Fowler, un politólogo de la Universidad de California San Diego que estudia las redes sociales online y offline, ha demostrado que las redes positivas basadas en cooperación y altruismo tienden a prosperar, mientras las negativas tienden a disolverse. «Al parecer, la evolución favorece las conductas que nos hacen desconectar de la gente mezquina», dice Fowler. Y ¿por qué no? En un mundo moderno que nos bombardea con razones para sentirse mal con nosotros mismos, a lo mejor, hay un margen, para un poco de celebración pública adicional cuando las cosas van bien. Online, estamos a salvo anotando nuestros logros, nuestros amores, nuestros pequeños triunfos diarios, a cambio de un poco de retroalimentación positiva. Así que adelante, como dicen los gurúes de marketing, promociona Tu Marca. Pero no seas «yo primero». Sé generoso con los comentarios a los demás tal y como a ti mismo. Potencia tus amigos que merecen tus ánimos que son demasiado humildes para promocionarse, y así, vas a estar cuidando el ecosistema entero de las redes sociales (Ratliff, 2010: 22).

Habiendo establecido la base para sospechar de un narcisismo contemporáneo elevado, como las herramientas de Web 2.0 nos proporciona varios espejos online para vernos a nosotros mismos a diario, es curioso recordar una antigua tradición oriental. Elif Shafak menciona esta tradición en su discurso sobre la narración de historias en la famosa serie de *TED Talks*: Cubrir los espejos con un terciopelo grueso o colgarlos en la pared del revés. Es una vieja tradición oriental basada en el conocimiento de que pasar demasiado tiempo mirando a su propio reflejo no es sano para un ser humano (Shafak, 2010).

Estamos rodeados de espejos, siempre hemos estado rodeados de espejos, no podemos escapar de los espejos reales o metafóricos, y como seres sociales y visuales, este hecho siempre ha sido reflejado en nuestras identidades. Vale la pena señalar aquí que siempre hemos sido conscientes de tener una «identidad». En una investigación creativa llevada a cabo por David Gauntlett en 2007, utilizando los modelos de Lego para representar la identidad personal, una de las conclusiones fundamentales fue que los participantes estaban familiarizados con facilidad a la idea de tener «una identidad», lo que se podía comunicar de una manera u otra, con piezas de Lego o algún otro material visual. La noción de identidad fue aceptada como un hecho por todos los participantes y, como es lógico, sus preocupaciones estaban en la línea de «¿Qué aspectos voy a mostrar?» y «¿Qué elementos voy a usar?» (Gauntlett, 2007: 186). «Identidad» no es sólo una construcción teórica externa de los filósofos o sociólogos, pero ya está integrado en la vida cotidiana y es parte de nuestra conciencia de nosotros mismos a diario. Por tanto, al investigar identidades online, ha de ser considerada la idea de que la gente está demasiado preocupada por sus representaciones online que constituyen sus perfiles de Facebook o sus blogs. En su mayor parte derivado del instinto de «vender» de la sociedad de consumo y de la «Generación Yo», la identidad tiende a ser una herramienta más de marketing, y, finalmente, podemos hablar de *una identidad de marca* que se construye con el fin de estar mejor valorado online – y offline.

Durante siglos la gente ha socializado en la calle, cara a cara con los demás. Las últimas décadas se nos presentó un nuevo medio en lo cual socializar, que no exige nuestra presencia física. Hoy, en todos los ámbitos, desde la investigación académica a las charlas entre amigos hablamos de la presencia de redes sociales online en nuestras vidas: exhibicionismo, voyerismo o simplemente la necesidad de socializar? Howard Rheingold responde en una entrevista reciente:

Reformula la pregunta sustituyendo las «redes sociales online» con la « la vida cotidiana actual». Los sociólogos han sido discutiendo durante mucho tiempo cómo los seres humanos actúan para cambiar la forma en la que los demás les perciben. Si hemos de tener en cuenta la versión online de esta actuación, sí, Twitter, blogs y similares son herramientas que ayudan a las personas a comunicar sus fachadas narcisistas. Lo que necesitamos saber en este proceso de democratización de la comunicación es cómo elegir la información útil y auténtica en este río de fraude y charlatanismo. Los seres humanos son muy buenos en olfatear lo falso cuando se comunican cara a cara. Ahora lo que falta para dominar es cómo hacer lo mismo en el mundo virtual. ... Estamos en un período de transición, de adaptación y regulación. La gente tiene que saber qué es lo que tiene valor en la socialización online y dónde trazar la línea (Tuna, 2010).

Así que aquí estamos una vez más, en otra transición, esta vez de aprender a vivir online, mientras nuestras identidades digitales y actuales se fusionan en uno.

Hipótesis de la investigación

En nuestra contemporaneidad, en la actualidad, el proceso de construirse de una identidad se ha hecho aún más complicado de lo que venía siendo antes de la irrupción e implantación generalizada de la web 2.0. Además de las bases tradicionales que aún persisten en el proceso de construcción de la identidad -tales como la familia, los amigos, los aspectos religiosos y nacionales propios a cada uno- hoy tenemos nuevas herramientas que nos permiten *jugar* con nuestra identidad. La Web 2.0, nuestra última herramienta de *auto-expresión*, está cambiando nuestra primera concepción del ciberespacio – en la que predominaba la idea de invisibilidad – sustituyéndola por la *super-visibilidad* de nuestra identidad digitalmente editada.

A principios del siglo XXI, cuando Turkle definió la *identidad descentralizada*, se refería a una multiplicidad paralela (de la/s identidad/es). Pero hoy en día estamos inmersos en un proceso en que nuestra *identidad en la pantalla* es cada vez más parte/reflejo de nuestro *yo verdadero*, de nuestro *yo real*. A la vez que, nuestra *identidad en la pantalla* es (1) nuestro reflejo de la sociedad narcisista, (2) un reflejo de la sociedad narcisista sobre nosotros, (3) un reflejo de la sociedad narcisista que hay en nosotros y (4) un reflejo de la sociedad narcisista en que vivimos, casi una imagen manipulada para el auto-marketing.

De ahí que la corroboración de la hipótesis de esta tesis vendría a responder la multifacética pregunta de si nos estamos convirtiendo poco a poco en las *imágenes vacías* que hemos creado de nosotros mismos a medida que nuestras identidades *real* y *digital* convergen: ***Yo soy mi imagen 2.0 [de la marca que he manipulado y construido cuidadosamente]***.

Objetivos de la investigación

Para poder llegar a una humilde conclusión en la hipótesis planteada por esta investigación, ha sido previsto la cobertura de los siguientes objetivos :

- Investigar los fenómenos que afectan a la construcción de la identidad humana actual en dos «capas»: Nuestras relaciones cambiantes con nuestros seres actuales y cómo reconstruimos quienes somos con las identidades digitales/imágenes que elegimos para expresar y comunicarnos.
- ¿Cómo nuestra reflexión en la pantalla empezó a cambiar con la llegada de las redes sociales online y en qué momento se ha perdido (si fuera el caso) la frontera que separa el reflejo y lo real.
- Investigar los procesos de auto-construcción y si la oportunidad que el ciberespacio nos proporcionó de jugar con las identidades, ha tenido/está teniendo efectos positivos en el objetivo final de auto-realización.
- Rastrear el fenómeno de la crisis identitaria/la enfermedad a través de las transformaciones de la comunicación interpersonal, sea en la calle o en el ciberespacio.
- Comprender la base de la «sociedad narcisista» y cómo se está efectuando (si lo hace) la evacuación y la bidimensionalización de la identidad.
- Aproximar cómo la presencia online y el estado de no ser anónimo en las redes sociales más populares como Facebook, Twitter y Tuenti están afectando la forma en la que nos relacionamos con nuestra propia identidad y cómo la importancia aumentada de la imagen y de la identidad online está resultando en la construcción de marcas (imágenes) que venden.

Estructura de la tesis doctoral

Esta tesis doctoral consta de seis capítulos, organizados según el interés académico y en relación con los objetivos de investigación descritos anteriormente. El desarrollo del marco teórico de la investigación y la evaluación de los datos recogidos fueron tratados de acuerdo con esta estructura.

El primer capítulo, «Espejos de la identidad», trata de cubrir las teorías desarrolladas sobre la identidad y más tarde sobre el yo, investigando los campos relacionados en psicología, sociología, filosofía, semiótica y ciencias de la comunicación. Empezando en la etapa del espejo de Lacan, y extendiéndose a lo largo de nuestras vidas, identificamos, definimos y redefinimos a nosotros mismos en los entornos sociales que atravesamos. En el camino hacia una auto-realización ideal, nos encontramos con varias fases de crisis identitaria que surgen por los conflictos entre el yo ideal y el yo obligatorio, así como entre el yo público y privado. En el eje de lo imaginario, lo simbólico, lo virtual y lo real, este capítulo trata de identificar hasta qué punto nuestros interiores y exteriores se fusionan y se separan. Buscando las transformaciones de la identidad en la ciudad, en la pantalla y en la red, el capítulo se concluye con la manera en que la sociedad de consumo está involucrada en la construcción de nuestras identidades sociales.

El segundo capítulo da un giro inesperado para investigar cómo nuestra relación con el espacio ha reflexionado sobre nuestros cuerpos y nuestra percepción. A partir de las evoluciones tecnológicas del espacio urbano y la insatisfacción provocada por tales cambios, se investiga el concepto de ciberespacio como un espacio *real* de comunicación interpersonal y con ella *el salto fuera* del cuerpo. La intención en este capítulo es profundizar en la metamorfosis de la identidad humana a través de los cambios en los modos de comunicación, así como en la percepción del tiempo y el espacio.

En el tercer capítulo de la tesis, «Del yo en la pantalla al yo 2.0», tratamos de dar una retrospectiva del viaje que el ser humano ha recorrido a través de los espacios de comunicación en las últimas dos décadas. Con especial énfasis en nuestra vida anterior y actual en la pantalla, las consecuencias de la llegada de la Web 2.0 y la red en nuestra vida cotidiana serán investigadas en este capítulo para comprender la forma diferente/similar en que nuestra identidad se refleja en la pantalla y en la ciudad. Actuamos de maneras diferentes, tratando de manipular nuestras imágenes en los ojos de los demás, tanto online como offline. A lo largo de este capítulo vamos a estar investigando cómo el cambio de percepción en el eje de lo real/virtual y de lo público/privado resulta en un efecto drástico en nuestra construcción de identidad e imagen.

El cuarto capítulo aborda el tema desde una perspectiva incómoda, en este capítulo llamado «Crisis de identidad», se investiga el punto de vista distópica que ha sido asociada con la identidad humana a través de varias metáforas de enfermedad a lo largo de las últimas décadas. Desde la histeria y la paranoia urbana de la ciudad industrial, hasta la esquizofrenia capitalista de Deleuze y Guattari y los debates anteriores y actuales sobre el individuo narcisista, el objetivo es observar los cambios en la percepción de los límites que nos separan de los demás. La confusión de los límites entre el interior y el exterior, nos está llevando a la desaparición del otro como un punto de referencia. Dentro de esta

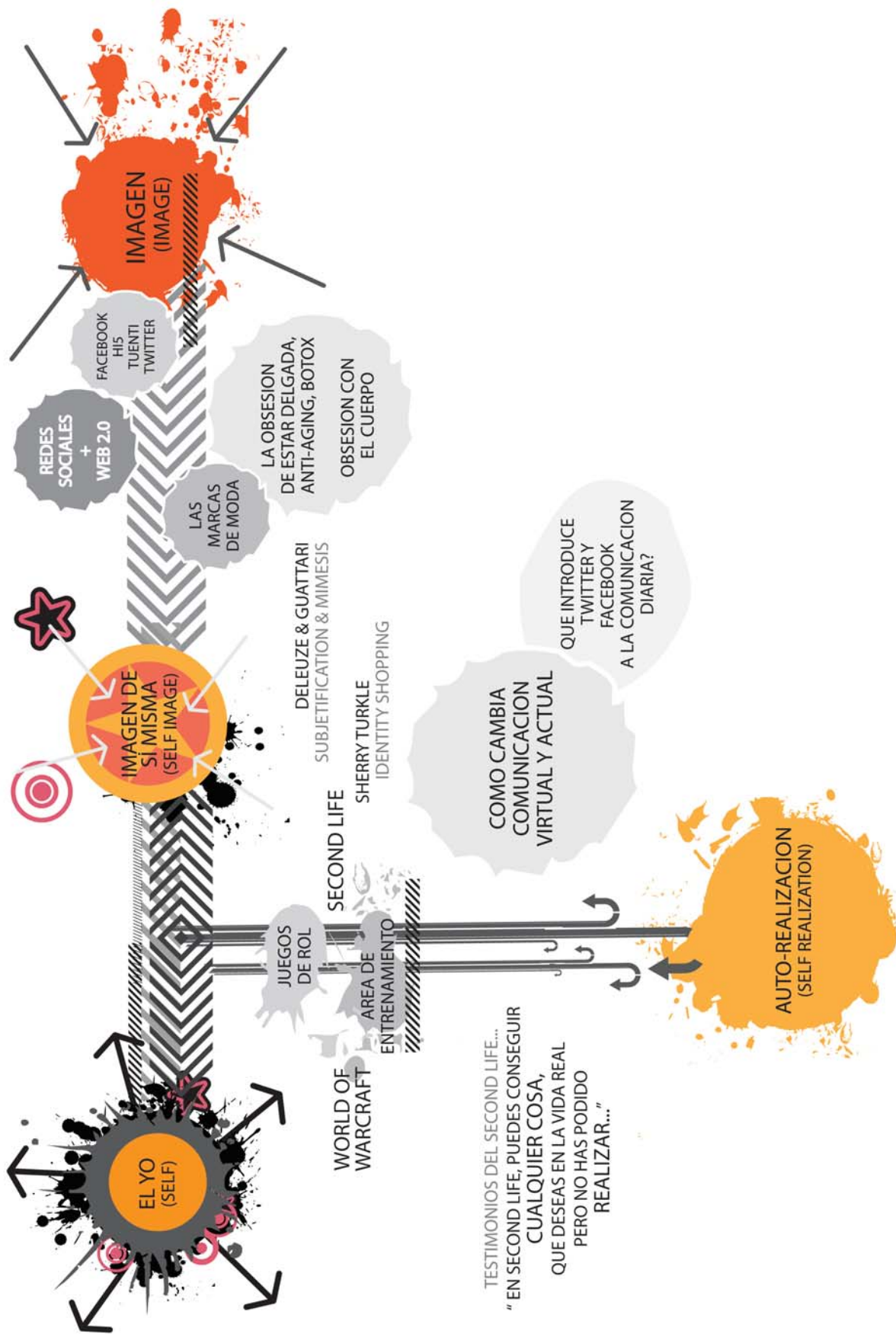


Figure i.5 – Un esquema de la relación entre la imagen, la autoestima y la identidad, junto con las tendencias actuales que influyen en la relación entre los tres, como están elaboradas en esta investigación. Zeynep Arda (2009).

perspectiva, también incluimos una sección sobre el *flâneur* que deambulaba las calles de la metrópolis industrial del siglo diecinueve. Esta sección también trata los intentos de Facebook para crear una perspectiva filosófica sobre el concepto cambiante del bienestar del individuo social.

El quinto capítulo, «El Yo Como Una Marca» ofrece una breve descripción de la sociedad de consumo y el papel de las marcas en nuestras vidas, así como las formas de construir y presentarlas. A partir de la transformación (y de la evacuación) de la comunicación, el debate se centra en cómo el ser humano se reduce a una imagen bidimensional. En esta sección, analizamos también la continuidad del yo/auto-imagen/imagen, la forma en que *social media* está cambiando la comunicación y auto-marketing. La tendencia contemporánea a crear *marcas* de nosotros mismos es uno de los factores principales que afecta la auto-presentación 2.0, mientras entender a nuestro público también es muy importante en la gestión de impresión en esta manera.

El sexto capítulo, «Las conclusiones de la encuesta sobre la vida digital», se dedica a la evaluación detallada de los datos obtenidos a través de la aplicación de la encuesta del mismo nombre. Un total de 946 participantes de todo el mundo respondieron preguntas sobre la manera en que nos presentamos online y la identidad que creamos para nosotros mismos, además de secciones sobre las tendencias de autoestima y narcisismo. Este capítulo se centra en la evaluación de los datos recopilados de dicha muestra, con el objetivo de llegar a conclusiones sobre la importancia de la auto-presentación online y las correlaciones entre nuestras historias digitales, la autoestima y las tendencias narcisistas.

Metodología de la Investigación

Con la intención de diseccionar y estudiar en detalle esa hipótesis compleja y multidisciplinaria, he hecho uso de varios instrumentos para llegar a la mejor combinación deconstructivista posible de todos los datos recogidos durante el tiempo limitado de esta investigación. Las líneas de investigación abiertas por este trabajo podrían ampliarse en el futuro para llegar a conclusiones más concretas sobre cómo los seres humanos se relacionan socialmente y consigo mismos en nuestra sociedad contemporánea.

Facebook, el narcisismo y el discurso de enfermedad en relación a la identidad del individuo contemporáneo son temas de plena actualidad tanto en la literatura académica como en los medios de comunicación populares. Sin embargo, no existe un estudio global, que cubra lo que estos temas significan para el individuo hoy en día, o si estas nuevas tecnologías ayudan a construir psicologías humanas más felices y sanas. Partiendo de las teorías clásicas de la salud mental positiva e investigando

las patologías probables en relación con el yo, la auto-imagen y la imagen, esta tesis intentará recopilar todos los factores relevantes para poder dar un toque académico a la charla cotidiana sobre la Web 2.0 y sus efectos secundarios.

El concepto de la identidad humana es, sin duda, una cuestión cuantitativa y subjetiva, pero como siempre, nuestros juicios personales están ensombrecidos a menudo por las corrientes principales – incluso cuando nos centramos solamente en nosotros mismos. Nuestra época no es diferente en cuanto a sus influencias sociológicas. Por ello, esta tesis se inicia en la forma en que construimos las imágenes de nosotros mismos para llegar a entender hasta qué punto somos susceptibles a las influencias externas. Construyendo una teoría sobre la influencia de Facebook en nuestra vida cotidiana y sobre cómo nos relacionamos con nosotros mismos, esta tesis trae algunas tendencias actuales a la atención académica a través de su uso de datos reales y métodos estadísticos.

No obstante, debemos aclarar algunos puntos sobre el alcance de este trabajo. En este marco de investigación, investigamos «identidad» como un concepto *urbano*, un concepto de los habitantes de la metrópolis moderna, y de la imagen de uno mismo en este entorno. Con plena conciencia de la brecha digital entre varias partes de la sociedad y varias regiones del mundo, en esta tesis estamos investigando la población familiarizada con la tecnología y no tratando de buscar los casos extremos, como los efectos de la Web 2.0 sobre la construcción de identidad en las tribus africanas. Nuestro sujeto es el individuo moderno consciente de su identidad. Sin embargo, tampoco tratamos de hacer un análisis entero de la identidad tal como lo haríamos en el campo de la psicología. En su lugar, esta tesis está tratando la identidad dentro de la perspectiva de comunicación e interacción social.

Otro punto significativo es la imposibilidad de imponer la misma hipótesis en los diferentes tipos de usuarios de *social media*. Es importante identificar que existen tres perspectivas principales dentro del social media y este trabajo está implicado sólo en uno de ellos. En primer lugar, a algunas personas no les importa la Web 2.0 y otras herramientas digitales y no las utilizan. Este grupo de personas no tienen cuentas de Twitter o Facebook, o son usuarios inactivos, ya que no les parece necesario este tipo de comunicación. Sin embargo, podríamos decir que incluso este grupo se ve afectado en parte por *social media*, ya que la mayoría de sus contactos utiliza este tipo de herramientas en sus comunicaciones diarias, y de alguna manera, este grupo se queda desconectado.

Luego, hay un segundo grupo de personas que utilizan estas herramientas, simplemente como meras *herramientas* que son y nada más. Tienen perfiles de Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, LinkedIn o Youtube, suben fotos o videos sólo para compartir con un par de amigos más cercanos – como lo harían en la vida real. Este grupo de usuarios tiene cuentas de Twitter y las usan solamente para seguir las novedades en

sus campos de interés y no para *tweetear* lo que comieron para desayunar esta mañana o la ruta que cogieron para llegar a la oficina. Ellos tienen LinkedIn u otras cuentas relacionadas con el trabajo para gestionar y mantener sus redes de contactos. Para ellos, la Web 2.0 es una plataforma de aplicaciones.

El tercer grupo de personas es nuestro enfoque principal de esta tesis. Este es el grupo de tendencia mayoritaria en términos de *social media*. Estos usuarios tienen cuentas en todos los tipos de redes sociales online y sacan el máximo partido de ellas. Se socializan y cuentan su vida en plan *lifecasting* en Facebook, Twitter o Tuenti, reciben retroalimentación constantemente sobre cómo se ven o lo que hacen, y muchas veces les gusta presumir de sus capitales sociales. «Esto es lo que soy, esta es mi casa, esta es mi vida y estas son las personas con las que paso mis días» es el mensaje que emiten. Esta investigación se centra en este mismo comportamiento de mayor tendencia, que construye y mantiene lo que llamamos *social media*, hoy en día, y no en los *marginales contemporáneos* que no quieren estar *ahí fuera*.

Una última nota sobre este trabajo es que no tiene la pretensión de revisar la totalidad de las últimas investigaciones académicas sobre el crecimiento de Facebook. Sin embargo, es la investigación de las teorías clásicas de auto-presentación, comunicación y crisis de identidad, para poder deducir los cambios y transformaciones en la sociedad que nos traen hoy a Facebook y a la manera en que lo empleamos. De una manera casi deconstructivista, pedimos conceptos prestados de varios filósofos y autores para explicar la identidad en la era de Facebook. Algunos de los autores citados han vivido y muerto mucho antes de que Facebook hubiera entrado en nuestras vidas. Sin embargo, los conceptos que discutieron acerca de la identidad están todavía vigentes para explicar los fenómenos actuales, lo cual también nos indica que las novedades en la comunicación afectan a la forma de construcción y percepción de la identidad, pero no, a su esencia per se. Los seres humanos siguen siendo seres humanos, como siempre, y la identidad en su esencia es la misma de siempre, por lo tanto, hemos trasladado los conceptos que existían mucho antes de Facebook para demostrar nuestro punto.

Los lectores de mi tesis siempre son libres de no coincidir con los argumentos que aquí se presentan; como todos sabemos, el conocimiento científico avanza a través de los investigadores que poseen la potestad de realizar cualquier tipo de reclamación, siempre que estas reclamaciones sean lo suficiente concretas para que otros las puedan probar y estar en desacuerdo con ellas potencialmente. A continuación, voy a explicar los métodos utilizados en esta investigación para entretejer los hilos independientes de distintos campos.

Revisión de la literatura actual y observaciones personales

La metodología utilizada consiste en varios instrumentos de investigación. Además de la revisión de la literatura y de la Web para obtener información actualizada y para construir la base teórica, la tesis está basada también en observaciones en *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *World of Warcraft* y *Second Life*, así como varias otras redes populares y juegos online. A pesar de que Facebook no ha sido el centro absoluto de la investigación al principio, los intentos de construir y perfeccionar la hipótesis, han orientado la investigación de forma automática a ésta – la más popular de todas las redes sociales online. Esta orientación se confirmó con el estudio cuantitativo llevado a cabo, ya que una gran mayoría, el 83,1% de los participantes han señalado en la dirección de las redes sociales y de Facebook en particular. Esta mayoría relleno el apartado dedicado a Facebook en la *Encuesta sobre la vida digital*, definiéndola así como la red social más visitada.

Twitter fue investigado paralelamente, en un intento de comprender su peculiar popularidad. La comunicación en Twitter es parecida a Facebook en el sentido de no tener un destinatario específico y estar orientada a una comunicación de masas. Sin embargo, nos resulta que los *tweets* en Twitter sirven para ampliar la presencia online, normalmente con fines comerciales. Después de haber alcanzado el nivel de investigación requerido en el análisis de Twitter, el rumbo de la investigación fue dirigido a Facebook, de nuevo, para entender lo que David Kirkpatrick llama el «efecto Facebook».

La investigación de los mundos virtuales y de los juegos de rol masivos de multi-jugadores online (MMORPG) demostró que éstos han perdido parte de sus influencias como espacios de «vuelo fuera del cuerpo y de la libertad ilimitada de la creación de identidades anónimas». Aunque estuvieron mejor valorados al comienzo de esta investigación, al final resultaron ser «sólo juegos» y poco más. La antigua fascinación con el ciberespacio como un «núcleo de comunicación anónima e invisible, donde uno es libre de ser quien quiera ser» (Arda, 2000), parece haberse calmado, ya que con la Web 2.0, la tendencia online es comunicar con nuestra identidad real y combinar la vida digital con la real en un «lifemix».

Haber optado por *World of Warcraft* como el actual y más popular representante de los MMORPGs hoy en día, el autor dedicó mucho tiempo a crear un *avatar* y una identidad en WOW. Gracias a la comunicación en este entorno, «Reinamaga» actualmente tiene varios «amigos avatares» en ciudades españolas que nunca ha visitado – que han ayudado a entender de lo está hecho este mundo virtual.

Second Life se hizo parte de la investigación de una manera similar, por sus numerosos suscriptores. Sus *residentes* no lo consideran como un «juego», sino como una *ventana* a grandes oportunidades. Aunque su lógica es similar a los MUDs anteriores, en la forma de construir un avatar y el mundo, sus componentes visuales de tres dimensiones y sus posibilidades ilimitadas para la creatividad, lo han

convertido a un mundo *réplica*. Ya que es el caso en la *primera vida*, el consumo es el rey también en esta comunidad virtual. En este trabajo, llegamos a evaluar *Second Life* a través de los testimonios de otras personas, mientras los otros tres, *Facebook*, *Twitter* y *World of Warcraft* fueron confirmados a través de la experiencia práctica propia y las observaciones del autor. Muy poca observación personal en *Second Life* fue llevada a cabo, ya que estos «mundos» virtuales requieren mucho tiempo dedicado exclusivamente a ellos, para revelar sus «secretos» a sus usuarios/ investigadores.

El estudio preliminar de Facebook

Durante todo el proceso, Facebook resultó ser significativa, como un medio de comunicación, por lo tanto, cumpliendo perfectamente su *raison d'être*, ya que permitió al autor alcanzar una muestra más amplia y más universal, y obtener resultados mucho más fiables. Durante agosto y septiembre de 2010, Facebook fue utilizado como una herramienta para llevar a cabo una pequeña encuesta preliminar, entender su uso percibido, sus pros y contras a través de los testimonios de los mismos usuarios.

El 28 de agosto de 2010, la pregunta genérica «¿Qué piensas de Facebook?» fue enviada uno por uno a 670 usuarios de esta red social. En lugar de un muestreo aleatorio, para poder obtener respuestas más o menos sinceras, «amigos» y «amigos de los amigos» fueron seleccionados como el público objetivo. Los participantes recibieron un mensaje privado a través de Facebook, utilizando un tono muy personal. El autor se dirigió a los posibles participantes de la misma forma que les trataría en la vida cotidiana actual. La pregunta estaba formulada en inglés, turco y español, y se recibió un total de 391 respuestas desde todas las partes del mundo, fechando la llegada de la última de ellas el 2 de noviembre de 2010. Todas las respuestas fueron evaluadas para ser utilizadas básicamente de dos maneras:

1 - Utilizar como una creativa y participativa lista de comprobación antes de ejecutar la verdadera Encuesta sobre la vida digital. El estudio previo de una sola pregunta era informal y amistoso, en la manera *natural* de las comunicaciones en Facebook. La pregunta fue enviada, adrede, a todos los participantes en un mensaje privado, en lugar de un comentario público sobre el muro de Facebook del autor o en el formato de un quiz. Esta decisión consciente se basaba en dos supuestos básicos. Vivimos en la era de la etiqueta de la red, sin embargo, algunas costumbres sociales están muy bien cuidadas y en general se considera de mala educación no responder a los correos electrónicos recibidos. Las personas tienen más probabilidades de responder a un mensaje si el mensaje está enviado a ellos personalmente, y en el caso de los correos electrónicos, los receptores CC (con copia) no están obligados a responder. El segundo supuesto fue que las personas son más propensas a responder con sinceridad y a expresar sus ideas personales en una comunicación uno a uno, ya que no estarán sesgados por las ideas de los demás.

2 - Citar las respuestas de los actuales usuarios de Facebook y su terminología, basada en la creencia de que esto añadiría un tono más «real» a esta investigación y a esta aproximación de la vida social que tiene lugar en la web. Este supuesto resultó ser muy útil, ya que varios de los participantes dieron una explicación muy elaborada de su perspectiva personal sobre el tema, utilizando definiciones y metáforas muy creativas. Cabe mencionar en este punto que el método aplicado no fue un profundo análisis del discurso, pero sólo una revisión general de la perspectiva actual en el medio.

La encuesta sobre la vida digital

Después del estudio preliminar en Facebook, se preparó un estudio cuantitativo completo y éste se llevó a cabo en diciembre de 2010. El objetivo fue investigar en detalle, el comportamiento de los internautas en la vida digital, y las identidades que construyen en la web, sea un avatar en *World of Warcraft* o en *Second Life*; o un perfil *real* en *Facebook*, *Twitter*, o *Tuenti*.

La metodología del estudio fue seleccionado con la intención de adaptarse al medio. La encuesta fue llamada la *Encuesta sobre la vida digital* para crear una percepción general de la cuestión y para evitar cualquier prejuicio o sesgo que se puede crear mediante el uso de los títulos de «Escala de autoestima» o «La medición del narcisismo». La encuesta se llevó a cabo completamente online, utilizando el sistema digital de Lime Survey, y fue ubicado en los servidores de la Universitat Jaume I, en el dominio «<http://digitallife.uji.es>». Teniendo en cuenta la actualidad del tema, la colocación de la encuesta en un subdominio de la página web de la universidad ha sido una elección intencionada. El objetivo era dar a la encuesta un aspecto más serio y distinguirla del formato «Facebook quiz» – una aplicación muy popular de esta red social online.

La encuesta tiene tres secciones principales, además de una cuarta sección de preguntas introductorias para la recopilación de los datos socio-demográficos de la muestra:

1 - Escala de autoestima de Rosenberg:

Desarrollado por el Dr. Morris Rosenberg, este instrumento consta de 10 ítems destinados a medir «la autoestima global» en el sentido descrito por Rosenberg como:

«Cuando le caracterizamos a una persona como una de alta autoestima ... queremos decir que tiene respeto a sí mismo, que se considera a sí mismo como una persona valiosa. Aprecia sus propios méritos, sin embargo, reconoce sus defectos ... que tiene esperanza y espera superar sus imperfecciones ... El término «baja autoestima» ... significa que el individuo no tiene respeto a sí mismo, se considera indigno, inadecuado, o muy deficiente de alguna otra manera como persona» (1979: 54).

Rosenberg escribió la Escala de Autoestima utilizando el «método directo» y considerando su uso con facilidad, su rapidez, su forma unidimensional y validez (Wylie, 1989: 25). Todas estas cualidades estaban en sintonía con los objetivos de la encuesta desarrollada para esta tesis y fueron consideradas en las demás secciones también. Como se trataba de una encuesta online, con el ambicioso objetivo de medir varios aspectos de la hipótesis, cada componente de la encuesta tenía unidimensional para no perjudicar la fiabilidad de los resultados.

Originalmente utilizado con una escala de 4 puntos por Rosenberg, en su estudio llevado a cabo en 1965 sobre 5.024 estudiantes de secundaria en Nueva York, se usó el mismo formato para mantener la coherencia y la fiabilidad del instrumento en las diferentes traducciones y adaptaciones. La versión en español estaba traducida y validada por Martín-Albo, Núñez, Navarro & Grijalvo en 2007, así como la versión turca de Uyanik Balat y Akman que se desarrolló en 2004.

Para las respuestas se utilizó el formato típico de Likert de cuatro niveles, desde «completamente en desacuerdo» a «completamente de acuerdo». Uno de los objetivos de mantener la escala consistente en todas las secciones de la encuesta fue el intercambio de las variables dependientes e independientes para conseguir ambas perspectivas en la evaluación de los resultados. El muestreo aleatorio utilizado en la investigación para el efecto de baja autoestima o alta narcisismo se midieron con relación a la actitud de la representación online, y viceversa, el efecto de la importancia dada a la representación online estaba basada en alta o baja autoestima o un narcisismo alto.

La fiabilidad de la Escala de Autoestima de Rosenberg ha sido demostrada a lo largo de los largos años de su uso en la psicología. En este caso la escala se utilizó para obtener una evaluación directa y rápida de los participantes en términos de su autoestima, para poder compararlo con su comportamiento online más tarde.

2 - La Medición Empírica del Narcisismo (NPI)

Con el objetivo de medir la inclinación hacia una identidad de marca evacuada sustituyendo la identidad humana verdadera, el narcisismo fue seleccionado como un indicador de la separación del yo de la misma. La NPI, desarrollado originalmente por Raskin y Terry (1988) como un inventario de cuarenta preguntas con respuestas obligadas, es el que está más empleado en este campo de psicología social. La NPI se formuló basado en los criterios clínicos del Trastorno Narcisista de la Personalidad (NPD), tal y como está descrito en el Manual Diagnóstico y Estadístico de Trastornos Mentales-III (DSM-III), sin embargo, fue diseñado por Raskin y Terry para medir características similares en la población general: No es un instrumento de diagnóstico para un trastorno de la personalidad, ni uno para clasificar las personas que puntúan muy alto en él como diagnosticados con NPD.

A pesar de la fiabilidad global aceptable exhibido por la escala entera, los módulos de factores distintos también resultó aceptable para medir NPD. Por lo tanto, de acuerdo con los objetivos de esta tesis, la NPI se utilizó en parte para medir las dimensiones de «superficialidad», así como una discrepancia entre la autoestima demostrada y la falta de la misma en un narcisista.

El inventario original considera siete factores de narcisismo: la superioridad, el exhibicionismo, la pretensión, la vanidad, la autoridad, la explotación y la autosuficiencia. Sin embargo, Pinsky y Young, evaluando los resultados de una investigación reciente donde la NPI ha sido utilizada, confirmaron que es importante tener en cuenta cuales de los rasgos resultan dominantes. En su opinión, una puntuación global que refleja más puntos en vanidad, pretensión, exhibicionismo y explotación es más preocupante que una puntuación alta en autoridad, auto-suficiencia y superioridad (Pinsky & Young, 2009: 254).

Por lo tanto, en el uso de la NPI como parte de esta investigación, el único objetivo es tener una base para empezar a construir. El narcisismo es un tema muy presente en nuestra contemporaneidad y hay posibilidad de que pueda estar identificado como una dificultad parcialmente responsable de los sentimientos de vacío, el funcionamiento interpersonal o la imposibilidad de ver a cualquier otra perspectiva que no sea la nuestra. Ya que es muy difícil generalizar, y hacer una generalización sin evidencia real sería simplista, por no decir académicamente inadecuada, me gustaría utilizar los resultados cuantitativos obtenidos a partir de la realización de este inventario, la evaluación que, junto con las formas en que nos expresamos con las herramientas Web 2.0.

Otro punto que se debe mencionar sobre la metodología es que esta sección de la encuesta no reveló su objetivo de medir el narcisismo, para no causar una opinión sesgada y negativa por parte de los participantes, aunque las preguntas son bastante reveladoras. Este punto no debe ser entendido como un engaño, ya que el objetivo era sólo obtener datos imparciales y llegar a una comprensión global de la condición humana en nuestra contemporaneidad con relación a la Web 2.0, y claramente no hemos tratado de diagnosticar los estados psicológicos de cada uno de los participantes.

3 - Presentación del Self Online

Esta sección se compone de preguntas sobre la actitud de las personas comunicando online, en las redes sociales o en los juegos de multi-jugadores. Con un enfoque particular en el nivel de participación en estos medios mencionados, preguntas sobre la imagen de sí mismo, de la comunicación interpersonal y la auto-expresión están incluidos en esta parte. Dependiendo del tipo de la pregunta, los participantes responden utilizando una escala de Guttman o de Likert.

A los participantes se les pide que seleccionen entre *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *World of Warcraft* o *Second Life* para responder las preguntas en el tema elegido, lo cual corresponde a la red o el juego que utilizan más frecuentemente. Como todos los participantes llenan todas las preguntas en los dos apartados anteriores, la elección que hacen en este punto nos permite comparar los resultados de los participantes con actitudes diferentes entre sí, y también con las puntuaciones en la NPI y la escala de autoestima.

Combinando los resultados obtenidos, la tesis se concluye con una evaluación global de los hallazgos y con la justificación de la hipótesis original. Para un tema tan actual, no disponemos de un método de probada eficacia, ni teorías comprobadas. No obstante, la investigación trata de alcanzar sus objetivos con una combinación deconstructivista de todos los instrumentos que han estado utilizados – a pesar de sus complicaciones y limitaciones inevitables. Una de las limitaciones más obvias es el hecho que el proceso de preguntar es una «intervención» en sí. Como fue mencionado también por algunos de los participantes de la encuesta preliminar en Facebook, la gente realmente no piensa en cómo se ven afectadas por estos medios, ni se dan cuenta de los cambios sociológicos hasta cuando les preguntamos deliberadamente al respecto. Por lo tanto, en todas las preguntas que hacemos sobre el tema, comenzando con la primera y la más general, «¿Qué piensas de Facebook?», los participantes están conscientes del hecho de que están tomando parte en una investigación.

La disertación incluye un apartado final y comprehensivo las referencias que cubre toda la literatura consultada y citada en esta investigación, así como las publicaciones populares y recursos de Internet utilizados. Los contenidos de esta sección están organizados en diferentes títulos, tales como, «Identidad offline», «El espacio urbano y la interacción cara a cara», «La interacción online», «Los videojuegos y los mundos virtuales», «Web 2.0 y las redes sociales online», «Identidad de marca» y «Recursos generales» para facilitar su uso por los lectores de diferentes formaciones académicas y distintos intereses.

CHAPTER 01 | MIRRORS OF IDENTITY



CHAPTER 01

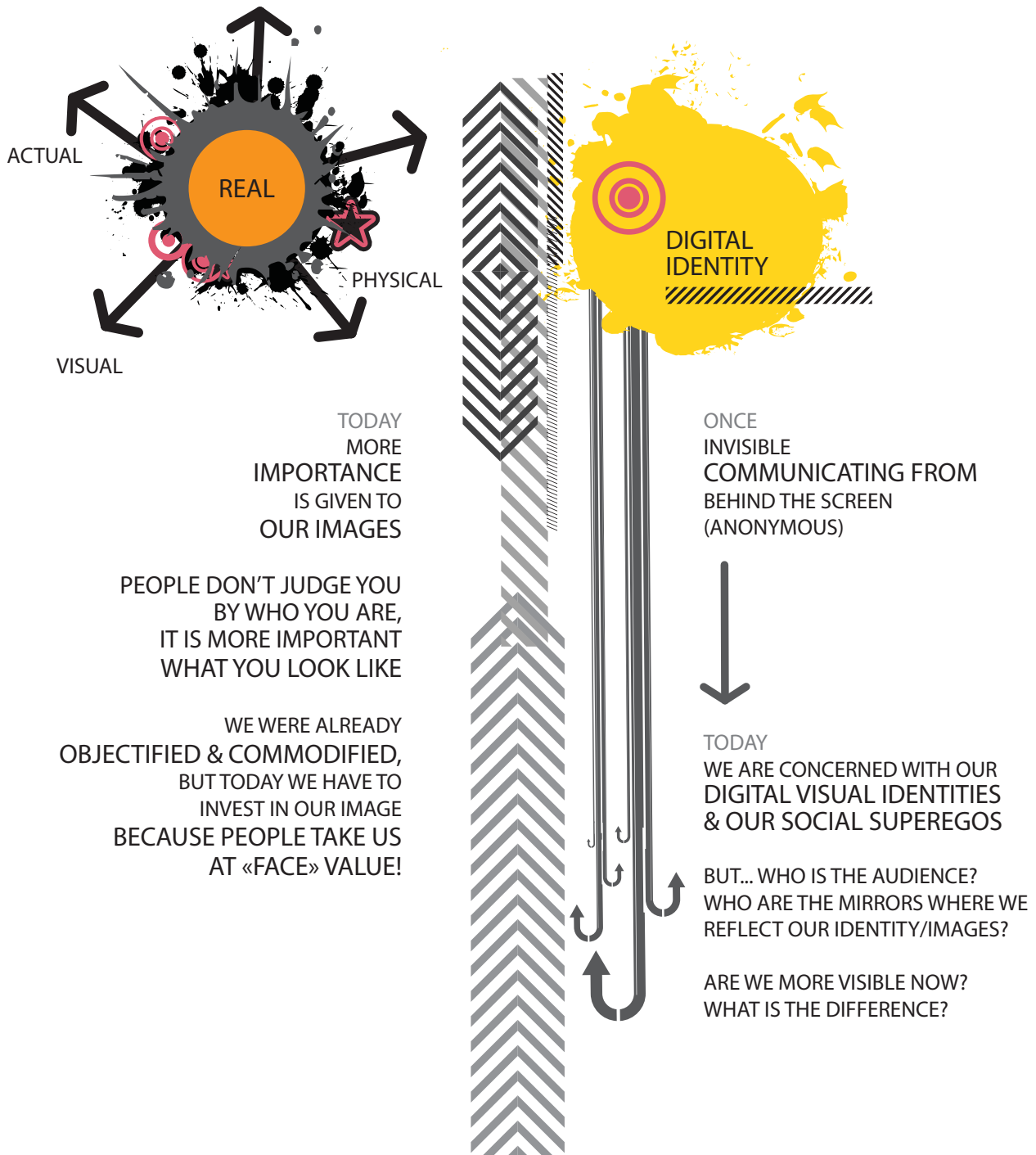


Figure 1.1 - Schema comparing *actual* identity with digital identity today. Zeynep Arda (2010).



Identity is a curious, intriguing concept, and according to some social scientists and philosophers, it is a concept that is already «under erasure»: no longer serviceable, not even «good to think with» as it has already been exhausted in several directions in several disciplines (Hall, 1996; Derrida, 1981). Then what is the need for a further debate about it? Probably we still cling to identity as among several different time-consuming digital concepts in our daily lives, identity is the only one that somehow seems to stay familiar. Theories, philosophies, concepts tell us that «identity» is in crisis, it is evacuated, fragmented, decentralized, schizophrenic, discontinuous, diseased; nevertheless human beings are still convinced that they have identities and that, no matter what, their identities are «unified» (Gauntlett, 2007: 188-189). And yet, in the place of the self, new images of subjectivity proliferate «as socially constructed, as dialogic, as inscribed upon the surface of the body, as spatialized, decentered, multiple, nomadic, created in episodic recognition-seeking practices of self-display in particular times and places» (Rose, 1998: 169).

On one hand the social theorists claim this image of the human being to be «old-fashioned», while in practice we observe that individuals are more attached to their «selfhood» than ever before, and that the idea of identity is increasingly under the spotlights in so many of the practices in which human beings engage (Rose, 1998: 169). Lately, individuals insist more than ever on defining and defending their identities, expressing themselves and sharing who they are with the whole world – probably thanks also to the online social network which gave everyone a *face* and a *voice*.

But in the meantime, who did the person behind the *persona* become? As we pour ourselves out on Web 2.0, is there still anyone left *inside*? Or do we start to fall for the «brand identity» that we have created and edited meticulously for ourselves that we no longer know how to distinguish between the reflection and the self – like Narcissus lost in his own gaze? This dissertation, in this sense, is trying to see how distanced we are from our own selves, how our gaze closing upon ourselves has turned out to limit our vision of reality while on the surface it seemed to expand it enormously in the past decade.

Today, admitting to a digital native that you are not registered on a social network such as Facebook or Twitter is almost a social *«faux pas»*. People look at you with worried eyes, and they wonder, «Don't you have anything to say? Don't you have any friends? Perhaps you are a social outcast or just totally uncool» (Blackman & Choquelle, 2011). Your absence sounds as if there is something missing or wrong with you. It creates a sense that «you don't exist until you are there». As the social networks become *the natural* mode of self-expression and momentary narcissistic pleasure, they also slowly become tools for defining who we are. They become the latest mirrors in which to see our reflections of who we are – most certainly, with the peculiarities and the limitations inherent to this *new* medium.

While on the outside much of social networking looks like a seamless extension of real life, and it seems that we no longer make a bona fide distinction between digital and real parts of our lives, the context for creating our identity in the world of Web 2.0 is clearly not the same as in the real world. The digital environment is an unpredictable, evolving territory, yet the physical spaces that we live in do not help us to overcome the insecurities that have arisen either. The digital, as it was defined in William Gibson's cyberpunk novels is a ubiquitous «nervous system» that is transparent, fluid, public, and permanently on: A virtual and visual display in which to reflect our narcissistic desires.

With all of this and more in concern, do the ways of knowing and communicating who we are in real life still apply to the digital world as well? Do we start to believe in our reflections on the digital mirror and start becoming the images that we had previously delegated only to represent us online? Or is there still more to us than that? It is probably true that the ways of self-expression introduced in our daily lives by Web 2.0 and the online identities that we have developed in the process of adaptation had a certain effect on how we create our identities, nonetheless we should probably look for the reasons not only in the advent of Web 2.0 in our daily lives, but also in the rapid sociological evolution of human beings in the past decades. In this section, as we examine theories of identity meticulously, we will also develop the debate on how the online social network started to become the digital mirror that reflects our image back at us. Starting in this chapter with the basic psychoanalytic theories of knowing who we are, we will move on to «communicating who we are» to others in the chapters to follow.

An old Eastern tradition tells us that when designing one's home, one should try to minimize the contact with mirrors, trying to avoid the mirrors catching our reflection by covering them with a piece of thick velvet or hanging them on the wall with their backs facing out if possible. This tradition is based on the common knowledge that it is not healthy for a human being to spend too much time staring at her/his own reflection (Shafak, 2010). While the Eastern belief suggests staying away from the mirrors as much as we could, in the West, the identity formation of the child is believed to begin with the first

encounter with her/his image in the mirror. Throughout the developed world, mirrors are commonplace and, both figuratively and metaphorically speaking, they play a very significant role in assuming an image as one's own. Insomuch that there is even a specific fear of mirrors, spectrophobia, which involves the dread of seeing one's own reflection, a phobia which is intriguingly attributed to two main causes: fear of self-knowledge and fright from exhibitionism (Ferenczi, 1927).

There is an abundance of theories on how the identity has transformed under the influence of technology, consumption and the evolution of the social life. Despite their multitude, it is possible that this theoretic reaction is a quite dramatic one. Instead of talking about how the identity was transformed, we could talk about the transformation of the mirrors where our identities are reflected and how seeing our own selves in such altered mirrors effects our relationship with ourselves and with others: In its essence, it is not the identity that has changed, but our perception of it – that is, if identity is not an *always-already* perceptive construct.

As we talk about the perception of identity, we have to base our definition on the three concepts which also coincide with the three realms that form the basis of psychoanalysis. **Identity**, which is considered to be the *true self*, **self-image**, the mental image we have of our own self and **image**, the mental image that our self-presentation has created on the others as a representation of the self. Our image, as it is formed through the gaze of the «Other», is reflected onto our self-image either negatively or positively, in the form of an approval or a criticism. Yet, selves are social constructs that are reflexively shaped and re-shaped in this gaze, as well as through our own gaze onto ourselves as the «other». As we have seen in the schema in the introduction section, these three agents have bi-directional interactions with one another through the socialization of the individual. And as we unravel the properties of communication on Facebook, the new popular mirror of identity today, we will observe that our self-image tends to change with the feedback our online image generates.

As the self is considered *meaningful* only in the context of one's relationship to others and one's position in social groups (Brewer, 2004: 6), the advent of the online social networks did have its impact. The online self-presentation (social introduction in a quite controlled way) as well as the online representation (the mental image, idea or concept created as a result of such presentation) of the individual in today's Web 2.0 world strikes back to effect the *actual* daily life. Hence within the zeitgeist of our period, the issue should be considered not as a tendency that effects identity and how it is constructed, but more as the *why* it is constructed in a new manner, while it stays almost the same in its essence – or, whether it is already minimized to a concept operating «under erasure» in Derrida's interval between reversal and emergence; «an idea which cannot be thought at all» (Hall, 1996: 2).

The perception of identity, or more precisely that of visual identity, can be investigated together with the parallel tendencies that take place in the urban space as well as in the cyberspace that have modified the way we perceive in general. The commodification of human and the «extremely visual» character of human identity in our contemporaneity are some of the basic responsables behind the obsession with the body, considering the money and effort dedicated to staying fit, to the consumption of anti-aging products and the scary plastic surgeries that we succumb ourselves in (Noonan & Adler, 2002). The more visual our identities tend to be, the more significance we place in the mirrors where we see our own reflection, literally and figuratively. And our self-esteem seems to shrink to the two-dimensional visual image, losing its multi-faceted nature.

Sometimes, however, I admit that I have thought we might be better off without mirrors, especially when I read that hundreds of thousands of people a year pay for botox injections to smooth their facial wrinkles with a paralytic poison, or when I consider other such attempts to manipulate image and deny mortality (Anderson, 2007: 11).



Figure 1.2 - Our lifelong relationship with the mirror, metaphorically and figuratively, constructs our relationships with ourselves.

The body is the inevitable representation of who we are and the most involuntary of all the variables that form part of our identity. The unavoidable visualness of the human body has always been at the centre of the visual theory, nonetheless, in terms of self-image it is always the perception of the individual that is significant. Emphasizing this perspective, the research aims to check out realistic/unrealistic self-regard which might lead us to display narcissistic conduct. Though totally inevitable, having a body is not sufficient, you have to have a coherent, stable and pleasant behavior to be able to communicate and interact with other people and as we long know a narcissistic approach is not helping at all to do that.

Lacan says that in «the Imaginary order», her/his own image permanently catches and captivates the subject. In *Ecrits*(1977), he explains how he assigns a twofold value to his phenomenon of the mirror stage: «In the first place, it has historical value as it marks a decisive turning-point in the mental development of the child. In the second place it typifies an essential libidinal relationship with the body image», which is developed as the basis of narcissism.

Within the traditional context of the human life, our sociality, our interaction with the family, the community that we live in and the society in general formed the mirrors in which we reflected our identities and received feedback for our projects of ourselves. Nonetheless, in today's world we have a dizzying array of options for knowing/expressing who we are and a very wide range of changing tendencies in our actual and digital social lives for receiving feedback.

Prominent sociologists defend that our identities are results of reflexive processes and that one of the key characteristics of late modernity is its requirement for individuals to define and refine their identities reflexively (Giddens, 1991; Bauman, 2000). Be it within our momentary awareness or not, we are constantly carrying out self-projects such as discovering oneself, knowing oneself, improving oneself, creating oneself anew, expressing oneself, taking care of oneself, being happy with oneself or being ashamed of oneself (Oyserman, 2003: 11). Giddens quotes Theodore Roszak, as he says, «we live in a time when the very private experience of having a personal identity to discover, a personal destiny to fulfil, has become a subversive political force of major proportions», nonetheless disagrees with him on that «both person and planet are threatened by the same enemy – the bigness of things» (1990: 157-158). According to Zygmunt Bauman, the problem is not the size, but the unlimited number of choices one has: «The world full of possibilities is like a buffet table set with mouth-watering dishes, too numerous for the keenest of eaters to hope to taste them all. The diners are *consumers*, and the most taxing and irritating of the challenges consumers confront is the need to establish priorities: the necessity to forsake some unexplored options and to leave them unexplored» (2000: 63).

The conceptualization of identity as answering the questions, «Who am I?», «Where do I belong?», and «How do I fit?» puts the focus on the «I» – the individual self-concept, nonetheless as mentioned above, the self is thought of as a cognitive construction, developed in the course of social interaction as a product of interpersonal and social group processes (Brewer: 6). The self also has a temporal dimension, incorporating representations of the past (personal history) and the future (possible selves), as well as the present. Parallel to this extension of the self through time is the idea of extension of self across persons. Through the development of close relationships and identification with social groups, the self is expanded by inclusion of others into the self-concept, and such self-expansion serves to enhance

identity resources beyond the capabilities and experiences of a single individual. Yet once again today, the question is whether the others do serve as the audience from whom to receive feedback for the self-project – and, if possible, to receive approval and admiration – or whether the narcissistic self hardly ever expands to include others in the self-project – as it is rather occupied with itself.

Selves are created within contexts and take into account the values and norms of others that are likely to participate in that context. By adolescence, individuals are able to distinguish between the selves that they would like to be and become and the selves others want them to be, which indicates their position on the continuum defined by self-actualization on one extreme and identity crisis on the other. Certainly among several factors that affect the commitment of an adolescent on this scale are the level of education, culture and their socio-economic status. Students given a say in their social contexts are more likely to report expressing their «true» selves, the selves they want to be, rather than feeling compelled to present situation-appropriate «false» selves, the selves they know others want them to be (Oyserman, 2003: 11).

Within this perspective, the social networks of our day assume an important role, as Web 2.0 made it possible for the users to own the data on a website and exercise control over that data, in other words, «architecture of participation» made it possible for the users to «express themselves». In this chapter we will investigate what is *there* to express.

1.1 Man in the Mirror



1.1.1 Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who's the Fairest of Them All?

If we were to start at the very beginning, the first question to ask ourselves is probably when and how we become aware of having a self. Self-concept and identity are what come to mind when we think of ourselves, including both personal and social identities (Neisser, 1993; Stryker, 1980; Tajfel, 1981 as cited in Brewer, 2004: 10). With reference to self-knowledge research carried out by Lewis, «being human means being conscious of having a self and the nature of the self is central to what it means to be human» (1990: 279). Quite similarly, the concept of the «I» appears in Jacques Lacan's work as a function of identification with one's self. Piera Aulagnier later develops this term which derives from the mirror stage in a different way and defines it as nothing other than knowledge of itself: «the 'I' is nothing more than the 'I's knowledge of the 'I'» (1975/2001: 114).

The significance of consciousness in identity is considered by Antonio Damasio in a recent work:

The self-as-subject, as knower, as the «I», is a more elusive presence, far less collected in mental or biological terms than the *me*, more dispersed, often dissolved in the stream of consciousness, at times so annoyingly subtle that it is there but almost not there. The self-as-knower is more difficult to capture than the plain *me*, unquestionably. But that does not diminish its significance for consciousness. The self-as-subject-and-knower is not only a very real presence but a turning point in biological evolution. We can imagine that the self-as-subject- and-knower is stacked, so to speak, on top of the self-as-object, as a new layer of neural processes giving rise to yet another layer of mental processing. There is no dichotomy between self-as-object and self-as-knower; there is, rather, a continuity and progression. The self-as-knower is grounded on the self-as-object (2010: 18).

Several experiments concerning child development have indicated that our self-recognition and consequent self-awareness starts as early as at the age of two (Cooley, 1908; Lacan, 1936; Gallup, 1964; Amsterdam, 1972; Anderson, 2007). Lacan's mirror stage, though later criticized and rectified, constitutes a fundamental identification; namely, the transformation that occurs in a subject when s/he

assumes an image as her/his own. The mirror stage describes the formation of the Ego via the process of objectification, the Ego, in this definition being the result of a conflict between one's perceived visual appearance and emotional experience. Also imaginary in its essence, such identification is what Lacan called alienation (Mijolla, 2005: 930). This identification is followed by the moment when the subject identifies with others through the mediation of language, when s/he is able to communicate within the symbolic realm.

In Lacan's original, unrectified theory, a six-month-old baby, that still lacks physical coordination of her/his body, is able to recognize her/himself in a mirror though s/he cannot still control her/his bodily movements. This contradictory experience is the beginning of an aggressive tension between the subject and the image: The child sees her/his image as a whole and the synthesis of this image produces a sense of contrast with the lack of coordination of the body, which causes its perception as «fragmented». Based on this contrast, according to Lacan, what the child initially experiences is a rivalry with her/his own image, as the wholeness of the image threatens the child with fragmentation. To resolve the aggressive tension that arises, the child identifies with the image: Hence the Ego is formed through this primary identification with the counterpart (Evans, 1996: 6). Lacan understands this moment of identification as a moment of joy, since it leads to an imaginary sense of mastery, yet when the child compares her/his own precarious sense of mastery with the omnipotence of the mother, a depressive reaction may accompany the joy. This identification also involves the ideal ego which functions as a promise of future wholeness which sustains the ego in anticipation (Evans: 118).

Lacan's mirror stage was widely criticized, though it is extremely useful for us to clarify and discuss several concepts around self-recognition, self-image and identity. In his famous critique, Hirst (1979) argued that it depended on a subject that had the capacity to perform before it had been constituted as a subject and hence we were in the danger of presupposing an already constituted subject. «This something which is not a subject must already have the faculties necessary to support the recognition that will constitute it as a subject» (Hirst as cited in Hall, 1996: 7). Whether it was constituted or not, the subject of primary identification has always been at the center of the psychoanalytical theories that aim to explain scientifically why and how we are the way we are.

Kant (1781) was the first philosopher to affirm that the self could not be known directly or in isolation, but could only be known through its action and interaction with the world. He emphasized that the unity of the self is «stitched together out of the series of momentary glimpses of self-awareness, which also explains why the self can become unravelled» (Baumeister, 1986: 13). Early in the nineteenth century, Charles Horton Cooley theorized that the human sense of self is created in infants through social interactions. Cooley called this the «looking-glass self» because he believed that our self-concept

is a reflection of what we perceive others think of us (1908). His disciple, George Mead, concluded that, «it is impossible to conceive of a self-arising outside of social experience» (1934: 191-192). His concept of how mind and self-emerge from the social process of communication by signs founded the symbolic interactionist school of sociology. Rooted intellectually in Hegelian dialectics and process philosophy, Mead, developed a more materialist process philosophy that was based upon human action and specifically communicative action. According to Mead, human activity is, in a pragmatic sense, the criterion of truth, and through human activity meaning is made. Joint activity, including communicative activity, is the means through which our sense of self is constituted.

Gallup, following the lead of Cooley and Mead, gave his famous mark test to chimpanzees that had been raised in complete isolation, after habituating them to mirrors. As he predicted, the chimpanzees failed to identify themselves in their mirror reflections. He concluded that the brain's capacity to allow us to know we are looking at ourselves appears to place us in a unique category; this simple ability to recognize ourselves in a mirror appears to be essential to the human enterprise, and that the «recognition of one's own reflection would seem to require a rather advanced form of intellect» (1970: 86-87).

Shortly after, Beulah Amsterdam published the first mirror-recognition study for human babies, «Mirror self: Image reactions before age two» (1972). She described how she had tested children between the ages of three to twenty-four months by putting a smudge of rouge on one side of the nose and placing them in front of a mirror. Then their mothers would point to the reflection in the mirror and ask the child: «Who's that?» – while researchers watched the behavior of the infants. Early on, babies seemed to recognize their mothers in the mirror, but not themselves. With respect to her observations, by six months, infants were smiling and playing with themselves in the mirror, but they treated the reflection as another child – though Lacan in his original description of the mirror stage previously claimed that a six-month old baby can recognize the image as hers/his. At one year, they began to search behind the mirror for their mysterious playmate.

Finally, Amsterdam concluded that, «from twenty to twenty-four months, 65 percent of the subjects demonstrated recognition of their mirror images», as from around this age infants started to clearly recognise themselves by pointing to the spot of rouge on their own noses (Anderson, 2007: 8). This strongly suggested that they have realized the image was theirs and the spot of rouge was on their own nose. Though her primary sampling was quite limited, subsequent research has substantiated Amsterdam's findings, indicating that most children's brains first register that they are observing themselves sometime during the latter part of their second year, when they become coy, embarrassed, clownish, or self-admiring in front of the mirror.

Be that at six-months or two years of age, what exactly does mirror self-recognition imply? Gallup firmly believes that self-recognition means self-awareness: «You become the object of your own attention. You are aware of being aware. And that, in turn, allows you to make inferences about comparable states of awareness in others» (1998: 242). Pendergrast, in the introduction to Miranda Anderson's meticulous investigation of mirrors, asks the following questions on self-recognition:

Can it be a coincidence that toddlers develop language and begin to say *I*, *me*, and *mine* about the same time they learn mirror self-recognition? Or that the frontal lobes develop dramatically in the second year of life? Or that they reach Piaget's level of understanding «object permanence» – remembering and seeking out hidden objects – and begin to engage in pretend play? Or that they begin to act like strong, self-willed individuals in the «terrible twos»? Or that they begin soon afterwards to develop empathy for others and moral standards? Or that their autobiographical memories supersede the period of «infantile amnesia» around the age of three? (2007: 9-10).

Self-recognition and our primary identification are important because they also point us towards our first imaginary/symbolic identification and our infantile narcissism. If we were to revise his theory again, according to Lacan, the mirror stage comprises several phases: in the first, the child reacts joyfully to the image but identifies it as belonging to another (the mother) and therefore thinks of her/himself as an extension of the mother; in the second, he perceives imaginary nature of the mirror image and seeks the other behind the mirror; and finally in the third, the child recognizes the image as her/his own. According to Lacan, this entails the progressive and structuring conquest of the «I», through the intermediary of the subject's own body. Another important point to consider is that the «I» simultaneously is alienated in this image, because it is always external to it, and finds stability, if not a permanence, there. Here Lacan adduces the concept of alienation: «[the subject] identifies his sense of self with the image of the other and the image of the other then captivates this sense in him» (1977/2002: 50).

When investigating identity, one cannot proceed without making a reference at the Freudian perspective, and hence, in the argument that we have developed so far, a clean distinction between the self and the ego has to be made. During the mirror stage, the infant identifies with a certain point within the maternal space. In fact, what the subject takes for its own being is another: Both an image in the mirror and an alter ego. This fundamental alienation establishes the misapprehension whereby one's being is confused with one's ego: it is a «misunderstanding» that constitutes the Ego – the «I» becomes alienated from itself through the introduction of an imaginary dimension to the subject. Thus, from the beginning the subject is torn. S/he is divided between the place from which s/he sees her/himself; and the image, the other with which s/he identifies. From this perspective, a human being can never

experience a wholeness that would amount to being (Mijolla, 2005: 1848). The mirror stage also has a significant symbolic dimension, due to the presence of the figure of the adult who carries the infant. Having joyfully assumed the image as her/his own, the child turns her/his head towards this adult, who represents the big «Other», as if to call on the adult to validate this image (Lacan, 1977/2002).

Despite the proximity of the concepts, the «I», for both Lacan and Aulagnier, is something clearly distinct from the Freudian ego¹. The Freudian ego is an agency, even though it first claimed to represent the totality of the person. It has to be understood in relation to the other agencies (id and superego) and to the demands of reality and the object, which it can also oppose by occupying its position and turning, narcissistically, towards the love of the id. Within our objective of investigating the relationship between our representations, ourselves and narcissism, it is important to note that towards the end of his work *The Ego and the Id* (1923), Freud ascribes a different origin to the ego, no longer considering it as a psychic agency or no longer defining its «character» only as a product of identifications but regarding it as «the mental projection of the surface of the body» and thus primarily as a «bodily ego» that is derived from sensations (Mijolla, 2005: 775). It is mainly in the perception of this bodily ego that we observe the changes in the way we relate to ourselves in the limelight gaze of the computer-mediated communication.

Aulagnier's development of the concept provides us with yet another hint on the primary construction of the narcissistic character: Aulagnier fundamentally modifies the Lacanian concept of «I» by interpreting it as a product of historical development, that is, by defining it in terms of the dual processes of «self-historicization» and the «identificatory project». However, it is principally in the mother-child relationship, well before the mirror stage, that she locates the primary identification from which the «I» will subsequently emerge. For the child, this identification develops from the first experience of pleasure, and it is the mother who identifies the child as the seeker of what she is offering, which thus makes the child dependent on the mother's own imagination. Similarly, in the mirror stage, Aulagnier emphasizes that the child, having recognized the specular image as his own, turns to his mother to seek approbation in her gaze and thus to find the «junction between the image and the legend». «She alone will be able to complete the narcissistic image, to add that something more that is indispensable to its sheen and without which it would cease to be anything more than it is in the real: an effect of the laws of optics» (1975/2001: 124).

This knowledge has only one purpose: to guarantee to the «I» knowledge of its past and its future, the former being the precondition for the representability of the latter. The «I» will be characterized by its work, which differs from the enacting fantasy because it entails a work of making-sense based on «ideational representatives». Despite being anticipated by the mother at a primitive stage, the «I» can

subsequently occur only by itself. The Other, the mother, no longer has the power to respond to questions such as «Who am I?» or «What am I to become?»: «To these two questions, which must necessarily find an answer, the 'I' will respond on its own behalf by the continuous self-construction of an ideal image that it claims as its inalienable right and which assures it that the future will prove to be neither the result of pure chance, nor forged by the exclusive desire of another 'I'» (Aulagnier, 1975/2001: 116). What is possessed in this case is nothing but an outline, but what is being cathected is the ideal image, as well as the ability to construct it and to recognize oneself through this process of construction (Mijolla, 2005: 826-827).

Within the perspective of this thesis, the mirror stage gives us two important points to elaborate from: Firstly, it highlights the introduction to narcissism, through its imaginary and symbolic connotations. The baby by identifying her/his fragmented body with the unified image assumes perfection, a wholeness that precedes her/him. Thus the joy of this misidentification introduces us to the ideal ego, which will never be re-encountered to support the joyous narcissism. On the other hand, the baby makes her/his first narcissistic interaction by way of assuming the omnipotent mother as the authority from whom the approbation to the ego ideal would be issued. Secondly, it assures us on the ever-divided nature of the self, as the subject is divided between the place from which s/he sees her/himself and the image (Ruyer, 1950; Deleuze and Guattari, 1994), the other in the mirror with which s/he identifies.

But before we move onto discuss how we develop our self-concepts in the gaze of the other; we should also consider the role of the conscious mind in how we become aware of ourselves. As Damasio puts it; «Consciousness is not merely about images in the mind» (2010: 18). He gives us a different perspective on self and awareness in his conceptualization of «self as witness»:

Without consciousness – that is, a mind endowed with subjectivity – you would have no way of knowing that you exist, let alone know who you are and what you think. ... in the absence of consciousness, the personal view is suspended; we do not know of our existence; and we do not know that anything else exists. What is consciousness made of? Mind with a twist, it seems to me, since we cannot be conscious without having a mind to be conscious of (2010: 14).

In his further elaboration of the theme, Damasio defines a concept of the «I» as a combination of the self-as-object and self-as-knower. He builds on the self-concepts developed by William James, who thought that the self-as-object, the material me, was the sum total of all that a man could call his – «not only his body and his psychic powers, but his clothes and his wife and children, his ancestors and friends, his reputation and works, his lands and horses, and yacht and bank account» (James, 1890/1950: 183). Damasio expands James' definition based on the «feelings of knowing», which are the feelings that

accomplish a distinction between self and non-self and defines the material me, the self-as-object as «a dynamic collection of integrated neural processes, centered on the representation of the living body that finds expression in a dynamic collection of integrated mental processes» (2010: 17).

In keeping with this idea, the decisive step in the making of consciousness is not the making of images and creating the basics of a mind. The decisive step is *making the images ours*, making them belong to their rightful owners, the singular, perfectly bounded organisms in which they emerge. In the perspective of evolution and in the perspective of one's life history, the knower came in steps: the protoself and its primordial feelings; the action-driven core self; and finally the autobiographical self, which incorporates social and spiritual dimensions. But these are dynamic processes, not rigid things, and on any day their level fluctuates (simple, complex, somewhere in between) and can be readily adjusted as the circumstances dictate. A knower, by whatever name one may want to call it – self, experiencer, protagonist – needs to be generated in the brain if the mind is to become conscious. When the brain manages to introduce a knower in the mind, subjectivity follows (Damasio, 2010: 18).

Hence, the significance of the mirror stage lies not in the first identification and the alienation, as much as in the discovery of the «Other's gaze» made through this stage. To recapitulate, when the baby then turns toward the adult who is holding it and entreats that adult to confirm with her/his expression what it perceives in the mirror, namely the image of mastery not yet achieved. Even before it was elaborated by Lacan, it was Henri Wallon's observation in the context of his work on the development of the child's conception of its «own body» that inspired the adoption of the term mirror stage (1931). The elaboration of the concept confirms the importance of human identity as a mental image, as confronted by its own image in a mirror, a two-year-old human will grow excited and fascinated, whereas a chimpanzee of the same age will lose interest as soon as it realizes that the reflection is illusory (Mijolla, 2005: 1058).

When Lacan introduced the concept of the «Other», the mirror stage came to indicate how the founding role of the Other's gaze works to form the subject's mental apparatus. From there on, the very possibility of the mirror stage presupposed a symbolic operation. Were such operations lacking, the mirror stage would not occur, as happens with the autistic child, in whom there is no relationship in the Imaginary either to a body image or to any kind of counterpart (Mijolla, 2005: 1208). Hence from the 1960s onward, Lacan took the mirror as a metaphor for the «Other's gaze», and on the significance of the gaze he said: «I see from only one point, but in my existence I am looked at from all sides» ([1978: 72] as cited in Mijolla, 2005: 990).

The advent of consciousness of self, or the mirror stage in Lacanian terms, is, in Winnicott's view, a construction linked to «the mirror of the mother's face and the family». Winnicott (1967) extended the

Lacanian notion of the mirror stage by emphasizing the part played by the face, and especially the gaze of the mother, as a mirror for the child. According to Winnicott, interiorization of the love-object enables the infant to find or create potential spaces for representation of the self and the outside world. Nonetheless, this very same interiorization sets us on the path to the narcissistic perspective of the young human being.

Thus understanding the mirror phase assumes a critical role for defining the concept of the «Other» and its role in our creation of self-image, as well as in the creation of the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. One of the critiques to the mirror tests discussed in this chapter, was that the infants were not able to understand faces particularly well until they were around two years old, however it was probable that they did develop a self-concept at a much earlier stage (Dean, 2008). Meanwhile it is also around two to four years of age that children start to display a rapid increase in their social behavior. Being able to distinguish yourself from other people is fundamental to successful social relationships rather than simple interactions. It seems quite unlikely that infants would be able to build relationships with others without some limited concept of themselves (Dean). It is with this basic knowledge that all human beings take their first faltering steps into the social world.

1.1.2 Mirror, Mirror on the Wall, Who's the Fairest of Them All?

It is not enough to understand what we ought to be, unless we know what we are; and we do not understand what we are, unless we know what we ought to be (T. S. Eliot, 1935: 392).

Once we are conscious in our minds and in our skins of being human and having an identity, we move forward with our lifelong project of the self. On this path, our perceptions, the imaginary, the symbolic and the real all relate to something significant in our daily sense of the world, all evoke meanings and references independent of each other. For instance we may seek out (or avoid) the «real world»; we may have «imaginary friends»; or we may experience «symbolic moments» (Loos, 2002). Nonetheless as we try to unfold the changing perceptions of self-presentation and the consequent self-representation, our development of the concepts begin with the triad of psychoanalytic orders proposed by Lacan, and such conceptualization is important for analysing the tendencies of identity perception and the interactions with our *imaginary friends* on Facebook in the following chapters.

In a nutshell, imaginary identification is how we see ourselves, while symbolic identification is how we identify with the gaze from which we are observed. The symbolic often influences the imaginary identification, in such a way that imaginary identification is also always «on behalf of a certain gaze in

the Other,» which raises the question, for the symbolic order – *for whom* are we enacting our (imaginary) roles? Who is the eye that watches us? From the Freudian point of view, as developed in *On Narcissism* (1914), it is an agency together with the ego ideal – or as he later termed it, the infamous superego, that is the society's agent in our psyche and hence the genesis of all the symbolic:

It would not surprise us if we were to find a special psychical agency which performs the task of seeing that narcissistic satisfaction from the ego ideal is ensured and which, with this end in view, constantly watches the actual ego and measures it by that ideal. If such an agency does exist, we cannot possibly come upon it as a *discovery* – we can only *recognize* it; for we may reflect that what we call our «conscience» has the required characteristics. Recognition of this agency enables us to understand the so-called «delusions of being noticed» or more correctly, of being watched, which are such striking symptoms in the paranoid diseases ... Patients of this sort complain that all their thoughts are known and their actions watched and supervised; they are informed of the functioning of this agency by voices which characteristically speak to them in the third person («Now she's thinking of that again», «now he's going out»). This complaint is justified; it describes the truth. A power of this kind, watching, discovering and criticizing all our intentions, does really exist. Indeed, it exists in every one of us in normal life. ... For what prompted the subject to form an ego ideal, on whose behalf his conscience acts as watchman, arose from the critical influence of his parents (conveyed to him by the medium of the voice), to whom were added, as time went on, those who trained and taught him and the innumerable and indefinable host of all the other people in his environment – his fellow-men – and public opinion (Freud, 1914: 95-96).

Freud's two notions of ideal ego and ego ideal could be used as metaphors for the relation between our identity and our image today. The ideal ego is based on the self-love that the ego enjoyed in the infancy, while the ego ideal is a dynamic notion, by which the person seeks to regain the narcissistic perfection of its infancy under the new form of the ego ideal, which is constituted as a goal to be attained in the future (Mijolla, 2005: 481). The distinction between the two lies in the moment of the imaginary identification, where the baby identifies with the unified image joyously. Once he discovers his fragmentation, that joy is forever lost together with the reality, which remains an ambition of the ego ideal to go back to that moment of perfection. Considering the ego ideal, which in the course of argument, was developed into the famous superego by Freud, the ego only obtains self-esteem by trying to re-conquer the ego ideal, by trying to fulfil the expectations of the society reflected within the individual in the form of the superego. This is the attempt to reclaim the lost omnipotence of the imaginary ideal ego. Since the ideal ego, which Lacan interprets as a narcissistic formation based on the mirror stage, is linked to the primary identification with another being, the mother, who becomes the cathexis of omnipotence for the child, as the demands on the ego ideal stem from the gaze of the (m)other. In later stages, most significantly in the adolescence, the individual identifies her/himself with the ideal ego once again, striving to emancipate from the ego ideal/superego: «In a subject's relation to

the other as an authority, the ego ideal, obeying the law to please, leads the subject to displease himself as the price of obeying the commandment; the ideal ego, at the risk of displeasing, triumphs only by displeasing in spite of the commandment—» (Lagache, 1966 qtd in Mijolla, 2005: 481).

On a basic level, the Freudian mental apparatus defines three infamous actors: the id, ego and the superego, each with their own role, making it possible for us to function and fit in to the society. The ego is the mediator, surrounded by the instinctive id, in constant search of pleasure, and the socially aware superego, striving for perfection and acceptance. Blackman and Choquelle, in their recent study of the social media introduce us to the new contemporary superego:

With the advent of the social media, it seems that the Super Ego is becoming increasingly dominant and conscious in this threesome, to the point where it hogs the entire stage. While Freud and Dr. Elias Aboujaoude would regard this as a highly dysfunctional dynamic, one could argue that such hyper activity has evolved into a radically new psychological asset. For the first time ever, within hours, anyone can envisage becoming a contagious Internet meme and even starting a revolution. Either way the specifics of the digital social stage have given birth to a new kind of performer that is an augmented version of his Freudian cousin. We call it the **Social Super Ego**. Constantly on a high from making new connections, and obsessed with nourishing its infinite audience, it always presents itself in the best light possible. It is highly creative, and often goes great lengths to produce an ideal model of itself with whatever media there is to play with (images, text bites or video). Hyper alert and hypersensitive, it censors and filters anything that threatens its reputation (2011: 26, *emphasis added*).

This is indeed how the reflection in the Web 2.0 mirror looks like. Though the narcissistic needs were always there, the new medium of reflection provided the facilities to attend to them much easier than ever before. At no point do we intend to say that a massive population has turned narcissistic pathologically, but as Freud persistently reminds us, «the frontier between the so-called normal states of mind and the pathological ones is to a great extent conventional, and ... is so fluid that each one of us probably crosses it many times in the course of a day» (1901/1914a: 52). Nonetheless, oversimplifying the psychoanalytical theories that we have revised here, it is generally considered normal as long as the focus of the gaze is a symbolic or real other, for as the object of the gaze becomes one's own self, the symbolic is taken over by the narcissistic. It is through this narcissistic «introversion» as coined by Jung (1921) that, the individual closes upon oneself. While all that matters to her/him is her/his own reality, on the outside s/he seems to enjoy the company of the others, while her/his secret wish is their admiration, approval and acceptance – as it was the case with the first gaze of the (m)other.

Freud defined four types of narcissism based on one's narcissistic or anaclitic object-choice for emotional investment: In the case of narcissistic object-choice, a person loved «(a) what he himself is, (b)

what he himself was, (c) what he himself would like to be, (d) someone who was once part of himself». In anaclitic object-choice, a person loved «(a) the woman who feeds» or «(b) the man who protects» and the succession of substitutes who take their place (1914b: 90):

We have discovered, especially clearly in people whose libidinal development has suffered some disturbance, such as perverts and homosexuals, that in their later choice of love-objects they have taken as a model not their mother but their own selves. They are plainly seeking themselves as a love-object, and are exhibiting a type of object-choice which must be termed «narcissistic» (Freud, 1914b: 88).

What disturbance have we suffered then, that has led to our narcissistic behavior to loom large? What has happened to the human beings with the supply of new tools of self-expression that we've turned approbation-needy, feedback-addict individuals? We will go on investigating the changing conditions that has led to this *digital protagonism*, as well as how the axis of imaginary / symbolic / real has shifted our perceptions under the impact of the earlier real / virtual distinction. One of the basic reasons for talking about narcissism instead of any other psychoses to define the current situation is that the individual *is* closing upon oneself, which is not the case for hysteria, paranoia or schizophrenia that were



Figure 1.3 - Our narcissistic relationship with our body-image.

discussed widely in literature as definitions of the sociological disease in the capitalist society in earlier occasions. As such, we have reached «the paradoxical limit of alienation [which] is to take oneself as a focal point [*comme point de mire*], as an object of care, of desire, of suffering, and of communication» and this is why we are condemned to our image, «not because of an alienation, but because of the end of alienation and because of the virtual disappearance of the other» (Baudrillard, 1993b: 55-6).

The image in the mirror is the image of coherence, it defines us our place in the world. It delineates where we start and where we end and «makes the world and our place in it as complete subjects make sense» (Loos, 2002). As it defines a process of identifying oneself with the external image, it thereby determines the first encounter with subjectivity, with spatial relations, with an external sense of coherence and with the sense of «I» and «you». Lacan uses this basis, together with several other psychoanalytical concepts to identify the three orders where this subjectivity can operate: The Imaginary, the Symbolic and the Real.

The imaginary becomes the internalized image of this ideal, whole, self and is situated around the notion of coherence rather than fragmentation. The imaginary can roughly be aligned with the formation of the ego which serves as the mediator [as in Freud] between the internal and the external world. It becomes, in Lacan, the space in which the relation «between the ego and its images» [Miller, 280] is developed. For Pierce, the imaginary is aligned with the «icon» – an image which is «understood» with no (or little) mediation [Pierce, 102]; for Saussure the imaginary becomes the «signified» the concept symbolized arbitrarily by a sign [Saussure, 114] (Loos, 2002).

Lacan, regarding the Symbolic, claims that, we are already born into the symbolic order long before we become aware of it: «Symbols in fact envelop the life of man in a network so total that they join together, before he comes into the world, those who are going to engender him» (1956: 42). The symbolic determines how we are to relate to this world, it defines how we are to communicate ourselves through the language and the symbols, it in a way makes us and our entire system of conscious/unconscious accessible through signifiers/signifieds and associations. We come out of our ideal, our imaginary, through the use of symbols and use them in trying to represent our identity to the others, while on the other hand we are bound and limited by the Symbolic.

This is how, the third order of the psyche, the Real, always escapes us, it is where words fail us. Not only is it opposed to the Imaginary, but the Real is also exterior to the Symbolic. According to the Lacanian theory, «the real becomes that which resists representation, what is pre-mirror, pre-imaginary, pre-symbolic – what cannot be symbolized – what loses its 'reality' once it is symbolized (made conscious) through language» (Loos, 2002). In Seminar XI Lacan defines the Real as «the impossible»

because it is impossible to imagine, impossible to integrate into the Symbolic, and impossible to attain. It is this resistance to symbolization that lends the Real its traumatic quality. Finally, the Real is the object of anxiety, insofar as it lacks any possible mediation and is «the essential object which is not an object any longer, but this something faced with which all words cease and all categories fail, the object of anxiety par excellence». The desperate attempt to achieve the real through the symbolic and the imaginary, leads us to Baudrillard's «a kind of delusion», where all the attempts to achieve the «totality» are null. Thus all the attempts to know the *real* identity are bound to be unsuccessful in one way or the other.

Freud claims that especially, but not exclusively, in its relation to sexuality, narcissism can generate an oceanic feeling of «oneness with the universe». Giddens, in the *Transformation of Intimacy*(1992) mentions Freud, as he says that primary narcissism survives in modern civilization, not only as neurosis, but as something of an «alternative reality»:

Narcissism, usually understood ... as a defensive adaptation to the wider world through withdrawal from it, reveals a potential for transcendence. Narcissism «may become the source and reservoir for a new libidinal cathexis of the objective world – transforming this world into a new mode of being» (166-167).

This could help us develop a new perspective on the contemporary narcissism as an attempt to achieve the «unity» of oneself, which has long been considered fragmented, through the imaginary and the symbolic, in remembrance of the joyous, but at the same time deceptive, narcissistic moment of the perfect baby.

In the light of such impossibility, we turn our attention to the possible and the attainable: Creating our ideal images with our favorite Web 2.0 tools and communicating from behind our creations – though we seem to be metaphorically stuck between our ideal ego and super ego in the light of these online personae that we create. As Aulagnier had put it; «To be like the image that others admire or to be like the image admired by those whom the I admire are the two formulations that the narcissistic wish borrows from the field of identifications» (1975/2001: 126). Thus we could even consider our «imaginary» digital attempts as futuristic ideals, maybe as identity drafts, as long as we know who is behind the image, for being, or rather, knowing who one is, is essentially knowing who one wants to become. Do we *know* who is *really* behind the digital, virtual image?

1.1.3 Self, Identity and the Other

Thus the modern world foreseen by Marx, driven on by the work of the negative, by the engine of contradiction, became, by the very excess of its fulfillment, another world in which things no longer even need their opposites in order to exist, in which light no longer needs shade, the feminine no longer needs the masculine, good no longer needs evil – and the world no longer needs us (Baudrillard, 2009: 16).

I remember lucidly the first class of my junior year in the university, it was *101 Introduction to City Planning* and it opened exactly with this phrase: «The urban is what is not rural. Where agriculture ends, the city begins». At that point in life, I wouldn't have been able to tell you that the modernist definitions were bi-polar, and that every extreme was defined by the other extreme. Everything was identified by what it was not. Man / woman, east / west, light /dark. At that point, I was also ignorant of Baudrillard's *system of objects*.

Baudrillard's arguments, in common with many poststructuralists, consistently draw upon this notion that signification and meaning are both only understandable in terms of how particular words or «signs» interrelate. Baudrillard thought, as many post-structuralists did, that meaning is brought about through systems of signs working together. Following on from the structuralist linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, he argued that meaning is based upon an absence; so that «dog» means «dog» not because of what the word says, as such, but because it does not say «cat», «goat» or «tree» (1968/1996). In fact, he viewed meaning as near enough self-referential: objects, images of objects, words and signs are situated in a web of meaning; one object's meaning is only understandable through its relation to the meaning of other objects, in other words, one thing's prestige relates to another's mundanity (Poster, 1988: 11).

I do not know whether it was because of my origins, or the way that I was brought up, but I was not convinced with defining something with what it was not. I come from a country where it is very difficult to define your identity, even the national one. I may try to define myself as «Turkish», but then my father comes from Volos which is now a province in Greece, in the south of Thessaloniki, yet my mother is totally from the other side of Turkey, from the east, from a family that even includes Azerbaijani and Kurdish blood.

I am as white as my Finnish and Swedish friends, yet in most of the airports I would always be classified with the Arabs and sometimes find myself waiting in a small, claustrophobic room with several of them while the officers check out if I am a terrorist or not, as I carry the passport of a secular country where

99% percent of the population is Muslim. Turkey, as they taught me in primary school, «has a strategic geo-political location right in the middle of the East and the West», indeed, even the university where I received my bachelor's degree was called the Middle East Technical University. I have travelled abroad frequently ever since I was twelve years old, and yet, everywhere I go the question that I was most frequently asked was «whether I took my veil off as soon as I got on the plane».

With such difficulties in trying to define myself with what I was not, a little later in life, when they taught me what postmodernism was, I took it to be my only «religion» and loved it ever since. Though the least «applied» and the least «ideology» of all ideological structures, the unity it offered was amazing to me. In Italy, where I studied design, I was famous among my classmates from all around the world for having said; «Nobody is *rare* or *bizarre*, we could only be *different* which is to be cherished, we all come from different stories». Of course with such an introduction, I enjoyed very close friendships with a lot of people from Korea to Israel, from Thailand to Finland – long before we were all connected through Facebook. Facebook came up in 2004. In his own words, its founder Mark Zuckerberg's objective was to «make the world more open» (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 276).

I am certainly not making this narcissistic introduction to talk about myself. My point is that we have lived for a long time with the Other helping us define where we started and where we ended – though in some cases like mine, the Other was always quite blurry and difficult to distinguish. And my case is one of the best examples that I could think of for the complexity of the identity definition processes. With all that conflict that I have described, it should be very difficult for me to have an identity, but yet I do have one.

Although academic argument may say that identity is just a set of stories that we tell ourselves, I haven't met anyone who says that they have no particular identity or set of core values (although, of course, certain individuals may exist who *do* say that). A socially constructed identity is one which has been, as the phrase suggests, built, and brought into being. If a sense of identity is common, and central to human experience, then any amount of discussion about where this comes from is secondary to the fact that it *is* common and central to human experience.

At the same time, we have an ongoing sense of self which seems more permanent, an underlying identity which experiences all these moments but is not usually changed by them. We are happy to accept that a person's emotions or even attitudes can change quite quickly, as a result of external inputs or internal thoughts; but change to the underlying identity is assumed to be far more gradual and incremental; we look doubtfully at someone who says they feel like a completely different person to who they were last week, or last month. (Gauntlett, 2007: 18).

Basically, our sense of self is based on two fundamental components: Continuity over time and differentiation (Baumeister, 1986: 18). Which means that we know ourselves, from the similar behavior that we show over time, from being similar to ourselves, and from what differentiates us from what we are not, from the Other. The concept that the self requires the Other to define itself is an old one and has been expressed by many writers and philosophers. Though this Other does not necessarily stand at the other extreme of the continuum, like in any modernist bipolarity, even a postmodernist like Haraway underlines its role in defining identity.

Nothing exists in splendid isolation as a thing in itself, a self, a nation, any kind of identity. The signification of identity exists only in relation to something else. It is called into being by the binary code of language, albeit creating binaries that need to be deconstructed from the point of view of postmodern thinkers like Haraway. In this framework and in these conditions, Haraway argues, all identities are fractured. There are no essential identities of class, ethnicity, gender or sexuality: everything is potentially fluid and transformable into something else. Fixed identities are kept in place only by systems of domination (McGuigan, 2006: 88).

The German philosopher Hegel was among the first to introduce the idea of the other as constituent in self-consciousness. «Through philosophy, human consciousness in progress discovers itself for itself», as Hegel had said (Gombrowicz, 2004: 9). About the pre-self-conscious man, he wrote: «Each consciousness pursues the death of the other», meaning that seeing yourself separate from another, creates a feeling of alienation, which you try to resolve by synthesis. The resolution was described in Hegel's famous master-slave dialectic passage in *Phenomenology of Spirit*(1807). According to Hegel, «On approaching the other it has lost its own self, since it finds itself as another being; secondly, it has thereby sublated that other, for this primitive consciousness does not regard the other as essentially real but sees its own self in the other» (1807/1977: 111).

Sartre also made use of such dialectic in *Being and Nothingness*(1943), when describing how the world is altered at the appearance of another person, how the world now appears to orient itself around this other person. At the level Sartre presented it, however, it was without any life-threatening need for resolution, but as a feeling or phenomenon and not as a radical threat. «... in the field of my reflection I can never meet with anything but the consciousness which is mine. But the Other is the indispensable mediator between myself and me. I am ashamed of myself as I appear to the Other. By the mere appearance of the Other, I am put in the position of passing judgment on myself as on an object, for it is as an object that I appear to the Other» (Sartre, 1943/1992: 222).

Lacan and the Lithuanian-French philosopher Emmanuel Levinas were instrumental in coining contemporary usage of «the Other», as radically other. Lacan articulated the Other with the symbolic

order and language. Levinas talks of the Other in terms of awakening-reawakening. It is an ecstasy, or exteriority toward the Other that forever remains beyond any attempt at full capture, this otherness is interminable (or infinite); even in murdering another, the otherness remains, it has not been negated or controlled. This «infiniteness» of the Other will allow Levinas to derive other aspects of philosophy and science as secondary to this ethic. Levinas writes:

The others that obsess me in the other do not affect me as examples of the same genus united with my neighbor by resemblance or common nature, individuations of the human race, or chips off the old block ... The others concern me from the first. Here fraternity precedes the commonness of a genus. My relationship with the Other as neighbor gives meaning to my relations with all the others (1974/1998: 159).

William James (1890/1950) described the role of the Other with regard to the social aspect of the self-concept and the variety of social selves were described as the unique version of the self reflected in each human interaction. Diverse early conceptualizations of the self-concept highlighted how the self was shaped through the Others' views of us, or at least how our perceptions of these appraisals influenced the way we conceive of ourselves (Cooley, 1908). Others were seen as vital to the production and experience of being a self: «the self can only exist for the individual only if he assumes the roles of the others» (Mead, 1934: 284). The self is thus experienced «indirectly, from the particular standpoints of other individual members of the same social group, or from the generalized standpoint of the social group» (Mead: 138).

Similarly, Stuart Hall cites Derrida, Laclau and Butler, as he discusses that «identity is constructed within, not outside discourse ... identities are constructed through, not outside, difference». This entails the radically disturbing recognition that it is only through the relation to the Other, the relation to what it is not, to precisely what it lacks, to what has been called its *constitutive outside* that the «positive» meaning of any term – and thus its «identity» – can be constructed (Hall, 1996: 4-5).

... *spacing* is the impossibility for an identity to be closed on *itself*, on the inside of its proper interiority, or on its coincidence with itself. The irreducibility of *spacing* is the irreducibility of the [O]ther (Derrida, 1981: 94).

If we are currently discussing the turning of the gaze onto ourselves and the disappearance of the Other, this must be the consequence of a long transformation in the perception of the individual, which warns us on the non-coincidental nature of the point that we have arrived today. Both the «other» and the «Other» as dimensions of constructing the self have significant roles in changing the way that we present ourselves online and offline today. By the same token, our never-ending inner conflict with our

inner «other» creates the basis on which our identity and our image merge. Where our diminishing emphasis on the «Other» causes us to close upon ourselves and fix our gaze on ourselves – there is nobody that we see but us. While hints of exhibitionist and voyeuristic motives appear behind the online self-presentation on the social network, these motives change the structure of the contemporary communication significantly. To understand this change we continue following the path that was initiated with the first gaze upon our own images in the mirror stage. The focus of this gaze distinguishes subjectivity versus objectivity - which results in signalling a narcissistic self.

Present-day psychoanalysis is clearly more interested in synthetic approaches to the individual and the individual's relationship to others than in the ego as the frontier agency to which Freud accorded so much importance, or in the other/Other distinction as defined by Lacan. Nonetheless, it is important to understand the essences of these two concepts to refine our perspective on the roles we play and the stories we tell online.

When Lacan first started to use the term «other» in his work in the 1930s, he simply referred to «other people», with a connotation to Hegel's work with which he had become familiar by then (Evans, 1996: 135). It was much later, in 1955, that he clearly distinguished between «the little other», *a*, and «the big Other», *A*, both denominated with an «a» for French «autre». The *petit a*, is the other who is not really other, but a reflection and projection of one's ego, which is both the counterpart and the specular image of one's own self at the same time. With this definition, the *petit a* was entirely inscribed in the imaginary order and as the mirror that we looked at for self-recognition, whereas the «Other» indicated an otherness which transcended the illusory otherness of the imaginary. The «Other» was that which cannot be assimilated through identification. It was thus inscribed in the order of the symbolic, both for its radical alterity/unassimilable uniqueness and also the symbolic order which mediates the relationship with the other subject (Evans, 1996: 135). «The Other must first of all be considered a locus, the locus in which speech is constituted» (Lacan, 1956: 274).

In arguing that speech originates not in the ego, nor even in the subject, but in the Other, Lacan is stressing that speech and language are beyond one's conscious control; they come from another place, outside consciousness, and hence «the unconscious is the discourse of the Other» (1977/ 2002: 16). It is the mother who first occupies the position of the big Other for the child, because it is she who receives the child's primitive cries and retroactively sanctions them as a particular message (Evans, 1996: 136).

Similar to Lacan's successive definitions of the other, the ego was defined and re-defined by Freud until he reached a complete understanding of the agencies that make up the «I». In the *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1899), the «ego» stood for «the representation of the self» in the sense of identity (Mijolla, 2005: 462):

Dreams are completely egoistic. Whenever my own ego does not appear in the content of the dream, but only some extraneous person, I may safely assume that my own ego lies concealed, by identification, behind this other person; I can insert my ego into the context. On other occasions, when my ego *does* appear in the dream, the situation in which it occurs may teach me that some other person lies concealed, by identification, behind my ego. In that case, the dream should warn me to transfer on to myself, when I am interpreting the dream, the concealed common element attached to this other person. There are also dreams in which my ego appears along with other people who, when the identification is resolved, are revealed once again as my ego. These identifications should then make it possible for me to bring into contact with my ego certain ideas whose acceptance has been forbidden by the censorship. (Freud, 1899/2010: 338).

In the relationship with the other, there is a controversy of wanting to highlight features that distinguish one's self from the other, co-existing at the same time with the wish to establish similarity and team-up with others. The value of Simmel for us here is that he saw social experience in terms of a continuous tension between the individual and society, which seems to mirror the way in which identities are represented even on Facebook today. In the friction of these two controversial tendencies of adapting oneself to the society and trying to achieve the authentic self, Simmel sees the opportunity of progress:

On the one side, societies seek to shape each individual's life to fit the goals of society as they change over time. On the other side, individuals resist the shifting influences of society as they seek internal consistency in trying to realize their own values (Simmel as cited in Gauntlett, 2007: 190).

This is the «double relationship» that is a core theme of Simmel's work. He defined it as a state of being both inside and outside of the collective: «On the one hand the individual belongs to a whole and is a part of it, while on the other hand s/he is independent and stands opposed to it». Several decades before Bourdieu was writing about distinction – the cultural ways in which individuals mark themselves as different from others – Simmel was discussing the same theme, but underpinned by a more dynamic model which assigns a greater amount of agency to the individual. He noted that in Europe in the eighteenth century individualism was seen in terms of *freedom* from external constraints, based on a spirit of equality. However, in the nineteenth century, emphasis came to be placed on *differences* between unique individuals (Simmel, 1971: 218-223), and therefore individuality became about inequality:

As soon as the ego had become sufficiently strengthened by the feeling of equality and universality, it sought once again inequality – but this time an inequality determined only from within ... The quest for independence continued to the point where individuals who had been rendered independent in this way wanted also to distinguish themselves from one another (Simmel, 1971: 222).

In both cases, and indeed as we have moved forward into the present, «the drive underlying this development remains one and the same»: the individual is searching for «a fixed and unambiguous point of reference», and cannot find it outside the self (Simmel, 1971: 223). As social life becomes more complex, and different perspectives have to be taken into account, meaning does not come from external sources but needs to be achieved by the individual themselves, *in relation to* – but separately from – the social world of others. Yet, one of Simmel's concerns was that as the external world of technology and culture became so complex and much too vast to be fully accessed by one individual, the individual's own participation would come to seem relatively fragmentary and insignificant. He later came to define the individual culture in the *Philosophy of Money* (1907) as «trivial», which we will see in the «Identity Crisis» chapter in detail.

Foucault makes a similar point in defining one's relation to oneself:

On the one hand, there is an accentuation of everything that allows the individual to define his identity in accordance with his status and with the elements that manifest it in the most visible way. One seeks to make oneself as adequate as possible to one's own status by means of a set of signs and marks pertaining to physical bearing, clothing and accommodations, gestures of generosity and munificence, spending behavior, and so on. With regard to these behaviors by which one affirms oneself in the superiority one manifests over others, MacMullen has shown how common they were in the Roman aristocracy and the degree of exaggeration to which they could be carried. But at the opposite extreme one finds the attitude that consists, on the contrary, in defining what one is purely in relation to oneself. It is then a matter of forming and recognizing oneself as the subject of one's own actions, not through a system of signs denoting power over others, but through a relation that depends as little as possible on status and its external forms, for this relation is fulfilled in the sovereignty that one exercises over oneself. To the new forms of the political game, and to the difficulties of conceiving oneself as an acting subject placed between birth and functions, tasks and rights, prerogatives and subordinations, one was able to respond by intensifying all the recognizable marks of status or by seeking an adequate relationship with oneself (1984: 85).

The desperate search for a point of reference is, nonetheless, reflected in our way of self-presentation. Borrowing from Goffman, the human desire for social contact and for companionship emerges from two basic effects: a need for an audience before which to try out one's vaunted selves, and a need for teammates with whom to enter into collusive intimacies and backstage relaxation (1959: 206). Within this perspective we could make an early judgment of the communication medium brought about by Web 2.0 and say that it is almost perfect for the first urge, providing a not-too-close, not-too-far audience to test out our identity drafts, while for the second effect it results quite unsatisfactory. Facebook *friends*, on one hand function as Bourdieu's social capital to build better economic conditions

in which for the self to bloom, while on the other hand they respond to the narcissistic need for feedback from the others as discussed before.

Indeed, with the self-help books, life coaches and philosophical counselling on one side and the online self-exposure on the other, a revolution has taken place in the vocabulary of the self. Words that used to imply responsibility or accountability, such as, self-criticism, self-denial, self-discipline, self-control, self-effacement, self-mastery, self-reproach, or self-sacrifice – are no longer fashionable. The language most in favor is that which exalts the self – self-expression, self-assertion, self-indulgence, self-realization, self-approval, self-acceptance, self-love and the ubiquitous self-esteem (Ruggiero, 2000). In this new picture, the other does not assure objectivity, but rather serves as the confirmation of subjectivity. Actually, we have been switching from «identity» to «self» throughout this text but before we conclude the significance of the other in drawing the line to the identity, we should follow the path that had led to the self psychology to emerge in the first place.

In 1956, Erik Erikson introduced the concept of an ego identity formed during adolescence. Erikson's ego identity was defined by the unconscious quest for personal continuity, by the synthesis of the ego, and by group loyalties. It reflected an existential dimension of the ego. It was formed through a succession of syntheses of the ego whereby the conflicts of earlier stages were integrated. The opposite of ego identity was a diffusion of identity, a pathological syndrome in which representations of self and objects were fluid and unintegrated, and oppositionalism and acting out were manifested.

In 1961, Heinz Lichtenstein proposed giving identity the priority that the libido had for Freud. He considered it the keystone of psychopathology and eventually reframed Freudian metapsychology within a monist perspective that challenged the dualistic concept of identification. Erikson hoped to explain human development in phases, through which the ego was not only propelled by drives, as explained by Freud, but must confront the challenges posed by the environment. Ego identity was the adolescent stage; it took over from various identifications and its successful establishment depended on the resolution of earlier developmental crises.

Lichtenstein looked upon human identity as a permanent dilemma because of the absence of any form of guarantee. The theme of an invariable identity arose from an unconscious imprint derived from the mother thanks to a process of mirror reflection. Variations on this theme constituted the feeling of identity, a creation unique to the child. Pathological developments occurred when themes emerged that were impossible to satisfy yet necessary for the maintenance of identity. In such case a subject could be caught in a paradoxical oscillation between the search for an annihilating other and an isolating autonomy.

The principle of identity was the central motivation for the human individual, who was obliged to maintain an identity under more or less continual threat. This principle replaced the reality principle in Lichtenstein's account, and the drives as well as the repetition compulsion were subservient to it. Identity was assimilated to narcissism, described as a primary thematic with secondary variants. It left room for the self, the fourth metapsychological dimension and third paradigm of psychoanalysis. Identity was part of an evolutionist view that rejected dualism of any kind.

Historically speaking, theories of identity were replaced by theories of the self and by the «self psychology» of brought about by Heinz Kohut. Kohut characterized Erikson's identity as a descriptive psychosocial concept. The concept of «self» proposed in *The Analysis of the Self* (1971) is really the invention of Heinz Kohut: the Freudian idea of the «splitting of the ego» through the Kleinian idea of the splitting of the object molding the ego, by way of the mechanisms of introjection and projection led, finally to the Kohutian idea of a self, which becomes the object of all the narcissistic cathexes (Mijolla, 2005: 1579).

Understanding Kohut's model is only possible within the context of the history of ideas. In the 1960s the nosographic concept of limit-states and *borderline* pathologies, belonging neither to neurotic nor psychotic structures, surfaced. This resulted in the progressive delineation of hybrid or composite disorders, centered on issues linked to representation or identity of the Self – that is to say, in the last resort, to narcissistic personality disorders.

The Self became progressively a relatively autonomous principle of motivation, integrating the drives, and accorded its own program of realization; it no longer was separate from the Self-object, a concept that was enlarged to include the entire narcissistic dimension of experience (Mijolla, 2005: 1580). When one becomes her/his own self-object, there are no reference points left on the outside, thus narcissism is at stake and is reflected onto the way the self is presented.

Beyond a certain number of notions, like the corporal or archaic Self, the nuclear Self, the consistency of the self, the permanent disintegration of the self, the fragmented self, and self-esteem, Kohut has particularly emphasized the notion of the grandiose Self to try to account for «the child's solipsistic vision of the world and the manifest pleasure he derives from the admiration he receives from it». However, his descriptions of the grandiose Self cover a wide range of phenomena, from «paranoiac delirium and the crudely sexual acts of the adult pervert, to certain kinds of simple, sublimated satisfaction that adults derive from what they are, what they do, and what they succeed in».

Heinz Kohut offered his own reformulation of narcissism, describing it as the cathexis of self-representations (and not of the ego); he defined it as an agency of the personality responsible for issues of relationship. In light of the evidence from the human behavior online that we will investigate at length throughout this dissertation, we could talk about a more collaboratively formulated self that is continuously defined and re-defined. Nonetheless, in the context defined by Web 2.0, 'the self' should not be investigated in the terms in which it has historically come to relate to itself, as an enclosed space of human individuality, bounded by the envelope of the skin, and defined by its difference from the «Other». The processes defining the self and the Other are some of the innovations brought about by the sociological changes.

1.2 The Presentation of the Self

1.2.1 The Roles We Play

persóna rum. persoană; fr. personne
 prov. cat. e sp. persona; port. pessoa
 I Latini dissero persona (da PER-SONAR
 risuonare a traverso) la maschera di legno
 portata sempre sulla scena dagli attori
 nei teatri dell'antica Grecia e d'Italia
 nella quale i tratti del viso erano esage-
 rati, perché meglio potessero essere rile-
 vati dagli spettatori e la bocca era fatta
 in modo da rafforzare il suono della voce
 (ut personaret): cosa resa necessaria dall'
 ordinaria vastità degli antichi teatri. Que-
 sto vocabolo venne poi applicato ad espre-
 mere l'individuo rappresentato sulla scen-
 che ora diciamo Personaggio; poi (nel qua-
 senso persevera tuttora) un Uomo qua-
 siasi, e successivamente la sua Corpora-
 tura o il Complesso delle sue qualità.
 In legge « Persona » è l'Individuo ma-
 rale capace di diritti e di doveri.
 In grammatica « Persona prima, se-
 conda, terza » (del verbo) vale La person-
 che parla, quella che ascolta, quella a
 cui si parla.
 In proposizioni negative Persona usata
 per Alcuno: p. es. Non veder persona.
 Deriv. Personaggio; Personale; Personcina; Pe-
 sonevole. Comp. Im-personale; Personificare.

Figure 1.4 - Dictionary definition of «persona».

A personality, in the word's everyday usage, is a social role or a character played by an actor. *Persona* is an Italian word that derives from the Latin for a kind of *mask* made to resonate with the voice of the actor – *per sonare* meaning «to sound through».

In the study of communication, persona is a term given to describe the versions of self that all individuals possess. Behaviors are selected according to the desired impression an individual wishes to create when interacting with other people. Therefore, personae presented to other people vary according to the social environment that the person is engaged in, in particular the persona presented before others will probably differ from the persona an individual will present when s/he happens to be alone (Goffman, 1959). As defined parallelly in psychology by Carl Jung, the persona is the social face the individual presents to the world - «a kind of mask, designed on the one hand to make a definite impression upon others, and on the other to conceal the true nature of the individual» (1953: 190).

Masks are arrested expressions and admirable echoes of feeling, at once faithful, discreet, and superlative. Living things in contact with the air must acquire a cuticle, and it is not urged against cuticles that they are not hearts; yet some philosophers seem to be angry with images for not being things, and with words for not being feelings. Words and images are like shells, no less integral parts of nature than are the substances they cover, but better addressed to the eye and more open to observation. I would not say that substance exists for the sake of appearance, or faces for the sake of masks, or the passions for the sake of poetry, and virtue. Nothing arises in nature for the sake of anything else; all these phases and products are involved equally in the round of existence... (Santayana, 1922: 131-132 as cited in Goffman, 1959).

Erving Goffman opens his sociology classic *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) with the above epigraph by George Santayana. For Goffman, as the society is not homogeneous, we have to act differently in different settings to maintain an orderly society. All participants in social interactions are engaged in certain practices to avoid being embarrassed or embarrassing others. As he puts it: «There is no interaction in which the participants do not take an appreciable chance of being slightly embarrassed or a slight chance of being deeply humiliated. Life may not be much of a gamble, but interaction is» (Goffman as cited in Treviño, 2003: 14).

In a similar perspective, Bauman quotes Sennett in *Liquid Modernity* (2000), on the «obligatory» nature of these masks for the sustainability of the society's order. Remembering Richard Sennett's classic definition, a city is «a human settlement in which strangers are likely to meet» (1978: 39), and:

... urban living calls for a rather special and quite sophisticated type of skill, a whole family of skills which Sennett listed under the rubric of «civility», that is the activity which protects people from each other and yet allows them to enjoy each other's company. Wearing a mask is the essence of civility. Masks permit pure sociability, detached from the circumstances of power, malaise, and private feelings of those who wear them. Civility has as its aim the shielding of others from being burdened with oneself (Bauman, 2000: 95).

In Goffman's famously developed dramaturgical concept of «life as a theatre», the solution for such risks is that when an individual comes in contact with other people, that individual will attempt to control or guide the impression that others might make of her/him by changing or fixing her/his setting, appearance and manner. Nonetheless, at the same time, the person that the individual is interacting with is trying to form and obtain information about the individual. (Treviño, 2003: 35). Hence in social interaction, like in theatrical performance, there is a front region where the «actors» (individuals) are on «stage» in front of the audiences. This is where positive aspect of the idea of self and desired impressions are highlighted. There is a back region or «backstage» which can also be considered as a hidden or private place where the individuals can be themselves and get rid of their role or identity in society. (Ritzer, 1993b: 100).

When we talk about the online identity or the online representation of the self, we refer to a social identity that an Internet user establishes in online communities and websites – where the definitions of a «stage» and a «backstage» could be manipulated to a higher extent depending on the choices of the individual. As taking the «stage» to be the identity of a person is a reciprocal social consensus that has already been reached with the *actual* communication, it is natural that with the online nobody hesitates in judging others at «face value».

With Web 2.0 more people tend to use their real names online, while some internet users still prefer to be anonymous, identifying themselves by means of pseudonyms, which reveal varying amounts of personally identifiable information. Though the disclosure of the actual *name* does not necessarily imply the disclosure of the actual *self*, it is important to note that a majority of people that maintain online profiles prefer to connect their online «performances» to their *offline* ones. Considering the user tendency on Facebook, based on the data collected through the *Digital Life Scale*, out of the 528 participants that indicated Facebook to be the online social network where they spend most of their time online, %89.4 were using their actual names on their online profiles so as to be easily located by their friends who look for them. Nonetheless, anonymous or not, online or *offline* whenever an individual interacts in a social sphere s/he portrays a mask of her/his identity. This is no different online and in fact becomes even more pronounced due to the decisions a user must make concerning her/his online profile.

Certainly there is nothing *new* about such identity theories. They are «common currency», as Gauntlett claims in the findings of his *Creative Explorations*(2007):

... the essence of Erving Goffman's classic sociological argument ... that people have to routinely generate a kind of social performance in order to appear competent and coherent in everyday life, was taken for granted by most participants. It was assumed to be normal and unsurprising that their identity models would include, for example, «backstage» areas where the more private aspects of identity were to be found, and a more «public face» which looked out to and interacted with the external world (187).

Though such ideas are widely proved both in theory and practice, we should also consider a witty and contradictory point by Alan Fletcher about the «theatre» before moving forward to examine the relationship between self, identity and the theatrical mask:

Note. An evening at the theatre. It occurred to me that there is something weird about someone wanting to be someone else. And even more so about someone sitting down for a couple of hours to look at someone they don't know, pretending to be someone else, talking to someone who is also pretending to be someone else. A dialogue, furthermore, invented by somebody who imagined they were pretending to be each of these in turn (2001: 486).

Though not without a bitter aftertaste about the *sincerity* of all human social interaction, Goffman leaves us a rich array of metaphors, not only with the one of dramaturgy, but also with his conceptions of «game», «ritual» and «frame», his use of rhetorical techniques, irony, disclaimers and conceptual schemes through which to conduct a penetrating analysis of the organization of face-to-face interaction. Paying close attention to the routine and seemingly trivial social behaviors, involvement

obligations and situational interchanges the way that he has encouraged us, we could try to reach a deeper understanding of our online behaviors, of the network self and our ultimate alienation as well as the offline as was addressed within his theoretical framework.

1.2.2 Stage, Backstage, Performance and Identity

Identity implies continuity in a sense of the self, a sort of constancy behind the ever-changing mask of appearances. In the philosophies of Plato and Aristotle, which dominate the western tradition, the changing nature of the sensible realm is contrasted with the invariance of the realm of the forms – the place of identity (Wiszniewski, 2002: 198). According to Goffman, the social actor has the ability to choose his stage and his foundations, as well as the costume he would put on in front of a specific audience. The actor's main goal is to keep his coherence, and adjust to the different settings offered him. In doing this, interaction with other actors is fundamental. Making a clear distinction between our «human selves» and «socialized selves», Goffman claims that in the public realm, civility requires us to maintain the homogeneity and coherence of our expressions at all cost:

The expressive coherence that is required in performances points out a crucial discrepancy between our all-too-human selves and our socialized selves. As human beings we are presumably creatures of variable impulse with moods and energies that change from one moment to the next. As characters put on for an audience, however, we must not be subject to ups and downs. As Durkheim suggested, we do not allow our higher social activity «to follow in the trail of our bodily states, as our sensations and our general bodily consciousness do». A certain bureaucratization of the spirit is expected so that we can be relied upon to give a perfectly homogeneous performance at every appointed time (Goffman, 1959: 56).

«The costume that we put on» in front of our Web 2.0 audiences is quite interesting: We make collages of our so-called «private» lives and we «mass communicate» this collage manipulating the level of *self* projected onto the public *identity* on a scale of 0% to 100% to maintain the coherency of our public selves. And as we do that we worry about «identity theft»² and one of our chief complaints is that our privacy is not being protected adequately. Today, we must be talking about a new definition of *privacy*, also with our mobile communications:

When people have phone conversations in public spaces, their sense of privacy is sustained by the presumption that those around them will treat them not only as anonymous but as if absent. On a recent train trip from Boston to New York, I sat next to a man talking to his girlfriend about his problems. Here is what I learned by trying not to listen: He's had a recent

bout of heavy drinking, and his father is no longer willing to supplement his income. He thinks his girlfriend spends too much money and he dislikes her teenage daughter. Embarrassed, I walked up and down the aisles to find another seat, but the train was full. Resigned, I returned to my seat next to the complainer. There was some comfort in the fact that he was not complaining to me, but I did wish I could disappear. Perhaps there was no need. I was already being treated as though I were not there (Turkle, 2011: 92).

Traditionally, the development of intimacy required privacy. Intimacy without privacy reinvents what intimacy means. In this curious relational space of digital communications, even sophisticated users who know that electronic communications can be saved, shared, and that they could show up in court, succumb to its illusion of privacy. Among many definitions Goffman presents us based on the metaphor of theatre, several could be applied to our online representations as contemporary forms of selves-made-public. One of his very basic definitions which we are presented with in the introduction of his book, however, is the key to distinguish the limitations of online representation:

... the «true» or «real» attitudes, beliefs, and emotions of the individual can be ascertained only indirectly, through his avowals or through what appears to be involuntary expressive behavior. ... The expressiveness of the individual (and therefore his capacity to give impressions) appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he *gives*, and the expression that he *gives off*. The first involves verbal symbols or their substitutes which he uses admittedly and solely to convey the information that he and the others are known to attach to these symbols. This is communication in the traditional and narrow sense. The second involves a wide range of action that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor, the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed in this way. ... The individual does of course intentionally convey misinformation by means of both of these types of communication, the first involving deceit, the second feigning (Goffman: 1959: 2).



Figure 1.5 - People wearing masks at the Festival of Venice.

When interacting online, be that through Facebook profiles, personal web pages or blogs, every single piece of our self expressions that is *published/broadcasted* is carefully *selected* and/or *edited*, hence the possibility of expressions *given off* are minimized to intentional manipulations, Freudian «slips of tongue» or mere carelessness. As we lack the expressions *given off*, we are missing the non-verbal part of communication which Goffman

defines as the «presumably unintentional kind, whether this communication be purposely engineered or not» (1959: 4). When the spontaneity of the interaction is lost, the already masked public identity is once again filtered through meticulous editing of what is made public, based on the fact that when communicating online «a person» is *actually* «alone with a machine» (Turkle, 1995: 9). Papacharissi, in her research on virtual self-presentation claims that the web provides the ideal setting for the Goffmanian type of «information game», allowing maximum control over the information disclosed (2002a: 644; 2002c: 348).

Goffman himself makes this distinction, limiting his definition and metaphor of the roles that we play only to situations where people socialize in the physical presence of others:

... interaction (that is, face-to-face interaction) may be roughly defined as the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's actions when in one another's immediate physical presence. An interaction may be defined as all the interaction which occurs throughout any one occasion when a given set of individuals are in one another's continuous presence; the term «an encounter» would do as well. A «performance» may be defined as all the activity of a given participant and his performance as a basic point of reference, we may refer to those who contribute the other performances as the audience, observers, or co-participants. The pre-established pattern of action which is unfolded during a performance and which may be called a «part» or «routine» (1959: 15).

In that case, if our *real selves* are not to be communicated when we interact socially, they remain forever locked in our own consciousness claustrophobically, never to be revealed in the presence of any other. With a similar concern, Blumstein in his research on the production of selves in intimate relationships analytically distinguishes between self and identity, defining the self as «a personal intrapsychic structure knowable only by the person to whom it belongs», and identity as «the face that is publicly displayed» (Treviño, 2003: 87). In this sense, a performative identity is always-already constructed through the image that one wants to maintain.

The idea that the identities of the participants in social situations are *constituted* through performances is yet another of the many provocative ideas brought about by Goffman's work (1959). Despite terminological differences, Blumstein's basic argument, that identities shape selves, follows from Goffman, in particular from his distinction between «self-as-performer» and «self-as-character», as well as his distinctions between ego identity, personal identity and social identity in *Stigma* (1963). In making this argument, Blumstein, much the same as Goffman had before him, challenges the common sense notion that enacted (represented?) identities *express* an individual's fundamental sense of self but do not significantly *shape* selves. Blumstein argues that frequently projected identities may come to shape

the individual's sense of self, particularly when such projections occur in the context of significant relationships in which individuals are motivated to identify with the roles that they play (Treviño, 2003: 85).

Blumstein uses the term «ossification»³, the hardening of identities into selves, to describe this process. Because individuals are inclined to expect coherence between their projected identities and their inward sense of self, particularly in intimate relationships, Blumstein focuses on these types of relationships as a domain where identities are most likely to shape selves (Treviño, 2003: 87). Once again, developed for the «interaction order» in Goffman's terms, these theories are based on the conduct of the human beings in face-to-face interaction. Nevertheless in the chapters to follow, how, through decades of filtering and refinement with the Debordian spectacle, this definition of «identity becoming self» applies to our online representations as «image becoming identity» will be elaborated in detail. The ossification of identity becoming self in the conventional offline interaction is «image becomes identity» today with the web. Through the commodification of human beings, the online networks and the social media become the *market place* for these human/brand performances.

To say that our performances in social life produce the self, however, is not to say that such performances could be readily accepted as reflections of the self. On the contrary, as Goffman highlights, in some cases, for purposes of personal gain or any other reason, individuals or teams give performances in which they do not believe. While they may impress their audiences with their performance, they themselves are not taken in (Treviño, 2003: 91-92).

However, in Goffman's view, the self *is* a *product* of performance in social life, nevertheless the identity implications of a given performance are not ultimately controlled by the performer (Treviño, 2003: 92). As Goffman puts it, the self is «a dramatic effect arising diffusely from a scene that is presented, and the characteristic issue, the crucial concern, is whether it will be credited or discredited» (1959: 253). Whether or not an image of self presented in social interaction is credited or discredited depends on the handling of it by others in the social situation. Any definition of reality or image of self, Goffman argues, is subject to discrediting. Definitional disruptions would occur frequently were it not for the constant precautions taken and the tact that others exert in their reception of received definitions of realities and selves (Goffman 1959: 13-14). To sustain a desired image of self in social situations, in other words, depends fundamentally on the acceptance and tactful support of this image by others. Selves, social identities, and social hierarchies, all achieve their coherence and sense of reality from the dramatic support achieved in everyday social situations.

Moreover, Goffman argues that the main inclination of social interaction is for people to «maintain face», or in other words, receive the acceptance and support of others and of the situation for their projected image of the self. However as Branaman discusses, this tendency does not necessarily indicate honesty or realistic modesty, instead it is a result of the fundamental constraints of interaction which appear to favor *mutual* face maintenance (Treviño, 2003: 94). It is a tendency that is similar to our way of mutual *Facebook maintenance* today, or in other words, to the «self-reinforcing spirals of reciprocal kindness [that] social networking tends to create» (Ratliff, 2010: 22). This point not only implies an adequate application of Goffman's face-to-face interaction theory to the online interaction but also emphasizes the fact that we have long elevated the online interaction to the level of the *actual* one. Three decades after its publication, this is a pure implication of Lasch's *Culture of Narcissism*(1979).

This respectful act of favouring face maintenance mutually is the basis of the Goffmanian norm in everyday interaction and could be distinguished in two simple rules: The rule of self-respect and the rule of considerateness (Goffman, 1967). In social situations, individuals tend to maintain the face they have been given, typically on the basis of various social attributes to the person by others in the situation as well as by the wider society in general, due to their self-respect. Regarding the rule of considerateness, individuals handle carefully and respectfully the feelings and faces of others in social situations. The overall effect of both rules is that the social masks are meticulously and formally maintained at all costs despite whatever insincerity this may imply. If the social hierarchies are considered, these rules also serve the maintenance of the already established hierarchy «by limiting the claims that can appropriately be made by the lower-in-status and by protecting the higher-in-status from challenge» (Treviño, 2003: 92).

We could observe in several examples elaborated by Goffman that one's place in a social hierarchy is largely determined by the image one is able to sustain not only through one's own communicative efforts but also through the support s/he receives or fails to receive from others in social situations (Goffman, 1959: 75). Reciprocally, the image that one is able to sustain in social interaction is a product of the place in a social hierarchy that persons with one's social characteristics tend to hold (Goffman, 1967: 7). To avoid the embarrassment or humiliation of having one's projection of self rejected by others, or to «maintain face» properly, individuals are advised to present themselves in a way that others will be prepared to accept. Typically, this means that individuals are compelled to present themselves as persons of a level of worthiness compatible with the visible or discoverable status characteristics they are said to possess. According to Goffman, even the tendency to experience embarrassment or humiliation as a result of others' failure to provide support for one's projected image seems to vary according to status (1967: 26).

Goffman values highly the role of embarrassment in the interaction, which is also apparent in the lip service paid to the actor by the witness/observer who is likely to have advantage over her/his performance, simply by being on the spectator side. A major theme that Goffman treats throughout the work is the fundamental importance of having an agreed upon definition of the situation in a given interaction, in order to give the interaction coherency. In interactions, or performances, the involved parties may be audience members and performers simultaneously; the actors usually foster impressions that reflect well upon themselves, and encourage the others, by various means, to accept their preferred definition. All the participants in the interaction are expected to suppress their immediate heartfelt feelings as part of the «information game» and convey a view of the situation which would be more appropriate and at least temporarily acceptable. Goffman acknowledges that when the accepted definition of the situation has been discredited, some or all of the actors may pretend that nothing has changed, if they find this strategy profitable to themselves or wish to keep the peace. This is how the information game unfolds – a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery (1959: 8-10).

Considering the contemporary manipulating individual, at the same time manipulated by the online social network, another important point to emphasize from Goffman's theory is «the belief in the part one is playing» which resonates true also for the online theatre we have set up.

When an individual plays a part he implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess, that the task he performs will have the consequences that are implicitly claimed for it, and that, in general, matters are what they appear to be. ... When the individual has no belief in his own act and no ultimate concern with the beliefs of his audience, we may call him cynical, reserving the term «sincere» for individuals who believe in the impression fostered by their own performance (1959: 17-18).

This «sincerity» of the role, the mask that we carry in a natural manner is the thin line that separates us from *being* the role that we play. In a sense, and in so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves – the role we are striving to live up to – this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality: «We come into the world as individuals, achieve character, and become persons» (Goffman, 1959: 19).

It is probably no mere historical accident that the word person, in its first meaning, is a mask. It is rather a recognition of the fact that everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously, playing a role ... It is in these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves (Park as cited in Goffman, 1959: 11-12).

Though it is very likely that the basic reason behind the roles we play is face maintenance, or in other words, «impression management» as will be discussed in the following chapters, an alternative perspective could be the one that Lady Gaga suggests, one of the most popular figures of the current music industry who is a queen of managing her millions of fans with her iconic impressions. Could our image/identities be a protection, a shell, to ensure the authenticity of ourselves? CBS's Anderson Cooper reports a recent interview with the icon for his program 60 Minutes:

Spending time with Lady Gaga, we realize that the outfits and transformations are not just attention-getting, they're also attention-directing. A way for her to keep the public focused on her work as opposed to her personal life. Lady Gaga says «As part of my mastering of the art of fame, part of it is getting people to pay attention to what you want them to pay attention to, and not pay attention to the things that you don't want them to pay attention to». She studied the fame of others, how they got it, how they kept it and how they lost it. «The sociology of fame ... I mean how to maintain a certain privacy, without feeling like you're withholding anything from your fans. My philosophy is if I'm open with them about everything and yet I art-direct every moment of my life, I can maintain a sort of privacy. In a way, I maintain a certain soulfulness that I have yet to give» (Cooper, 2011, *emphasis added*).

Hence the pop icon maintains her Simmelian «honor» by giving her a private space in which to breathe, carefully hidden from public eye by the loud distraction and the show. Goffman quotes Simmel who believes in the personality value of the individual is saved by such a sphere of protection:

To act upon the second of these decisions corresponds to the feeling (which also operates elsewhere) that an ideal sphere lies around every human being. Although differing in size in various directions and differing according to the person with whom one entertains relations, this sphere cannot be penetrated, unless the personality value of the individual is thereby destroyed. A sphere of this sort is placed around man by his «honor». Language very poignantly designates an insult to one's honor as «coming too close»: the radius of this sphere marks, as it were, the distance whose trespassing by another person insults one's honor (1959: 69).

Masks do remain extremely important to us, for our face and self-maintenance, remembering Jung, either to make a desired impression or to conceal our true selves – whatever that may be. But they also form the basis of our confusion and frustration with our selves as well as the basis of the contemporary identity crisis.



1.3 A Life Well Lived



From the idea that the self is not given to us... there is only one practical consequence: we have to create ourselves as a work of art (Foucault as cited in Rabinow, 1997: 351).

As we developed in previous sections, an identity is a definition, an interpretation of the self and an identity crisis is not resolved by checking one's wallet for one's name and address. The modern desire for identity is different from several other modern appetites, as it is different from the way identity was understood in the previous centuries. Baumeister says, confirming the hypothesis of this dissertation, that «the modern difficulty with identity must be understood as resulting from a change in identity – or rather, *in the way identity is created and shaped*» (1986: 4, *emphasis added*).

Theorists tell us that the desire to assemble a solid and unified view of self-identity is the pillar of self-actualization and that despite the dominance of consumer culture, the goal of formulating this identity is not about possessions gained, but about social connections, inner happiness and a life well lived (Gauntlett, 2007: 196).

The earliest philosopher to describe a life well lived based on a fulfilled self was Aristotle. His brief reply to questions like «How should the human being live?» or «What does it take to live a good life?» was: «Man can only achieve happiness by using all his abilities and capabilities» (Gaarder, 1991: 57). We should remember that the replies which we expect from psychology today for our mental well-being, once fell in the field of philosophy. Recalling the principle familiar to the Epicureans, the Cynics and the Stoics, philosophy's role was to «heal the diseases of the soul» (Foucault, 1981: 97).

Hence a life well lived requires sound self-knowledge, to know one's own potential, desires and capabilities. In the sixteenth century, Montaigne introduced his autobiography with the boast that no writer had ever known a topic better than he knew his, because he was writing about himself (Baumeister, 1986: 5).

Our duty is to compose our character, not to compose books, to win not battles and provinces, but order and tranquility in our conduct. Our great and glorious masterpiece is to live properly. All other things – to reign, to lay up treasure, to build – are at the best but little aids and additions (Montaigne, 1580/1993: 397).

Yet at his time, knowledge of self, seemed nearly perfect and indisputable. Today self-knowledge does not enjoy such confident certainty. In the process of finding one's identity, «self-deception, unconscious motivations, selective perception and memory of events and interpretive biases have all been recognized as major obstacles on the path to self-knowledge» (Baumeister, 1986: 5).

Psychoanalysis was established in the early twentieth century as a means of better understanding the self. Before such scientific attempts to understand one's self, human beings used any tool that they could invent to augment their self-knowledge. Popular astrological assessments and daily horoscopes were used and transformed into means of mass personality assessment. The ambitious quest for self-knowledge had dispersed even to the use of illegal drugs, as psychedelic drugs like LSD were believed to promote insight into oneself (Baumeister, 1986: 7). Knowing oneself was considered the starting point for achieving the person you were meant to be by religions, philosophies and popular culture, yet it still is considered as such:

Academic theories about lifestyles and relationships, self-knowledge and self-fulfillment, are popularized in mass market paperbacks, lifestyle magazines and daytime TV shows, as well as more serious documentaries. Ideas about identity and self-presentation are worked through constantly in TV shows from *Smallville* to *What Not to Wear*, as well as popular movies, newspaper and magazine advice features, and the continuous media commentary about the personalities of politicians, royalty and celebrities (Gauntlett, 2007: 187-188).

For Foucault, psychoanalysis was a very important tool, as it was the *scientific* means of knowing oneself (Ffrench, 2005: 208). In the Foucaultian perspective, the project of «life as a work of art» was oriented towards that non-place of the legacy or testament, the place that had all the characteristics of utopia. Having studied the theories of the self, starting from Greek and Roman antiquity, Foucault concluded that the concern for the life of the self was to (be seen to) have led a beautiful life, to have produced one's life as an ethical substance. In Foucault's several writings where he assesses this «life» as a finished product, he orients our thinking towards the future anterior of *having lived* a beautiful life, as a gift to the memory of others (Ffrench: 213). This point not only implies an evaluation of the life with regard to death, but also highlights the role of the other, as a witness to the project of a life «that was lived beautifully». Such an attitude moreover, is able to reveal «the obsessive relation our age entertains with death» (Rabinow, 1997: 310).

Concerning where Foucault's philosophy stands, introducing two of his concepts are important in the development of this dissertation: the «aesthetics of existence» and the «Californian cult of the self». Starting from Plato's *Alcibiades*, where the philosopher asks «What work should one do on oneself?», the life of the self was presented to be a project one should work



Figure 1.5 - People wearing masks at the Festival of Venice.

on or for. Nonetheless, the definition of «care of the self» is significantly different than our concept of self-knowledge, and even different than the infamous «know thyself». In contrast with the self-serving self-help society of our contemporaneity, as Socrates had observed, the purpose of the Greek concept of caring for the self, comprised of a set of complex and regulated techniques to develop better citizens (Foucault, 1981: 93), which we can interpret as creating identities that served the society well, or social roles enacted flawlessly.

As part of the «hermeneutic of the subject», working on oneself meant mostly self-control, controlling in oneself those forces that one should resist as a quest for the «aesthetics of existence». It meant that an ethical life was something to be produced aesthetically, through its living:

As such, this care for the self does not imply narcissism; it is necessary, on the contrary, for today's critical thinker to «get free of oneself». In terms of Foucault's analysis of the Greek «aesthetics of existence», this is a falling out of love with oneself, a sacrifice of oneself, in order to be able to turn one's attention to a divine element. It is an ascetic renunciation of the self, that being oriented towards the future anterior of *having lived* a beautiful, ethical life, necessarily destined for the reception of others, after the event (Ffrench, 2005: 206-207).

To this end, Foucault understands «care of the self» not as a pastime but as a way of living, a program through which one comes to achieve self-sovereignty and, ultimately, self-enjoyment. Though it was a *luxury* only of the masters who were able to dedicate time to the techniques of the self, the application involved «ascetic principles of disengagement rather than narcissistic projects of self-fashioning» (Ffrench, 2005: 207).

When Foucault was asked in «On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress», how the «care of the self» relates to the modern times, he replied saying that what we experience today is a different relation to oneself, as he explained that the theme in Greek ethics people was to constitute an aesthetic of existence, whereas it is not the focus of our problem today. According to Foucault, most people no longer believe that ethics is founded in religion, nor want a legal system to intervene in their moral, personal, private life:

Recent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethics. They need an ethics, but they cannot find any other ethics than an ethics founded on so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is, and so on (Foucault, 1985: 255-256).

In other words, Christian hermeneutics of the self has been transmuted into the scientific (which for Foucault, is psychoanalytic) knowledge of the truth of the self. The problem in the present, then, is the

absence of an ethics other than one based in knowledge, in the hermeneutics of the self whereby one finds one's truth in one's desire and is enjoined to be true to one's desire (Ffrench, 2005: 210). At this point Foucault changes his mind on where to find the ethics, as he now condemns the ancient Greek model as «a virile society, where the ethics of pleasure is linked to asymmetry, exclusion of the other, an obsession with penetration, and a kind of threat of being dispossessed of your own energy» (1985: 258).

However, he does not abandon the idea that one's life should be a «work of art», nonetheless, this time criticizing the definition of art in modern times:

What strikes me is the fact that, in our society, art has become something that is related only to objects and not to individuals or to life. That art is something which is specialized or done by experts who are artists. But couldn't everyone's life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object but not our life? (Foucault, 1985: 261).

Nonetheless he strictly clarifies that it should not be confused with the «Californian cult of self», as he is not talking about the effort to fashion a «perfect life» exemplified on Californian campuses such as Berkeley (Ffrench, 2005: 211). The kind of project in most of these examples, where everything from the way they eat breakfast, to the way they have sex, to the way they spend their day, should be perfected, according to him, is because they believe to «know the truth about desire, life, nature, the body, and so on» (1985: 261-262).

As we try to define the «life well-lived» today, what we face is not the Greek ethics, though the «Californian cult» has already had its effect on the Facebook display of the self. Today's concern mostly stemming from our over self-absorption is seen by Foucault to be the opposite extreme of what we were told to do by the religious doctrines like «Be selfless»:

In the Californian cult of the self, one is supposed to discover one's true self, to separate it from that which might obscure or alienate it, to decipher its truth thanks to psychological or psychoanalytic science, which is supposed to be able to tell you what your true self is. Therefore, not only do I not identify this ancient culture of the self with what you might call the Californian cult of the self, [but I also] think they are diametrically opposed. What happened in between is precisely an over-tuning of the classical culture of the self. This took place when Christianity substituted the idea of a self that one had to renounce, because clinging to the self was opposed to God's will, for the idea of a self that had to be created as a work of art (1985: 271).

The task of modernity is thus to separate out from the contingency of what we are, what we do or think, the possibility of no longer being, doing, or thinking in that way. This historical ontology of ourselves, Foucault adds, must also be an experimental one, to be practiced «at the limit of ourselves» (Rabinow,

1997: 316), constantly putting itself to the test of reality – specific, local and practical. This will rest on the knowledge of practical systems, that will enable individuals to know the rules of the rationalities determining what and how they are, think and do, and thereby to modify the «rules of the game».

Hence Foucault's refusal of the heroization of Antiquity and the real concern with the possibilities of different ethical practices and relations to the self «today» stem from a critique of the hermeneutics of desire and the constitution of the self's truth in relation to *scientific* knowledge, a critique in other words of the constitution of subjectivity as premised on a «recognition» of oneself. Foucault is not after recognition, then, but transformation. His is an orientation in favour of a creative practice according to which the self is something to be invented, worked upon, transformed, performed, rather than recognised or found: life as *the material* of a work of art (Ffrench, 2005: 212-213).

At this point we can connect Foucault's line of thought to that of Giddens and Ricoeur. Developing a hermeneutics that is a little different than Foucault's, Anthony Giddens and Paul Ricoeur highlight the significance of developing a personal narrative in the construction of one's identity. According to Giddens, in contemporary modern societies, individuals create a «narrative of the self» to explain their journey through the social world and their sense of who they are (1991, 1992). Paul Ricoeur argues that we make use of stories, from literature and popular culture, to help us assemble the narrative of our own lives (1984, 1992).

In Ricoeur's perspective, the world cannot be directly and instantly *known* and understood, but must always be *interpreted*. This is why Ricoeur is interested in the stories that we tell – ultimately including the stories that we tell about ourselves, which we call our «identities». Nonetheless, seeing identity as a story is not the same thing as seeing it as *fiction*. It is the reality of a person formulated as a narrative, with the objective of gaining self-knowledge «through the long route of the interpretation of texts, monuments and cultural forms» (Ricoeur, 1992: 75). On a witty note, Mark Twain thought that the big difference between fiction and reality was that fiction had to be believable. Reality could afford to be implausible, but fiction could not (Damasio, 2010: 33).

Rather, Ricoeur seeks to bridge the gap between the inner certainty of Descartes and the grand suspicion of Nietzsche. Descartes's famous assertion «I think, therefore I am» takes personal consciousness as the absolute foundation for all knowledge, whereas Nietzsche argues that this is an illusion. In *Freud and Philosophy* (1970), Ricoeur says, «The first truth – *I am, I think* – remains as abstract and empty as it is invincible; it has to be 'mediated' by the ideas, actions, works, institutions and monuments that objectify it» (43).



He [Pirandello] starts with the question: Who am I? What proof have I for my own identity other than the continuation of my physical self? His answer is not like Descartes' – the affirmation of the individual self – but its denial: I have no identity, there is no self excepting the one which is the reflex of what others expect me to be: I am «as you desire me». This loss of identity then makes it still more imperative to conform; it means that one can be sure of oneself only if one lives up to the expectations of others. If we do not live up to this picture we not only risk disapproval and increased isolation, but we risk losing the identity of our personality, which means jeopardizing sanity (Fromm, 1942: 220).

Figure 1.6 & Figure 1.7 - Sometimes, it is even difficult to claim the continuity of our identity in physical terms. Who would say that this little African-American boy with his curly head on the left and the middle-aged white man on the right are the same person? Michael Jackson, 7 years old on the left and 50 years old on the right.

Figure 1.8 & Figure 1.9 - In a less extreme example, we see Zuckerberg's physical change through time. Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg is five years old on the left. A very recent photo of Zuckerberg at the 37th G8 summit in 2011, 27 years old on the right.

Furthermore, Ricoeur argued that narratives provide their audiences with the opportunity to consider ethical questions. We can see the stories in popular media as today's most commonly engaged-with dimension of the «vast laboratory for thought experiments» mentioned by Ricoeur (1992: 148). These narratives include television drama and soaps, movies, comics, video games, and even the «true» narratives about celebrities and reality TV stars which appear in a range of media forms. Such narratives give people the chance to think about what constitutes a «good life» or a desirable identity (Gauntlett, 2007: 194).

Stories which emphasize the importance of love, family and keeping one's word – themes which are at the heart of numerous popular movies, for example – help individuals to orient themselves towards what is important in life, if we share this cultural view; or more cynical entertainments are preferred by others as offering something more «challenging» to reflect upon. Responses to different kinds of stories can change over time, and life-stages are significant here, but – whatever their content – media narratives offer their audiences models to respond to as they refine their own sense of self-identity, and *navigation points* as they steer their own personal routes through life.

As such, one's life becomes a narrative through which one gets to follow the continuity of her/his own identity. And today the narrative is constructed and told through the use of the online social network, thereby creating witnesses and accomplices to one's narrative. The photo-illustrated lifecasting that we publish on Facebook serves as a proofreading of our identities and the stories that we tell ourselves.

1.4 Identity Construction and Positive Mental Health

Identity is not in the past to be found, but in the future to be constructed (Hall, 1980: 57-72).

The search for identity is one of the most pervasive themes in our society. And yet, the different usages of the term «identity» by social scientists reflect an imprecise and sometimes conflictive understanding of the concept even among researchers. As we will see in the following chapters, the contemporary literature tends to focus more on the «crisis» than the «identity», nevertheless, following Maslow's lead, we will try to develop this section around what constitutes the positive self-regard and mental health.

The discovery and fulfillment of one's potentiality as a unique individual is a significant aspect of constructing human identity. This is what Maslow defines as self-actualization, and places at the top of his hierarchy of needs as the final stage to be achieved. On the course of a lifetime, few of us actually reach the stage of self-actualization, realizing our full potentials. Nevertheless, to lead a «life well-lived» the contemporary individual sets out on the path to create coherency and stability between the components of her/his existence. The more common rituals, problems and crises of self-construction are confronted on this way to self-actualization and several external factors are handled and processed. Today's world offers us several creative digital tools, the latest being the Web 2.0 and mobile technologies to accompany us on the way, besides the ever-present traditional tools that we already knew for managing our identity construction processes.

Anthony Giddens, one of the most prominent contemporary sociologists, has argued that individuals in contemporary Western societies have to construct and maintain a personal biographical narrative of the self, in order to enjoy a coherent and stable existence (1991). David Gauntlett, who has carried out a creative identity construction experiment called the «Lego identity» reports in his findings that his experiment confirms Giddens' perspective of the identity as being constructed as a reflexive narrative of the self; «that it was constructed from a set of relevant parts, some rather intimate and personal, some to do with external obligations and social ties»; and that it was established through a matrix of similarity and difference – through acceptance of some of the categories and resistance of some others (Gauntlett, 2007: 188). He notes that pride and self-esteem – or, on the negative side, embarrassment and shame – are associated with our ability to tell a consistent and meaningful story of our self-identity; and in Gauntlett's Lego identity participants indeed seem distinctly *pleased* when they had constructed models representing their personal narrative in an attractive, reasoned and (literally) solid way (190).

Similarly, Paul Ricoeur writes of the search for «the good life», an ethical dimension to narrative identity,

which includes values and aspirations as part of one's identity (1992: 171). The drive to seek a «good life» would be a motor at the heart of the machine, driving the person towards personal goals and hopefully, in the final instance, to self-actualization. Ricoeur, in his definition of what it takes to define a «good life» with respect to its content, says that there is a personal criteria for each of us, the nebulous of ideals and dreams of achievements with regard to which a life is held to be more or less fulfilled or unfulfilled (179).

In Maslow's infamous model, the path to enlightenment, or self-actualization starts with resolving basic physiological needs, attainment of security, love and belonging to reach a stable level of self-esteem and to progress onto the final stage of self-actualization. His extremely detailed psychological research was based on his humanistic vision of the human nature as «wonderful possibilities, inscrutable depths» and diametrically opposite to Freud's conception he claimed that we find basic goodness and decency at the psychological and biological core of human nature. According to Maslow, when people appeared to be something other than good and decent, it was only because «they were reacting to stress, pain or the deprivation of basic human needs such as security, love and self-esteem» (1962: vi).

Upon this basis Maslow's theory of deficiency motivation and growth motivation was built. When a human being has a need *for* something, motivational dynamisms were activated by *deficiency*. All such deficiency motives cause our perceptions of reality to be blurred, as well as distorting our dealings with

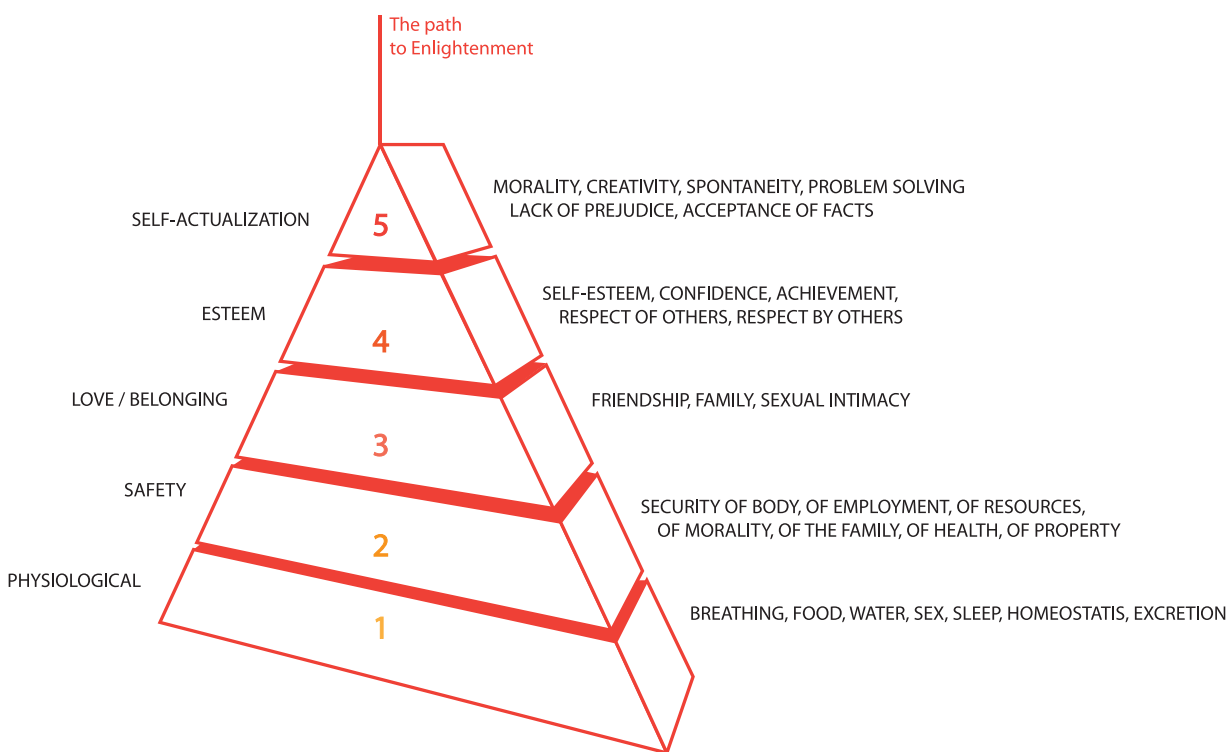


Figure 1.10 - According to Maslow's schema of needs, the highest human need is self-realization. Abraham Maslow (1962).

reality by causing us to make demands on it: «Feed me! Love me! Respect me!» The greater our need for food, or affection or self-esteem, the more distorted would be our items of reality.

In his original paper, Maslow described the characteristics of self-actualizing people as having «more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it». These people, no longer look at the world through the clouded lens of deficiency, and thus are able to:

... distinguish far more easily than most the fresh, concrete, and individual from the generic, abstract and stereotyped. The consequence is that they live more in the real world of nature than in the man-made mass of concepts, abstractions, expectations, beliefs and stereotypes that most people confuse with the world. They are therefore far more apt to perceive what is there rather than their own wishes, hopes, fears, anxieties, their own theories and beliefs, or those of their cultural group (1954: 205).

Capitalism and the consumer society, as we will examine in detail in the following section, have placed several layers of distortion over the reality, as did technology, in a way that Slouka calls a «high-tech assault on reality» (1995). The unflagging drive of consuming more and the constant act of comparing what others possess with one's own create the type of frustration mentioned by Maslow and cause the human being to act with deficiency motivation paired with a blurred perception of reality.

This point is highly significant for this dissertation, as we research how the perception of identity was altered with the advent of the online network. After long decades of heavy consumption-to-be and a «schizophrenic» identity split and multiplied in the process of inhabiting the screen, the motives of today's individual are highly deviated from the natural and the basic. Constant competitiveness which was once receiving persistent feedback from the television and other mass media is today customized to our own social circles and brought to our screens no matter where we are. The way Facebook was formulated, as well as how it is used and perceived today are both consequences and locomotives of the contemporary society seeking its *benefits* everywhere.

Hence the level of self-esteem was considered as a very significant variable and was used in building the theoretical argument as well as designing the field study. The factors that we could consider as affecting the self-esteem of individuals within the context of Web 2.0 communication were assessed with the items designed in parallel to the Self-Esteem Scale developed by Rosenberg in 1965.

Through years of research, Rosenberg elaborated the mechanisms by which the evaluations of some others that we refer to mean more to us in shaping our self-concept than others, while he also clarified the social contexts in which social comparisons operate. He showed that the self-concept of each

individual is defined by a complex hierarchical structure of traits, values and identities and the psychological ordering of these characteristics vary substantially from one individual to the other.

Building on earlier seminal work of Cooley (1902) and Mead (1934), he systematically used theory to guide and explain the social processes of a similar nature, that effect an individual's feelings and attitudes toward oneself. His theory rests upon the careful combination of four theories of self-formation: reflected appraisals, social comparisons, self-perception, and psychological centrality (Rosenberg: 1965).

The significance of the gaze of the other on us, the reflected appraisals, or in other words our perception of others' views of us, are affected by a variety of selectivity mechanisms which promote a positive self-regard. Hence, self-concept is not a passive product of what we think others think of us; instead, we are actively and aggressively involved in a variety of social and psychological processes that protect and bolster our self-images. For instance, we are filtering our social lives selectively, in a way that would benefit our self-esteem: We choose to interact more often with others who see us positively (or, more precisely, those who we think see us positively) and we minimize contact with (or avoid altogether) those whom we think see us in less favorable or even negative terms. Similarly, we respect and value the opinions of some people more than others, a process Rosenberg termed selective valuation and credibility (Demo, 2001: 135)⁴.

By choosing to pay more attention to the views of those who (we think) see us favorably and ignoring or downplaying the opinions of those who (we think) see us less favorably, our self-image is enhanced. Rosenberg demonstrated a far more complex and self-activated process: We are more or less unconsciously seeing ourselves as we think others who are important to us and whose opinion we trust see us. Hence our self-image is mostly constructed on our image. As we will shortly see, this characteristic of self-concept is at work in the communication processes of self-presentation using the tools and feedback mechanisms of Web 2.0.

A common view of the contemporary society as narcissistic was also considered to be one of significant variables to test the distorted perceptions of the online social network and how it reflects onto identity. In this process a special attention has to be given to the relationship between narcissism and self-esteem. Narcissism is an unrealistic self-regard, usually a grandiose self-concept which is commonly associated with a high level of self-esteem (Baumeister, 1997; Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides & Elliot, 2000 as cited in Coşkan & Gençöz, 2008). In the Digital Life Scale, several items and subscales were used to identify such differences, besides the NPI-16 to identify any narcissistic tendencies.

Maslow describes two different forms of self-esteem: the need for respect from others and the need for self-respect, or inner self-esteem (1954). Respect from others entails recognition, acceptance, status, and appreciation, and is believed to be more fragile and easily lost than inner self-esteem. Level-wise, one can exhibit high but fragile self-esteem (as is the case in narcissism) or low but stable self-esteem (as in humility). Whichever is the case, according to Maslow, without the fulfillment of the self-esteem need, individuals will be driven to seek it and unable to grow and obtain self-actualization.

Facebook, as well as other Web 2.0 networks, introduces interesting variables in this framework. The type of communication it suggests rests in presenting the self to an undefined set of recipients and receiving feedback on the actual personal information shared. The constant editing of the online identity/image for stabilizing personal impression management and to «maintain face» exhausts the perception of personal realities, as well as the realities of others. The time and energy dedicated to Facebook requires almost an automatic external validation of the presentation made, which could sometimes be disappointing as 95% of the status updates on Facebook go unnoticed (Blackman & Choquelle, 2011). Though it should be approached carefully, as Facebook provides a mirror where the accumulated layers of distortion are printed one on the top of the other to create a highly manipulated *reality*, Facebook usage was found to interact with measures of psychological well-being, suggesting that it might provide greater benefits for users experiencing low self-esteem and low life satisfaction (Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe: 2007)⁵. In the *Digital Life Scale*(2011) realized as part of this research, the item fcb12, «Checking out photos of people that I don't know very well on Facebook, makes me get to know them better» was confirmed by 44.9% of the participants, while 30.3% neither agreed nor disagreed, which subtly tells us that we tend to minimize others down to their digital images. Thus we have minimized our own selves in the same way.



Figure 1.11 - Self-Esteem Cereal Bowl. A search of Amazon.com reveals several dozen books, CDs, and other products with «self-esteem» in their titles, including *The Self-Esteem Workbook*, *Ten Days to Self-Esteem*, *How to Raise Your Self-Esteem*, *Breaking the Chain of Low Self-Esteem*, and *The Complete Self-Esteem Hypnosis Program*. On this web site <http://bit.ly/f8pvbz>, you can even purchase a bright yellow self-esteem bowl for your kitchen, replete with such self-affirming phrases as «I'm talented,» «I'm good looking,» and «I rule!»

Contrasting Ellison's research conclusions, the findings of the *Digital Life Scale* suggest that the type of social feedback received through Facebook communication, or the passive voyeurism of others on Facebook tend to be superficial and even depressing than rewarding. Branden (1969) labeled external validation as «pseudo self-esteem», arguing that «true self-esteem» comes from internal sources, such as self-responsibility, self-sufficiency and the knowledge of one's own competence and capability to deal with obstacles and adversity, regardless of what other people think.

Even when we turn our gaze inward and look for positive self-regard on the inside, Ricoeur thinks internal validation of self-worth could be difficult to achieve:

By the same token, our concept of the self is greatly enriched by this relation between interpretation of the text of action and self-interpretation. On the ethical plane, self-interpretation becomes self-esteem. ... In return, self-esteem follows the fate of interpretation. Like the latter, it provokes controversy, dispute and rivalry, or in short, the conflict of interpretations, in the exercise of practical judgment. This means that the search for adequation between our life ideals and our decisions, themselves vital ones, is not open to the sort of verification expected in the sciences of observation (1992: 179-80).

This definition adds to the contemporary fragility of self-esteem, as today, probably more than ever, we tend to share Socrates's perspective that – *an unexamined life is not worth living*.

In terms of creating one's self narrative and sharing it, online social networks provide several new frontiers. Facebook, in particular, enables its users to present themselves in an online profile, accumulate «friends» who can post comments on each other's pages, and view each other's profiles. Facebook members can also join virtual groups based on common interests, see what classes they have in common, and learn each other's hobbies, interests, musical tastes, and romantic relationship status through the profiles. It is more common that relationships in Facebook primarily originated offline, later migrating into the online context, though a relatively smaller population of users utilize it to meet new people (Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe, 2007).

On a social network website, the individual serves as the core «social object» around which the site orients. Common activities, such as the addition of friends, the posting of messages to the wall, or the publishing of photos can all be thought of as «identity transactions» (Stutzman, 2007). These identity transactions generally carried out in public, shape the representation of the individual's identity as presented in the particular social network website. Thus these transactions are subject to feedback from other users, in the form of the famous «Like» button, or by leaving comments. These comments appear together with the virtual avatar of the user who left them and their name. Eventually, users get used to

adapting their behavior to the positive or negative feedback that they receive from their «friends». In essence, the shaping of the individual identity is directly tied to outcomes from use of the site (Stutzman, 2007: 2). This essential feature of Facebook is one of the key factors considered in this dissertation.

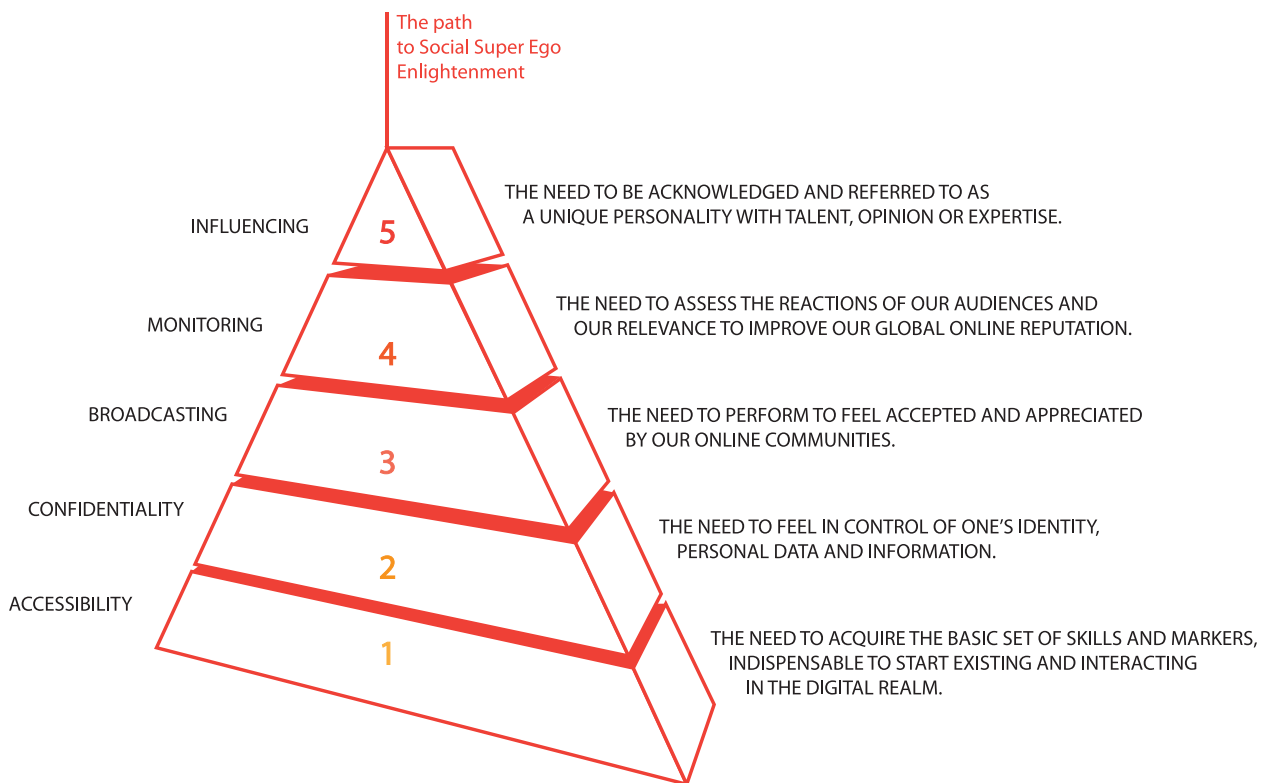


Figure 1.12 - In today's Web 2.0 world, the needs are quite different:

1 - ACCESSIBILITY - The need to acquire the basic set of skills and markers, indispensable to start existing and interacting in the digital realm. / How to attend to it: Submitting to networks, picking a screen name and an avatar, learning the language and etiquette of a specific platform.

2 – CONFIDENTIALITY - The need to feel in control of one's identity, personal data and information. / How to attend to it: Picking and changing passwords, adapting privacy settings to specific networks and audience, managing how one's image and reputation is displayed by others in pictures, conversations, updates.

3 - BROADCASTING - The need to perform to feel accepted and appreciated by our online communities. / How to attend to it: Showing both who we are and what we stand for in descriptions, conversations, profile pictures, albums, check-ins, advocacies, updates, blog posts.

4 - MONITORING - The need to assess the reactions of our audiences and our relevance to improve our global online reputation. / How to attend to it: Qualifying and quantifying the reactions to your posts, likes, comments, assessing your influence score, and googling yourself.

5 - INFLUENCING - The need to be acknowledged and referred to as a unique personality with talent, opinion or expertise. / How to attend to it: Maximizing your online presence through personal blogs, vlogs, websites, branding yourself. Blackman & Choquelle (2011).



Figure 1.13 & 1.14 & 1.15 - In a very creative and successful viral campaign, the British GSM operator, T-Mobile, used a replica of the wedding of the year, the royal William & Kate wedding with its intelligent catchline: «Life's for sharing». The spoof captures the royal couple, accompanied by a full complement of royal look-alikes including Prince Charles and Camilla, making shapes down the aisle to the song «House of Love» by East 17 in front of a packed congregation.

As the presentation of the self becomes adaptable to «what others think», the identity starts to tend towards being «what others perceive you are»: your image. The structural aspects of many social network sites enable identity to be represented in a more «conversational» nature. For example, the individual controls many profile elements, but they do not direct which photos they are «tagged» in, or what individuals will write on their wall to be publicly seen by other users (Stutzman, 2007: 7). It is important to understand this distinction as it serves to remind us that identity is socially constructed in social network sites. Stutzman's research also provides us with the information that besides the robust representation of identity by the users in the social network context, generally at high levels of disclosure, this information is tied to real-world outcomes in actual social settings of the individual, such as evaluations, friend judgments, and social awareness.

Hence, online social networks introduce us to the concept of «social super ego» (Blackman & Choquelle, 2011). The rules of the game are easy to figure out and free-of-charge to carry out. The more you boost the self-esteem of your Facebook friends, the more you would receive positive feedback on yours. This is the second aspect of the Facebook communication that became apparent and that was evaluated through the «Superficiality Subscale» formulated as part of the *Digital Life Scale*.

In the Web 2.0 guide for brands, *Seducing the Social Super Ego*(2011) prepared by one of the largest international advertising agencies, BBDO, a witty replica of Maslow's pyramid of needs was presented together with the basic hints on how to attend to the narcissistic needs of the users. The tips provided by BBDO for its clients include, catering the digital consumer on three fundamental levels that are identified in parallel to Maslow's definition of basic needs: «How to make them feel loved and give them a sense of

belonging? », «How to nurture their self-esteem? » and «How to help them actualize their dreams? » (Blackman & Choquelle, 2011).

Unified in this way, the online and offline identities develop a porous interface between them, where something that you *actually* live needs to be published or shared on your Facebook profile, or your status to gain recognition as *real*. Termed as «lifecasting» in the Web 2.0 terminology a contemporary life well-lived *needs* to be shared, or mass-communicated in order to be believed. Similarly, your commentaries on Facebook could come *alive* and effect you in your *actual* life, as in the increasing number of well-documented cases of employees losing their jobs for publishing details of their working or personal lives. Besides employers that check your Facebook profile before deciding whether or not to contract you, there is even a specific term for losing your job through the mischiefs of your online identity: to be «dooced» is to be fired from your job for something you've written on the Internet (Burrows, 2007: 21).

The term «life» that figures three times in the expressions «life plan», «narrative unity of a life» and «good life» denotes both the biologic rootedness of life and the unity of the person as a whole, as that person casts upon himself or herself the gaze of appraisal. ... As for the term «narrative unity» the aspect we are emphasizing here is less the function of assembling -together, performed by the narrative at the summit of the scale of praxis, than the connection the narrative makes between estimations applied to actions and the evaluation of persons themselves. The idea of the narrative unity of a life therefore serves to assure us that the subject of ethics is none other than the one to whom the narrative assigns a narrative identity. Moreover, while the notion of life plan places an accent on the voluntary, even willful, side of what Sartre termed the existential project, the notion of narrative unity places its accent on the organization of intention, causes, and chance that we find in all stories (Ricoeur, 1992: 178).

In the Digital Life Scale, we have developed two subscales for the «intended recipient of Facebook communication», namely the «Extroversion» and «Introversion» subscales to examine the way one relates to the ongoing online narrative. These scales not only aimed to identify the direction of our gaze on Facebook, but also the basis on which we constructed our online presence. What was discussed in this chapter on self-esteem and a unified narrative were tested among the sample population through correlations and regressions.

Nonetheless, the measures of positive mental health defined and discussed by Maslow direct at a «unified» identity not only in the sense of the online-offline merge of identities but much more importantly, in terms of inner coherence and as in the case of self-esteem, internal validation:

We can certainly now assert that at least a reasonable, theoretical, and empirical case has been made for the presence within the human being of a tendency toward, or need for growing in a direction that can be summarized in general as self-actualization, or psychological health, and specifically as growth toward each and all of the sub-aspects of self-actualization, i.e., he has within him a pressure toward unity of personality, toward spontaneous expressiveness, toward full individuality and identity, toward seeing the truth rather than being blind, toward being creative, toward being good, and a lot else. That is, the human being is so constructed that he presses toward fuller and fuller being and this means pressing toward what most people would call good values, toward serenity, kindness, courage, honesty, love, unselfishness, and goodness (1962: 171).

Maslow also provided us with the check-list of the characteristics both of the fully evolved human being and of the well-growing human being. These characteristics are not only neutrally describable; they are also subjectively rewarding, pleasurable and reinforcing. Among the objectively describable and measurable characteristics of the healthy human specimen are:

- 1- Clearer, more efficient perception of reality.
- 2- More openness to experience.
- 3- Increased integration, wholeness, and unity of the person.
- 4- Increased spontaneity, expressiveness; full functioning; aliveness.
- 5- A real self; a firm identity; autonomy, uniqueness.
- 6- Increased objectivity, detachment, transcendence of self.
- 7- Recovery of creativeness.
- 8- Ability to fuse concreteness and abstractness.
- 9- Democratic character structure.
- 10- Ability to love (Maslow, 1962: 172-173).

On the humanistic path defined by Maslow, we could extract some uses of Facebook and similar contemporary tools that could be used to our advantage. His theory tells us that self-knowledge seems to be the major path, though not the only one to self-improvement, and yet, it is usually very difficult for most people and needs great courage and long struggle.

Hence, as was the case with any other mask that we wore previously, we could hide behind the *image* we create on Facebook and make positive use of the online *experience* for self-improvement.

... we can never really understand human weakness without also understanding its healthy trends. Otherwise we make the mistake of pathologizing everything. But also we can never fully understand or help human strength without also understanding its weaknesses. Otherwise we fall into the errors of overoptimistic reliance on rationality alone ... if we wish to help humans to become more fully human, we must realize not only that they try to realize

themselves but that they are also reluctant or afraid or unable to do so. Only by fully appreciating this dialectic between sickness and health can we help to tip the balance in favor of health (Maslow, 1962: 181).

Somewhere in between our minds, bodies and souls, somewhere arising in/from our families, our friends, our social lives, our nationalities, thoughts, memories, opinions, languages, texts, computer screens, internet, social networks, mobile phones, smartphones, ipods, city streets, shopping malls, brands, mass communication, advertisements, avatars, role models, the jobs we undertake, the clothes we wear, the games we play, our curriculums, autobiographies, stories; somewhere between the real and the virtual, the physical and the digital, the conscious and the unconscious, the temporary and the constant; somewhere investigated scientifically at the intersection of philosophy, psychology, psychiatry, sociology, anthropology, communication sciences, and medicine lie our true «identities» or at least we believe so. And any tiny step that gets us closer to our full being is welcome.

1.5 Towards an Identity of the Consumer

Present-day consumerism, though, is no longer about satisfying the needs – not even the more sublime, detached ... needs of identification or the self-assurance as to the degree of «adequacy». It has been said that the *spiritus movens* of consumer activity is no longer the measurable set of articulated needs, but **desire** – a much more volatile and ephemeral, evasive and capricious, and essentially non-referential entity than «needs», a self-begotten and self-propelled motive that needs no other justification or «cause» (Bauman, 2000: 74).

Photographer Jason Travis came up with the idea of photographing random people in Atlanta together with what they carry on around with them in their everyday lives. As he was interested in what people take with them on a daily basis, he also wanted to see what similarities and differences there were between our simple individual possessions. Did our hidden trash reveal anything about who we are? The result of his curiosity was the *Persona Project*, which he displayed on his Flickr account and the interesting study was featured on several blogs, magazines and newspapers online and offline, with the witty catchline: «You are what you schlep». We have long accustomed ourselves to consume for our images, to «have» in order to «be», nonetheless, the digital pressure is changing even our consumption tendencies in promoting our images.

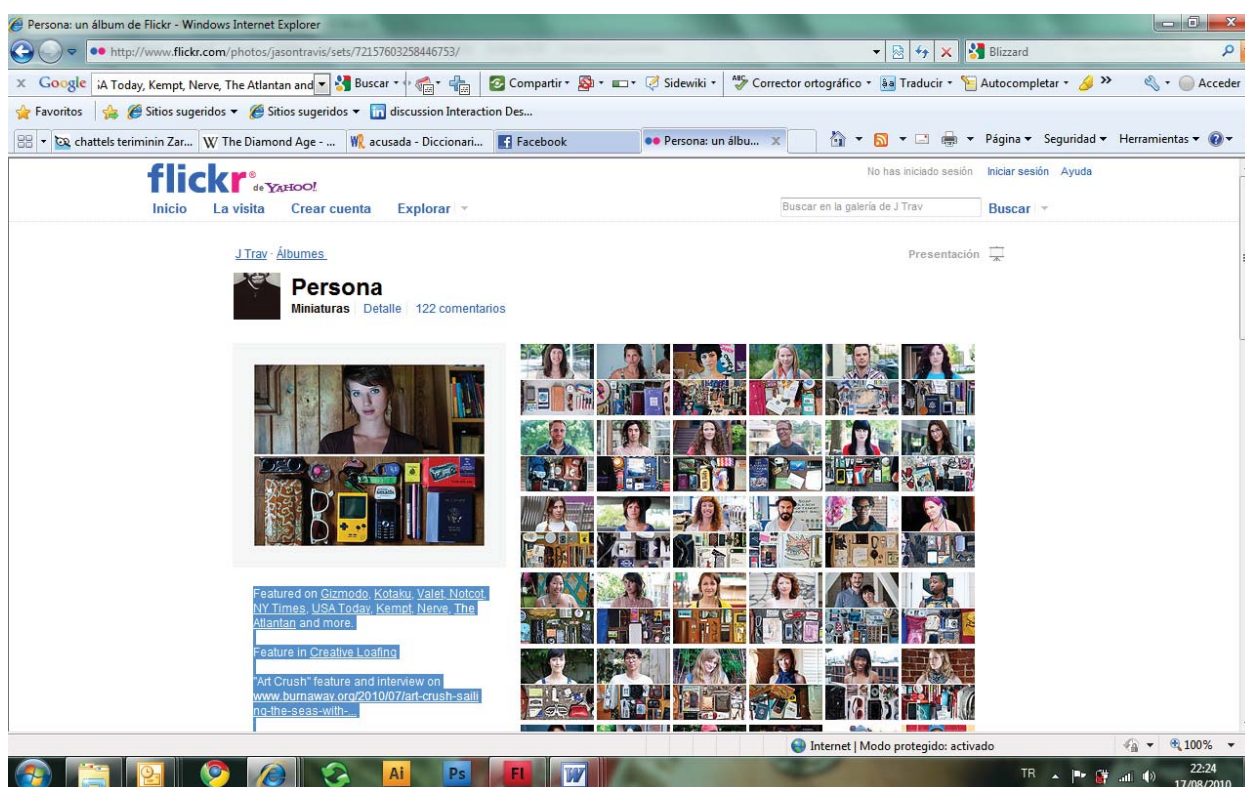


Figure 1.16 - Jason Travis's *Persona Project* on Flickr (2009).

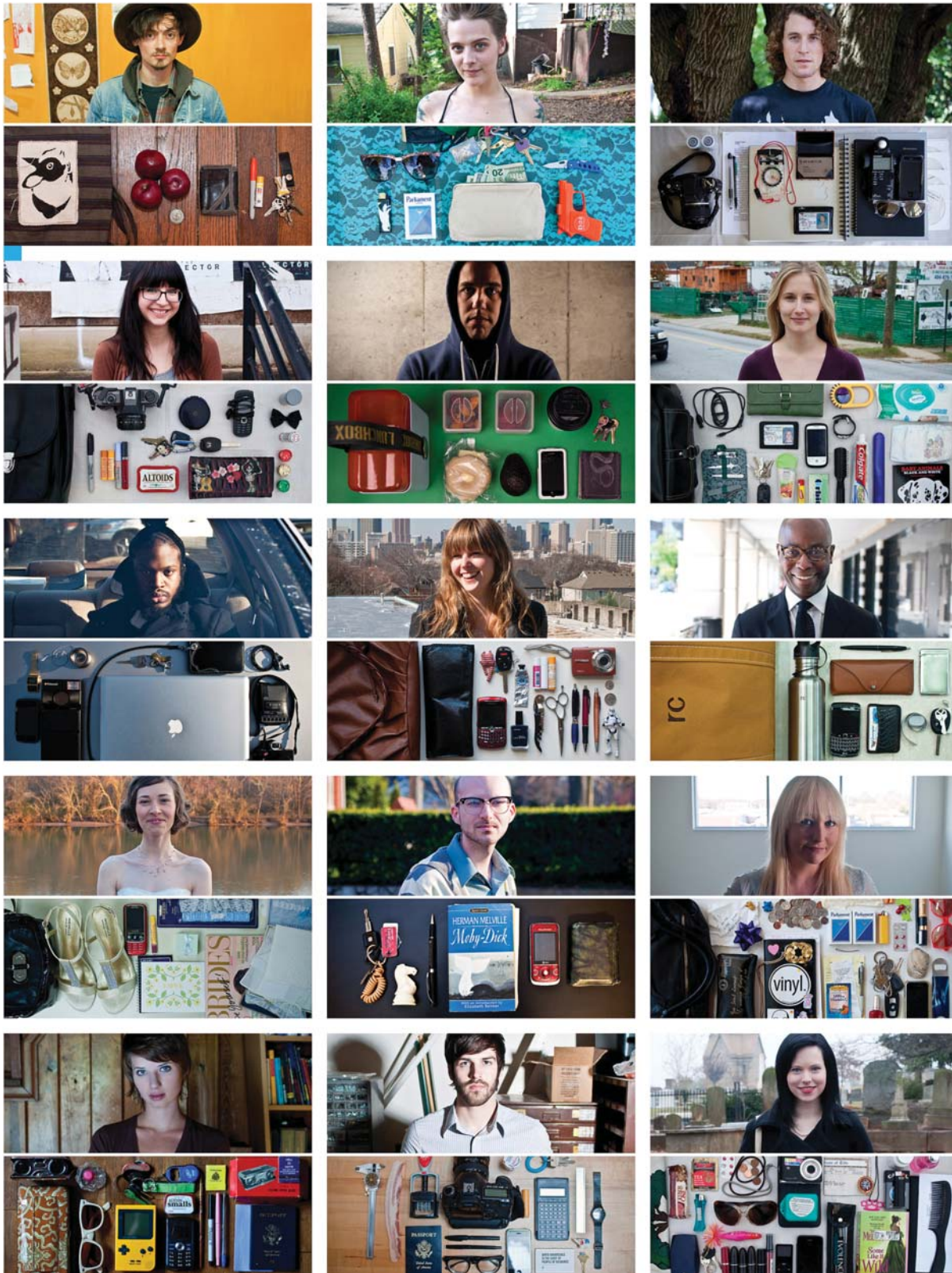


Figure 1.17 - In the *Persona Project*, his deliciously voyeuristic, fashion forward portraits, Jason Travis snaps hipster Atlantans along with the contents of their messenger bags, backpacks and clutches to determine «what they deem important in their lives». You are what you schlep (2009).

For instance, in the world of fashion, the bag that you are carrying is much more important than what you choose to carry in it. The symbolic value of carrying around a Louis Vuitton bag rates so high that if you cannot afford to buy the bag, you can go ahead and rent it on fashionhire.co.uk, or on any other one of the several websites of the same genre, that tempt you with their motto: «Why buy, when you can hire?» It's no longer even important to *own* the status symbols, also considering how fast they are consumed and how soon they fade away. You may very optimistically think that, this is a collective and anti-capitalist way of sharing a commodity among several users, that it is even against the individualistic nature of consumption, but you are definitely mistaken. Renting fashion today is a way of consuming the image of the brand, instead of the product itself. Is this not exactly what the branding strategy asked for? After all Naomi Klein reported in her famous *No Logo* (2000), that the biggest corporations of the American economy produced primarily not things, but *images* of their brands (4). After two decades of selling products for their images, it must be the ironic twist of fate that the consumers are doing just that, renting – not even buying – only the *image*.

Such a solution is coherent with Michel De Certeau's claim that consumers are «active manipulators» and that «instead of meekly using consumer goods and services as intended, consumers use them in unique ways that suit their own needs and interests» (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 414-415). So while the image of the brand is being consumed through renting, the consumer meets her/his needs and interests and is nonetheless alone, as the task of consumption is an «utterly, irredeemably individual pastime, a string of sensations which can be experienced ... only subjectively» (Bauman, 2000: 97). The irony, then, rests not in whether «sharing» a rented bag is a collective way of consuming or not, but *where* the satisfaction from such consumption lies. The idea no longer is to «have» in order to

Figure 1.18 - New age consumerism, don't buy a designer's bag when you can rent it.

«be», if not to consume only to «show that you have» – even if momentarily. This is not even an act of economic means, as much as an act of displaying your «distinctive taste» in Bourdieu's terms.

In such absolute loneliness of the consumer, one can observe similarities with the online «face» socializing its way across the online social networks, where everything is carefree, brief and effortless. Though it is not his intention, Bauman, in his description of a shopping stroll in department stores, comes very close to defining the online experience of a consumer of social encounters with friends and acquaintances:

Encounters ... need to be brief and shallow: no longer and not deeper than the actor wishes them to be. The place is well protected against those likely to break this rule – all sorts of intruders, meddlers, spoilsports and other busybodies who would interfere with the consumer's or shopper's splendid isolation. The well supervised, properly surveilled and guarded temple of consumption is an island of order, free from beggars, loiterers, stalkers and prowlers – or at least expected and assumed to be so. People do not flock to these temples in order to talk and sociate. Whatever company they may wish to enjoy (or are willing to tolerate) they carry with them, like snails carry their homes (Bauman, 2000: 97).

Parallely, our current criticism of the online socializations lies in a similar direction, yet still, we do not dispose of sufficient evidence for judging the consequences of the online social network on humanity as negative. Just as consumerism itself is judged to be bad, so is the online socialization, whether the source of the evil lies in individuals or in the organization of the society (Campbell as cited in Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 419). This perspective sometimes places the blame on individuals for engaging in such practices, while at other times it exonerates them by arguing that consumers are typically coerced or manipulated into this form of behavior by others – usually manufacturers or advertisers.

Ritzer, in «Theories of Consumption», tells us how the social theory had long favored the production aspect of capitalism while very few social scientists have based their theories on consumption, while emphasizing «no serious theory of contemporary society can ignore the importance of consumption» (2001: 410).

Nonetheless, among others, a usual adversary, Baudrillard insisted that it was *consumption*, rather than production, which was the main drive in the capitalist society (1970/1998). His defense is based on his critique of the Marxian concept, the «use-value». According to Baudrillard, accepting the idea that genuine needs relating to genuine uses, as Marx and Adam Smith did in their economic thought was an oversimplification of the process. He rather argued, drawing from Georges Bataille, that needs are constructed, rather than discovered innately. Where Marx distinguished between objects of necessary

use-value and those of pure «commodity fetishism», to Baudrillard, all purchases, as they always signify something socially, had a fetishistic side. As was elaborated by Roland Barthes, objects always «say something» about their users. And this was, for Baudrillard, why consumption was and remained more important than production, because the «ideological genesis of needs» precedes the production of goods to meet those needs (1981: 63). Baudrillard was especially interested in the cultural *mystique* added to objects by advertising, which encourages consumers to purchase them as aids to the construction of their personal identity.

Just as our decisions of consumption become part of the system, the identity of the individual succumbed into the online social network tends to be constructed to fit Baudrillard's «system of objects» as well, as we will see in detail in the following chapters. In the last instance, the consumer society controlled by the code ends up redefining what we conventionally thought of as «reality». The advent of digital communications and the significances given to them thereupon is not at all sudden, nor surprising rather they are gradual reflections of the system of objects taking over the complete field of human communications. It is consumption becoming the *language* that we speak to one another.

This idea is developed further in Baudrillard's structuralism, as he compares consumption as a system of meaning like Saussure's language, or like Lévi-Strauss's kinship system in primitive societies. Baudrillard defines it as:

Marketing, purchasing, sales, the acquisition of differentiated commodities and object/signs – all of these presently constitute our language, a code with which our entire society *communicates* and speaks of and to itself. Such is the present day structure of communication: a language in opposition to which individual needs and pleasures are but the *effects of speech* (Poster, 1988: 48).

As is the case, in a world controlled by the code, consumption ceases to have anything to do with the satisfaction of what we conventionally think of as «needs». The idea of needs is derived from the false separation of subject and object; yet the idea of needs is indeed created to connect them. Baudrillard seeks to deconstruct the subject-object dichotomy and, more generally, the notion of needs. We do not buy what we need, but rather what the code tells us we should buy (Ritzer, 1997: 81). Moreover, needs themselves are determined by the code so that we end up «needing» what the code tells us we need; «there are only needs because the system needs them» (Baudrillard, 1981: 82).

Again in this system, consumption is about the «systematic and indefinite possession of object-signs of consumption» (Baudrillard as cited in Poster, 1988: 25). These object-signs, and the code of which they are part, are not «real». From this point of view, when we purchase a Big Mac at McDonald's we are not

just, mainly buying food, but rather we are procuring what a Big Mac signifies about us, for example, that we are part of the fast-paced, mobile society or that we cannot afford to eat filet mignon (Ritzer, 1997: 81).

The signifieds in this language could come to signify different things on other planets, but when it comes to the social rankings of the capitalist society, we all know the *code* to why a BMW is preferred to a Hyundai. Commodities are purchased as an «expression and mark of style, prestige, luxury, power, and so on» (Kellner as cited in Ritzer, 1997: 81). Thus, we all know (because we all know the code) that a BMW is not preferred for being more useful but rather because in the system of car objects the BMW has far higher status than the Hyundai.

Quoting Baudrillard once again, «we are living the period of the objects» (Poster, 1988: 29). And the meanings of these objects come from their relationships to, and/or difference from, other objects. As this network of objects comes to have a meaning and logic of its own, we try to align ourselves with some and differentiate ourselves from others on the basis of the object-signs that we consume (Ritzer, 1997: 82), as the defining criteria for the identity concept is to maintain the consistency of our personal narratives [continuity] and to be different from others [differentiation] (Baumeister, 1986: 18). In such a framework, human relationships have already been transformed into relationships with objects, or yet, humans into objects.

What we come to need in capitalism is not a particular object, say a BMW, but rather we seek difference, and by being different we acquire social status and social meaning. In consumption in modern capitalist society, it is *not* pleasure, not the pleasure of obtaining and using an object that we seek, but rather difference. This also leads to the view that when they are defined in this way, needs can never be satisfied; we have a continuing, lifelong need to differentiate ourselves from those who occupy other positions in society (Ritzer, 1997: 82).

Facebook, or any other Web 2.0 website, that is supporting the commodification and objectification of human beings cannot be considered, or understood out of this framework. This type of online presence or online self-expression is not simply about a «new» way of communication or a new technological infrastructure when considered in this contextuality. For one thing, feminists could probably say that it is new in one sense, or just one step further, as it also accelerates the objectification of the male, which had long been the case for the female body in the previous decades or even centuries. Nonetheless, our capitalist urge that results in shopping for selves, shopping for identities in the digital space is an extension of this older consumer spirit, of this system of objects. As Ritzer, Goodman and Wiedenhoft claim, «no serious theory of contemporary society can ignore the importance of consumption» (2001: 410). For them, the Internet boom, which has become emblematic of modern society is itself the proof

of the significance of consumption. The Internet, though it was originally developed to facilitate workflows for the scientific, military and industrial sectors of the population, had long expanded to cover more of the consumption side, «its role in production has been eclipsed by its role in consumption ... It has been estimated that consumers spent \$38-\$40 billion on the Internet in 1999 and companies devoted to consumption are the darlings of high-tech investors» (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 411).

So, once again as Bauman puts it:

Shopping is not just about food, shoes, cars or furniture items. The avid, never-ending search for new and improved examples and recipes for life is also a variety of shopping, and a most important variety, to be sure, in the light of the twin lessons that our happiness depends on personal competence but that we are (as Michael Parenti put it) personally incompetent, or not as competent as we should and could be if only we tried harder (2000: 74).

This competitive drive of the human being does not stem from the survival instinct as much as it does from the capitalist interest. We have to be competitive and competent to get the best jobs, sign up the best clients, hang out with the coolest people, earn a higher salary, buy the biggest house and the ultimate car as well as to find love or to be in a satisfying relationship with the most attractive partner possible – and today we have Facebook to show all that to whom it may concern. This capitalist fantasy, today, works with a formula that had proven successful earlier with the brands. You have to construct a brand identity that your target audience could identify with and build up a relationship on this imaginary identity. If it did work for several multi-national enterprises, why not for us, the ambitious contemporary individuals?

There are so many areas in which we need to be more competent, and each calls for «shopping around». We «shop» for the skills needed to earn our living and for the means to convince would-be employers that we have them; for the kind of image it would be nice to wear and ways to make others believe that we are what we wear; for ways of making the new friends we want and the ways of getting rid of past friends no longer wanted; for ways of drawing attention and ways to hide from scrutiny; for the means to squeeze most satisfaction out of love and the means to avoid becoming «dependent» on the loved or loving partner; for ways to earn the love of the beloved and the least costly way of finishing off the union once love has faded and the relationship has ceased to please; for the best expedients of saving money for a rainy day and the most convenient way to spend money before we earn it; for the resources for doing faster the things that are to be done and for things to do in order to fill the time thus vacated; for the most mouth-watering foods and the most effective diet to dispose of the consequences of eating them; for the most powerful hi-fi amplifiers and the most effective headache pills (Bauman, 2000: 74).

The advertising revolution that took place in the 1920s was based on the fact that capitalists had begun to realize that they could no longer leave consumers alone to make their own decisions (Ewen, 1976). In the academic field this signalled a turn from production-based theories towards accepting consumption as a significant part of capitalism as well – though not a very constructive part. The discourse was placed more towards the corrosive effect of the inherent individualism of consumption, or in Durkheim’s definition (1964), consumption was identified with the «society-threatening anomie» that could be remedied by the functional interrelations of the divisions of labor found in production (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 411).

Even today, it is common to view consumption as a threat to social order, instead of seeing it as *the* order of the society. The consumer's pursuit of choice, pleasure and individual expression encourages individualistic and pluralistic values that are often seen as inimical to the collective norms of society – if they still do persist.

Marx had accepted as early as 1857 the significance of consumption as a determining social factor, when in a statement which could easily be considered the hallmark of contemporary consumption studies, he wrote that every kind of consumption, «in one way or another produces human beings in some particular aspect». One has to accept consumption *as culture*, if art and music were once thought to be «pure» and «authentic» objects of culture, but have already been commodified and reduced to the value of exchange. One could not disregard the yearnings and desires of people so easily and for example, reduce fashion to an attempt

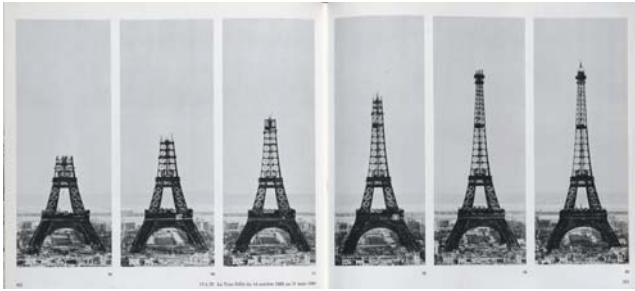


Figure 1.19 - Angry Birds is a very popular game and the most downloaded application for Iphone and Android.

to package humans as if they were commodities, as Haug describes in his criticism of commodity aesthetics (as cited in Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 411). This not only robs clothing of its very high symbolic value, but also its legitimate social dimension, while it even strips human beings of their desires and decision-making capacities.

There is a layer of complicated symbolic culture in the consumer society by which, drawing from Simmel's «tragedy of culture», we could argue that people grow increasingly distant from their products, unable to control even understand them. Simmel argued that there is a growing gap between, on the one hand, the objective culture of material and immaterial human productions that are available to people and, on the other hand, those cultural objects that people actually are able to use for self-development. As a result, people grow increasingly distant from their products and unable to control or even understand them (1907/2004: 43). And yet quite «tragically» today, the latest iPhone model produced by Apple is used mostly in playing a *childish* game called *Angry Birds* (<http://bit.ly/eVr9jL>), while among thousands of Microsoft programs, *Solitaire* is the most-used program in the Windows universe (<http://slate.me/9BQwG0>). Microsoft intended Windows Solitaire «to soothe people intimidated by the operating system», and at a time where many users were still unfamiliar with graphical user interfaces, it proved useful in familiarizing them with the use of a mouse, such as the drag-and-drop technique required for moving cards. Would it count as technology supporting actual self-development? In any case, «the concept of the tragedy of culture is of great relevance to a sociology of consumption where the growth of commodities overwhelms our ability to use them and calls forth a diffuse and senseless desire for more. Instead of using this enormous array of commodities, we often seem to be used by them» (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 414).

Walter Benjamin was one of the first to express his concern for the sites of consumption, as a result of his interest in the Parisian streets and arcades, as well as the world exhibitions which he described as «sites of pilgrimages to the commodity fetish» (1986: 151). On these sites, art was combined with technology to create dream worlds, which aimed to entertain and amuse the consumer so as to increase consumption. Hence a «phantasmagoria of capitalist culture» was being produced (Benjamin, 1986: 153), which marked the early examples of merging amusement with consumption, that later would result in the two to be indistinguishable from one another. Rosalind Williams investigating Paris with a similar critical eye during the same period examined by Benjamin, argued that it was during this period that the French pioneered the twin pillars of modern consumer life: advertising and retail consumption settings (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 422). Hence Paris emerged as the modern capital of consumption. And this mastery of the two concepts worked so well in increasing consumption that not only several French brands blossomed to conquer the whole world, but also the «French theory» in marketing was coined: give it a French name and you will sell it for a better price.



(Top to down, left to right)

Figure 1.20 – Going up: The Eiffel Tower under construction, 1888-1889.

Figure 1.21 – A great deal of criticism swirled around the Eiffel Tower during construction. Guy de Maupassant ridiculed it as a «high and skinny pyramid of iron ladders», while novelist Leon Bloy labeled it a «truly tragic street lamp».

Figure 1.22 – At the World Fair called «Exposition Universelle» in 1900, in Paris, France, the purpose was to show off the achievements of the previous century and welcome the innovative technology of the next. Several of Paris's most beautiful structures were created for the fair including Gare de Lyon, Gare d'Orsay, the Grand Palais, La Ruche, the Petit Palais, and our old friend The Eiffel Tower which was built as the entrance to the fair.

Figure 1.23 – Eiffel Tower keychain, a very popular souvenir for visitors of the French capital.

Figure 1.24 – In 2010, the World Expo took place in Shanghai and the theme was «Better City, Better Life». World Expo is always a window to the future. Shanghai, as a historically progressive yet still fast developing international metropolis, has been all along the embodiment of this forward looking optimism.



Ritzer tells us that various «cathedrals of consumption» include shopping malls, megamalls, discount malls, fast-food restaurants and other franchises and chains, superstores, cybermalls, the home shopping TV network, cruise ships, Disney World, Las Vegas-style casino hotels, nevertheless, the big growth area in the future is likely to be in the non-material sites to be found on the Internet, including cybermalls, cybershops of all types, on-line gambling, as well as online pornography. It is not likely that people will give up the joys of traveling to the more material means of consumption, but it is likely that more goods and services, especially of a non-material form, will be obtained through de-materialized means of consumption (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhoft, 2001: 422-423). Yet we should note that Ritzer is being optimistic here, because people are usually choosing the comfort and ease of online communication, as well as online-anything and with the online social network they are partly giving up «the joys of seeing their friends in person» to embrace – or accept and learn to live with - a different kind of sociality.

The new practice of shopping, changed the concept, adding it new layers of fantasy and imagination and thereby strengthening the «entertainment» aspect of consumption:

Before the dominance of the department store, shopping often meant entering a specialized small shop already having decided what to purchase and haggling over the price. As we all know, shopping now generally means something entirely different. Shopping can mean wandering through displays of objects, trying on goods (or trying on fantasies); it need not include an actual purchase. The practice of shopping encompasses experiences that exist at the periphery of consumption in the strictest sense. Shopping sites are full of those who would describe themselves as «window shopping», but who leave empty-handed (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhoft, 2001: 424).

In addition, the advent of home shopping television and cybermalls has brought commodification into the home to an unprecedented degree. In the celebration of being able to consume from anywhere, we should also note another movement that defined the mobile life. The increased movement of goods, shopping on TV, shopping on internet brought consumption into our homes. Next, internet turned out to be a basic household commodity, with its monthly payment right next to the bill of water, electricity, gas and the telephone, which signifies that «being connected» at home became a basic human need like running water in the contemporary society. Then the mobile layer topped off the already constructed digital basis. Technology started to get smaller, mobile phone made us ask «where are you?», before asking «how are you?» when we called one another. The PC converted itself gradually into the laptop, netbook, iPad and smartphone. Several functions intertwined as we migrated our way from the desk to the sofa (Burrows, 2007: 12). All the world at the touch of our fingers without leaving the cosiness of our living rooms. This not only reduces our motives to move ourselves, but also points to a process which reverses what has happened with the Industrial Revolution.

Post-industrial city was marked with the separation of the home from the workplace. Going back to Benjamin's perspective, the emergence of the new sites of consumption was linked by Benjamin to another locale, the private living space, which for the first time had come to stand as distinct from the place of work. Here, dwellers sought to create fantasy spaces of their own - «phantasmagorias of the interior» (Benjamin, 1986: 154). In order to do so, they were driven as consumers to the new sites of



Figure 1.25 & 1.26 - Barbara Kruger's campaign for the British department store Selfridges. The campaign has been part of a three-year collaboration between Kruger and the retailer, which was developed by Mother – an «edgy» advertising agency who specialize in «anti-advertising». Kruger has not commented on her involvement with Selfridges, however Neil Douglas in his column has defined the campaign by Kruger with these words in his column: «Anyone entering the Selfridges store in London for their new year sale in January may have wondered if the store wasn't doing its best to put off potential customers» (2006).



(Top to down, left to right)

Figure 1.27 - Esquire cover, May 1992 by Barbara Kruger, featuring Howard Stern «I hate myself and you love me for it».

Figure 1.28 - W Magazine, November, 2010 featuring Kim Kardashian wearing nothing by the words of the feminist artist Barbara Kruger.

Figure 1.29 - Untitled (1982).

Figure 1.30 - «I shop, therefore I am» (1987).

consumption in order to obtain what they needed to turn their living spaces into dream worlds, even if most lacked the resources to fully succeed in this (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 421). Yet with the home-office that stood out in the twenty-first century city, as these two spaces merged, the private space also became another object of display on Facebook, several profiles gave a sneak peak view of the home, if it was considered dignified of having achieved the «dream world» of the profile's owner.

The way the «phantasmagorias of the interior» are displayed on Facebook profiles, including the literal display of one's home could be viewed in the light of Daniel Miller's theory of shopping. Miller tells us that the processes of consumption, especially for the female consumers, are connected to the real and ideal social relationships that make up the shopper's world. «Shopping is an active praxis which intervenes and constitutes as well as referring back to relationships» says Miller, and thus, it can «reveal contradictions between self-image and the idealization or denigration of self by others».

The irony here, Miller concludes, is that the primary «purpose behind shopping is not so much to buy the things that people want, but to strive to be in a relationship with subjects that want these things» (1998: 148). Love and devotion play important roles in consumption for Miller, as he suggests that consumer objects can mediate our personal, even romantic, relationships with other people (147). And as such, what we consume, not only in terms of clothing or food but also entertainment, travel or property, become objects of display of an *image* we strive to be, it skips the stage of being part of «who we are» and goes directly to «who we want others to see us to be». Facebook, not only encourages mass communication of such a process, but also elevates it to a higher level of appearance dominating the *identity*.

Baudrillard, in «Ironic Aesthetic Disorders», a text he wrote to refer to Barbara Kruger's art, says that we no longer even need to create the irony, that «today, irony is inherent in things, it has become an objective irony. ... We no longer have to project irony into a natural world; we no longer need an external mirror that offers the world the image of its double. Our universe has swallowed its double. It has therefore become spectral, transparent ... Things discard their meaning effortlessly» (Genosko, 2001: 134). Kruger's images thus completely reflect the society we live in – «a society of paroxysm and exorcism», that is, a society in which we have absorbed our own reality and our own identity to a dizzying degree and now try to reject them forcefully, a society in which all reality has absorbed its double to a dizzying degree and now tries to expel it in all its forms (137). Kruger herself had said that she works with pictures and words «because they have the ability to determine who we are and who we aren't». Yet in this society, her images create an ironic depth, «by means of the injunction of the YOU and its repetition, which actually emphasize the absence of the other, of the interlocutor – or at least his problematical presence. This is the litany of a society of communication which does not itself

communicate, in which the medium exists, all media exist, but not a single message can be deciphered collectively. Or rather, all messages exist, fully available, but there is no one at the other end of the sign. A society in which one desperately tries to speak to someone – but who?» (135).

Hence in this hyper-reality devoid of meaning is where «all things are doomed to appearance. Having no origin and deriving from a few general modes, things have no secret. They are condemned to publicity, to making themselves believable, to being seen and promoted. Our modern world is one of publicity in its very essence (or rather in its transparency). One would think it was invented solely to be publicized in a different world» (Genosko, 2001: 135). If we were to substitute «things» with «humans» in the previous sentences, the whole paragraph would still ring true.

The «exorcist» that seems to strip us from meaning seems to be advertising, as the images it deploys are almost superficial and stereotypical. Just like masks, these images perform a kind of exorcism on our society. Baudrillard says, «Like masks, which absorb the identities of actors, dancers, and spectators, and whose function is thereby to provoke something like a thaumaturgic (traumatogenic) vertigo, I believe that these images have a force and function to absorb the interlocutor (YOU) and send him reeling, rather than to communicate» (as cited in Genosko, 2001: 135).

Hence personal identity in a consumer society is no longer formed through the internalization of the family structure nor is it expanded and disrupted through encounters with the utopian art projects. In the commodity culture, identity is derived from the commodity itself – you are what you purchase – and art no longer expands and disrupts, instead it soothes and distracts. Or as is the case in the Consumer Society 2.0, «you are what you pretend to consume». The realm of consumption supplies an illusion of freedom and pleasure in exchange for the alienation necessary for capitalist production (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 413).

1.6 Chapter Conclusions



As we have seen in this chapter, identity has several different theoretical definitions ranging from the performative identities we assume to the identity shopping of the consumer. Starting with our first identification with our image in the mirror, we are performing our imaginary and symbolic roles for the eye that watches us inside and outside – the superego, the society’s agent in our psyche and the public opinion of the «Other» in the world outside our imagination.

In the light of several psychological and psychoanalytical theories and especially through Goffman’s elaboration of the dramaturgical metaphor, we understand that the self is a «personal intraphysic structure knowable only by the person to whom it belongs», and identity as «the face that is publicly displayed». As much as the self shapes the identity, the identity is very likely to shape the self. As Blumstein explains with his concept of «ossification», individuals are inclined to expect coherence between their projected identities and their inward sense of self, hence social relations – intimate ones in particular – become the domains where identities are most likely to shape selves. Though these theories are based on the conduct of the human beings in face-to-face interaction, we will see in the following chapters that this conversion of identity to self is eventually triggers the *image* becoming the *identity*.

To say that our performances in social life produce the self, however, is not to say that such performances could be readily accepted as reflections of the self. In some cases, individuals or teams give performances in which they do not believe, simply for purposes of personal gain or maintaining social status. Though they may impress their audiences with such performances and overwhelm their images, on the inside they themselves are not convinced.

Not believing in your image is a deal breaker in today’s society. Unless we believe completely and whole-heartedly in our performance and consequent images, we assume the risk of being discredited. Sustaining a desired image of self in social situations, depends fundamentally on the acceptance and tactful support of this image by others. Selves, social identities, and social hierarchies, all achieve their coherence and sense of reality from the dramatic support achieved in everyday social situations.

An identity needs two aspects to be stable: Continuity over time and differentiation from the other. As we have seen, Giddens and Ricoeur highlight the significance of developing a personal narrative in the construction of one’s identity. According to Giddens, in contemporary modern societies, individuals create a «narrative of the self» to explain their journey through the social world and their sense of who they are. Yet today this story is told more digitally than physically and almost always through the use of

multimedia tools. With these tools we cut and paste pieces of literature, popular culture and stories of others to formulate our personal *collage* and interpret the world in our own way – invent the stories that we tell about ourselves, which we call our «identities».

In the consumer society, there are several layers of distortion over the reality and yet, unflagging the drive of consumption and the constant act of comparing what others possess with one's own creates the type of frustration mentioned by Maslow and causes the human being to act with «deficiency motivation» paired with an even more blurred perception of reality. Through the commodification of human beings the online networks and the social media become the *market place* for these human/brand performances, while the city gives in and starts to diminish as the center of social interaction.

The motives for interaction also do change. Constant competitiveness which was once based on receiving persistent feedback from the television and other mass media is today customized to our own social circles and brought to our mobile screens no matter where we are. The way Facebook was formulated, as well as how it is used and perceived today are both consequences and locomotives of the contemporary society seeking its *benefits* everywhere.

In such a world, our foundations, our self-esteem, our positive self-regard come to play a very significant role – which we also manipulate according to our benefits. By choosing to pay more attention to the views of those who we think see us favorably and ignoring or downplaying the opinions of those who we think see us less favorably, we enhance our self-images. As we will shortly see, this characteristic of self-concept is at work in the communication processes of self-presentation using the tools and feedback mechanisms of Web 2.0. And yet with the contemporary fragility of self-esteem, today, probably more than ever, we tend to share Socrates's ancient perspective that – *an unexamined life is not worth living*.

Endnotes

¹ To clarify the concept, we should also acknowledge that what was translated as «ego» in his work was, for Freud, «das Ich». Freud tended to employ «das Ich» in a sense akin to that of the philosophers, that is to say as a synonym for «conscious person». The choice of «ego» by the translators of the Standard Edition has been challenged, by Bruno Bettelheim among others: «To mistranslate Ich as 'ego' is to transform it into jargon that no longer conveys the personal commitment we make when we say 'I' or 'me'» (Bettelheim as cited in Mijolla, 2005: 461).

² Identity theft is a hot topic when we talk about online identity. Nonetheless as the term refers to a form of fraud or cheating of another person's identity in which someone pretends to be someone else by assuming that person's legal identity, typically in order to access resources or obtain credit and other benefits in that person's name, it is not considered directly related to the hypothesis investigated here and hence not assessed in this dissertation. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the term identity theft was coined in 1964 and is actually a misnomer, since it is not literally possible to steal an identity as such - more accurate terms would be identity fraud or impersonation or identity cloning but identity theft has become commonplace.

³ Ossification (or osteogenesis) is a medical term, used for the process of creating bone, through the transformation of cartilage or fibrous tissue into bone.

⁴ Demo also points to the limitations of Rosenberg's model in his article. «It should be clear that there were important limitations to Rosenberg's research and thus there are limitations to understanding the self, using his paradigm. Perhaps most important, Rosenberg was not able to translate some of the important things he knew about self-concept into his research design, notably that self-concept is dynamic, temporal, and malleable, with self-images shifting and vacillating from one situation to the next. Still, his vast contributions to our knowledge of self-dynamics distinguishes him in an elite group of eminent self-theorists that includes James, Cooley, and Mead, and his work is recognized as exemplary in linking social structure and personality [(House, 1981)]» (Demo, 2001: 150).

⁵ We should note that this research was carried out when Facebook was a relatively smaller social network with 21 million members, compared to over 500 million users today.

CHAPTER 02 | CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF BODY/SPACE





Figure 2.1 - Lonely Metropolitan, photomontage, by Herbert Bayer (1931).



Spaces that we live in have been defined by the technical and technological progresses of the human being, while the human body always came to be marked by the consequences of what it built. Earlier discussions on cyberspace were full of «complaints» and «accusations» of the urban condition that the human being was subject to, and yet it is doubtful whether the digital/virtual life was successful in improving the human condition either. Though Baudrillard claims that «we no longer need an external mirror that offers the world the image of its double» (Genosko, 2001: 134), there is still the need for the urban space and the urban still serves as a reflecting surface to the narcissistic image – for as long as human beings can *see* and *be seen*.

There has been a tendency to draw parallels between the city and the cyberspace – or between the virtual space of computer networks and post-urban places of disorder and decay – ever since William Gibson had published his science fiction novel *Neuromancer* (1984) and announced that the new informational network looked like Los Angeles seen from five thousand feet up in the air (Boyer, 1995: 14). Gibson, with his abstract analogy not only introduced us to the *spatial* conception of the cyberspace; but he indeed coined the term *cyberspace* that turned out to be our new model for future possibilities in virtuality from 1984 onwards. It was again during this period, with the publication of *Neuromancer* «virtual reality» acquired a new name and a suddenly prominent conceptual identity as «cyberspace» (Stone, 1991: 98).

In William Gibson's words, cyberspace was defined to be:

«Cyberspace. A consensual hallucination experienced daily by billions of legitimate operators, in every nation, by children being taught mathematical concepts... A graphic representation of data abstracted from the banks of every computer in the human system. Unthinkable complexity. Lines of light ranged in the nonspace of the mind, clusters and constellations of data. Like city lights, receding... » (1984: 51).

Considering the spatial conceptualization of virtuality; there are two main highlights to the issue. The urban decay of world's greater cities today, raise doubts on the future of city as the space of human sociality in the decades to come; as is the case in *Neuromancer* and Ridley Scott's cult science fiction movie *Bladerunner*(1982). Taking the dystopian point of view as suggested by these two popular cultural artifacts, what awaits the inhabitant of urban settlements is pictured to be a «dark city». For instance, in the post-nuclear holocaust Los Angeles of *Bladerunner*; seen through a dark filter of smog or persistently drizzling acid rain, in the murky streets clogged with a mass of isolated individuals, people not only lose the spatial dimension of urban life but also the effective means – and even the desire – to communicate with each other (Boyer, 1995: 113).

Having this threat on one side; the other possibility that people would get jacked into the cyberspace, that the cyberspace would have a spatial configuration – though as virtual as it can be – exposes an escape from the reality just before our eyes. This idea of an escape that would relieve us off our places in actuality, and would allow us to step into a global network of social interaction where we might even leave our bodies behind and wear any body that we would rather have – or any person that we would rather be – expands the commotion that we are already indulged in. Yet this kind of a cyberspace is defined again by Gibson, in both *Neuromancer*, where Case, the protagonist connects his nerves to the nervous system of another character, in order to have access to her thoughts, to see through her eyes, to hear through her ears; and in another novel by Gibson, in *Mona Lisa Overdrive*, the main character trying to solve a previous event that had taken place in the matrix, strives for answers within the matrix and is erased from the real world. This concept of escape actually suggests a debate of cities versus computer-generated cyberspace; or to put it more effectively: Real spaces versus the matrix of the computer system which is nothing more than a grid of zeros and ones. One important point is that this differentiation of real and virtual spaces forms a great challenge for the way we perceive; offers us a new mode of perception. One fine example of this new mode of perception is in the opening sentence of *Neuromancer*: «The sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel» (1984: 1).

But concerning this point we were missing yet another: Isn't the city a grid itself? This grid implies a wish for order. A potentiality... The point that the matrix of the computer system is nothing more than a grid of zeros and ones suggests that there is the same potentiality in both, in the sense that this «grid» imposes an order.

In this chapter we will investigate how the changing perception of the spaces that we live in, has changed the way we related to the space, to our bodies and to one another through an overview of the dystopic perspective on the city.



2.1 The Urban Space and the Spectacle



Space, as defined by human and as defining the human, gave the first signs to an uneasiness with an over-exposition of the human subject to the technology. In the undiminished challenge of confronting the nature, in the certain degrees of enlightenment that was achieved and that had triggered the human to accomplish more and more, the city was the *membrane* surrounding the delicate balances of achievements, victories and defeats. On the other hand, the urban space grew also from within with what was achieved – or was lost – and turned out to be the parade of human power and the victory of technology versus nature. And yet it remains the disgraceful display of human failure all at the same time. Hand in hand, technology and modern imposed their order on the city, under the mask of *the grid*, which had been the basis of the city plan starting from antiquity, with Hippodamus of Miletus. But this time, the grid expanded even to the *third* dimension defining a new topology of the urban geography surrounding the human subject.

The way that the city came up with the *visualization* of the human condition, brought about many other functions to the already multi-functional space of human activity; to be the *scene* to define and display the human condition from the outside and from within; and from time to time, to be the *mirror* in which to recognize and redefine what is human. In Baudrillard's view, however, even those days are long gone, and the «all-too-visible» of the modern, had turned the city into a control screen, attenuating it to a «non-reflecting» surface of omnipresence (Baudrillard, 1987a).

The *grid* provided, quite figuratively, the «common ground» on which the identification of the city space with the *body* – the corporeal space – could come about. This fantasy construction was inspired by a famous passage of architectural treatise, completed in about 1452, by Leon Battista Alberti, who had found that «The city is like a large house and the house like a small city», but that in the end, «every edifice is a body» (as cited in Burgin, 1993: 35). Alberti's imagination of the corporeal city, predicated on his narrative on painting, *De Pictura*(1435), which contained the first detailed description of the method of drawing a linear perspective.

In his description, the side of each square underlying the grid represented, as the unit of measurement, the *braccio*, equivalent to one third of the height of a standing man. Using this system for measurement, in a perspective the accurate size of a figure could be determined relatively, at any point of the illusory depth of the represented space. By this means, the size of any building, or any other object could be determined with respect to this corporeal measure. Thereby, literally, man was the *measure of all things*. Nevertheless it was again with perspective, and in the light of this new *perspective* that man was «represented» and the human body as the origin of space, was swiftly replaced with «the eye» – «its disembodied metonymic representative» (Burgin, 1993: 35).

The human body reduced to the representativeness of the eye, has long been the case, and similarly has long been the basis of an uneasiness that arises with it. The eye becomes the relation to reality, and visible becomes all that is real. The *visible* filled and conquered the everlasting space of the modern, until the day it was *digitized* to be represented as cyberspace, and it still does in the presence of this new electronic space. Thereby, underlying the grid was the detachment of the self and the body. The subject «I» was always already transferred to the «eye», the representative of the human body in place, in situ, before it was delegated to any other «agent» out there in the non-place. And in this way, man was already reduced to his image, which formed the basis for more uneasiness with the body to come. By the same token the urban space became the scene for the eye to see others.

The grid had another potentiality, that of imposing its order; while erasing the differences that existed on the surface. Its first modern appearance was in Baron Haussmann's dreams of modern Paris, in 1860s. His introduction of boulevards into the organic, historical fabric of Paris – though not in the actual shape of a rectangular grid, but a radiant one – was the first time implementation of the grid, lacerating the surface of differences as if to achieve neutrality and homogeneity.

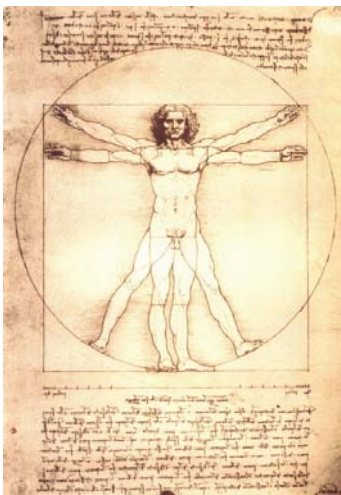


Figure 2.2 – Ideal Man, by Leonardo da Vinci (1492).

Baron Haussmann's remaking of Paris was simultaneous with the grid being imposed on New York by other planners. He was engaged in planning Paris during the era in which Central Park was created. Haussman confronted a congested city a thousand years old whose twisted streets, in his mind, were a breeding ground for the unholy trinity of disease, crime, and revolution. He imagined a traditional means of repression in face of these dangers. The cutting of straight streets through a congested Paris was to make it easier for people to breathe, for police and if necessary, troops to move. The new streets of northeastern Paris were to be lined with apartments over elegant shops, in order to attract the bourgeoisie into previously working-class districts; he

imagined a kind of internal class colonization of the city. Haussmann sought to create a Paris of steady and demanding customers, concierge-spies, and a thousand little services (Sennett, 1991: 62).

Paris at this time was a mosaic of the industrial and the pre-industrial orders. New factories were growing rapidly on the outskirts of the city and in certain sections of the inner city as well; but the tangle of small crooked streets and decaying buildings was still the focus for economic activities, new and old, with a population increasingly unknown to the administrative and social service authorities of the city. Movement within the city itself was very difficult and especially frightening to the political authorities was the fact there was no way of controlling the workers in case of civil insurrection, since the twisted streets were perfect for setting up impromptu barricades. Haussmann began to cut, through the jumble of streets, great, long, unswervingly straight avenues, avenues that could accommodate an enormous amount of traffic, serve as an easy means of getting troops into riotous sections of the city, and act like river boundaries dividing different socioeconomic sections of the city (Sennett, 1996: 88-89). Thus the urban space possessed a new *face*, that of the modern, which looked at the public *as a mass that needed to be ordered and organized*.

At about the same time the grid took over New York. Undertaking its transformation in the era of high capitalism, New York's planners treated it as if it were a city on the frontier – a place required to deal with the physical world as an enemy. Under the objectives of the plan blinked an aggression against the environment; which was not displayed explicitly, nonetheless could not be hidden. The planners imposed a grid at one blow in 1811 upon Manhattan from Canal Street, the edge of dense settlement, up to 155th Street, and then in a second stroke in 1870 to the northern tip (Sennett, 1991: 52). And, inexorably, development according to the grid did abolish whatever existing settlement was encountered. Or in other words, planning New York was the ultimate exercise of displaying the power of technology over nature and on the built environment. The victory lay in creating a surface from an urban land containing enormous variety, by neutralizing it (Sennett: 52).

The twentieth century, nevertheless, also deploys the grid. It is vertical and more universal; it is the skyscraper. The older geographic modes reappear in this architectural form. More, it is in the building of skyscrapers that the cracks became evident in the edifice of neutralizing power. In cities of skyscrapers, Hong Kong as much as New York, it is impossible to think of the

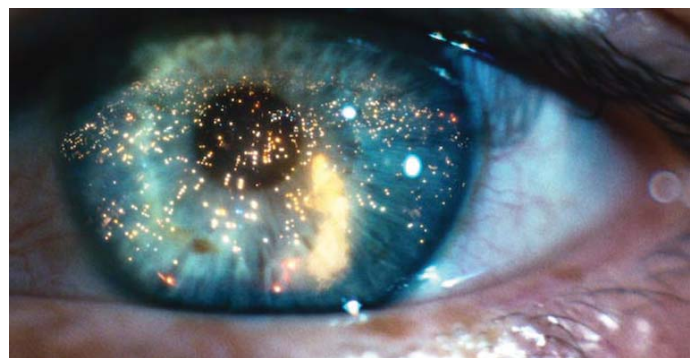


Figure 2.3 – The Eye of the Replicant. *Bladerunner*, by Ridley Scott (1982).

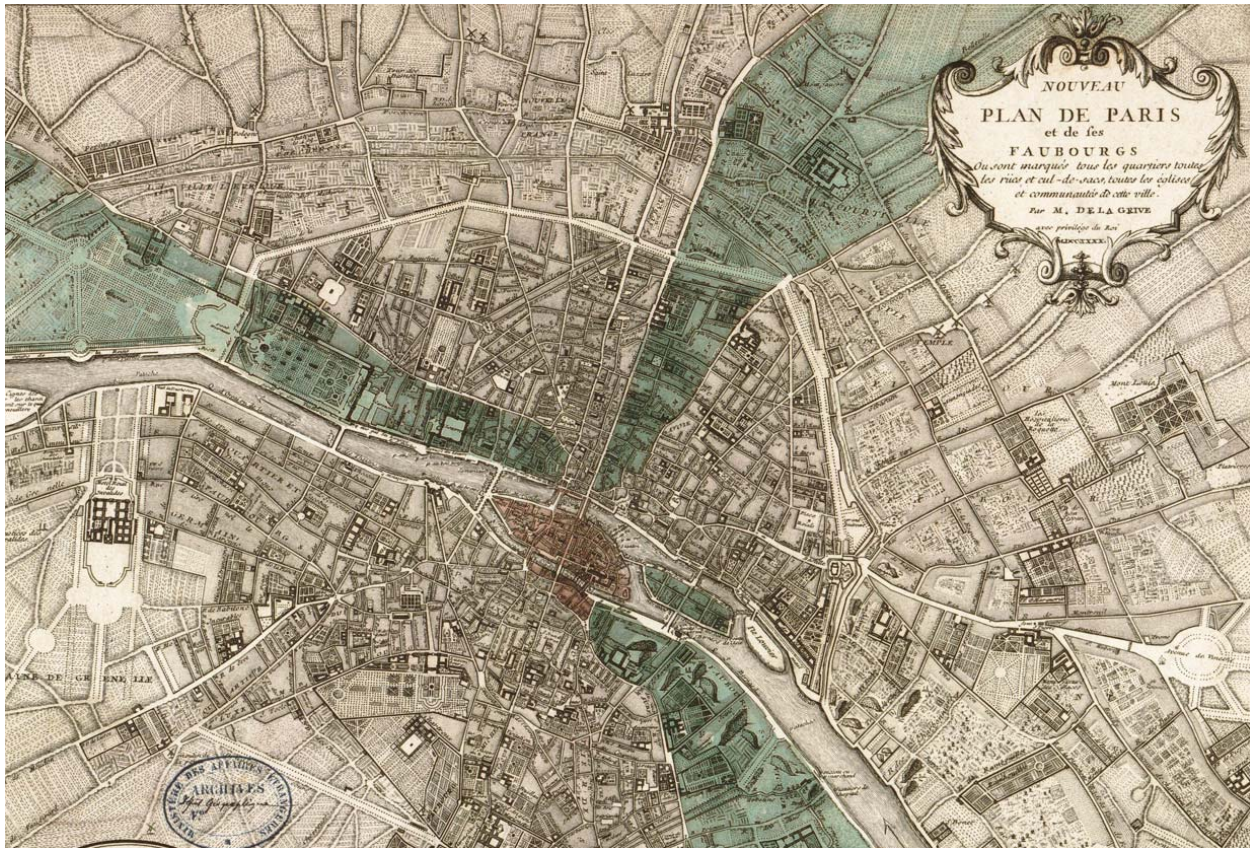


Figure 2.4 – Paris 1740, before Baron Haussman applied the grid onto the city fabric.

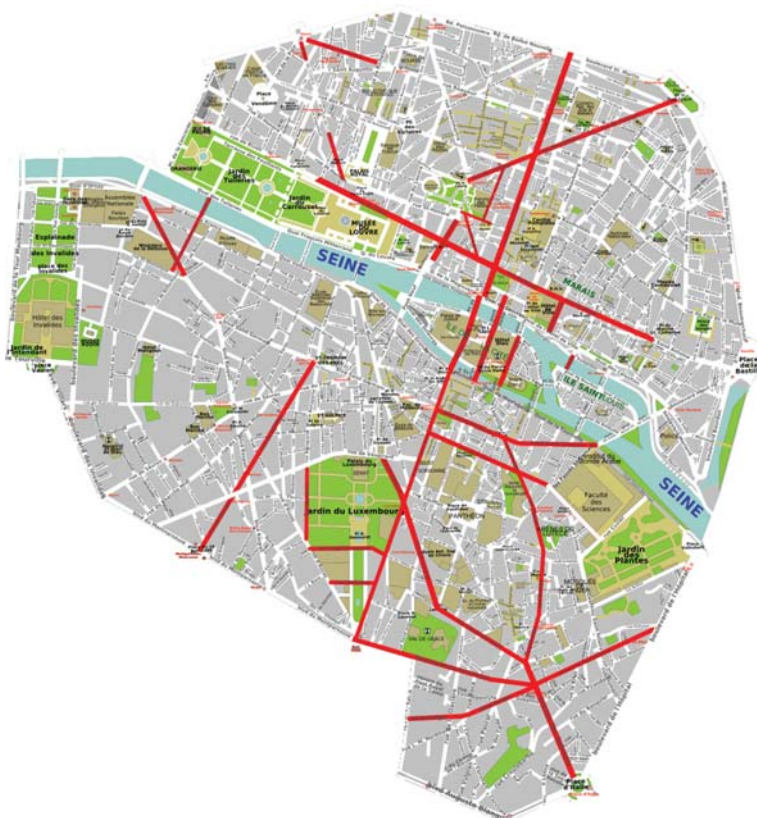


Figure 2.5 – Haussman's interventions on the Parisian city fabric are marked with red. The transformations were realized around 1850 - 1870.

vertical slices above street level as having an inherent order, like the intersection of *cardo* and *decumanus*; one cannot point to activities that ought particularly to happen on the sixth floor of buildings. Nor can one relate visually sixth floors to twenty-second floors as opposed to twenty-fifth floors in a building (Sennett, 1991: 57-60). The vertical grid lacks definitions of both significant placement and closure, thus giving the sensation of «getting lost» and «not belonging» to the urban dweller.

It was under this definition of grid that the *binary grid* of the invisible of cyberspace was undertaken. The grid as apparent in the case of cyberspace was an act of appearing and disappearing at the same time. In her attempt to delve into the plus effect – the burden or the relief – of what the conceptualization of cyberspace, or virtual reality, brought to the already confused individual; Vicky Kirby defines the current situation to be an «exemplary of [the] incessant and aggressive redefinition of the human condition» as the «human subject is now digitized and decentered through the global stretch of cyberspace capillaries». Her position is one of discerning the dark side of an enlightenment, that took place – and *is* taking place – which «extends to the larger and not unrelated question of what it means to be *human*» (1997: 129).

The dark side to an enlightenment, which had for the most part, contracted «a new Cartesian-Lockean-Kantian subject through a happy, progressive marriage of self, reason, and technology» was previously perceived by Guy Debord – as by many other philosophers – who saw the very first symptoms in the great cities of his era (Derian, 1998: 3). To Debord, the reduction of life to the *spectacle*, was the reason that the city took over from being the display of the visions of life, to being the scenery, the image, the representation which previously was life itself:

In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of *spectacles*. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into a representation (Debord, 1967: 1).

Debord's influential expression of lives being *visualized* rather than lived, lead the way to the realization of the «powers of the eye», as well as to a dystopian view of the future of humanity. On the threshold of postmodernity, that aimed at the destruction of the modern order, many were altered, the spectacle replaced by Baudrillardian *transparency* and *obscenity*, as we approached a life of science fiction gradually. Today we have reached the final stage of the spectacle, where the identity is *visualized* on Facebook, rather than *lived*.

Portrayed in the movies and attributed to the city, was not only the dying hopes of saving the urban spaces in any conceptual or physical sense, but also the uneasiness that the human subject lived through, deriving from his interrelation *with* the space, his interrelation *within* the space, with himself and with the *other*. Borrowing Philip K. Dick's words, what was at stake for the human subject was «sensing the absence of life» and «not reacting». Boyer's comment on *Bladerunner*, clarifies this point of losing contact:

Los Angeles in 2019 reflects a post-industrial, post-nuclear-holocaust, decomposed, disintegrated, and decayed city where technological systems have gone awry. Seen through a dark filter of smog or persistently dripping acid rain, its small-scale street markets and low-ceilinged malls give the appearance of a labyrinthine underground enclosure choked with refuse. All of the vendors in these crowded street markets, as well as the individually subcontracted manufacturers of eyes or various other body parts, are third-world Asian immigrants whose language is «city-speak», a meltdown of English, Japanese, Spanish, and other vocabularies *who no longer have the effective means or even the desire to communicate with each other* (1995: 113-114, *emphasis added*).

What was the reason for this dystopic view? On behalf of the city, the twentieth century had begun with great innovations and inventions besides the urban utopias that have configured «civilized» urban settings for the future of human communities. Reported by Robert Fishman in «Urban utopias in the twentieth century», the search for the ideal city of the twentieth century involved the description of «the city that best expresses *the power and beauty of modern technology* and the most enlightened ideas of social justice» (1996: 19, *emphasis added*). Between 1890 and 1930, three names, Ebenezer Howard, Frank Lloyd Wright and Le Corbusier came up with plans for ideal cities that included detailed plans for factories, office buildings, schools, parks and transportation systems, all integrated into a revolutionary restructuring of urban form. Having pulled the trigger for ideas underlying the modern city, these men devoted themselves to passionate and unremitting efforts to make their ideal a reality, however, reality did not turn out to be what they had planned.

This was exactly the point that Jane Jacobs attacked, in her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1996) in 1960s, the «megalomania» of architects like Le Corbusier, who sought to sweep away, with a single stroke of pen, a thousand years of dense urban settlement and many others who thought they would design the social life of the city with their plans for the physical design of the city. To Jane Jacobs, however, it made more sense that the viability of urban forms that have accumulated over time from local uses and historical changes were used to create a socially legitimate and democratic urban space, instead of order that the «artist-designer-dictator» imposed (1996: 111).

Remaining as a larger settlement, where people sought to find better ways of mutual life, revolutions stroked the *human* of the city, and when the magic wand of technology touched it, with it began the process that gave the cold face of technology that alienated people from the space and later with high-tech, urban space assumed a face that the human could no longer recognize. As materials for culture, the stones of the modern city seemed badly laid by planners and architects. Different conceptualizations of the grid became apparent with the shopping mall, the parking lot, the apartment house and the elevator – as the object of the three-dimensional grid – which in their form did not imply the complexities of how people might live in them. What once were the experiences of places appeared now as floating mental operations.

Along with the alienation from the space of civilization, soon the human was even an alien to his own body – *the body of technology*. It was in the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries that the human communities had undergone the effects of the industrial revolution, followed by the invention of computer in the twentieth century, and yet by the 1990s, even a «cyberspace revolution» was pronounced. As Slouka argues in the *War of the Worlds*(1995), «The cyberspace revolution» sought to erase the world «as we had known it» (22).

Realizing the potency of the rapid developments in computer technology, Alvin Toffler wrote early in 1980s that there is a «Third Wave» coming up and that «humanity [faced] a quantum leap forward». To Toffler, the «Third Wave» meant «the deepest upheaval and creative restructuring of all time». It was a *wave* both in the sense that it would clear away history, and us, human beings would be engaged in «building a remarkable civilization from the ground up»; and that it would all be so rapid that it would be done away with our civilization by the time we realize it:

Until now, the human race has undergone two great waves of change, each one largely obliterating earlier cultures or civilizations and replacing them with ways of life inconceivable to those who came before. The First Wave of change – the agricultural revolution – took thousands of years to play it out. The Second Wave – the rise of industrial civilization – took a mere hundred years. Today history is even more accelerative, and it is likely that the Third Wave will sweep across history and complete itself in a few decades (Toffler, 1981: 10).

Although some chances of cyberspace being assimilated – as did many other innovations – is also pronounced by many authors who claim that it could never replace the pleasures of



Figure 2.6 – Dystopia by firelight. *Bladerunner*(1982).

the real experiences, there is evidence that first the cyberspace and then the Web 2.0 way of life reshaped our *real* instead of replacing it:

There is another fact about cultural innovations. If an innovation is basic, simply because it *is* so, a generation after it has been introduced, it becomes part of the world as given – part of the shape of consciousness, you might say, rather than the content of consciousness. Television seemed to the generation of the 1940s to be an amazing triumph of human ingenuity and pregnant with social implications. Its influence on modern culture has been every bit as great as those who witnessed its birth imagined. But now that it has been assimilated, it is taken for granted, which means that, in a sense, it has become obvious and invisible at the same time. Anyone who discusses modern culture has to do a great deal of contemplating of the invisible in the obvious (Hardison, 1989: xii-xiii).

Oversimplifying the visual of the city, this was indeed the core of the changing perceptions of the urban space, the technology and the grid that it imposed on the city, became «obvious and invisible at the same time». Or, in other words, it was the invisibility of the all-too-visible in the urban space that had changed the way we perceived and experienced it. Today, the reality of our daily lives is yet another grid, this time, that of the network which homogenizes and neutralizes our identities in its nodes.

Richard Sennett considered, in his article «The Powers of the Eye», the way our perception has been altered by his emphasis on the effects of the modern urban geography on the body's sensations of motion, sight and touch. His account is very much effected by the point that our urban experiences are now presumably reflections of our altered *reality*, as he noted earlier «As the reality people could believe in transformed itself to what they could immediately experience, a kind of terror about the immanent entered their lives» (Sennett, 1994: 193).

Sennett's concern was mainly the impact of modern city planning and urban design however, the modern architecture and then, the postmodern architecture also had their share in the way the human subject of the urban geography changed her/his perception of the actual space. In 1932, an exhibition of modern architecture was held in the Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition was largely a tribute to the Bauhaus movement, nevertheless the style that the exhibition revealed was identified by Philip Johnson and Henry-Russell Hitchcock as the «International Style» (Hardison, 1989: 100).

The International Style was not only international in the sense of being abstract rather than historical, but also in the sense of being worldwide. The use of reflective glass was primarily functional, in buildings that were exemplaries of the International Style, especially in the American Southwest and South, because it reduced heat radiation into the buildings. However, the primary objective was beauty,

not efficiency. The squares and rectangles were replaced by gigantic mirrors reflecting surrealistic variations of the surrounding activity.

Human beings floated across these mirrors like bubbles in an oversized Wurlitzer jukebox. The buildings themselves seemed only half real. Sometimes they were brilliantly there – great rectangles and cylinders of reflected light. At other times they were almost invisible because when they were looked at they blended into the scenery. When they were not disappearing, these buildings asserted by their geometries that they were rigid and that their basic structural principle was compression – the piling of one column on another. The movement that rippled across their surfaces intensified the impression that they, themselves, were static. Nevertheless, they implied the playfulness of the modern aesthetic, which was their most striking – and also their most disturbing – feature.

Thus far, the new architecture that involved transparent façades, semi-open spaces and skylights caused uneasiness on the individual's experience of the urban space, the sense of space or enclosure was totally lost and the individual was left in a maze of transparencies which emphasizes what is hidden more than that is displayed. Nonetheless, Novak makes similar indications, in his concept of «liquid architecture»:

The city, traditionally the continuous city of physical proximity becomes the discontinuous city of cultural and intellectual community. Architecture, normally understood in the context of the first, conventional city, shifts to the structure of relationships, connections and associations that are webbed over and around the simple world of appearances and accommodations of commonplace functions (1991: 249).



Figure 2.7 – Mirror building. Typical image of the surreal imagery created by the façades of the buildings covered by reflective glass (1988).

The unceasing feeling of «being lost» in the freedom of the new conception of space led to yet another sense of loss: There was a feeling of having been robbed of time in the space of transparencies and multiplications. In the repetitive pattern of the urban daily life, one felt as if time had shrunk and every day was lost to the urban rituals instead of the bodily pleasures it might have included. Coming to the Wonderland comparison suggested by Olalquiaga, the city was becoming yet another place *where reality and appearance merged into one*.

As discussed by Sennett in «The Powers of The Eye», the changing urban space had its way of deadening our bodily sensations and reducing them to a rapid cycle of appearances and disappearances, or in the context delineated by Negroponte previously, digitizing the space, reducing it to ons and offs. The human subject wandered in this three dimensional grid, floated, appeared and disappeared.

Even more uneasiness stemmed from the motion attained in the industrial city due to the automobile, as motion reduced the urban journeys to journeys *through* space instead of journeys *in* space, meanwhile reducing the perception of space as *space*:

People experience speed today in terms people in the past could hardly conceive. The technology of motion has changed modern geography; thanks to the power of human speed, human settlements have extended beyond tight-packed centers out into peripheral space. ... Yet speed is a very curious phenomenon. For one thing, anxiety about moving has developed in the same measure as the ability to move fast; people become uneasy if a subway stops for half a minute, and traffic jams bring out the beast in even the most sedate bourgeois. ... The desire for speed has in turn a marked effect on one's sense of space. The moving body does not want to be arrested in space, it seeks pure forward thrust. This dissonance between speed and space again contrasts to earlier eras. For instance, the «Villes Circulatoires» of the eighteenth century sought to organize a city so that people could circulate efficiently through it yet experience its monuments, churches, and parks as pleasurable elements in the process of moving... as a journey in space, the course of the journey as significant as its origin and its destination (Sennett, 1994: 61).

The speed of daily life, both in the sense of speed attained by the body moving around in its automobile armor, and the speed of the perception process in the urban environment became a perplexing aspect of the urban space, a threat for the individual completing her/his identity formation. In this context, the distinctions that define the identity of the individual in space as the individual were so blurred that the merging of reality and appearance was inevitable as well as a threat to identity formation. The reality of perception was more a reality of rapid snapshots of «appearances» rather than a gaze. And the city became an *envelope* of the landscape of human silences – but not the space of social interaction anymore. As Burgin reminds us:

[A]s much as modernity is the locus of transparency in architecture, it is also the at the origin of the social isolation in and between high-rise apartment houses, the death of the street as a site of social interaction, and the practice of «zoning», which establishes absolute lines of demarcation between work and residential areas, and between cultural and commercial activities. The transparent wall, used by such socialist modernists as Gropius to unite interior with exterior, was destined to become the very index of capitalist corporate exclusivity (1993: 37).

Thus arguments of the psychological disorders – considered as the «disease of the 1980s» – became relevant when also the way individuals were deprived of *verbal language* to re-establish the necessary distinctions was considered. As the verbal language was gradually replaced by the *visual*, the threat on identity formation expanded.

The *disorder* that Olalquiaga found appropriate in defining the condition of the human subject was *psychasthenia*. Psychasthenia helps describe contemporary experience and accounts for the consequent uneasiness. Defined as a disturbance in the relation between self and surrounding territory, psychasthenia is a state in which the space defined by the coordinates of the organism's body is confused with represented space. Incapable of demarcating the limits of its own body, lost in the immense area that circumscribes it, the psychasthenic organism proceeds to abandon its own identity to embrace the space beyond. It does so by camouflaging itself into the milieu. This simulation effects a double usurpation: while the organism successfully reproduces those elements it could not otherwise apprehend, in the process it is swallowed by them, vanishing as a differentiated entity (Olalquiaga, 1992: 1-2).

Urban culture resembles this mimetic condition when it enables a ubiquitous feeling of being in all places while not really being anywhere. This feeling of ubiquitousness was at its extreme in the condition of cyberspace. This feeling was the triggering force that separated the body from the space that blurred the boundaries of the body and defined the condition of uneasiness for identity, when it attacked the final bastion of the human identity – *the body*.

In «Psycho-Analysis of Space», Schilder writes: «There is at first an undifferentiated relation between an incompletely developed body-image and the outside space. Clearer differentiations take place around the openings of the body. There is a zone of indifference between body and outside world, which makes distortions of body-space, and outside-space by projection and appersonization possible» (1935: 295). *Appersonization* is the process in which: «We may take parts of the bodies of others and incorporate them in our own body-image» (Schilder: 1950: 172). Concerning a pathological setting, such interchange of body parts is a symptom of «psychoses».

Today we cannot disregard the actuality of the fact that a new way of perception is blurring and merging our distinctions of our identities, like *Bladerunner* coming true. In *Bladerunner*, based on Dick's novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*(1968), the way the space was *evacuated*, indicated another evacuation within the human subject, that deprived the human being of his reactions and feelings while the *replicant*, the *artificial* appeared with his wish to possess *humanity* as such. «I want more life, fucker...» cries Roy, the highly developed Nexus 6 replicant, to Rick Deckard, the protagonist, who has been ordered to hunt down and «retire» these rebellious replicants (Bukatman, 1997: 7). In this expression of machine versus human, important to argument of the city and the human being was the interrelatedness that triggered this evacuation, the way that the human body related to the urban space, the way that the urban space related to the human body, or to put it more bluntly, the way that the human body related to other bodies in the urban space.

Hence in this urban space, with the altering conceptions of space, and architecture, and enclosure, a certain subject is redeemed «a useless body», the all-too-visibility is sweeping away the subject when and where the «truth is out there» (Baudrillard, 1987a: 129; Zizek, 1997: 3-45).

2.2 Inside and Outside, Public and Private

Besides the aftermath of technology on the physicality of the city, the public realm also had its share out of the subtle threat of cyberspace and the digitalized life on human identity and space. Extensive historical work in cultural studies shows how apparently new forms of identity formation and content are often strongly dependent upon pre-existing social arrangements (Hall, 1980: 60). Therefore, to be able to comprehend what had altered in the social space of the city with the emergence of new technologies and new cyber-communities, one may have a clearer picture of what «public» came to mean in the eighteenth century city – the time the word «public» had taken on its modern meaning (Sennett, 1977: 17).

In the evolution of the concept of the «public», there lay the struggle to define and delineate the border between the inside and the outside. Considering the identity of the individual, confusions in the social space arose later in the evolution of the public – in the blurring of the border and the disappearing distinction between the inside and the outside. In the pre-industrial urban setting, strangers talked openly to one another. What public came to mean was a closure of individuality, when it first meant anything, it was that you could be in places where you are with people who are not your family or your friends. Nevertheless with the industrial revolution there appeared the notion that you had no right to speak to those strangers.

The divide between inner subjective experience and outer, physical life expresses in fact a great fear which our civilization has refused to admit, much less to reckon (Sennett, 1991: xii).

In Burgin's account, one of the most visible images of the modern dialectic of interior and exterior is the wall of steel and glass, of which the glass and iron structures of the Paris arcades are a prototype. He considers the specific example of the Administrative Office, for a model factory complex, built by Walter Gropius and Adolf Meyer for the Werkbund exhibition in Cologne in 1914. The Administrative Office building, as Sennett has described it, was an outstanding example of one, where the confines of the interior have lost their meaning: «...in this building you are simultaneously inside and outside. ... From the outside you can see people moving up and down between floors. ... You can see through the walls, your eyes move inside to outside, outside to inside». Thus, Burgin notes, «...the metaphor of porosity competes with a dialectic of interior and exterior which belongs to a different register and this ambivalence marks the representational space of modernism in general» (1993: 36).

Nonetheless, it was not only a question of the new architectural styles, what blurred the distinctions between inside and outside. Similar to the porosity of human identity, Lefebvre reminds us that even an

apparently solid house «is permeated from every direction». Thus he writes: «...as exact a picture as possible of this space would differ considerably from the one embodied in the representational space which its habitants have in their minds, and which for all its inaccuracy plays an integral role in social practice» (Burgin, 1993: 39).

With the onset of the industrial revolution and its cold penetration into the public, nineteenth century city witnessed the withdrawal of the individual into the private realm; social interaction remained scarce while the persons outside the private realm remained *strangers*.

Each person withdrawn into himself, behaves as though he is a stranger to the destiny of all others. His children and his good friends constitute for him the whole of the human species. As for his transactions with his fellow citizens, he may mix among them, but he sees them not; he touches them, but does not feel them; he exists only in himself and for himself alone. And if on these terms there remains in his mind a sense of family, there no longer remains a sense of society (Tocqueville as cited in Sennett, 1977: 1).

What lied beneath this closure of the private was the emerging behavior, as the emerging belief, that the psyche had to be isolated from the external effects to fulfill its internal completion. Few people today would claim that psychic life arose from spontaneous generation, independent of social conditions and environmental influences. Nevertheless, the psyche was treated as though it had an inner life of its own. This psychic life was seen as so precious and so delicate that it would wither «if exposed to the harsh realities of the social world» and would flower only to the extent that «it is protected and isolated» (Sennett, 1977: 4). Thus in this primary definition of the private life and of the isolation of the psyche; each person's self, became his principal burden; to know oneself had become an end, instead of a means through which one knows the world.

This conflict of isolation versus interaction, in the sense of its contribution to the development of the self, was also identified by Goethe:

From early on I have suspected that the so important sounding task «know thyself» is a ruse of a cabal of priests. They are trying to seduce man from activity in the outside world, to distract him with impossible demands; they seek to draw him into a false inner contemplation. Man only knows himself insofar as he knows the world – the world which he only comes to know in himself and himself only in it (as cited in Sennett, 1991: 1).

This *claustrophobic* sense of identity could also be traced as the origin of the narcissistic culture that we live in today. We are the focus of our gaze. The sense of public, in its long evolution, had eradicated the walls that kept the self as isolated, even before the distinction, or the border, between the private and

the public was invented. Today, as the boundaries that keep the public separate from the private and the boundaries that separate the inside from the outside dissolve to let the separated merge, the identity becomes an imaginary, if not a null concept.

Going back to its evolution through time, it was nevertheless in the city space, where the sense of who the public were was delineated. It was in the early eighteenth century in both Paris and London, where the concept of «being out in public» was defined. Bourgeois people became less concerned to cover up their social origins; there were many more of them; the cities they inhabited were becoming a world in which widely diverse groups in society were coming into contact. By the time the word «public» had taken on its modern meaning, therefore, it meant, not only a region of social life located apart from the realm of family and close friends, but also that this public realm of acquaintances and strangers included a relatively wide diversity of people. «Public» thus came to mean a life passed outside the life of family and close friends; in the public region diverse, complex social groups were to be brought into ineluctable contact. The focus of this public life was the capital city (Sennett, 1977: 17).

Behaving with strangers in an emotionally satisfying way and yet remaining aloof from them was seen by the mid-eighteenth century as the means by which the human animal was transformed into a social being. Together, public and private created what today would be called a «universe» of social relations.

Industrial capitalism was equally and directly at work on the material life of the public realm itself. For instance, the mass production of clothes, and the use of mass production patterns by individual tailors or seamstresses, meant that many diverse segments of the cosmopolitan public began in gross to take on a similar appearance, that public markings were losing distinctive forms. Yet virtually, no one believed that society was becoming thereby homogenized; the machine meant that social differences – important differences, necessary to know if one were to survive in a rapidly expanding milieu of strangers – were becoming hidden, and the stranger more intractably a mystery. The machine production of a wide variety of goods, sold for the first time in a mass-merchandising setting, the department store, succeeded with the public not through appeals to utility or cheap price, but rather by capitalizing on this mystification. Even as they became more uniform, physical goods were endowed in advertising with human qualities, made to seem tantalizing mysteries which had to be possessed to be understood.

Still in the alternating realm, the bourgeoisie continued to believe that «out in public» people experienced sensations and human relations which one could not experience any other social setting or context. Out in public was where moral violation occurred and was tolerated; in public one could break the laws of respectability. This sense of being «out in public» meant in fact, that one was in a

growing milieu of strangers, who remained unknown and to whom one remained unknown. This notion coincided with our sense of being «out in cyberspace», where the identity was no longer intertwined with visibility, and that this invisibility allowed for the moral violation to occur and to be tolerated – at least to the extent that the newly developing ethics of cyberspace, «netiquette» allowed it: in cyberspace one could break the laws of respectability. The advanced intrigue of cyberspace that expands the sense of freedom is that there is no geography, no limiting identity involved, since all the people involved are total strangers to one another. This phenomenon as observed by Mark Dery, editor of *Flame Wars: The Discourse of Cyberculture*(1994), is explained as, «authors are sometimes anonymous, often pseudonymous, and almost always strangers». This incorporeality and invisibility, that transcends the borders of the previous definitions of sociality heralded new possibilities on the cyberspace frontier:

[A] technologically enabled, post-multicultural vision of identity [is] disengaged from gender, ethnicity, and other problematic constructions. On-line, users can float free of biological and sociocultural determinants, at least to the degree that their idiosyncratic language usage does not mark them as white, black, college-educated, a high-school drop-out, and so on (1994: 560-561).

Moreover, these new possibilities posed a challenge to the earlier idea of the public as an immoral domain, which meant rather different things to women and men. But once freed from the constraints of a gendered body in cyberspace, what was observed in the industrial capitalist city of early nineteenth century no longer applied. The public domain, for women was where one risked losing virtue, dirtying oneself, being swept into «a disorderly and heady swirl» (Thackeray as cited in Sennett, 1977: 23). For women, the public and the idea of disgrace were closely allied. The public for a bourgeoisie man had a different moral tone. By going out in public, or «losing yourself in public», as the phrase occurred in ordinary speech a century ago, a man was able to withdraw from those very repressive and authoritarian features of respectability which were supposed to be incarnate in his person, as father and husband, in the home. Therefore, for men, the immorality of public life was allied to an undercurrent of sensing immorality to be a region of freedom, rather than of simple disgrace, as it was for women (Sennett, 1977: 23).

By the middle of the last century, experience gained in company of strangers came to seem a matter of urgent necessity in the formation of one's personality. One's personal strengths might not develop if one did not expose oneself to strangers – one might be too inexperienced, too naïve to survive. In the *ancien* regime, public experience was connected to the formation of personality. Worldly experience as an obligation for self-development appeared in the great monuments of the last century's culture, as well as in its more everyday codes of belief; the theme speaks in Balzac's *Illusion Perdues*(1843), in Tocqueville's *Souvenirs*(1848), in the works of the social Darwinists. This pervasive, painful, unreasonable

theme was the conjunction of a surviving belief in the value of public experience with the new secular creed that all experiences may have an equal value because all have an equal, potential importance in forming the self.

Consequently, as the boundary between public and private was no longer at work, and so was the line between private feeling and public display. What is today popularly misnamed «unconscious» behavior was foreshadowed by these ideas of involuntary disclosure of character in public. In a milieu where sensation and feeling, once aroused, are thought to be displayed beyond the power of the will to conceal them, withdrawal from feeling is the only means of keeping some measure of invulnerability. The only sure defense is trying to keep oneself from feeling, to have no feelings to show.

In this society on its way to becoming intimate – wherein character was expressed beyond the control of the will, the private was superimposed on the public, the defense against being read by others was to stop feeling – one’s behavior in public was altered in its fundamental terms. Silence in public became the only way one could experience public life, especially street life, without feeling overwhelmed. In the mid-nineteenth century there grew up in Paris and London, and hence in other Western capitals, a pattern of behavior unlike what was known in London or Paris a century before, or is known in most of the non-Western world today: There grew up the notion that strangers had no right to speak to each other, that each man possessed as a public right an invisible shield, a right to be left alone.

And gradually public behavior became a matter of consumption, of passive participation, of a certain kind of voyeurism. The «gastronomy of the eye», Balzac called it; one is open to everything, one rejects nothing a priori from one’s purview, provided one needn’t become a participant, enmeshed in a scene. This invisible wall of silence as a right meant that knowledge in public was a matter of observation – of scenes, of other men and women. Knowledge was no longer to be produced by social intercourse (Sennett, 1977: 28).

The paradox of visibility and isolation which haunted so much of modern public life originated in the right to silence in public which took form in the last century. Isolation in the midst of visibility to others was a logical consequence of insisting on one’s right to be mute when one ventured into this chaotic yet still magnetic realm.

As we will see in the following chapters, Facebook provided an interesting new dimension in the merge of the public and private spaces, and the inside and outside. By befriending almost everyone that one knows in actual life through the Facebook interface, one created a database of her/his social connections – imported from real life into the digital. In this way, the knowledge of «who we know»

became public information. Thus one's social circles became part of one's digital identity, making Web 2.0 way of screen communication totally different than the earlier interactions in cyberspace. This way, the Facebook profile not only becomes a display of one's social capital, borrowing the Bourdieu's term, but also a part of one's identity/image package.



2.3 The Mute Individual of the City



Between the introversion and the closure that allowed the distinct separation from the other, from the stranger of the urban scene, was the individual deprived of his main tool of communication – disarmed *off* his speech. Lying at the heart of this notion was the fear of the other, not knowing the other, being in a homogeneous crowd of strangers. Forming the basis of urban paranoia, this sense was highly integrated with the modern ethos of «minding your own business», and social interaction was less desired than ever (Knox, 1982: 25). In this «landscape of human silences», on the stage of visibility *of* the other, and visibility to the other, the eye assumed a new role, that of doing the kind of sociological work which was previously done by the voice (Sennett, 1994: 62).

The modern environment was full of mechanical noise but it lacked the verbal language. This sense of deprivation was expanding the threat on identity, as the voice of disorder was heard louder and louder and meanwhile verbal language was gradually replaced by the visual and thereby blurring the distinctions between the self and the other even further.

It was not only by the public space but also by the changing physicality of the city; the geographic dispersion of the city, the driver's detachment, and the rise of television that accomplished what the nineteenth century police was not able to do. The density of talking bodies thinned out, and physical contact between them has weakened; watching television was a more passive experience than reading. Talk lacked the space in which it was collective action, despite people still talking to strangers in bars or on airplanes (Sennett, 1994; Rubin, 1975).

According to Sennett's concern, the eye had to assume a very harsh responsibility:

As the city has fallen silent, the eye has become the organ through which people now got their direct information about strangers. What social knowledge comes to the eye, looking around in silence? (1994: 63).

The pre-industrial, dense urban center was a place in which strangers talked openly to one another, on the street as in coffee houses, cafés, shops, and government buildings. More than sociable impulses moved strangers to talk to one another; in an age without mass communication, talk was the most important means of gaining information, especially among the large mass of people who could not read. Some critics have argued that the growth of mass literacy commenced the process of eroding discussion among strangers, so that people increasingly read about others rather than talked to them,

but this was not the case. The advent of the modern newspaper in the eighteenth century sharpened, if anything, the impulse to talk; displayed on racks in cafes and bars, the newspapers served as points of discussion for the people who read them in public. Throughout the nineteenth century, men felt free to speak to others on the street, intervening when something unruly occurred or striking up casual conversations. Throughout the nineteenth century, however, the authorities feared the political consequences of strangers gathering together to talk, knowing that social revolt could be ignited by the sparks of the discussion. In London, Paris and Berlin, a police system of spies and repressive laws operated throughout much of the nineteenth century, attempting to keep people from talking too much to each other in bars, pubs, and in public squares (Sennett, 1994). Thus regulation proceeded into paranoia (Arda, 2000).

Also in the early days of internet, the individual lost his ability to speak in the cyberspace. The flight from the body disarmed the man off his *speech*, reducing speech to *chat* on the internet, while it reduced the space of interaction to the *chatrooms*. The speech, language, that was necessary to the man to justify his presence to himself was evacuated – his representation to himself thus reduced.

What was once directly lived has become mere representation. (Debord, 1967: 12)

According to the Stoic conception of bodies and events, what an actor represents is that role which has been and which will be – but never is. The actor is only as a body and the representation is always what has been and what will be. This is a fascinating theory of representation because in such a framework, representation is that which can never be separated from the body (Aracagok, 1997: 18).

But then, what if representation *is* separated from the body? What if representation *is already* separated from the body? Perhaps this is the perplexing point about the identity of the human being in the contemporary society. The image of man is *detrterritorialized*. The lost connection between man and his image is the *disease of the 1980s* (Olalquiaga, 1992: 1). According to Olalquiaga, the disorder stems from the (dis)connection between the individual and the environment. Nonetheless, the *disease of the 2000s* is yet to be named, as man is becoming *only* his image with very little to add.

At the turn of the millenium, the architecture that involves transparent façades, semi-open spaces and skylights caused an uneasiness on the individual's experience of the urban space, the sense of space or enclosure was totally lost and the individual was left in a maze of transparencies that emphasize what is hidden more than what is displayed. In this context defined by architecture, the example of psychasthenia¹ helps define this contemporary experience; the psychasthenic organism begins to abandon its own identity to embrace the space beyond, losing its spatial boundaries, it camouflages

itself into the space. From an urban sociological point of view, this may go hand-in-hand with the urban paranoia, in a constant sense of paranoia, the individual disappears into the crowd to be safe from all that causes the uneasiness, nevertheless, the individual does not appear as «one» of the crowd, instead the crowd becomes *all that causes the uneasiness*:

Modern geography dulls our sensations in a second way, through its effect on the operations of the eye. As cities have spread out and diffused, the eye has been obliged to do a kind of sociological work that formerly was also done by the voice, for though the modern environment is full of mechanical noise it is also a landscape of human silences. ... Of course, people today still talk sociably to strangers in bars or in airplanes, but the talk lacks a space in which it can become collective action. (Sennett, 1994:21)

For nearly a century, modern culture sought to liberate the human body, to set it free in particular from the sexual phobias, silences, and prejudices of earlier eras. Yet a great chasm exists between modern images of the body and bodily experience. Just as few soldiers taste the movie pleasures of ripping other bodies apart, marketable images of sexual pleasure have very little to do with real lovers' sexual experience. Few films show two elderly naked people making love, nor naked fat people; movie sex is great the first time. The imagery of bodily pleasure in the mass media supposes and supports the idea of flight from one's own body as does the experience of cyberspace.

Yet a decade after the spread of the mobile technologies, even the *home, the castle of intimate relationships* joins the urban space in being a «landscape of human silences». Addicted to technology, our family time is usually downsized to all members of the family in front of the TV tackling their laptops and mobile phones in search of «better communications» – that is as a better scenario, usually the members of the family are not in the same room. We are shaped by our tools and we are indeed «alone together», as Sherry Turkle puts it:

People are skilled at creating rituals for demarcating the boundaries between the world of work and the world of family, play, and relaxation. There are special times (the Sabbath), special meals (the family dinner), special clothes (the «armor» for a day's labor comes off at home, whether it is the businessman's suit or the laborer's overalls), and special places (the dining room, the parlor, the kitchen, and the bedroom). Now demarcations blur as technology accompanies us everywhere, all the time. We are too quick to celebrate the continual presence of a technology that knows no respect for traditional and helpful lines in the sand (Turkle, 2011: 258-259).

Turkle, in her book, introduces us to several different cases of human beings silenced in favor of the technology. Let us analyze three of these participants in her research to be able to see the different perspectives on the issue: Audrey, Sal and Deval.

Deval is a sixteen-year-old high school student. He will be starting college in Canada soon. He introduces us to the advanced techniques of avoiding a phone call at whatever cost and «conversation fillers». Deval has a cousin in Montreal and he is making plans of living with her throughout college – through a conversation of smss (texting) back and forth. He explains that he avoids the phonecall because his cousin «has an annoying voice» and spends a good deal of his morning in sending and receiving text messages – hence we learn that avoiding a phone call is not about not losing time. Deval finds texting «more direct» and says that, this way «you don't have to use conversation filler» – the conversation filler here, most probably would be the *human* part of the conversation where the participants show one another their interest in the other with questions regarding their health or daily life. So Deval exchanges «just information» with his cousin and reports their sms *conversation* as: «She was asking me direct questions; I was giving her direct answers. A long phone conversation with somebody you don't want to talk to that badly can be a waste of time».

Hence Deval can avoid a phone call, not to hear the sound of a voice he finds irritating and could still have a *conversation* where he receives all the information he needs. He, thus, organizes the details of how to live with his cousin during the summer without sharing any pleasantries or showing any interest in her.

And yet, Deval does not know if texting is for life. He says that he might, not now, but sometime soon, «force himself» to talk on the phone. «It might be a way to teach yourself to have a conversation ... For later in life, I'll need to learn how to have a conversation, learn how to find common ground so I can have something to talk about, rather than spending my life in awkward silence. I feel like phone conversations nowadays will help me in the long run because I'll be able to have a conversation». These days, of course, even those who are «later in life» have come to avoid telephone conversations. If you feel that you're always on call, you start to hide from the rigors of things that unfold in real time (Turkle, 2011: 321-323).

Audrey is yet another teenager who would do anything and everything she can to avoid a phone call. «The phone, it's awkward. I don't see the point. Too much for just a recap and sharing feelings. With a text ... I can answer on my own time. I can respond. I can ignore it. So it really works with my mood. I'm not bound to anything, no commitment ... I have control over the conversation and also more control over what I say» (Turkle, 2011: 303). In her opinion, texting offers protection:

Nothing will get spat at you. You have time to think and prepare what you're going to say, to make you appear like that's just the way you are. There's planning involved, so you can control how you're portrayed to this person, because you're choosing these words, editing it before you send it ... When you instant-message you can cross things out, edit what you say, block a person, or sign off. A phone conversation is a lot of pressure. You're always expected to uphold

it, to keep it going, and that's too much pressure ... You have to just keep going ... «Oh, how was your day?» You're trying to think of something else to say real fast so the conversation doesn't die out (Turkle, 2011: 304).

The third case that we would like to analyze is Sal. He is sixty-two-years-old, a widower:

When his wife became ill five years before, he dropped out of one world. Now, a year after her death, he wakes up in another. Recently, Sal began to entertain at his home again. At his first small dinner party, he tells me, «I invited a woman, about fifty, who works in Washington. In the middle of a conversation about the Middle East, she takes out her BlackBerry. She wasn't speaking on it. I wondered if she was checking her email. I thought she was being rude, so I asked her what she was doing. She said that she was blogging the conversation. She was blogging the conversation». Several months after the event, Sal remains incredulous. He thinks of an evening with friends as private, as if surrounded by an invisible wall. His guest, living the life mix, sees her evening as an occasion to appear on a larger virtual stage (Turkle, 2011: 260).

Life on the larger virtual stage is causing alterations in identity and self-image for all of us, and not only the teenagers that are supposed to be in an «identity-crisis». What was once a «stepping through the looking glass» for changing from our real identities to the virtual is today a constant zigzagging, such that the boundary is totally blurred. But yet, it is not totally clear, if we are switching between Goffmanian «roles» as we always did, or we create and look at a digital reflection of ourselves, and as we also have the means to receive feedback from the others, we come back to reflect it back on the actual.

2.4 Chapter Conclusions



Technological and socio-economic developments, reducing the urban space to a grid of appearances and disappearances, and reducing the human body to the representativeness of the eye, have been the case for a long time now and a basic threat on the human identity. Starting with the urban grid defining the city and expanding with the binary grid of cyberspace taking over what is *spatial*, the changing perception of the space provoked the detachment of the self and the body.

The subject «I» was gradually transferred to the «eye», the representative of the human body in place, and then it was delegated to a *no body* out there in cyberspace – in the *non-place*. And in this way, man was already reduced to his image, which formed the basis for more uneasiness with the body to come with the associated conditions created in space. In the meantime, the urban space transformed itself to become the scene for the eye to see others.

The imposition of the grid onto the urban space, according to some theorists, stopped the process of the local uses and historical changes creating a socially legitimate and democratic city. Instead, with the grid, a new order, the one that the «artist-designer-dictator» imposed started to control and define the urban space. Thus, as the definition of «public» evolved, the nineteenth century city witnessed the withdrawal of the individual into the private realm; social interaction remained scarce while the persons outside the private realm remained *strangers*.

The sense of who the public were and the concept of «being out in public» was delineated in the early eighteenth century Paris and London, where the bourgeoisie became less concerned to cover up their social origins. The cities were becoming a world in which widely diverse groups in society were coming into contact. By the time the word «public» had taken on its modern meaning, therefore, it meant, not only a region of social life located apart from the realm of family and close friends, but also that this public realm of acquaintances and strangers included a relatively wide diversity of people. The game of behaving with strangers in an emotionally satisfying way, yet maintaining your distance from them was seen by the mid-eighteenth century as the means by which the «human animal» was transformed into a «social being». Thus, public and private together, created what today would be called a «universe» of social relations.

In terms of constructing one's identity, experience gained in company of strangers came to seem a matter of urgent necessity in the formation of one's personality. One's personal strengths might not develop if one did not expose oneself to strangers – one might be too inexperienced, too naïve to survive. Being in the public meant being exposed to a wide variety of experiences, and this painful

theme was the conjunction of a surviving belief in the value of such public experience, the belief that all experiences may have an equal value because all have an equal, potential importance in forming the self.

On the other hand there was the technological dimension to how the life in the urban setting was shaped. The speed of daily life, both in the sense of the speed attained by the body moving around in an automobile, and the speed of the perception process in the urban environment became a perplexing aspect of the urban space – considered as a new threat for the individual completing her/his identity formation. The reality of perception was more a reality of rapid snapshots of «appearances» rather than a gaze. And the city became an *envelope* of the landscape of human silences, as it gradually stopped being the node of social interaction.

In the crowded city space, several new distances were invented in-between the humans, each person was withdrawn into her/himself, starting to behave as though s/he was a stranger to the destiny of all others. The family, defined the realm of private, children and good friends constituted for the individual the whole of the human species. What lied beneath this closure of the private was the emerging belief, that the psyche had to be isolated from the external effects to fulfill its internal completion. The psyche was treated as though it had an inner life of its own. This psychic life was seen as so precious and so delicate that it would wither «if exposed to the harsh realities of the social world» and would flower only to the extent that «it is protected and isolated». Thus in this primary definition of the private life and of the isolation of the psyche; each person's self, became his principal burden; to know oneself had become an end, instead of a means through which one knows the world.

In this society on its way to becoming intimate, silence in public became the only way one could experience public life, especially street life, without feeling overwhelmed: There grew up the notion that strangers had no right to speak to each other, that each man possessed as a public right an invisible shield, a right to be left alone. The paradox of visibility and isolation which haunted so much of modern public life originated in the right to silence in public which took form in the last century. Isolation in the midst of visibility to others was a logical consequence of insisting on one's right to be mute when one ventured into this chaotic public realm.

And gradually public behavior became a matter of consumption, of passive participation, of a certain kind of voyeurism. This invisible wall of silence as a right meant that knowledge in public was a matter of observation – of scenes, of other men and women. Knowledge was no longer to be produced by social intercourse. Hence the eye assumed a new role, that of doing the kind of sociological work which was previously done by the voice and dialogue. This passive voyeurism of the eye is reinforced today with the online social network where the individual alone, looking at a screen *socializes*.

Endnotes

¹ Olalquiaga introduces psychastenia – the individual proceeding to abandon his own identity to embrace the space beyond – and obsessive compulsive disorder as the diseases that the human psychology suffers from the result of the perceptual and technological changes that produce a fragmentation of the self. According to Olalquiaga, this fragmentation of the self is what underlies compensation in the intensification of pornographic and painful pleasures.



A blue rectangular box with a white border containing the word "procrastination." in white lowercase letters with a registered trademark symbol.

procrastination.

The word "Cat" in black sans-serif font followed by the word "Videos" in white sans-serif font inside a red rounded rectangle with a white border and a slight shadow.

Cat Videos



Now the gaze was tied not only to the psychological lures of the Imaginary and the interpersonal dialectics of the Look but also to the social institutions of surveillance and the spectacle. The evil eye emerged from the realm of superstition to become the ruling metaphor of social control and political oppression at its most insidious (Jay, 1993: 377-378).

In Wired's March 1993 inaugural issue, as the public spread of internet became obvious, founder and editor-in-chief Louis Rossetto proclaimed that a cultural transformation was under way. «The Digital Revolution is whipping through our lives like a Bengali typhoon,» he announced, bringing with it «social changes so profound their only parallel is probably the discovery of fire». Indeed in the last two decades we have witnessed the transformation of several concepts, which resulted in the alterations of time, space and identity as we perceive it.

In *Liquid Modernity*, Zygmunt Bauman explains how the dystopic scenarios that we live in today turned out to be different than the Orwellian and Huxleyian dystopias that were quite basic in our imagination of the new millenium. Though we still doubt the presence of a «Big Brother»¹, what ended up to be a cause of anxiety is uncertainty, more than the restlessness of surveillance. Orwell's *1984*(1949), attempted to describe a future in which dictatorship was legitimate. It is a description of life under a dictator, Big Brother, and a vast hierarchy under him. We never meet the despot, nor do we know whether he in fact exists, there being dark hints to his being only an empty and symbolic figure head. But the message of the novel is unmistakable: once a power elite gains even partial control, it is bound to advance to autocracy, by its very nature, and to become self-perpetuating (Paul, 1966: 12).

Bauman suggests that, as this dystopia faded out, the biggest anxiety of human beings turned out to be undecisiveness confronting an unlimited number of choices:

... with the Supreme Offices seeing to the regularity of the world and guarding the boundary between right and wrong no longer in sight, the world becomes an infinite collection of possibilities: a container filled to the brim with a countless multitude of opportunities yet to be chased or already missed. There are more – painfully more – possibilities than any individual life, however long, adventurous and industrious, can attempt to explore, let alone to adopt (Bauman, 2000: 61).

This uncertainty, as we have seen earlier, is a new type of uncertainty: «not knowing the ends instead of the traditional uncertainty of not knowing the means» (Bauman, 2000: 60). In the absence of a decision-maker, a leader or a role-model, the question of objectives is thrown wide open and bound to become the cause of endless agony and much hesitation, and generate the unnerving feeling of unmitigated uncertainty and therefore also the state of perpetual anxiety.

The question of defining the objectives and hence being able to evaluate opportunities do exist in almost all aspects of our lives, however in none of these aspects does it cause as much anxiety as it does in answering the basic questions of identity: Who are we? Who do we want to be? How do we choose our identities? In the midst of opportunities, everything, so to speak, is now down to the individual. It is the individual's personal choice to find out what she or he is capable of doing, to stretch that capacity to the utmost, and to pick the ends to which that capacity could be applied best – that is, to the greatest conceivable satisfaction. Bauman goes on to explain this state-of-mind in detail:

Living in a world full of opportunities – each one more appetizing and alluring than the previous one, each «compensating for the last, and providing grounds for shifting towards the next» – is an exhilarating experience. In such a world, little is predetermined, even less irrevocable. Few defeats are final, few if any mishaps irreversible yet no victory is ultimate either. ... As Zbyszko Melosik and Tomasz Szkudlarek point out in their insightful study of identity problems, living amidst apparently infinite chances (or at least among more chances than one can reasonably hope to try) offers the sweet taste of «freedom to become anybody». This sweetness has a bitter after-taste, though, since while the «becoming» bit suggests that nothing is over yet and everything lies ahead, the condition of «being somebody» which that becoming is meant to secure, portends the umpire's final, end-of-game whistle: «you're no more free when the end has been reached; you are not yourself when you have become somebody». The state of unfinishedness, incompleteness and underdetermination is full of risk and anxiety; but its opposite brings no unadulterated pleasure either, since it forecloses what freedom needs to stay open (2000: 62).

In Bauman's definition, «the world full of possibilities is like a buffet table set with mouth-watering dishes, too numerous for the keenest of eaters to hope to taste them all» (2000: 63). Nonetheless, facing

such a variety of options, there are few determinants that distinguish right from wrong. Trying to choose, there is nothing to distinguish a move as a better one, no criteria to recognize the right move among its many alternatives – at any point. This countless multitude of opportunities was the first sensation of the human beings when they faced the invisible world of cyberspace for the first time. Used to the advantages and limitations of the urban/body space, all of a sudden a new space opened behind the screen in which to be anybody that you wished to be.

Peter Steiner's cartoon, published in *The New Yorker* on July 5th, 1993, «On the Internet, nobody knows you're dog», gives us a very clear glimpse of the human condition under the presence of such new technology.

Though this was the first perception of the cyberspace, today its presence has made us stand at a totally different point with respect to our perceptions of ourselves and others. We no longer see cyberspace in which to be «anybody that we wish to be» if not as a medium of advertising in which to promote our own brands of ourselves. Another caricature, by Marisa Acocella Marchetto brings us closer to the perception of identity and the way it functions today – be it in the urban or the cyberspace.

Such a perception is a consequence not only of the presence of internet in our lives, or our lives gone mobile, but also, and even to a larger extent, an after-effect of several decades of hard-core capitalist consumption. Everything that advertising imposed on us subliminally all along this time is now our conscious tools to tend our own brands. And why is branding important? Because the consumer society, just as it is explained in Baudrillard's «system of objects», educated us in choosing products based on their perceived value rather than their actual value or their «use-value». Hence, as soon as we were given the opportunity, a *voice*, a *face* with the online social network, we opted in for increasing our perceived values. In a manner similar to that of «shopping-to-be», this time we chose to use different and more contemporary social signifiers to climb the ladder of social status. Before Facebook, we were able to *show-off* the material that we had, our cars, our



Figure 3.2 – «On the Internet, nobody knows you're dog». An ironic caricature on the preliminary perceptions of cyberspace. By Peter Steiner, published in *The New Yorker* on 05.07.1993.

houses, but not exactly our social capital. And we were limited to our geographies, the urban spaces we lived in determined our audiences. Now is the time to put it all on display. On the social network, we are showcasing who we are friends with, which in turn comes to define our statuses in the society. And, of course, lifecasting and displaying what you «have» makes perfect sense once you opt for building your identity *for your image* as now you can easily manipulate what the others think of you.

On the changing basis of identity construction, several and multi-dimensional factors are at work; technology and how we relate to it, the changing distribution of our time between the digital and physical activities, the urban spaces, the way we relate to them and our perceptions of time and space and maybe the most significant of all the factors: The blurring of the line that separates public and private. Once a reflexive task indulged in the private life of the individual, today the construction of identity is more of a public task, both in terms of its means as well as its ends. In this chapter, to be able to follow and understand the path that has lead us to our *brand selves* today, first we will take a retrospective look at our journey from space to cyberspace and back.



Figure 3.3 – We all know that Generation Y is the most cynical generation on earth when it comes to marketing and advertising. They hate being «sold» to and expect so much more from a brand than just the product. This cynicism has spawned an amusing trend where cool young things – dubbed «Brand Whores» by Coolhunter.com – are appropriating corporate logos and turning them into ironic fashion symbols. From McDonalds to KFC, Brand Whores are poking fun at brands and our rampant consumerist culture. Not that the brands mind, we presume. Any opportunity to have their logos splashed about – irony, or no irony – is a chance to market.

3.1 From Space to Cyberspace... and Back ////////////////////////////////////

3.1.1 Previously on Cyberspace

The city, by definition, is the *natural* social hub of human activity where people are brought together by the services provided to them. However, as we have discussed in the second chapter, centuries of life in the big cities brought about complaints and disgust of its citizens as well as their joys and pleasures. As the pendulum started to tend more toward discontent and dissatisfaction, it caused new competitors for the social space to rise and gain strength despite their inconveniences: These new rivals lacked the spatial component in which to *be*. Nonetheless, the social self – which was once constructed within the urban space, with traditional tools like the family, friends, the religious and national frameworks – started to give more «performances» in these digital spaces than it does physically.

From the moment William Gibson announced in his dystopian science-fiction novel *Neuromancer* (1984), that the new informational network/computer matrix called cyberspace looked like Los Angeles seen from five thousand feet up in the air, there has been a predilection for drawing a parallel between the virtual space of computer networks and post-urban places of disorder and decay (Boyer, 1995: 14). Many parallels do exist between the *real-life* experience offered by the city and the *virtual reality* that cyberspace suggests, to the extent that they effect the individual. What constitutes the similarity between the effects of the city and the cyberspace on the identity of the individual, in the form of a *threat* was highlighted by Stone as «the distinction between inside and outside has been erased and along with it the possibility of privacy» (1995:105).

In the earlier story of cyberspace, the feeling of taking off from the body, leaving behind the materiality of the real and the reality of the material and letting oneself go into the depths of the cyberspace with an *escape velocity* (Dery, 1996) of the throw involved a disavowal of the body. From another point of view, this gave rise to a debate over the possibility of whether one person can really have more than one personality, or, to put it more extremely, whether there can really be more than one person in a single body (Deleuze and Guattari's concepts as cited in Stone, 1991: 34). Though our earthly feelings of the

real deny the possibility instantly, the cybernetic point of view provided us with the full possibility of the invisible – of the flight to the other, the attempt to be another.

A story by Allucquere Roseanne Stone, a writer who is very familiar with the marvellous intrigue of these electronic worlds, introduces us to one such story of virtual role playing. In «Will The Real Body Please Stand Up?»(1991), we are introduced to Julie, a single and totally disabled woman with no social life to speak of. But she was able to communicate to other people on the internet, by engaging the computer keyboard with the aid of a headstick. Stone recounts that the woman's warm and perceptive intelligence won her many friends on the net, and her thoughtful and sympathetic advice was greatly valued. Within the intimacy of the virtual community where she was *present*, Julie was much loved. However, shortly after, it turned out that Julie had not fully overcome the *failures of the flesh*. Eager to meet and to thank the physical manifestation of her virtual confidante, one of Julie's online friends finally tracked her down. But the delight of anticipation foundered on the obstacle of Julie's body: Although she was indeed middle-aged, *Julie* possessed normal mobility and a profession that carried a good deal of authority and respect – she was, in fact, a psychiatrist, **a male psychiatrist**. The troubling fact of Julie's body had been of no significance previously, being just the vehicle of an expansive and generous online personality liberated from its broken housing (Kirby, 1997: 132). But once this virtual betrayal was uncovered, the *identity* formed by *Julie* was totally torn apart.

There are two important points to be derived from the case of Julie: The first one is that an identity was *formed* and was *actually* communicating with other people *as if it was real*. And the second point is that the people who had trust in that *manipulated identity* were feeling betrayed – because they still believed in a kind of *reality of virtuality*.

The case of Julie as considered by Kirby, is nothing different than *testing your presence* in another *self*, in another presence which you are *not*. Vivian Sobchack, a writer whose work addresses questions of phenomenology worries that this desire for an ultimate escape actually *demand*s «getting rid of the meat». It is the possibility that the cyberspace gives, the possibility of *getting rid of the flesh*, that evacuates the *reality* of corporeal existence, and fills in the *thereness* of the cyberspace (Sobchack as cited in Dery, 1996: 310).

Concerning Deleuze and Guattari's perspective on the subject, the possibility of more than one personality is not only a *possibility* but the reality itself for the age we live. For Deleuze and Guattari, there is no longer an «I», for every I is a multiplicity. There is no «one», for every one is a multiplicity. If an «identity» is defined for the individual in the schizophrenic capitalist society that they consider, in terms of the current debates on the cyberspace and the identity of the individual, then the cyberspace must

be the exact «plateau» for this identity that they define. Cyberspace is the plateau where each and every individual is given the possibility of being any «one» that they desire to be. Thus the so-called *attack* on identity is actually not an attack in the view of Deleuze and Guattari. The *attack* might be conceptualized in an other way in their terms, the attack – or the *assault* (Slouka, 1995) on reality, the reality that always escapes.

Not only Deleuze and Guattari are defining the current condition of the society to be *schizophrenic*, as it is actually common currency to describe the human condition with respect to a *disease* or a *disorder* in the literature on the identity of the individual in the contemporary society of the twenty-first century. Be that schizophrenia or Obsessive Compulsive Disorder, the one point that many authors agree upon is that there is something pathological about the borders of identity in the society today and that *disorders* are formed in the psychology of human beings under the current conditions (Lingis, 1991; Kroker, 1992; Olalquiaga, 1992; Virilio, 1995; Cubitt, 1997; Kirby, 1997).

One significant starting point to follow the alterations is investigating the changes in the perception of language. According to Deleuze and Guattari, one has to look as far back as the prohibition of incest, for this prohibition is what endows signs with a signifying capacity.² So once people had names, there was the language and there was the law. But as suggested by Stoic philosophy and by Deleuze and Guattari, since everything is a mixture and each individual includes the whole of the universe, the individuals are not differentiated by their names but by their *expressions* instead. Then the name as the *identity* of the individual is lost and the reign of language as *the signification system* defining the borders of the identity of the individual is shaken.

The way Deleuze and Guattari conceptualize representation, concerning the book, highlights some points about the way representation transforms itself:

There is no longer a tripartite division between a field of reality (the world), a field of representation (the book) and a field of subjectivity (the author). Rather an arrangement connects together certain multiplicities caught up in each of these orders, so that a book has no sequel in the following book, nor its object in the world, nor its subject in one or several authors. In short it seems to us that there will never be enough writing done in the name of an outside. The outside has no image, no signification, no subjectivity (1983: 132).

Hence to the question that we have raised on the separation of representation from the body earlier in the section on the «mute individual of the city», Deleuze and Guattari's reply appears to be a schizophrenic world. In the identity defined by the multiplicity of each monad, what differs one's identity, one's individuality, one's singularity is the way one *expresses* herself/himself. So there is no unity

of the world, no destiny of the individual but a *becoming* molded by the individual, by the expression of the individual. Thus, not believing in the unity of the world and considering the world as a place where everything is moving from one point to another all the time, they define a schizophrenic world. This definition opens up all the possibilities of identity, of being and invites them into existence. As Deleuze posits:

But bodies caught up in the particularity of their limited presents do not meet directly in line with the order of their causality, which is good only for the whole, taking into consideration all combinations at once (1990: 131).

So they define an *active* world, which is what Cubitt translates as «a less claustrophobic sense of identity» in *Digital Aesthetics* (1998: 125). However, from another perspective, Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of a schizophrenic world, actually frees the subject from the diseases suggested by many authors. Deleuze, in his *The Logic of the Sense* (1990), gives various possibilities for the identity of the individual under the circumstances of our time:

To the question «who is speaking?», we answer sometimes with the individual, sometimes with the person, and sometimes with the ground which dissolves both. ... But a final response yet remains: one which challenges the undifferentiated primitive ground and the forms of the individual and the person and which rejects their contradiction as well as their complementarity. No, singularities are not imprisoned within individuals and persons; and one does not fall into an undifferentiated ground, into groundless depth, when one undoes the individual and the person (Deleuze, 1990: 140).

Nonetheless, this perspective, does not yet free us from the anxiety of uncertainty brought about by Bauman. But before we try to see Bauman's point of view in the facts of today's world, let us continue investigating how social communication evolved earlier in the cyberspace.

In the era of Information Technology, the initial steps taken towards the interaction of people who are physically separated were the electronic versions of bulletin boards and the MUDs on the newly developing global network of the previous decades. Given this basis for the possibility of sociality in virtual systems, the concept of cyberspace came and triggered the spatial ascensions to such human interaction. The first virtual communities based on information technology were the online bulletin board services (BBS) of the mid-1970s (Stone, 1991: 88). These BBSs were named after their perceived function – virtual places, conceived to be just like physical bulletin boards, where people could post notes for general reading. After similar developments in the formation of virtual communities, a slight difference was introduced by the *Habitat* designed by Chip Morningstar and Randall Farmer: Visual

spatial representations of the virtual communities. *Habitat* existed first as a mural located in a building in California, but, online, each area of the mural represented an entirely expandable area in the cyberspace, be it a forest, a plain or a city.

Habitat was actually *inhabitable* in that, when the user signed on, s/he had a window into the ongoing social life of the cyberspace – the community *inside* the computer. The social space itself was represented by a cartoonlike frame. The virtual person – the user's delegated agency – was represented by a cartoon figure which could be customized from a menu of body parts. When the user wished to speak through her/his virtual character, s/he would type the words on the keyboard and these words would appear in a speech balloon over the head of the user's cartoon character. Thus *Habitat* was a two-dimensional example of what William Gibson called a «consensual hallucination» (1984: 51).

Later with the publication of *Neuromancer*, the participants of the electronic communities that have learned to delegate their agency to body-representatives that exist in an imaginal space with representatives of other individuals, realized the further possibilities highlighted by the novel. In this sense, *Neuromancer* was not only signalling any technological development, but more importantly, it was crystallizing a new community. The three-dimensional inhabitable cyberspace described in the novel never actually existed, but the groundwork for it was to be found in a series of experiments and simulations in both the military and private sectors.

The prominent literature on cyberspace usually was elaborated on this preliminary definition, which was the basis of our spatial conception of the space behind the screen. The evolution of the computer from being an isolating tool to a node of the digital social network in the early days of this perception were defined by Turkle to be:

At one level, the computer is a tool. It helps us write, keep track of our accounts, and communicate with others. Beyond this, the computer offers us both new models of mind and a new medium on which to project our ideas and fantasies. Most recently, the computer has become even more than tool and mirror: We are able to step through the looking glass. We are learning to live in virtual worlds. We may find ourselves alone as we navigate virtual oceans, unravel virtual mysteries, and engineer virtual skyscrapers. But increasingly, when we step through the looking glass, other people are there as well. ... The use of the term «cyberspace» to describe virtual worlds grew out of science fiction, but for many of us, cyberspace is now part of the routines of everyday life. When we read our electronic mail or send postings to an electronic bulletin board or make an airline reservation over a computer network, we are in cyberspace. In cyberspace, we can talk, exchange ideas, and assume personae of our own creation. We have the opportunity to build new kinds of communities, virtual communities, in which we participate with people from all over the world, people with whom we converse

daily, people with whom we may have fairly intimate relationships but whom we may never physically meet (1995: 9-10).

In such a space of social communication and simulation, what Turkle foresaw for the human identity as well as its construction was quite different than the traditional. The concerns over the human identity were never freed from the possibility that even the line separating the animate and the inanimate could be crossed: Hence, it was even possible to meet forms of artificial intelligence in the cyberspace that were trying to pass as human beings:

In the story of constructing identity in the culture of simulation, experiences on the internet figure prominently, but these experiences can only be understood as part of a larger cultural context. That context is the story of the eroding boundaries between the real and the virtual, the animate and the inanimate, the unitary and the multiple self, which is occurring both in advanced scientific fields of research and in the patterns of everyday life. From scientists trying to create artificial life to children «morphing» through a series of virtual personae, we shall see evidence of fundamental shifts in the way we create and experience human identity. But it is on the internet that our confrontations with technology as it collides with our sense of human identity are fresh, even raw. In the real-time communities of cyberspace, we are dwellers on the threshold between the real and the virtual, unsure of our footing, inventing ourselves as we go along (1995: 10).

Having this threat on one side; and the possibility that people could *get jacked into the cyberspace*, that the cyberspace could have a spatial configuration, implied *an escape* from the reality just before our eyes. This idea of an escape that would relieve us off our *places* in actuality, and would allow us to step into a global network of social interaction where we might even leave our *bodies* behind and *wear any body* that we would rather have – or any person that we would rather *be* – expanded the commotion that we were already indulged in. This kind of a cyberspace was defined by Gibson once again, in *Neuromancer*, where Case, the protagonist connects his nerves to the nervous system of another character, in order to have access to her thoughts, to see through her eyes, to hear through her ears (1984: 46). In another novel by Gibson, in *Mona Lisa Overdrive* (1988), the main character who is trying to solve a previous event that had taken place in the matrix, strives for answers within the matrix and is *erased* from the real world (61). This concept of escape actually suggests a debate of cities versus computer-generated cyberspace; or to put it more effectively: Real spaces versus the matrix of the computer system which is nothing more than a *binary grid of zeros and ones*. One important point is that this differentiation of real and virtual spaces forms a great challenge for the way we perceive; offers us a new mode of perception. Gibson provides us with a fine example of this new mode of perception is in the opening line of *Neuromancer*, which has become a classic in the genre over the years: «The sky above the port was the colour of television, tuned to a dead channel» (1984: 1).

Yet one has to draw the limits to the *debate* of identity at least. Yes, when first introduced cyberspace was a new electronic, invisible space that allowed the computer or the television screen to substitute for urban space and urban experience, or for the body and the bodily experience. It is a fact that the phenomenon of cyberspace created an aggressive redefinition of the human condition, in which the human subject was digitized and decentered and made *invisible* through the global stretch of cyberspace capillaries. The invisibility achieved by the newly proliferating electronic technologies of the Information Age forms a threat to the destruction of the concepts of space and time; as these new technologies are circulating outside of the human experiences of space and time, the notions of space and time are apt to change. But there is something almost uncanny in any description of «the virtual,» or in any other enthusiastic testimony that gives indirect references to what the new worlds of virtual reality is one day expected to provide – or remove. This «uncanny» may perhaps be explained in terms of the changes of perception, taking the opening sentence of *Neuromancer* again, although still in its infancy, this postmodern technology already offers new modes of perception and opens new spaces for the imaginary. Paul Virilio puts it as, «cyberspace is a new perspective [which] does not coincide with the audio-visual perspective which we already know» (1995: 1).

As suggested earlier by Turkle, Virilio's new perspective was what we stepped into as we stepped *through* the looking glass.

I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space, that opens up behind the surface;
... a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself there where I am absent... (Foucault,
1986: 24)

Considering human interaction, having lived through these eras of social interaction in the city – in the real spaces of human life – confused with the possibilities and the impossibilities of these spaces and having undergone the processes of alienation, isolation and the evacuation of the concept of a «community» human beings would now attempt to try the opportunities of the virtual. In this sense, *Neuromancer*, in a single stroke, provided, through Gibson's powerful vision for hackers, technologically literate and all the others involved, the imaginal public sphere and refigured discursive community that established the grounding for the possibility of a new kind of social interaction. However one cannot conclude that what he proposes would be the way it is going to end, since from another point of view this is nothing more than progress and cyberspace does not give the human beings any more reality than they already have; so humanity would find a way out again and again.

As commented by Howard Rheingold in a very recent interview, all these issues are not new to psychologists and sociologists; they have been trying to find out replies to the very same questions for over a century. He also highlights, that human beings are very good at –«sniffing» the fake, the

fraudulent in the flesh, what they should now figure out is how to do that in the online networks that connects us (Tuna, 2010).

Recapitulating the general perspectives on identity in the earlier and invisible cyberspace, we should remember, Turkle, one of the pioneers in this area, has examined computer culture, identity, technology, and the creation of online communities and she has consistently documented identity reinvention and community in cyberspace, noting that we are all «dreaming cyborg dreams» of fluid identities and minds that are downloadable to computers (1995). The role of the computer as a prosthetic device that catapults one into cyberspatial interaction has also been examined by Haraway, who has extensively advocated the eradication of what she considers mundane distinctions between human-animal, human-machine, and physical-nonphysical dimensions. The anonymous and textual nature of cyberspace allows one to overcome «identity fixes» such as gender, looks, and disabilities (1991). People choose to explore certain sides of their personalities more extensively online, or even invent virtual life personae different from their real life identities (Papacharissi, 2002c). For certain researchers, the defining point is that the individual and the computer function as one, and it is with the help of the machine that the individual is able to reinvent herself or himself online (Stone, 1996).

Nonetheless, if we are to go back to Foucault's «heterotopia», as we will see in the following sections, we are everywhere and we are nowhere to be found, even when in our bodies, we are absent from the lives of the loved ones, or the colleagues that surround us as we are «always on», always connected and always somewhere out there in the invisible space of ultimate communication. This type of interpersonal communication raises several concerns on the superficiality of our identities as presented online and on the superficiality, insincerity and vagueness of the communication carried out.

3.1.2 The Uneasiness of Being «Mobile»: Off of the Body?

A child is made known to itself by its name (Blixen as cited in Fletcher, 2001: 493).

The developing pace of technology, while transforming the urban space and the social space, posits a new threat on the identity formation of the individuals, in its way of changing the daily life of the urban dweller and effecting the social relations created in the urban space. The more technology favors the imaginary instead of the symbolic, and the cybernetic instead of the organic, the more human beings are confused in their search for a distinct identity. The continuous image attacks of everyday life, together with the changing conception of space, has made establishing one's self-image a difficult task to achieve, in such a way that the struggle to distinguish one's identity causes a fragmentation of self,

thus in time, technological images become the Lacanian mirrors in which one looks for self-perception – not being able to distinguish the borders of the self, one tends to attain a wholeness by identifying with the surrounding world of images.

In the earlier story of cyberspace, what we considered was a betrayal to/denial of the body. Once freed from the limitations of the flesh, one was able to try the limits of his dual self, in a perspective where the self is not in the body, but mostly in the psyche. The virtual role-playing did let us overcome the *failures of the flesh* and the multiplicity that it implied was just a daily game that we played. Back then we discussed whether it was possible to sustain multiple selves in one single body, yet today we have shifted the conversation to whether we live multiple lives distributed to our physical, digital and mobile worlds.

Early into the cyberspace, one of the milestones that lead to the flight off of the body was the loss of the names as the signification system. In the social communication of the MUDs, every individual was given a *nickname* or a *screen name*, which had liberated them from their actual names and identities. This was as much part of the emancipation of the individual from the body as the liberation of the prohibitions. Under such circumstances one could unleash the unconscious and engage in communication that represented what was not represented in the daily *actual* life. The minimization of speech to *chat* relieved the human being under such circumstances. In the age of Facebook however, though staying anonymous still could be an option, one goes back to having a *name*. According to the Digital Life Scale results, 89.4% of the 528 participants use their actual name on their Facebook accounts. And it is even preferable to have your actual name as the social communication tends to merge with marketing communication. As will be discussed in detail in the upcoming chapters, today, centuries after the freedom of the mouth, speech no longer works in overcoming *the narcissism, the closed individuality of the isolated individual of the information society*.³

In a nutshell, the option of still staying anonymous in the internet allows for parallel digital and real lives, while opting for nonanonymous presence on the social networks enables combining your actual identity with your online construction of self-presentation. In Turkle's *Alone Together*(2011), we are introduced to Pete, who is forty-six, is father of two young kids, lives in Weston, Massachusetts and is trying to find a better meaning to his life, with an attempt to overcome a disappointing marriage. He just turns on his iPhone and he is in another life, in his *Second* Life. There Pete is Rolo, a buff and handsome young man who is married to a female avatar called Jade, a pixie with short, spiky blonde hair. As Pete attends his four and six-year-old children in the park, he also attends his *second* wife on his iPhone, whom he has never met and does not wish to meet in actual life, or using the cyberspace jargon, in *RL*. Walking the boundary that separates the life and the game on a daily basis, Pete (Rolo) and Jade

talk – by typing on the iPhone – and then erotically engage their avatars, which the *Second Life* software facilitates with special animations. Online they not only talk about sex and *SL* gossip, but also about money, the recession, work or matters of health. Pete describes Jade as intelligent, passionate and easy to talk to, and finds it harder to talk to his *real* wife Alison about his health problems and anxieties as «she gets too worried that he might die and leave her alone». Pete says, «*Second Life* gives me a better relationship than I have in real life. This is where I feel most myself. Jade accepts who I am. My relationship with Jade makes it possible for me to stay in my marriage, with my family». The ironies are apparent: an avatar who has never seen or spoken to him in person and to whom he appears as an avatar, not as a body, seems to him to be the person most accepting of his truest self (Turkle, 2011: 255-256).

Finding ways to escape from ourselves is not new. Neither the desire to do so, nor the possibility is something new that came with internet. Pete's online life bears a family resemblance to how some people use more traditional extramarital affairs. It also resembles how people can play at being «other» on business trips and vacations. When Pete pushes a swing with one hand and types notes to Jade with the other, something is familiar: a man finding that a relationship outside his marriage gives him something he wants. But something is unfamiliar: the simultaneity of lives, the interleaving of romance with a shout-out to a six-year-old. Pete says that his online marriage is an essential part of his «life mix». He goes on to explain that the life mix is the mash-up of what you have on- and offline. Now, we do not ask to be satisfied in our lives, but in our life mixes. «We have moved from multitasking to multi-living» (Turkle, 2011: 256).

This has been made possible with the mobility of our connections, with the presence of mobile phones/smartphones that let us connect to the internet on-the-go. Before such mobility, the time we spent in the virtual space behind the screen was limited to the time we could spare to spend in front of a computer. The journey *off* of the body always finished in coming back to the corporeal at the moment of disconnecting ourselves from the net. Now with the mobile devices that serve as the portal, the movement is fluid and seamless. This gives an opportunity to use our «lives as avatars» to manage the tensions of everyday existence in case of *old-fashioned* anonymous presence while it allows for seamless and continuous self-expression on networks like Facebook or LinkedIn where nonanonymity is at stake. We use social networking to be «ourselves,» but our online performances take on lives of their own. Our online selves develop distinct personalities. Sometimes we even see them as our «better selves». As we invest our time, energy and *self* in them, we also want to take credit for what we have created. We want people to know our digital profiles as a part of who we are, we want them to meet the digital avatars that we create in *World of Warcraft* or in *Second Life*, thereby even bringing the anonymous out into the spotlight.

In talking about sociable robots, I described an arc that went from seeing simulation as better than nothing to simply better, as offering companions that could meet one's exact emotional requirements. Something similar is happening online. We may begin by thinking that emails, texts, and Facebook messaging are thin gruel but useful if the alternative is sparse communication with the people we care about. Then, we become accustomed to their special pleasures – we can have connection when and where we want or need it, and we can easily make it go away. In only a few more steps, you have people describing life on Facebook as better than anything they have ever known. They use the site to share their thoughts, their music, and their photos. They expand their reach in a continually growing community of acquaintance. No matter how esoteric their interests, they are surrounded by enthusiasts, potentially drawn from all over the world. No matter how parochial the culture around them, they are cosmopolitan. In this spirit, when Pete talks about *Second Life*, he extols its international flavor and his «in-world» educational opportunities. He makes it clear that he spends time «in physical life» with friends and family. But he says that *Second Life* «is [his] preferred way of *being* with people». . . . In addition to the time he spends on *Second Life*, Pete has an avatar on *World of Warcraft*, and he is a regular on the social-networking sites *Facebook*, *LinkedIn*, and *Plaxo*. Every day he checks one professional and three personal email accounts. I once described this kind of movement among identities with the metaphor of «cycling through». But now, with mobile technology, cycling through has accelerated into the mash-up of a life mix. Rapid cycling stabilizes into a sense of continual copresence. Even a simple cell phone brings us into the world of continual partial attention (Turkle, 2011: 257-258).



Figure 3.4 – As online and digital lives converge seamlessly, avatars created in *World of Warcraft* or *Second Life* are displayed *proudly* together with the actual identities and online friends, even if they are still not met in person start to have a face at least through the Facebook or Tuenti, they no longer stay *virtual* and out *there*. They become pieces of the *actual* daily live and start to make space for them in our *actual* identities and social lives.



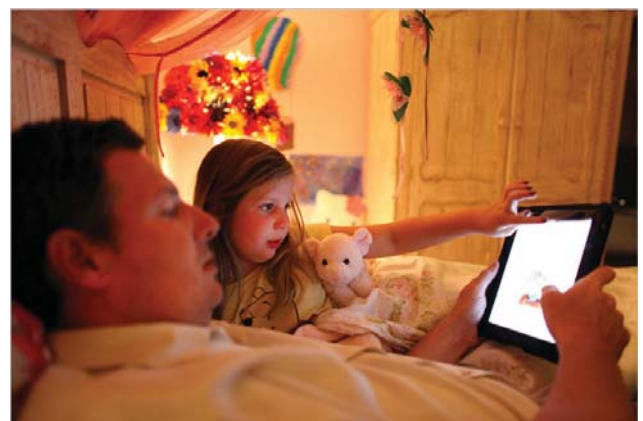
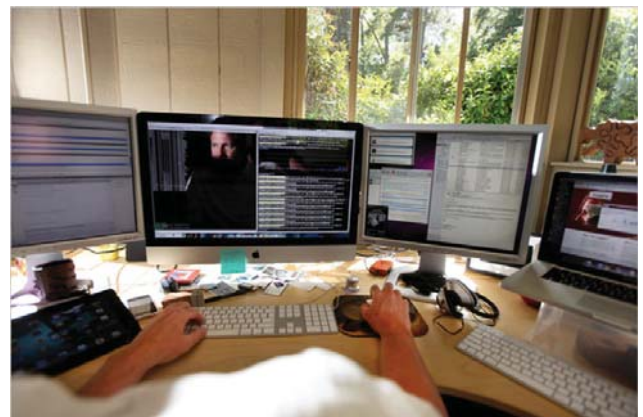
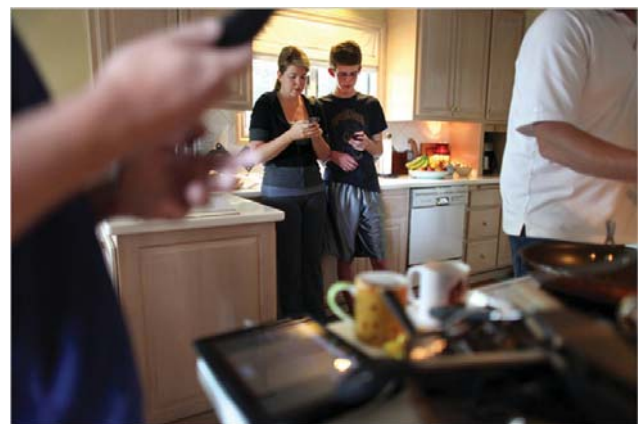
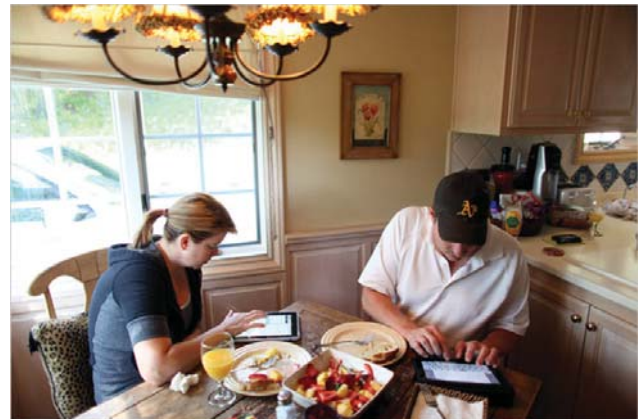
Figure 3.5 – Logo collage by Zeynep Arda. «a» from Alexa, the web information company, «N» from Nokia «Connecting people», «O» from Google, «N» from the always cool Nike, «Y» from Yahoo!, «M» from Myspace, the space of social entertainment, «O» from Facebook, as defined on the page «a social utility that connects people with friends and others», «U» from Youtube, «Broadcast yourself», «S» from Spotify, a radio tool that allows you to listen to music online for free and finally «!» from Yahoo!.

Thus with the advent of the *mobile* life, the landscape of silences expands. The mute individual of the city is *connected* but still refuses to speak – nonetheless, and surprisingly, no longer refuses to communicate with strangers. It is not a question of the changes in the signs and signifieds, it is absolute silence. We live our days looking at screens, monitors, smartphones, iPads, netbooks, Kindle or whatever. Even when we are in company of others, the norm is not respecting the people that surround us physically. If there is a message in your cellphone, it has to be attended first, and the people that you are with should know the *priorities* of contemporary communication as well.

Turkle takes us to an older perspective on attending mobile communications:

Not that many years ago, one of my graduate students talked to me about the first time he found himself walking across the MIT campus with a friend who took an incoming call on his mobile phone. My student was irritated, almost incredulous. «He put me on ‘pause.’ Am I supposed to remember where we were and pick up the conversation after he is done with his call?» At the time, his friend’s behavior seemed rude and confusing. Only a few years later, it registers as banal. Mobile technology has made each of us «pauseable». Our face-to-face conversations are routinely interrupted by incoming calls and text messages. In the world of paper mail, it was unacceptable for a colleague to read his or her correspondence during a meeting. In the new etiquette, turning away from those in front of you to answer a mobile phone or respond to a text has become close to the norm. When someone holds a phone, it can be hard to know if you have that person’s attention. A parent, partner, or child glances down and is lost to another place, often without realizing that they have taken leave (2011: 258).

Ever since we got used to the sense of «always-on» (Turkle, 2011), the «always-attainable» ever since we accepted that we could be reached by anyone who knows our mobile number, email or Facebook account, the priority of the face-to-face communication changed. It is no longer important to attend the people that you are with, they should assume the fact that you have «online business» to attend to and show some *respect*. They should even be grateful that you do so, as you attend to the email messages of your co-workers on your Blackberry, you are *earning* more time to spend *with them*, no?



(Top to down)

Figure 3.6 – Brenda and Kord Campbell, with iPads, at breakfast. The time with electronic devices doesn't end when Mr. Campbell gets up from his work space. A weekend family breakfast was interrupted when Mr. Campbell and his wife, Brenda, both took time to use their tablet computers.

Figure 3.7 – Juggling the Screens. Earlier, while Mr. Campbell was fixing breakfast for his family on his daughter's birthday, Brenda and their son, Connor, 16, both use their smart phones while waiting.

Figure 3.8 – Kord Campbell, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur, works in front of multiple screens in his home office, constantly shifting attention from his work computer to social networking sites, professional sites, instant messaging conversations, email and more.

Figure 3.9 – At the end of the day for Lily, 8, Mr. Campbell reads a Winnie the Pooh story from a tablet computer for bedtime.

IT'S
EMAIL'S
40TH
ANNIVERSARY!

THE HISTORY OF EMAIL

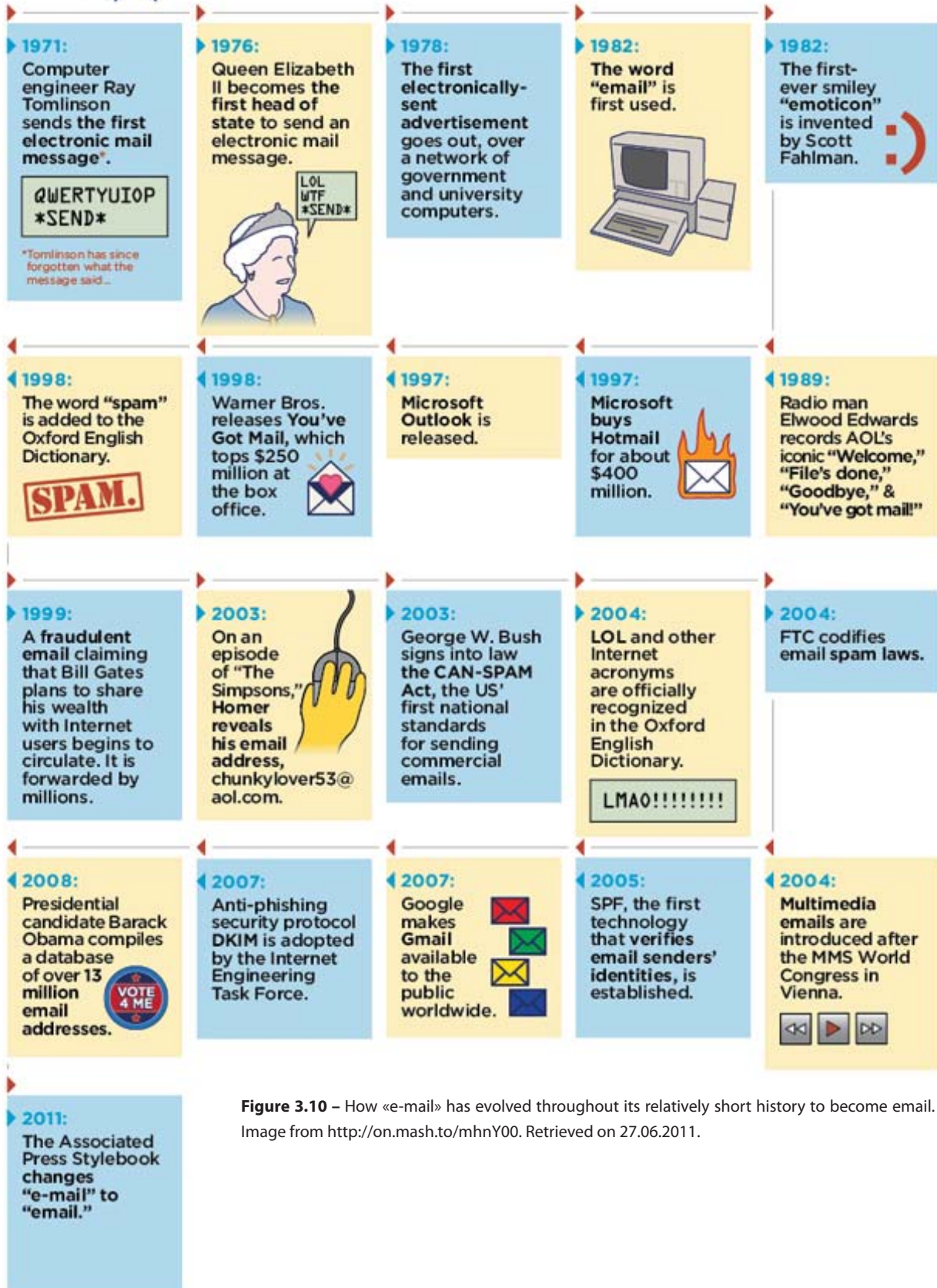


Figure 3.10 – How «e-mail» has evolved throughout its relatively short history to become email. Image from <http://on.mash.to/mhnY00>. Retrieved on 27.06.2011.

When media are always there, waiting to be wanted, people lose a sense of choosing to communicate. Those who use BlackBerry smartphones talk about the fascination of watching their lives «scroll by». They watch their lives as though watching a movie. One says, «I glance at my watch to sense the time; I glance at my BlackBerry to get a sense of my life» (Mazmanian, Orlikowski & Yates, 2006).

When the BlackBerry movie of one's life becomes one's life, there is a problem: the BlackBerry version is the unedited version of one's life. It contains more than one has time to live. Although we can't keep up with it, we feel responsible for it. ... We strive to be a *self* that can keep up with *its* email (Turkle, 2011: 262, *emphasis added*).

Hence this is how we have found ways of spending more time with friends and family, in which we hardly give them any attention at all. Vacations are chosen based on the availability of Wi-fi, we cannot take a vacation without bringing the office with us, we even dine out preferably where we could check out what's going on with work through your smartphone every once in a while and thus we are liberated from the space – or are we? Now we can go and work from anywhere – big hooray.

We are overwhelmed across the generations. Teenagers complain that parents don't look up from their phones at dinner and that they bring their phones to school sporting events. Hannah, sixteen, is a solemn, quiet high school junior. She tells me that for years she has tried to get her mother's attention when her mother comes to fetch her after school or after dance lessons. Hannah says, «The car will start; she'll be driving still looking down, looking at her messages, but still no hello». We will hear others tell similar stories. ... Parents say they are ashamed of such behavior but quickly get around to explaining, if not justifying, it. They say they are more stressed than ever as they try to keep up with email and messages. They always feel behind (Turkle, 2011: 260-261).

This success of this *self* is measured in terms of its rapid responses to the messages pouring in on a daily, hourly, momentary basis. The number of calls made, emails answered, sms messages replied to, tweets and status updates sent out all become measures of success and signifiers of a «busy, mobile, contemporary self» that has no time to stop and think. As we stepped out of the cubicles of the office, we have broken the chains that tied us to our desks, we became mobile corporate slaves. We insist that our world is increasingly complex, yet we have created a communications culture that has decreased the time available for us to sit and think uninterrupted. As we communicate in ways that ask for almost instantaneous responses, we don't allow sufficient space to consider complicated problems (Turkle, 2011). Thus, our new problematic comes down to how we could have an *inner* self, while we are always *out there*?

3.2 The Screen Inhabited



3.2.1 In the Brilliant Yellow Glow of the Screen

Cyberspace is an electronic, invisible space that allows the computer or television screen to substitute for urban space and urban experience (Stone, 1991: 105), or *for the body and the bodily experience*. With a heavy connotation of the invisibility achieved by the newly proliferating electronic technologies of the Information Age, the concept of cyberspace formed a threat to the destruction of the concepts of space and time. As these new technologies were circulating outside of the human experiences of space and time, the notions of space and time were apt to change. Though the concept was not new to the internet, it was already there with the telephone, there was something almost uncanny in any description of «the virtual,» or in any other enthusiastic testimony that alludes to what the new worlds of virtual reality were one day to provide.

The tele-digital machine converts, or has already converted, the notion of personal space and that of the collective (social), into *cyberspace*, with the transfer of topographic ontology and material to connective ontology (Fernández, 1998: 8-9).

The idea of a *nonplace* beyond the computer screen is significant in our contemporaneity; nonetheless, this nonplace had always been there, apparent with the telephone, with the *telepresence* that voice alluded in communicating via the telephone with another who was not physically present.

In Slouka's account, in today's world, we are as comfortable with the superhuman speed – and the level of abstraction it brings with it – as we are with the telephone. The first invention to introduce us to the *nonplace*, the telephone had, in a single stroke, distanced us from a habit as old as our species: talking to one another face-to-face. It was almost impossible, for our grandmothers and grandfathers, the initial users of the telephone, who found it striking to conceptualize another human being beyond the inanimate receiver; in order to communicate, they had to personify the receiver and speak *to* it, as to some mechanical pet, rather than *through* it to someone else (Slouka, 1995: 3-4). As we moved to live in the virtual communities of early cyberspace it was similarly uneasy for us, to imagine a new space that was *invisible* to us but yet still inhabitable by our *bodies*.

The inability to define and stabilize the notion of cyberspace and the future that the phenomenon indicated, led, on one hand, to the common debate of order/disorder, or to the discourse of virtual reality or cyberspace, being a simulation of the already existing real world that we live in – except for the confusing point that this simulation did not need to be one where physical rules of the real applied. In any case, what was new about cyberspace was not the idea of disorder with the virtual – since it is

already a debate of the actual – but the space that it opened up for the imaginary, for the fantasy. Accordingly, this new sense of space, whose boundaries – and limits – remained unexplored at that moment, created a sense of escape, an escape from the world as we had known it, from our physicality, and visibility, and corporeality that bounded, and from our physical bodies that have been the only limit to our «earthly presences» thus far.

This notion of abandoning the physicality was on the other hand, an expansion of our everlasting challenge of nature, similarly the sense of escape that cyberspace brings about connotes once again an escape from nature, from natural – that is if nature still is the nature that we know and not the «technology as our nature» (Stone, 1991).

This irredeemable sense that we desperately seek an escape has long been the issue of science fiction literature; nevertheless, as Mark Dery points out, cyberculture «seems as if it is on the verge of attaining escape velocity», as he defines «escape velocity» to be «the speed at which a body – a spacecraft, for instance – overcomes the gravitational pull of another body, such as the Earth» (1996: 3). Even so, this escape, though it appears as a reminiscent of the extreme escape from the earth, the migration to the off-world colonies that *Bladerunner* assumes – but all the same leaves open to question – is an abandoning of the body limit, is «getting rid of the flesh», or all the more implicit the disembodiment of the human and the visible of the human instead (Sobchack as cited in Dery, 1996: 310).

As of today, we no longer call our interactions on the internet to be «in the cyberspace», considering today's experience cyberspace sounds even more uncanny than it used to be. Living in the screen is no

longer science-fiction to us. We do not even sense the presence of the screen consciously. We are over here in an instant and over there in the next. Our daily passage into the digital is absolutely seamless and this *life mix* is our nature now.

About a decade ago, what was new about cyberspace was that it involved this sense of space; it connoted a space where *bodies* appeared. In Paul Virilio's words, it was a completely new perspective, which does not coincide with the audiovisual perspective that we already knew:



Figure 3.11 – Lobster Phone by Salvador Dali (1936). In the symbolic, the telephone even without the lobster was very strange for our grand parents, who were the first ones to experience communicating with someone that was not physically present.

It is a tactile perspective. To see at a distance, to hear at a distance: that was the essence of the audio-visual perspective of old. But to *reach* at a distance, to *feel* at a distance, that amounts to shifting the perspective towards a domain it did not yet encompass: that of contact, of contact-at-a-distance: tele-contact (1995).

Thus, the first project to bring the spatial component of tele-presence to life was *Habitat* developed by Chip Morningstar and Randall Farmer as mentioned before. Morningstar and Farmer's project brought a 2D visuality to the virtual space of communication (Stone, 1991: 87). *Habitat* was a large-scale social experiment that was accessible through common telephone-line computer networks. Designed for Lucas Films, *Habitat* first existed as a 35-foot mural located in California, but on-line, each area of the mural represented an expandable area in cyberspace. It was inhabitable in that, once online, the user had a window into the ongoing social life of cyberspace – the social life, the community *inside* the computer. The virtual person, the avatar, which was the user's representative, was visualized on the screen as a cartoon figure, which may be customized from a menu of body parts (Stone, 1991: 93-4). This project alluded a new dimension in virtuality, in that it demonstrated the possibility that we might have an imaginary visibility even to our virtual *selves*.

As the body you were in was by no means your own body in the *Habitat*, in the further elaborated cyberspace, the physical rules of normal did not need to apply and thus it did not need to encompass any *real* physicality of the body. Cyberspace in the vivid imagination of Gibson, was entered by means of direct links to the brain – because by then the Chinese had invented *nerve-splicing* (4) – that is, it was inhabited by refigured human «persons» separated from their physical bodies, which were parked in real space. Thus, in cyberspace, no measures to remind our body of its limits was necessary, nevertheless some experiential rules were carried over from normal space. For example, Gibson defined the geometry of cyberspace as Cartesian, thus a *virtual grid* was behind the order of the virtual. In *Neuromancer*, the «original» body was the authenticating source for the refigured person in cyberspace; no «persons» existed whose presence was not warranted by the concomitant existence of a physical body back in «normal» space. But death was all the same real, in cyberspace, in the sense that if the «person» in cyberspace died, the body in normal space died also and vice versa (Stone, 1995: 34).

This type of *cyberspace* has never occurred to be our everyday reality in the way Gibson had described, though we moved towards its virtualization and abstraction at an increasing speed. More and more we were convinced, like the sagely cyborg in Bruce Sterling's science fiction novel *Schismatrix*(1985), that «there is a whole world behind this screen» (179), as we were spending ever greater amounts of our lives in cyberspace, while the notion of community evolved into cybercommunities and being was reduced to such disembodiment of the human. More and more people were communicating with each other behind the screen, even in case of physical proximity. But in the case of the physically separated, the



(Top to down)

Figure 3.12 – Lucasfilm’s *Habitat* enabled modem-equipped Commodore 64 users to talk to each other in a virtual world. Though it now seems incredible, this was how «the screen» started to be «inhabited».

Figure 3.13 – A scene from *Worlds Away*.

Figure 3.14 – *Toontown*.

Figure 3.15 – *Habbo Hotel*.

Figure 3.16 – *World of Warcraft*, the capital of the Alliance, Stormwind.

Figure 3.17 – *Second Life*, Amsterdam.

Top significant moments from the Internet history

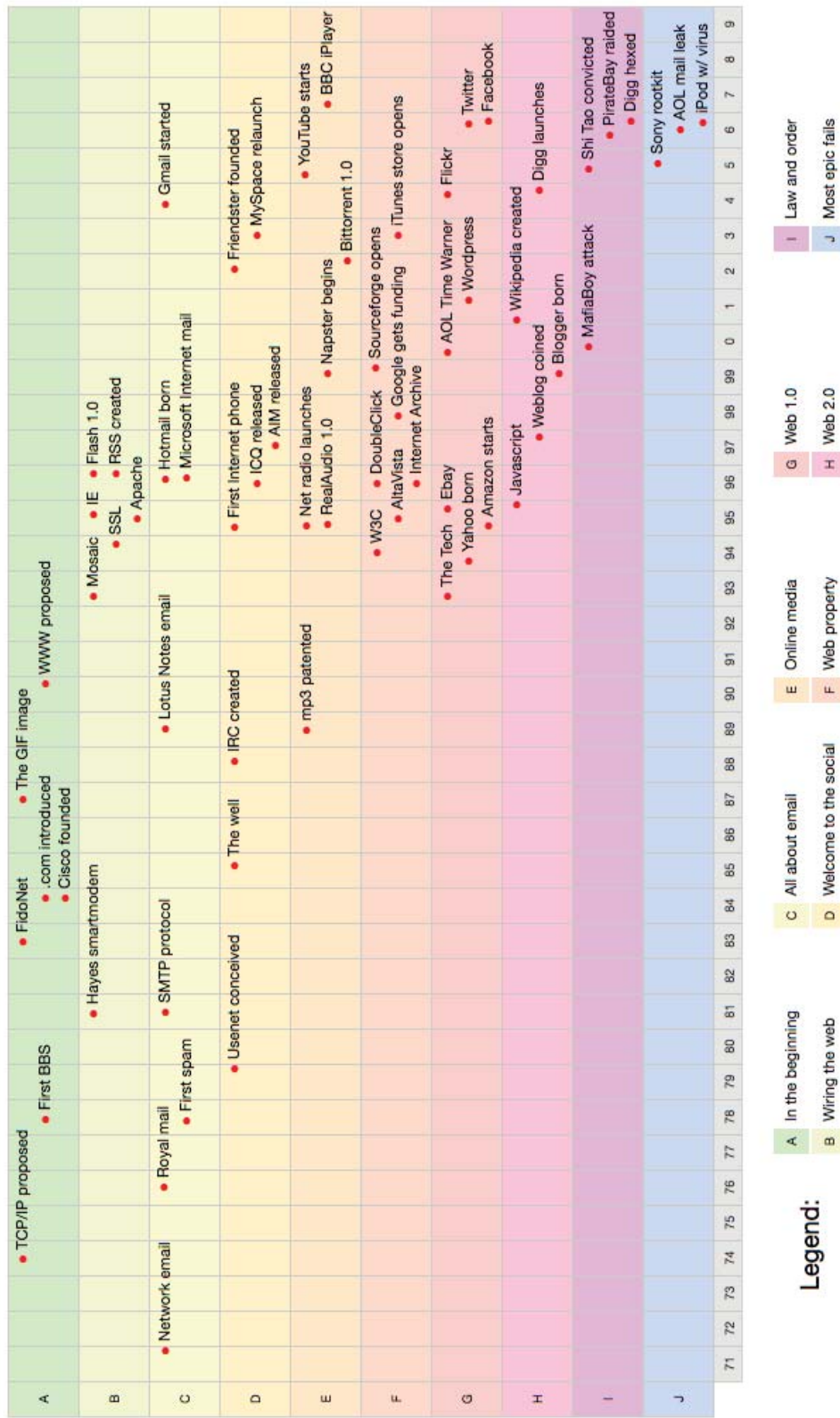


Figure 3.19 – Top significant moments in the history of internet.

On the road to unreality, we have gone a long way ever since Debord's preoccupations regarding the way life and experience were being reduced to spectacle. Today, the evacuation of reality seems much more rapid and pierce – it actually seems *totally evacuated*. Regarding Sherry Turkle's account of our relationship with simulations, how we «turn games into reality and reality into games», especially on the issue of «war» might be considered as a striking exemplary of the current condition.

For a generation of teenagers and children who have witnessed the Gulf War, between Iraq and the United States, broadcasted live by CNN, the meaning of war had been altered forever. This mighty war «online», had reduced war into «this rotten simulation», to any other war epic, where everything was just fiction (Baudrillard, 1995: 59). Therefore, one should consider their indifference in «playing» with war, playing war games, and inscribed by the motto of such games: «The more deaths the better».

James, fourteen years old, has been demonstrating his prowess at Platoon, a Nintendo video game. He tells me that the game pretty much boils down to «the more deaths the better». I ask James how he feels about this. What he thinks about Platoon's definition of success. James responds by clarifying how he sees the relationship between real and simulated war. «If you are a soldier on the ground, war is about killing faster than the other guy. So the game is realistic. It's too bad that people die, but the idea in war is that they die and you don't». James adds: «I sort of like it that it [Platoon] rubs your nose in what war is about. If people think war is more glamorous than that, I think that's what's bad» (Turkle, 1995: 71).

In Turkle's view, James's comment clarifies the point that the assumptions of such games are likely to reflect our real world assumptions as well. James's conviction that Platoon does well to confront us with reality brings us back further discussion and criticism of our reality. We go back to the question of «what is Real?»

The question may take many forms. What are we willing to count as real? What do our models allow us to see as real? To what degree are we willing to take simulations for reality? How do we keep a sense that there is a reality distinct from simulation? Would that sense be itself an illusion? (Turkle, 1995: 72-3).

By such means discussed above, virtual worlds represented labyrinths that confronted our bodies and our experiences of space with paradoxes of a new order. In the past, labyrinths were always spatial in conception, as they were metaphors of disorientation; while in «the virtual» they become meta-labyrinths of strange knots and irrational dizziness. Full immersion in «the virtual» meant that everything in it related to the synthetic reality of cyberspace, and not to exterior physical space (Boyer, 1995: 50).

Going back to the issue of escape that cyberspace implied, and which appeared to make cyberspace so *new*, there was the possibility that it was our escape, if not from the *space*, or from our *bodies*, or from our *realities*, but only from the «all-too-visible» that the city had exposed, in its being a mere screen with all the capitalist overflow. Maybe we were just looking for a new place in which to reinvent our fantasies, for the «obscene» did not allow for any imaginary space to exist. Maybe we desperately sought the *invisibility* that cyberspace offered, in which to be ourselves again, to hear our muteness, to remember what humanity was like.

«We tell ourselves stories in order to live», is the opening line of Joan Didion's *White Album*, indeed we do, or at least we have to do, for only stories would allow for the space of the imaginary in this technological world (as cited in Dery, 1996: 15). Wasn't there also the possibility that «cyberspace» was yet another story that we were telling ourselves? Indeed it was. For in its reduction of the space to little uncanny sentences of definition, of description is where we believed to be in a new space, a new space which we believed that we were delineating, where we believed we were re-defining the rules, and we were indeed obeying the rules that we created anew, we were defining ourselves a new *order* in which we could develop new *disorders* to be able to cope with the uncanny of life itself.

In fact, cyberspace had existed long before Gibson had coined the term and gave it a substantial existence. We were already in cyberspace when we talked on the phone with *someone* and maybe we were in cyberspace when we believed that the television had the «whole world in it». We were in cyberspace when we forgot that the computer was only a tool in our hands, in our control, and believed that it was a «second self» to us.

Concerns about the new role of the body (rebodified) in cyberspace, its peripheral relationship with the *interface* to capture and project the body, and the knowledge of how the tool is assimilated in the body structure will help us to know definitely this technology that manipulates body structures and experience gives us new tangibilities, new spaces (cyberspaces) where the presence, representation and simulation are interconnected, and where the body is constantly redefined (Molina, 1998: 2).

We were on our way to complete deception. The consensus on the hallucination was at the point of taking over our *real* selves in favor of our *second* selves. But then the technology advanced one step further and turned its spotlights on to light up every corner of the cyberspace of invisible communications. The physical body struck again. The cape of invisibility fell off. Technology advanced to remind us that human beings are inevitably visible beings. Thus, cyberspace turned visible. The advance of audio-visual technologies and the increased speed of connection to internet allowed for messages, images, photographs, videos to be delivered at a sensible speed and prepared the end of fantasy: *Game over* and we were visible again – thus started the age of the *digitally visible*, and shortly after, the age of Facebook.

3.2.2 Invisibility and Multiplicity

Cyberspace, the *new space* of interaction, folded and unfolded to make apparent a virtuality that people were very much embedded in, and unfolded again to display the illusion and fascination of it. In very crude terms, what was going on in cyberspace sociality was that:

The electronically disembodied are zapping emails around the world, typing messages back and forth in real-time «chat», and flocking to BBS discussion topics and UseNet newsgroups. They're lurking, flaming and ROTFLOL [Rolling on the Floor Laughing Out Loud]. They're swapping pornographic .GIFs (digitized photos), and swinging in anonymous «text sex» trysts. They're mousing around the Net's latest addition, the World Wide Web, a hypertext-based system that enables users around the globe to point and click from one multimedia site to another, bouncing from digitized video clips to snippets of sound to screenfuls of text without end (Dery, 1996: 6).

As observed by Mark Dery, and by many other authors, overwhelmingly growing numbers of people were – and still are – convinced that «there is a *there* there» and that there is an irredeemable social life going on in the cyberspace (Barlow, 1998: 164-169). In *Neuromancer*, William Gibson had borrowed the phrase «There's no *there* there», which was coined by Gertrude Stein, who was speaking of Oakland. But the phrase turned out to be reversed, if we are to acknowledge the fact that the number of people that are convinced about a presence in cyberspace, and about a presence of cyberspace, is growing very rapidly. Strong evidence suggests that many people enjoy and are satisfied with this new definition of sociality, where they fulfill their needs to socialize and where some of the participants could even go as far as achieving tactility and thereby some physical ones as well. Though the internet was mainly developed for transmission of information, and for military purposes, the fact that these new technological conduits had the potential to create new kinds of communities was noted and encouraged by the very top leaders of the research projects that created it.

Before ARPANET went online in 1969, the people who had sponsored its initial development, J. C. R. Licklider and Robert Taylor, wrote an article with E. Herbert, «The Computer as a Communication Device», in which they set forth their vision for the future of computer-linked communities:

Although more interactive multiaccess computer systems are being delivered now, and although more groups plan to be using these systems within the next year, there are at present perhaps only as few as half a dozen interactive multiaccess computer *communities* ... For the society, the impact will be good or bad, depending mainly on the question: Will «to be on-line» be a privilege or a right? If only a favored segment of the population gets a chance to enjoy the advantage of discontinuity in the spectrum of intellectual opportunity. ... On the other hand, if the network idea should prove to do for education what a few have envisioned in hope, if not

in concrete detailed plan, and if all minds should prove to be responsive, surely the boon to human kind would be beyond measure (Rheingold, 1993: 76).

But what was the sociality provided by cyberspace? The idea of a cybercommunity was mainly predicated on the sense of cyberspace as an actual place. This perception of the *conferenees*, as Stone calls them, or the MUDders, was based on an idea of virtual thereness indeed. Members of electronic virtual communities acted as if the community met in a physical public space. The number of times that online conferenees refer to the conference as an architectural place and to the mode of interaction in that place as being social was, overwhelmingly high in proportion to those who do not. They would say things like, «This is a nice place to get together» or «This is a convenient place to meet» (Stone, 1991: 104).

Besides their being perceived as such, there was also the point that the virtual space was most frequently visualized as Cartesian. On-line conferenees tend to visualize the conference system as a three-dimensional space that can be mapped in terms of Cartesian coordinates. And yet, conferenees acted as if the virtual space was inhabited by bodies. Conferenees constructed bodies on-line by describing them, either spontaneously or in response to questions, and articulate their discourses around this assumption. This demonstrates not only their ability to perceive of selves in delegated agencies, and also that they seem to have no difficulty addressing, befriending, and developing fairly complex relationships with the delegated agents of other conferenees. Electronic virtual communities represented flexible, lively, and practical adaptations to the real circumstances that confront persons seeking community.

Similarly, the early participants of online communities saw themselves not primarily as readers of bulletin boards or participants in a novel discourse but as agents of a new kind of social experiment. When asked how sitting alone at a terminal was a social act, they explained that they saw the terminal as a window into a social space. When describing the act of communication, many moved their hands expressively as though typing, emphasizing the gestural quality and essential tactility of the virtual mode. Also present in their descriptions was a propensity to reduce other expressive modalities to the tactile. It seemed clear that, from the beginning, the electronic virtual mode possessed the power to overcome its character of single-mode transmission and limited bandwidth.

Through the sense of space created by Roosevelt's «fireside chats» and later by *Habitat*, what William Gibson called a «consensual hallucination» was achieved. We were there in the space that opened up *behind* the screen and thus we were able to socialize and create communities to communicate with others: Yet we remained invisible to others. Today we do not need such a level of abstraction to communicate in such a manner and we hardly use the word «cyberspace». It's very natural to us to

communicate with people that are not physically present and it sounds naïve to imagine a space behind the screen, rather than the exception it is the norm. But in its day, *Habitat* was inhabitable in that, when the user signed on, he or she has a window into the ongoing social life of the cyberspace – the community «inside» the computer.

Thus in the era of the *Habitat*, the participants of electronic communities seem to be acquiring skills that are useful for the virtual social environments developing in the late twentieth century technologized nations. Their participants have learned to delegate their agency to body-representatives that exist in an imaginary space contiguously with representatives of other individuals. Previous to these electronic communities were the MUDs, MUSEs (Multiple-User Simulation Environments), MUSHes (Multiple-User Social Hosts) and MOOs (MUD Object-Oriented). All were generalized under the name of MUDs, Multi-User Domains, or with greater historical accuracy, Multi-User Dungeons, because of their genealogy from *Dungeons and Dragons*, the fantasy role-playing game that had swept high schools and colleges in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Turkle, 1998: 7). The first MUDs, developed in the late 1970s, were multiplayer fantasy games of the dungeons-and-dragons variety. In 1989, a graduate student at Carnegie Mellon University named James Aspnes decided to see what would happen if you took away the monsters and the magic of the swords out of the game and instead let people extend the virtual world. Thus people's main activity, that was trying to conquer the virtual world in *Dungeons and Dragons*, went from trying to conquer to trying to build it collaboratively (Bruckman, 1998: 173).

Your character, Buffy Mojo, is crawling through a maze of tunnels in the dungeon of her archenemy's castle. The walls are dank, the lighting is dim, and the silence is ominous. A spell has turned Buffy's only ally into a toad. Your hands feel clammy on the keyboard; your heartbeat seems too loud. If Buffy runs into the wrong character down here, your persona will die, and hundreds of hours of work you put into constructing her will have been wasted. More than just your imaginary character is at stake. Buffy's fate will influence virtual lives of other characters that represent real friends in the material world. You are in a MUD, along with the tens of thousands of others around the world who build fantasy worlds in the Net (Rheingold, 1993: 145).

What are the unique features of this medium that appeal to people psychologically and what does that say about people's psychological needs? The answer might be lying in the changing notions of identity that we have traced beginning from the built environment and ranging into the social, that were precipitated with the changing technologies. Some people are primed for the kind of communication saturation that MUDs offer because of the communication-saturated environments that have occupied their attention since birth. MUDs are part of the latest phase in a long sequence of mental changes brought about by the invention and widespread use of symbolic tools.

One of the outstanding characteristics of MUDs, is *pretending to be somebody else*, or even, *pretending to be several different people* at the same time. Some people seem to use these depersonalized modes of communication to get very personal with each other. For these people, at the right times, computer-mediated communication is a way to connect with another human being. But the authenticity of human relationships is always in question in cyberspace, because of the masking and *distancing* of the medium, in a way that it is not in question in real life. The grammar of MUD life involved syntax of identity play: new identities, false identities, multiple identities, exploratory identities, and these concepts indeed were observed in different manifestations of the medium.

Identity was the first thing you created in a MUD. You had to decide the name of your alternate identity – what MUDDers call your character. And you had to describe who this character was, for the benefit of the other people who inhabit the same MUD. By creating your identity, you helped create a world. Your character's role and the roles of the others who play with you were part of the architecture of belief that upholds for everybody in the MUD the illusion of being a wizard in a castle or a navigator aboard a starship: the roles give people new stages on which to exercise new identities, and their new identities affirm the reality of the scenario.

Today, as observed personally in *World of Warcraft*, though the sense of being in a «group» or in a «community» persists, it is no longer the «dark ages» of cyberspace. Most people know your real name, usually even your «face» thanks to the fact that you befriend your game buddies on Facebook, or other online networks, hence the MMORPG is downsized to being what it really is: a game, a hobby that is a little bit complicated than the other games that we play.

Earlier, the single largest category of MUDDers were college students, aged between seventeen to twenty-three, and the particular uses they find for this technology, identity play and sexual innuendo, reflected the preoccupations of that population. But not all undergraduate MUDDers were immature, nor were all MUDDers undergraduates. For many, a MUD was a place where they feel more comfortable in some ways than they do in the real world. Turkle wrote about the behavior of young, compulsive computer programmers that seemed to offer a key to understanding MUDding's addictive potential. Turkle focused on the notion of *mastery* as a crucial missing element in the lives of these young people:

The issue of mastery has an important role in the development of each individual. For the developing child, there is a point, usually at the start of the school years, when mastery takes on a privileged, central role. It becomes the key to autonomy, to the growth of confidence in one's ability to move beyond the world of parents to the world of peers. Later, when adolescence begins, with new sexual pressures and new social demands from peers and parents, mastery can provide respite. The safe microworlds the child master built – the

microworlds of sports, chess, cars, literature, or mathematical expertise – can become places of escape. ... But for some the issues that arise during adolescence are so threatening that the safe place is never abandoned. Sexuality is too threatening to be embraced. Intimacy with other people is unpredictable to the point of being intolerable. As we grow up, we forge our identities by building on the last place in psychological development where we felt safe. As a result, many people come to define themselves in terms of competence, in terms of what they can control. Pride in one's ability to master a medium is a positive thing. But if the sense of self becomes defined in terms of those things over which one can exert perfect control, the world of safe things becomes severely limited – because those things tend to be things, not people. Mastery can cease to be a growing force in individual development and take on another face. It becomes a way of masking fears about the self and the complexities of the world beyond. People can become trapped (as cited in Rheingold, 1993: 153).

The ability to create places and puzzles for others to explore, is a form of mastery, a way for people who might lack social status in their real-world community to gain status in their alternate community. For people whose lives are controlled by parents, or professors or bosses, there is a certain attraction to a world where mastery and the admiration of peers is available to anyone with imagination and intellectual curiosity.

In its earlier days, one of the *joys* of cyberspace was the margin it provided for the fantasy, with the anonymity and the invisibility of the MUDs, the actual identity of the people communicating was reduced to the name of their avatars, or characters, or simply their screen names. This gave people the chance to express multiple and often unexplored aspects of the self, to play with their identity and to try out new ones (Turkle, 1995: 12) – this play was evidently possible before the internet as well, nevertheless, required one to travel away from one's daily environment, to be «away from home» (Turkle, 2010). This user-friendly fluidity allowed by the invisibility of cyberspace made possible the creation of multiple identities that were not limited by the necessity to maintain the sameness between the person and her/his persona. In MUDs, «one [could] be many» (Turkle, 1995: 12).

The online users of the MUDs, usually referred to real life as RL, and one participant of Turkle's research insisted, «RL is just one more window, ... and it's not usually my best one». Turkle, in the passage below, distinguishes between roles, performances and multiple identities online:

The development of windows for computer interfaces was a technical innovation motivated by the desire to get people working more efficiently by cycling through different applications. But in the daily practice of many computer users, windows have become a powerful metaphor for thinking about the self as a multiple, distributed system. The self is no longer simply playing different roles in different settings at different times, something that a person experiences

when she wakes up as a lover, makes breakfast as a mother, and drives to work as a lawyer. The life practice of windows is that of a decentered self that exists in many worlds and plays many roles at the same time. In traditional theatre and in role-playing games that take place in physical space, one steps in and out of character; MUDs, in contrast, offer parallel identities, parallel lives. The experience of this parallelism encourages treating on-screen and off-screen lives with a surprising degree of equality. Experiences on the internet extend the metaphor of windows – now RL itself, as Doug said, can be «just one more window» (1995: 14).

Hence through the invisibility and the play of identities, it was apparent how we were to mold our *realities*. The culture of simulation was taking over reality, as «we learned to take things at interface value» and we were «increasingly comfortable with substituting representations of reality for the real». If we were to summarize it down to a one-liner: «In the culture of simulation, if it works for you, it has all the reality it needs» (Turkle, 1995: 23-24).

But what was the motive for looking for a new reality? What was wrong with the old one? As we have already seen in previous sections, the urban space was not able to satisfy the human being as a social setting. Many of the institutions that used to bring people together, a main street, a union hall, no longer worked as before. And with the rise of the computer culture there was more basis to think about not a social plurality of human beings, but a crowd of identities within one person, who was spending most of her/his day alone at the screen of a television or a computer. Who knows, maybe from the «loneliness» of the life on the screen, people were tempted to think about identity as multiplicity and build selves by cycling through many selves. From another perspective, this was the beginning of moving the focus of the gaze towards *inside* the self.

... In terms of our views of the self, new images of multiplicity, heterogeneity, flexibility, and fragmentation dominate current thinking about human identity. ... Psychoanalytic theory has played a complicated role in the historical debate about whether identity is unitary or multiple. One of Freud's most revolutionary contributions was proposing a radically decentered view of the self, but this message was often obscured by some of his followers who tended to give the ego greater executive authority in the management of the self. However, this recentralizing move was itself periodically challenged from within the psychoanalytic movement. Jungian ideas stressed that the self is a meeting place of diverse archetypes. Object-relations theory talked about how the things and people in the world come to live inside us. More recently, poststructuralist thinkers have attempted an even more radical decentering of the ego. In the work of Jacques Lacan, for example, the complex chains of associations that constitute meaning for each individual lead to no final endpoint or core self. ... In this he joins psychoanalysis to the postmodern attempt to portray the self as a realm of discourse rather than as a real thing or a permanent structure of the mind (Turkle, 1995: 178).

It was in 1982 that Fredric Jameson wrote a classic article on the meaning of postmodernism. He included in his characterization of postmodernism the precedence of surface over depth, of simulation over the «real», of play over seriousness, many of the same qualities that characterize the new computer aesthetic (Turkle, 1995: 45), long before the computer use was widespread. Nonetheless, the two qualities that Jameson had identified in his article are the very *nature* of the cyberspace experience: The transformation of reality into images and the fragmentation of time into a series of perpetual presents (1982: 144). He also highlighted several points to why a unique self is almost impossible to attain within the postmodernist context, based on the schizophrenic perspective.

The great modernisms were, as we have said, predicated on the invention of a personal, private style, as unmistakable as your fingerprint, as incomparable as your own body. But this means that modernist aesthetic is in some way organically linked to the conception of a unique self and private identity, a unique personality and individuality, which can be expected to generate its own unique vision of the world and to forge its own unique, unmistakable style (Jameson, 1982: 131).

In his review, he pointed out that we were starting to experience a different perception of space and time, very much like someone who suffers from schizophrenia in the clinical sense and is not able to distinguish between the past, present and the future, yet s/he is condemned to live longer and repetitive presents. This was a repetition that caused the boundaries and definitions to fall apart;

As meaning is lost, the materiality of words becomes obsessive, as is the case when children repeat a word over and over again until its sense is lost and it becomes an incomprehensible incantation. To begin to link up with our earlier description, a signifier that has lost its signified has thereby been transformed into an image (Jameson, 1982: 138).

Thus the experience of identity was bound to be different, bound to be «fragmented» as were the perceptions of time and space. As Lifton tried to resolve the contradiction in *The Protean Self*, he began by assuming that a unitary view of self corresponded to a traditional culture with stable symbols, institutions, and relationships. He found out that the old unitary notion was no longer viable because traditional culture was broken down and consequently a range of responses were identified (as cited in Turkle, 1995: 278). Hence, our identities were schizophrenic, in the sense that «the schizophrenic ... does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the 'I' and the 'me' over time» (Jameson, 1982: 137).

Nevertheless, Turkle insisted that the multiplicity still could be read as contributing to the unity and the coherence, that the self was multiple but integrated «You can have a sense of self without being one self»:

Without any principle of coherence, the self spins off in all directions. Multiplicity is not viable if it means shifting among personalities that cannot communicate. Multiplicity is not acceptable if it means being confused to a point of immobility. ... How can we be multiple and coherent at the same time? (1995: 258).

The solution, that was brought about by the sense of virtual community was that it provided options to choose from, to experiment, to play with, to put to test which served in the end to discover several different aspects of one's self, that existed in a multiplicity, but still summing up to a coherent unity. This was accepting the Deleuze and Guattari notion that every «I» is a «multiplicity». Massumi elaborates their concept as:

Operating within the framework «identity» (negative difference) versus undifferentiation (confusion) leaves a body three options. Becoming the person it is said to be: the slow death of stable equilibrium. Opting out of that path, into its opposite: neurosis and eventual breakdown. Or shopping-to-be: Not exactly mental stability, but not quite breakdown either. The frenzy of the purchasable – potential experienced as infinite choice between havings rather than becomings. Stealing away from the shopping mall on an exorbital path tangent to identity and undifferentiation is called «schizophrenia». Schizophrenia is a breakdown into the unstable equilibrium of continuing self-invention (1992: 92).

According to Turkle, on the web, the idiom for constructing a «home» identity was to assemble a «home page» of virtual objects that corresponded to one's interests. One constructs a home page by composing or «pasting» on it words, images, and sounds, and by making connections between it and other sites on the internet or the web – which is the same as the Facebook profile, the ultimate step in completing and thus *killing* our identity search.

The opportunities in developing multiple selves online were investigated by Turkle through a series of intensive interviews carried out. Serena, a twenty-six-year-old graduate student in history, says, «When I log on to a new MUD and I create a character and know I have to start typing my description, I always feel a sense of panic. Like I could find out something I don't want to know». Arlie, a twenty-year-old undergraduate says, «I am always very self-conscious when I create a new character. Usually, I end up creating someone I wouldn't want my parents to know about. It takes me, like, three hours. But that someone is part of me». In these ways and others, hidden in the invisibility many more of us were experimenting with multiplicity than ever before in the early days of cyberspace. As Turkle reports, «Virtual spaces may provide the safety for us to expose what we are missing so that we can begin to accept ourselves as we are. ... We don't have to reject life on the screen, but we don't have to treat it as an alternative life either. We can use it as a space for growth» (1995: 263). In her optimistic perspective she compares, the actual patients of schizophrenia to the schizophrenic of the screen: «Those burdened

by post-traumatic dissociative disorders suffer these questions; ... inhabitants of virtual communities play with them» (1995: 259).

Thus viewed, one is able to see the advantages and the opening up of possibilities with the cyber spatial invisibility. At one extreme, the unitary self maintains its oneness by repressing all that does not fit. Hence the illegitimate parts of the self are censored and they are not accessible. This model would, of course, function best within a fairly rigid social structure with clearly defined rules and roles. As we sense our inner diversity we come to know our limitations. We understand that we do not and cannot know things completely, not the outside world and not ourselves. Today's heightened consciousness of incompleteness may predispose us to join with others. Donna Haraway equates a «split and contradictory self» with a «knowing self». She, too, is optimistic about its possibilities: «The knowing self is partial in all its guises, never finished, whole, simply there and original; it is always constructed and stitched together imperfectly; and therefore able to join with another, to see together without claiming to be another» (1989).

Slavoj Žižek, in his reading of the Lacanian «decentered subject», where he develops a split identity quite different than the decentered subject of cyberspace as discussed by Turkle, argues that it is crucial to distinguish between «Self» («person») and subject, and that the «divided» subject does *not* necessarily mean that there are simply several Egos/Selves in the same individual:

This «decentration» is the decentrement of the void of the subject (\$) with regard to its content («Self» – the bundle of imaginary and/or symbolic identifications); the «splitting» is the splitting between \$ and the phantasmic «persona» as the «stuff of the I». *The subject is split even if it possesses only one «unified» Self*, since this split is the very split between \$ and Self ... In more topological terms: the subject's division is not the division between one Self and another, between two contents, but *the division between something and nothing*, between the feature of identification and the void. ... «Decentrement» thus first designates the ambiguity, the oscillation between symbolic and imaginary identification – the undecidability as to where my true point is, in my «real» self or in my external mask, with the possible implication that my symbolic mask can be «more true» than what it conceals, the «true face» behind it. At a more radical level, it points towards the fact that the very sliding from one identification to another, or among «multiple selves», presupposes the gap between identification as such and the void of \$ (the «barred subject») which *identifies itself* – serves as the empty medium of identification. In other words, the very process of shifting among multiple identifications presupposes a kind of empty band which makes the leap from one identity to another possible, and this empty band is the subject itself (1997: 141).

The subject as the «empty band itself» was a consequence of the play of identities, the mixture of the symbolic and imaginary identifications in our early perception, usage and experimentation of the

cyberspace and the invisibility it brought about. The early «comfort zone» of cyberspace invisibility soon became history with the advent of the audio-visual technologies and the bandwidth of connections. As cyberspace was gradually replaced by the participatory architecture of Web 2.0 and the widespread use of digital image production and sharing, we started to feel the presence of Web 2.0 in our lives, our communications and our identities. Soon we were to communicate online without being able to hide our «faces» and usually with some witnesses around to credit or discredit our *performances*.

Probably, as we assumed the life on the screen to be «natural» and as part of our daily lives, and as we started to opt for appearing with our actual identities online and even starting to prefer merging the online and offline identities, what remains us from our earlier experience of the cyberspace is not our own invisibility, but also, or even more importantly, the invisibility of the other to the absence of whom we also adapted ourselves with this exercise. We got so used to communicating with «nobody» being actually present with us that after some point – it stopped to matter. Or even worse, face-to-face communication started to be too much of a hassle, when compared to the unbearable ease of communication online. As long as there was some feedback to support our «lives well lived», we were feeling fine with the spotlight of our consciousness just on us – and on us only.

3.2.3 Role-Playing Games, Avatars and Identity Drafts

Writing in his diary in 1832, Ralph Waldo Emerson reflected that «Dreams and beasts are two keys by which we are to find out the secrets of our nature... they are our test objects». ... Dreams and beasts were the test objects for Freud and Darwin, the test objects for modernism. In the past decade, the computer has become the test object for postmodernism. The computer takes us beyond a world of dreams and beasts because it enables us to contemplate mental life that exists apart from bodies. It enables us to contemplate dreams that do not need beasts. The computer is an evocative object that causes old boundaries to be renegotiated (Turkle, 1995: 22).

A multi-user virtual environment, more commonly known as a virtual world, is a computer application in which multiple users can participate by interacting with the environment and with each other using an online interface. They are also referred to as digital worlds and simulated worlds. In virtual worlds, users can communicate with each other directly in real time, by typing public messages that can be seen by all users that are present or by sending private messages for just one specific user to read.

Users are represented as avatars within a graphical environment that can range in sophistication from 2D images to fully immersive 3D environments, and many users can exist and interact in the same space concurrently and in real time. The environment may have a fixed infrastructure of content, and would

typically allow users some level of capability to alter, develop, build, or submit customized content, and it may encourage the dynamic formation of in-world social groups like classes, teams, groups, and clubs.

The formation of identity begins in early childhood through immersion in pretend play and further solidifies in adolescence. By the time the individual reaches adulthood, he or she must negotiate between the different social roles designated by the culture and somehow perceive the self as a unified whole. In our postmodern world, however, interactions with multiple cultural forms of expression produce an awareness of the inner multiplicity of identity. For adults engaged in role-playing games and other forms of online communication, the distinctness of these selves becomes more apparent.

Thus, gaming provides a release from the pressures of social expectation, as well as an opportunity to explore repressed facets of inner consciousness. Many gamers begin to immerse themselves in role-playing at a young age. Pre-adolescent *play* activities provide the nascent building blocks for more sophisticated role-playing practices. These activities include, but are not limited to: engaging in pretend play and storytelling activities, challenging the rules of reality through imagination, adopting future social roles in game activities, reinventing identity through the creation of alternate selves and personal story lines, developing alternate *worlds*, and conversing with Imaginary Friends. Thus, engagement in role-playing games evolves out of an extension and expansion of childhood creative processes, which become more sophisticated and complicated as the individual's consciousness matures.

The term «avatar» is widely used to refer to the personality connected with the screen name, or the handle of an internet user. What is commonly known is that this sense of the word was coined by Neal Stephenson in his cyberpunk novel *Snow Crash* (1992), who converted it from the Sanskrit word *avatāra*, which defines a concept similar to incarnation. Nonetheless avatar as a term was actually being used in Morningstar & Farmer's *Habitat* even before *Snow Crash* was published.

Visually avatars could range from 16x16 pixel two-dimensional images to animated cartoon or game characters, nonetheless, on the metaphorical level they are any visual or descriptive material that can be used by the person behind the avatar to hide her/his actual identity – hence they are an online masks. People use avatars in online massive multi-player online role-playing games (MMORPGs) or virtual worlds like *Second Life*, *World of Warcraft*, *Habbo Hotel*, *Maid Marian*, *Active Worlds*, *Kaneva*, *Cybertown*, *Nicktropolis* and many others. The experiences in such worlds result very *real* or sometimes, *even better than the real thing* for several people who are engaged with these game/worlds. Quite different from the earlier MUDs, where everything used to be narrative, in these contemporary virtual worlds, everything is visual. Hours and hours spent in these online virtual worlds, time, energy and money dedicated to pay the monthly fees and several other things bought to enhance the gaming experience usually causes

raised eyebrows from the people who do not engage in them. But really, what is the appeal of *living through an avatar*?

Hollywood, introduced us to the Na'vis, the blue people in James Cameron's *Avatar*(2009), the movie, where the protagonist in the end chose to live in Pandora, the *world* where his avatar belonged, instead of the actual world where his *actual body* belonged. Cameron's *Avatar* gave us many unpleasant metaphors as it contrasted the capitalist and monstrous *actual* world, with the shamanic, natural and peaceful Pandora and we did not hesitate in accepting Jake Sully's decision of choosing his 12-foot-tall blue body over his paraplegic actual one; the lovely forests of Pandora over his limited actual life. As we watched the movie, we were tolerant with the fictional version, but when things get real, parents are worried about their children spending too much time in the computer-mediated worlds while they should be playing out on the street, believing that they lack «meaningful engagement» with others (Nino, 2010).

As we have previously tackled, there could be an instinct of *escape* from the actual urban spaces that we live in, as a basic triggering factor in the rise of the virtual worlds and the identity fabrication of adolescents, as well as the adults that remain unsatisfied with their actual lives. But what is the attraction and the satisfaction derived from being in the non-space? Could creating avatars be today's equivalent of reading fiction and identifying with fictional characters? We used to think that reading classical literature was supposed to expand our imagination, then why does it seem so difficult to think that engaging in these imaginary worlds derived from the role-playing genre could also have similar impacts? We will try to investigate the avatars based on two different paths. On one hand we will examine whether it is the imaginary nature of the avatar where we find a way of transcending the boundaries of the flesh and thus derive our satisfaction. On the other hand, we will try to understand whether it is the projection of a body-image that expands our experiences in the way that was described by Merleau-Ponty. Symbolic, imaginary, metaphorical and fictional, which aspect of these avatars create our sensations of «having the better part of ourselves» out there?

Merleau-Ponty, through the *Phenomenology of Perception*(1945) offers us new insights. As the body is the basis for our interactions and perceptions, virtual space can only be seen as a symbiotic synthesis of technology and corporeal phenomena. Consequently, the construction of self in virtual environments follows an alternative mode of «representation» which synergizes the physical and the virtual: the mind and body become one in order to pursue a unified goal (Sonvilla-Weiss, 2008: 15).

Though the definition of virtual worlds is not limited to online games, the most common type of virtual world is the *Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game*(MMORPG) which evolved from individual

2D/3D computer games such as *Doom*. *World of Warcraft(WOW)* is a typical and the most popular game of this genre. There are more than 12 million registered *WOW* subscribers that pay a 12-16 euros monthly fee.

Another virtual world that stands out from the rest is *Second Life(SL)*. *Second Life* has been successful at providing an environment in which gamers, educators, business and individuals can co-exist and in which there is an economy linked to that in the real world. It has also been extremely successful at gaining public exposure. *SL* is based on the concept of a mainland plus individually owned islands. These islands each have their own theme, enabling their use for whatever form of social – or anti-social – networking that may be required. Basic access to *SL* is free, but a modestly-priced premium account provides weekly in-world funds and additional access to in-world resources. The ability to earn a real world living from participating in *SL* has led to the rapid development of a vast number of enterprises in-world, from investment banks to design houses and retail shops (Shore & Zhou, 2008).

In this section we will investigate some characteristics of the virtual worlds that are significant regarding human identity. Popular contemporary virtual worlds have their origins in earlier concepts like role-playing games and *Multi-User Domains(MUDs)*. These virtual worlds, as we have already seen, while providing their participants with a certain type of socialization and entertainment, were also considered as tools of identity search, or identity play. In some cases they were even considered to be helpful in self-esteem enhancement in adolescents (Colwell, Grady & Rhaiti, 1995). Besides looking for the merits of virtual communication for the social self, we will also investigate the two very popular examples of this genre in detail, *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life*.

A role-playing game is a digital or physical game in which players assume the roles of characters in a fictional setting. The concept is both different from the Goffmanian roles we play to present ourselves socially as well as from game in any other sense. In role-playing games, players take responsibility for acting out pre-defined roles within a narrative, either through literal acting, or through a process of structured decision-making or character development. Though it is completely fictional, literature provides us with evidence that such enacting is yet another path to know more about our own selves.

Role-playing games were originally enacted in person, they were later elaborated and shared through narrative with the presence of the *MUDs*, and eventually, they started to take place through digital avatars in the online versions of the genre. In terms of the role-playing setting, the most popular original game, was *Dungeons&Dragons(1974)*, which takes place in a fantasy world (Bowman, 2010: 54). Based on this widely popular game, the term «dungeon» persisted in the high-tech culture to connote a virtual place. So when virtual spaces where many computer users could share and collaborate were created,

they were deemed Multi-User Dungeons (also as Multi-User Domains or Multi-User Dimensions) or shortly MUDs, a new kind of social virtual reality (Turkle, 1995: 180).

Dungeons&Dragons drew heavily on the work of J.R.R. Tolkien in *The Hobbit*(1937) and the *Lord of the Rings*(1955). Fantastic narratives, for Tolkien, allow people to escape the mundane in order to recover a sight that was previously obscured. As a result of this process, the participant in fantasy experiences a sense of consolation, which Tolkien refers to as *eucatastrophe* (Bowman, 2010: 54).

Described as such, the function of fantasy is providing an outlet to step outside of the box of reality and create a new, insightful perspective. The ability to take up a fantastic viewpoint can help us in putting things in better perspective; what we *recover* in fantasy is actually a clearer sight than we normally employ in viewing the world, because it is a less narrow sight – a sight which does not take for granted the limitations of mundanity. To argue thus is to assert that we cannot see reality clearly enough if we are trapped within it, and that only when we can perform the imaginative trick of moving outside the actual can we properly appreciate its bounds.

This definition holds true for the practice of role-playing, regardless of its genre. Any shift in the conception of reality is, in a sense, a fantasy: an active practice allowing people to see the mundane in better light. Thus, role-playing literature often refers to all RPGs as «fantasy». Fantasy role-playing games as social activities are broadly classified as being «grounded in shared worldviews, lifestyles, tastes and affinities, as well as collectively-imagined selves/ identities» (Williams as cited in Bowman, 2010: 56).

Just as when reading a book or watching a film, role-players must inhabit a different imaginary space and identify with someone «other» than themselves. Role-playing games push this identification a step further, allowing that «other person» to evolve as the player's own creation, rather than a conceptualization by an author imposed upon the passive reader of a book. These creations often reflect repressed aspects of the player's personality, which are allowed room to breathe and opportunity to manifest as entities against themselves (Turkle, 1995; Bowman, 2010). Almost functioning as a modern-day ritual, role-players perform with each other, calling upon the deep reaches of their imagination and creativity, establishing a safe space within which stories weave themselves. The participants play several roles in these unfolding stories; they act, direct, observe and co-create an alternate form of reality.

Play is also the medium of mastery, indeed of creation, of our selves as human actors. Without the capacity to formulate other social scenes in imagination, there can be little force to a sense of self, little agency. In play we experiment with the force of our acting otherwise, of our projectivity rather than our objectivity ... Through play our fancied selves become material (Holland, Lachiocotte, Skinner & Cain, 1998: 236).

The process of role-playing allows individuals to inhabit an alternate mental space by entering into the *fantastic*. This shift in perspective provides players with the opportunity to understand the motivations of others more clearly, expanding their comprehension of mundane reality and existing social dynamics. These skills are considered desirable to role-players, many of whom express having experienced deep feelings of alienation and ostracization from mainstream society (Bowman, 2010: 55).

According to Jean Piaget, before the age of eight, children perceive the world through a *narcissistic* lens. Narcissism refers to a state in which «the self remains undifferentiated, and thus unconscious of itself ... all affectivity is centered on the child's own body and action, since only with the dissociation of self from the other or non-self does decentration, whether affective or cognitive, become possible»(Piaget as cited in Bowman, 2010: 58). Children eventually shift from this narcissistic perspective, developing the ability to read social responses and anticipate the needs of others. A theory of mind, in a very Cartesian sense, is the conceptual mental framework of one person as developed and adopted in the mind of another. Role-playing allows participants to take theories of mind one step farther; instead of merely imaging what another might think, the players are forced into situations where s/he must make decisions *as if* they were that person. This practice of enactment is «thinking outside the box» in its most literal connotation and the performers must think outside the box of their own consciousness. Role-playing offers gamers the opportunity to become more open-minded in the broadest sense and experience, both as participant and observer, through the thoughts and feelings of the hypothetical self of the character.

Another aspect of such gaming is that it establishes bonds between people that would otherwise remain non-existent or underdeveloped as it offers the opportunity for a diverse group of people to interact in new and exciting ways. Because most games emphasize cooperation and teamwork, both players and characters have to learn to work through personal differences in order to achieve common goals. Gaming scenarios place players in crisis situations where characters must rely on each other for success. These moments of shared adversity can build bonds between people, offering them the chance to look beyond surface forms of identification such as age, race, sex, and occupation.

Though all games inherently possess personality differences that can erupt in conflict, most role-playing involves tapping into one's personal wellspring of creativity and weaving a story with others. In a powerful way, role-players dip into the content of their unconscious mind, sharing their secret thoughts, desires, and potentialities with each other. Role-playing offers the possibility for out-of-game relationships to be enhanced through deep engagement with each other's fantasies, both on an individual and communal level. A gamer explains:

When you enter a person's fantasy world, when you enter a person's fantasy character, when you become friends with a person's fantasy character, you become friends with a part of them that they've hidden from most of society. So therefore, not only have I been friends with most of the gamers I've played with before we started playing, I realized that I really wanted to be their friend even in a game world. Even with their fantasy character, which is truly a part of them, very deep in their heart that nobody else knows (Bowman, 2010: 78-79).

This sort of a relationship develops even in online games like *Everquest* or *World of Warcraft*, even though this type of game tends to focus less on in-depth character development and more on the instant gratification of conquest and reward. The perception of many gamers who prefer person-to-person role-playing, and that are comparing the real and virtual experiences of role-playing is that virtual environments can reduce the complexity and community building aspects of the experience.

One advantage virtual environments have over person-to-person roleplaying is that they offer players the opportunity to alternately represent their physical self beyond the realm of costuming. Even if online gamers do not always develop elaborate storylines for their characters, they still create a virtual Self that appears fundamentally different from their physical Self by virtue of its digitally rendering. This virtual Self is referred to as an *avatar*. Through the use of avatars, a participant in an online environment can represent the self as an alternate gender, race, ethnicity, or even species. Avatars on fantasy games such as *World of Warcraft* tend to fall into mythic archetypal representations such as elves, dwarves, etc. The MMO *Second Life* offers far greater customization of avatars. *Second Life* is similar to a MOO in that players can take part in the creation of an alternate universe without the hack-and-slash gaming element (Bowman, 2010: 31-32).

Indeed, the earlier MUDworlds, relied entirely on plain text: Description was the same as creation. MUDs were evidence that text still had its powers, even in this highly visual era. When you wove text into the kind of interactive landscape that computer models provided, you could build a kind of magic into the environment. Hence, the roots of MUDs were deep in the part of human nature that delighted in storytelling and playing «let's pretend». Brenda Laurel, in *Computers As Theatre*(1993), claimed that the strong identification players feel with artificial characters in a computer database was an example of the same human capacity for mimesis to which Aristotle attributed the «soul-changing» power of drama (112).

Narrative was the stuff of which MUDworlds were made; everyone, everything and every place had a story. Every object in a MUD, from your character's identity to the chair your character is sitting in, had a written description that was revealed when you choose to *look* at the object – where *look* was a command, that brought out the textual descriptions of all the objects and identities. If you had the

authorization to do so, you could create a small brown mouse or a purple mountain range or whatever else words can describe. «Building» on MUDs was something of a hybrid between computer programming and writing fiction (Turkle, 1995: 181). For example, when you first logged on to LambdaMOO, one of the most popular MUDs on the internet, you would see the following description:

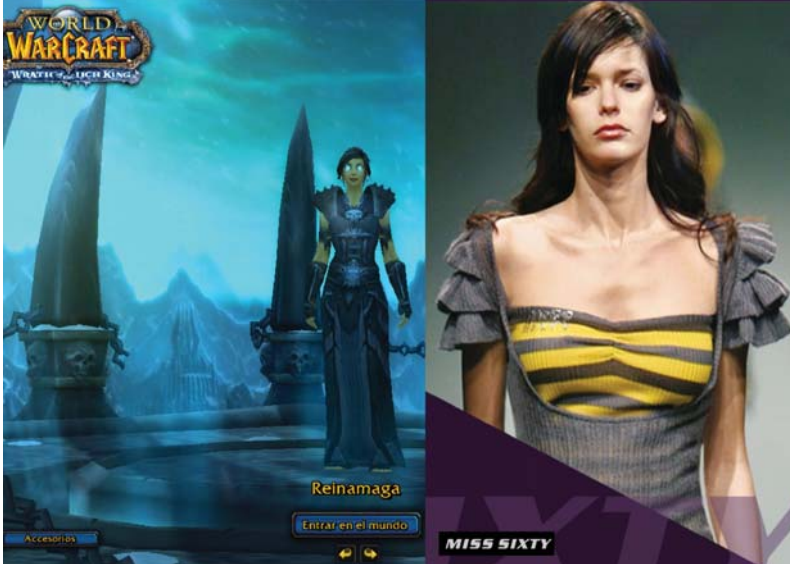
The Coat Closet. The Closet is a dark, cramped space. It appears to be very crowded in here; you keep bumping into what feels like coats, boots and other people (apparently sleeping). One useful thing that you've discovered in your bumbling about is a metal doorknob set at waist level into what might be a door. There's a new edition of the newspaper. Type «news» to see it.

The anonymity provided ample room for individuals to express unexplored parts of themselves – even the parts that could get one in trouble legally in real life. MUDs provide worlds for anonymous social interaction in which a participant could play a role as close to or as far away from her/his real self as one wished. Perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the process of role-playing lies in the ability to shift personality characteristics within the parameters of the game environment. Games and scenarios allow participants the opportunity to «try on different hats» of selfhood, experimenting with the adoption of personality characteristics that either amplify or contradict aspects of their primary identities. Role-playing environments provide a safe atmosphere for people to collectively enact new modes of self-expression and experience a sense of ego permeability while still maintaining their primary identity in the *real world*.

Turkle told us the story of a twenty-one-year-old college senior who defended his violent avatars as «something in me; but quite frankly I'd rather rape on MUDs where no harm is done». A twenty-six-year-old clerical worker said, «I'm not one thing, I'm many things. Each part gets to be fully expressed in MUDs than in the real world. So even though I play more than one self on MUDs, I feel more like 'myself' when I'm MUDding» (1995: 185). Creating screen personae was thus an opportunity for self-expression for these users, leading them to feel more like their true selves while they hid behind their virtual masks. MUDs implied difference, multiplicity, heterogeneity, and fragmentation:

Such an experience of identity contradicts the Latin root of the word, *idem*, meaning «the same». MUDs thus become objects-to-think-with for thinking about postmodern selves. ... Traditional ideas about identity have been tied to a notion of authenticity that such virtual experiences actively subvert. When each player can create many characters and participate in many games, the self is not only decentered but multiplied without limit (Turkle, 1995: 181).

Hence the concept of avatar is not as simple as it may seem in the first instant. It is the ultimate merge of the inside with the other, the other with the self such that even they are no longer separable. When Turkle says, «We are able to step through the looking glass», this is her concern (1998: 5). We step into



(Top to down)

Figure 3.20 – On the left, the author’s avatar from *World of Warcraft*, Reinamaga. On the right, a snapshot from the catwalk of the Italian fashion brand, Miss Sixty.

Figure 3.21 – The chatroom bar scene. The Motion Factory (1996).

Figure 3.22 – *Second Life* social scene (2008).

Figure 3.23 – Facebook office scenes at Turkcell, the leading Turkish GSM operator that has a mascot with antennas (2008).

the land of pure fantasy, but no longer by *ourselves*. We are there with the other, the other of ourselves. We are there to give birth to the other, to create our other and to live with it.

In this section we will evaluate what it came to mean creating online avatars when the world of role-playing games and videogames also evolved and started to exist in their own peculiar visualness. Did what once was an excuse to socialize, as was in the case described by Turkle below become an excuse to asocialize this time? While the concept of the MUD of earlier cyberspace survives today in the form of online virtual worlds like the *Second Life* or the most popular pay-to-play MMORPG, the *World of Warcraft*, the motives to *be* in such worlds are different from what they were in the past.

Similar to Turkle's methodology of in-depth interviews with users of MUDs in *Life on the Screen*, or lately with the always-connected in *Alone Together*, in this section we will make use of data collected through an in-depth interview with Bahar Vega, an entrepreneur in *Second Life*, the avatar of a real life housewife from İzmir, Turkey; and the hands-on experiences of the author through her own avatar in the *World of Warcraft*, Reinamaga.

3.2.3.1 World of Warcraft

When you enter the *World of Warcraft* (WOW), a massively multiplayer online role-playing game (MMORPG), with more than 12 million monthly subscribers, you have to select an avatar to represent you in the game from within the wide range of options given. You could be a human, a night elf, a dwarf or a troll among others. *WOW* is currently the world's largest MMORPG in terms of monthly subscribers and holds the Guinness World Record for the most popular MMORPG of all times (Bowman, 2010: 23). It was released by Blizzard Entertainment on November 23rd, 2004. The *World of Warcraft* is defined by critics as «a careful blend of cartoon, fantasy art, and realism» (1UP, 2004). With a combination of *Lord of the Rings*-style high fantasy epic with medieval fictional hints from *Dungeons & Dragons*, there are very few rules of the *real* world that apply in the *World of Warcraft*.

As characters, or avatars develop through the game, they gain various talents and skills, requiring the player to further define and control the abilities of that character. One of the most *social* features of the game is that characters may also form and join guilds, allowing characters within the guild access to the guild resources as well as undertaking guild responsibilities. Being a member of a guild is quite similar to any real life affiliation. Communicating with your fellow guild members on a regular basis through the in-game chat, you start developing online friendships.

In the Beginner's Guide, you are told that «In *World of Warcraft*, interacting with other players is optional. You can reach the level cap without ever joining forces with another player, without even saying hello to anyone on your realm. But by going it alone, you won't be able to master some of the game's tougher challenges, you will likely take longer to reach the endgame, and you won't have access to the game's most powerful magical treasures. Most importantly, the other players on your realm will miss out on the pleasure of meeting you. Your paths will cross with thousands of other people who share similar goals, interests, likes, and dislikes with you; so speak up, it's easy to make new friends in *World of Warcraft*». Considering its nature as a fantasy game, the social structure and the community formation of *WOW* is very realistic, and as the game reminds you in its loading screens, «you should be kind to your fellow gamers to be able to play in party with them again». While you begin your *WOW* journey as a lonely avatar and a character can perfectly be played on its own, the essence of the game lies in that players can also group with others to tackle more challenging content. Most end-game challenges are designed in a way that they can only be overcome while in a group. In this way, character classes are used in specific roles within a group.

You start *World of Warcraft* rather lonely, by yourself. ... And you're looking around trying to figure out what to do. You quickly realize, when you're get a little higher level that you can work together with other people to take down bigger, bad guys (Ito, 2006: 242).

Even though interacting with other players is «optional», the game actually does begin when you start this type of interaction and probably you can only get the best out of *WOW* if you are a member of a guild. Just like a real life affiliation to a social club would do, being a member of a guild helps you to get to know people (through their avatars), to learn about their ways of playing, to receive help to improve your gameplay skills and increase your game achievements as you would be able to form part of twenty-five or forty-people groups to take down bigger monsters. Once you have a social life going on in *WOW*, it is not only that you start to enjoy the game more, but you start to be responsible to others as well, considering that the other players have dedicated their time to help you improve your game statistics and get better gear for your avatar. Thus, the *gameplay* gets a little more serious, you start paying attention to be there on time when twenty-five people need to be coordinated to achieve something, in a sort of a businesslike professionalism – be that you are 14 or 39-years-old. There is a real sense of being part of something bigger in this gathering for killing a big mob in a crowded dungeon:

Molten Core ... is the first 40-man dungeon that you get to play. You have to be level 60, you have to do some quests to be allowed to get in here. But basically this is, forty people, eight classes, five of each class. You've healers that heal, you've got tanks that hold these monsters' attention. The healers heal the tanks, and you've got the mages and other classes who do a lot of damage and take bad guys down. Then you've got a variety of other classes that do other roles. But the key to this is getting this group together. And also when this group isn't perfectly

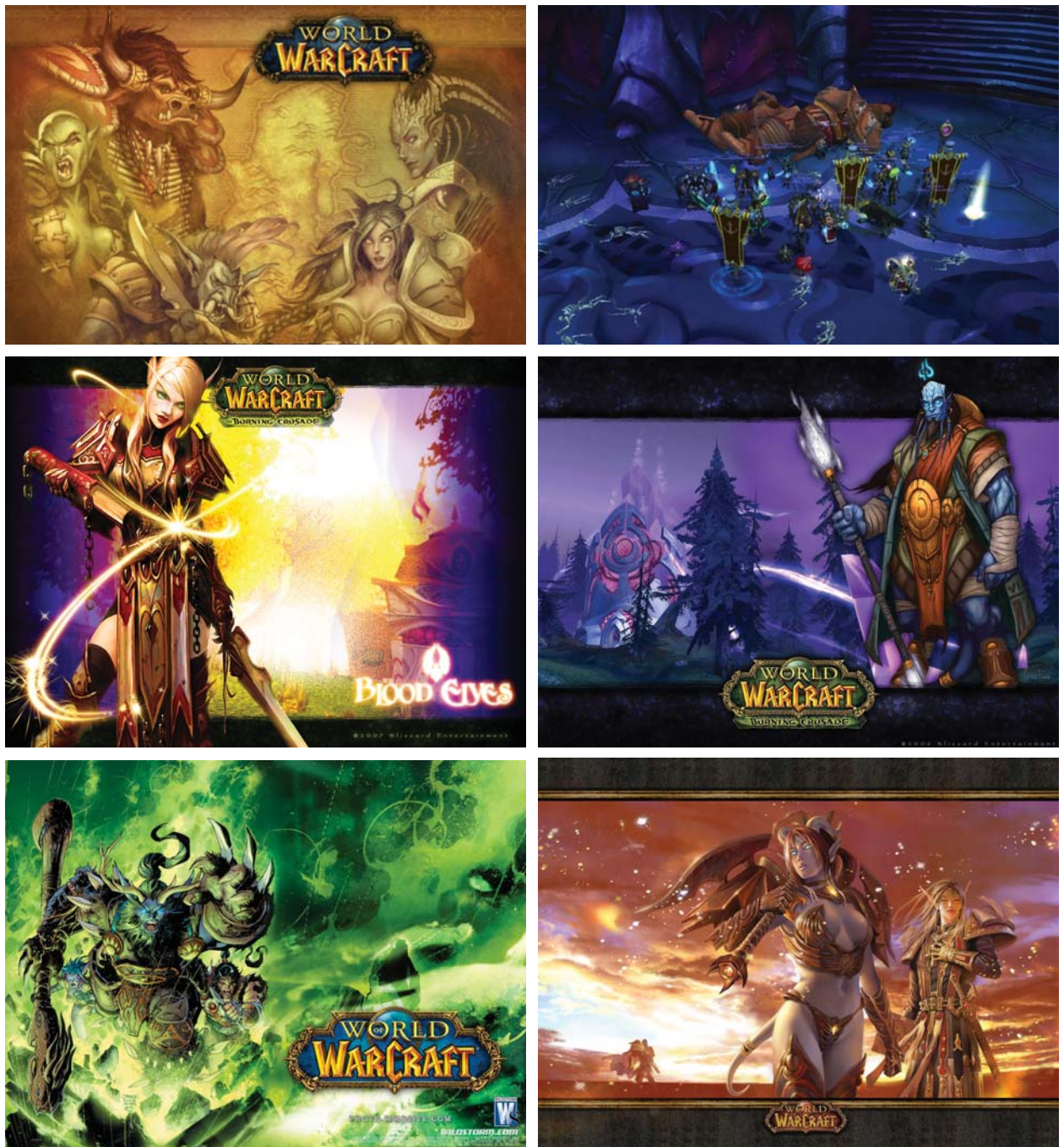


Figure 3.24 – Epic characters from World of Warcraft.

balanced, figuring out the right strategy is also a challenge. Imagine trying to organize 40 people every weekend to go to a movie and have eight different roles about what each of those people are going to do. And make them do that over and over again all day for about eight hours. Its is a boring yet difficult task (Ito, 2006: 242).

Besides giving you a satisfaction of achievement, this massive gathering of people causes you to sharpen up project management skills. The way the people come together to perform an *imaginary* task, in a game is much more complicated than some of the regular daily tasks in an actual office:

When you finally get here and you realize this is the first time you've ever seen forty of your fellow guild mates in one place at one time. And there's an enormous amount of coordination that's required. You have raid leaders, you have class leaders – I have about eight different channels going in my chat, with eight different colors for all the different things that I have to coordinate. Some researchers are saying you learn things like project management. This is a great metaphor for some kinds of real-time project management. You get a group together, you learn what each person can do, figure out if there are resources you can put together, and move forward. Clearly there are lots of direct and indirect things you can learn from this. You can learn how people work under stress. You can learn how good people are at communicating. My raid leader is a nightshift nurse in Virginia. Our main tank, is a foreman in Australia, one of our rogues is a bartender with ADD [Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder]. There is an immense amount of diversity in our guild and you can see how their backgrounds help in the game. However, there is a lot of common ground considering the diversity. ... One of the things I've noticed though. I haven't found a single MBA so far who is good at leadership in this situation. Most of the people who are good at leading here are people who are good at listening. ... When you're in the zone it just feels right and everything works together. ... And it really does feel like some kind of magic when you work and work, and suddenly 40 people are working together in concert. I get kids in my guild who are 14 years old. But when they get into a raid, they realize that if they do something stupid they get kicked out or people get mad at them. If they do something right, suddenly they have 39 adults telling them how great they are. There is a sense of being part of a group and achievement as a group ((Ito, 2006: 243-244).

This type of experience in the game environment is one of the basis to why people stay engaged in this virtual world and keep coming back for more. When the success of *WOW* is considered, Ito highlights four basic categories that the game combines very well and it is evaluated highly in terms of its successful combination of these categories: achievement, exploration, socialization and the killing:

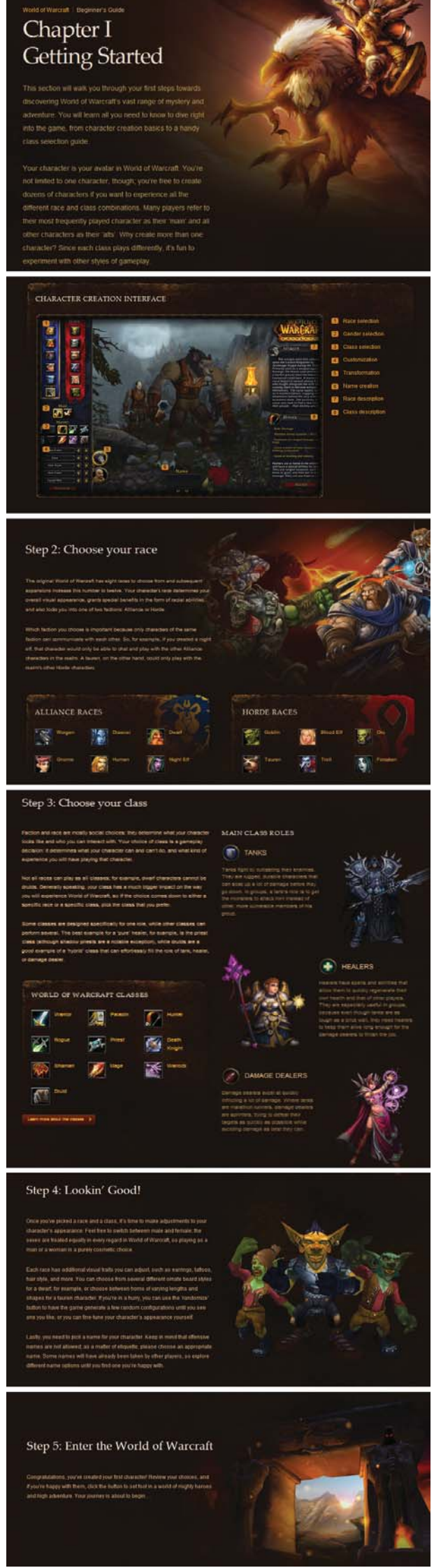
The first part is **achievement** – like game level, game gear, getting better, looking cooler, and a kind of self-achievement growth part of the game. This is your character and it's all your stats, and they keep getting better. The other important part is **exploration**. For example the lore. Often it is like talking to the historian and getting into the quest. Some people really get into that and know the whole world of the game. ... Another important part is the **socialization** part. [It] is [through] the chat window. Some

people just sit in Iron Forge, face the wall and just chat all day. Your guild is also your social base. Some people think World of Warcraft is just a fancy IRC (Internet Relay Chat) client. Then there's the last part, which is the **killing**. You can sit around and kill other players, you can sit around and kill monsters. ... It's a completely different part of the game. If you ask people what their favorite things are and in which order, it defines the way they play the game. (Ito, 2007: 3).

In the experience of creating Reinamaga, I was quite naive. I did not know, nor did I care about any of these aspects of *WOW*. Instead I was trying to get into a realm where I would be able to learn casual Spanish, for I always believed that one had to do more than attending classes to learn a language completely. Thus I started to dedicate some time to my *WOW* avatar, who naturally, was born on a Spanish server and, in fact, with a wrong name: Reinamaga is a warlock and not a «mage» as her name suggests in Spanish. Similar to the experiences of Bahar Vega in *Second Life*, it was difficult for Reinamaga to communicate with others as she did not speak Spanish fluently.

One of the first things that I have learned in *World of Warcraft* was that, having a female avatar was definitely an advantage. In fact, it was almost a cliché among role-players to portray a female character, so that they would have the inherent advantages to be consistently offered help in the form of items, money, and services by inspiring males (Bowman, 2010: 24). Such offerings were intensified if the male players could verify that the

Figure 3.25 – How to create your *WOW* avatar.



individual presenting the female persona was actually female in «real life». Haley, a female *WOW* player believes that female players are «given a lot more leeway than the guys [get] to mess up» (Bowman: 24). As a female player myself, I agree with this statement. In my experience, male players consistently forgive my lack of knowledge of the rules and offer extensive amounts of aid, both in-character and out-of-character online interactions. In fact, it was so much so that, in the groups that I belonged when it was discovered that I was a non-Spaniard female player, everybody was always careful about typing words correctly in the in-game chat, so as to help improve my Spanish.

It was as if online fellow gamers were more patient, tolerant and helpful than real life friends. Based on my personal experiences, I would say that *WOW* is much more about the game, coordination and group achievement than role-playing or identity drafts. In fact, whatever identity you have always comes second, first you should perform your function in the game, which is not even easy to do because *WOW* is a very complicated and sophisticated game where you have to dedicate a lot of time if you want to improve your statistics or your gaming skills. The identity is not even present in the sense that Papacharissi defines when she says that «the anonymous and textual nature of cyberspace allows one to overcome «identity fixes» such as gender, looks, and disabilities» (2002c). In *WOW*, you are definitely not in your real life identity and visually you are hidden behind a fantastic character, but at the end of the day, nobody even cares about who is behind the mask. Your social skills form part of your gameplay, if you are pleasant to chat with and you are capable of playing your character, people would befriend you in the game regardless of your real life identity. And if they do know about your actual identity, it would almost always come second.

Reinamaga's fellow gamers range from fanatic nationalists to several Spaniards that are currently unemployed. Most of them also have very limited knowledge of world politics or geography, and as it is



Figure 3.26 – *World of Warcraft* has inspired artists to satirize and/or acknowledge its mark in popular culture. One example was the Emmy award winning *South Park* episode called «Make Love, Not Warcraft».

in most cases their prejudices are greater than their actual knowledge. Hence they get worried and alarmed on occasions like the public upheaval in Egypt or Lybia, thinking that Turkey is a North-African Arabic country, nonetheless, their usual prejudices against muslim countries do not apply when it comes to Reinamaga: They help and encourage her with her Spanish, admire her language skills as «even better than most of the Spaniards themselves» and go on with their usual daily chatter and support through the game without nationality even being an issue. For them Reinamaga belongs to their online guild, and any other affiliation, ethnic, national or religious, is secondary.

Just as in any other online social encounter, the amount of personal information that is shared with your fellow gamers in *WOW* depends on the individual. There is currently a higher tendency to add fellow gamers as Facebook friends or create guild groups on Facebook, but though you may know actual names, meeting in person remains only an option – which is not very frequently taken. But still, we could say that there is general unwillingness to nonanonymity in *WOW*. On July 6th, 2010, Blizzard Entertainment announced on its forums that the users' accounts will display their real name tied to the account. According to the announcement, this was due to an agreement with Facebook, so as to allow Facebook to connect people who chose to become Facebook friends to share their real identity also in the game world. This raised numerous concerns among the fans and subscribers of *WOW*, as well as other games produced by Blizzard, hence, the company had to release an updated statement three days later announcing that the real life ID integration was being cancelled (Shiels, 2010).

There is a nuance between unwillingness to display our real names in *WOW* and going nonanonymous on communications online. One may choose to be nonanonymous on Facebook where the objective is to transfer our real life connections to the life online, or to get hold of friends that we have lost contact with. However in *WOW*, or any other similar MMORPG, it doesn't make too much sense to do that. Though *WOW* no longer works mainly as a medium to try out parts of your identity, it still remains a fantasy world where one may want to disconnect from reality.

3.2.3.2 Second Life

In *Second Life*, you can achieve anything, anything that you wished for in the real life and that you couldn't realize... (Bahar Vega, businesswoman in *Second Life*, 2009).

Second Life (SL) is a virtual world developed by Linden Lab and launched on June 23rd, 2003. In *SL* the users, called «residents», can interact with each other through avatars, they can meet other residents, socialize, participate in group activities, create and trade virtual property and services with one another, buy land and build their own houses, or travel throughout the world which the residents interestingly refer to as «the grid». What separates *SL* from the other virtual worlds is that it does not have a game component, like *World of Warcraft*, or other similar MMORPGs, and that in *SL*, the objective of the users is to interact per se (Senges, 2007: 15). According to reports published on the official *SL* website, the virtual world has an approximate of 24 million registered accounts, including the dormant users, and the average monthly repeat logins are 794,000 as of the first quarter of 2011 (<http://bit.ly/l6ds5a>). As of 2011, daily registrations range between 17-18,000 logins.

Second Life can hardly be classified as a computer game, because it does not have a designated objective, nor traditional gameplay mechanics or rules. Nobody wins or loses in *SL*. Nonetheless, it is also difficult not to classify it as a role-playing game, as its users can create avatars and assume any identity that they want to while they interact with the other residents. Completely user-created and community-driven, *SL* contains an extensive world that can be explored or interacted with and it can be used purely as a creative tool set if the user chooses to do so.

Malcolm Shore and Qinglan Zhou claim in «Second Life: The Future of Social Networking?» that «Second Life is arguably the most complex socio-technical networking environment yet seen» (2008: 21). Currently *SL* not only remains virtual, as its success as an environment for social activity has predictably led to the development of links to these existing social network websites. It has also encouraged the development of new websites focused on providing social networking specifically for *SL*. It is now relatively easy to access social networks such as Facebook through a *Second Life* Link application. Hybridlife.net offers a real world social connection through to *Second Life* to enable people to keep in touch with their *Second Life* community when they are in the real world. SecondLifeProfiles is a *SL* community which enables social networking of the real world people behind the *Second Life* avatars, with profile pages, photo albums and blogs. This community also provides resources to help newcomers to *SL* find the locations and encourages gestures such as hugs between participants. It acts as a forum from which voting can be recorded to provide feedback to *SL* about participants likes and dislikes. Slscout.com is a recent in-world social networking website with elements of embedded videos, forums, and photo contests. It is a show-and-share site for *SL* residents to use in the real world (Shore & Zhou, 2008: 21).

The economy of *Second Life* is one of the basic features of this virtual world that distinguishes it from the others and has a very strong impact on the functioning of this world. *SL* has its own currency, the Linden dollar, which can be used to buy, sell, rent or trade goods and services with other users and which can be exchanged for actual dollars, at a parity of 1US\$ = 250L\$. There are many people that spend real dollars to buy virtual goods for their *SL* avatars, as there are people that exchange the Linden dollars that they make in *SL* to real money in real life. According to figures published by Linden Lab, about 64,000 users made a profit in *Second Life* in February 2009, of whom 38,524 made less than US\$ 10, while 233 made more than US\$ 5,000. In March 2009, it has become known that there exist a few *Second Life* entrepreneurs, who gross in around 1 million US\$ per year.

To get a better understanding of *SL*, I have interviewed one of the users, Bahar Vega, who has earned serious amounts of money by selling her designs on *Second Life* in the past years. Bahar Vega, an avatar created by a Turkish housewife from İzmir, no longer considers herself a housewife because the business

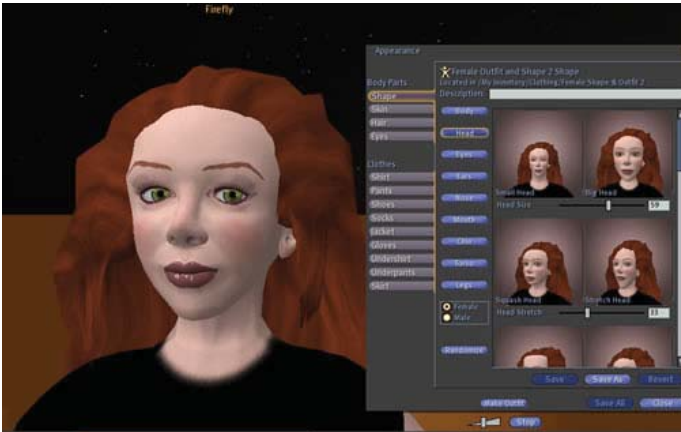
that she set up in *SL* «is real». She was a big fan of Sims 2 when she learned about *Second Life*, and as she stepped into *SL*, which she considered to be a «much more sophisticated and online version of Sims» really became her second life.

Turkle said in *Life in the Screen* that through the computer «We turn games into reality and reality into games» (1995: 72). In the *Sim* games like *SimCity*, *SimLife*, *SimAnt* or *SimHealth* you try to build a community or an ecosystem or to design a public policy. The goal is to make a successful whole from complex, interrelated parts. The game is about making choices and getting feedback. Eleven-year-old Jeremiah begins his description of the computer games in the *Sim* series with a similar remark about their lack of real rules. And he further explains that the games are not about «winning». He says, «In *SimLife* you get to develop life forms and play evolution, but you will not really be able to win the game. You can't really win this game, just a certain kind of life does. But only for a while» (Turkle, 1995: 72).

Though similar to *Sim* games in principle, *Second Life* is «much more than that» as Bahar Vega reports. She was intrigued with the complexity it offered and challenged herself to match up. Spending real money on virtual goods didn't seem like a good idea to her, thus she realized that she had to learn how to use Photoshop to make the virtual goods that she wanted for her avatar. She learned how to use this complex program for editing photos and designing just for playing *SL* the way she wanted to. Her admirable dedication was based on a feature of *SL* that struck her from the very beginning: «In *Second Life*, you can achieve anything, anything that you wished for in the real life and that you couldn't realize».

What started as a personal challenge turned into a passion for designing clothes as she conquered the hearts of several users with her virtual high-end couture line. Now she has a famous brand on *SL* and a regular clientele waiting at her stores to buy new designs branded «Dare to Bite». She dressed Miss Brasil in the *Second Life* beauty pageant and she is also generous enough to give her designs as gifts when she feels like it. She confirms never having transferred real money into *SL*, but she cashed out Linden dollars to actual dollars several times. Besides having a male underwear designer partner in her flagship stores, lately, as she could not handle customer communications with her limited English, she hired a manager to work for her in *Second Life*. This interesting and ambitious woman also confirms that *SL* increased her self-esteem substantially and made her more confident in several aspects.

For her *Second Life* is all about business and she loves her second life for giving her opportunities that she didn't have in her actual life. She distinguishes two groups of *SL* residents, those that are connected for the creativity and the business, and those that are «after mingling with others, socializing and sexual interactions». For her, it has little to do with trying out different selves, nonetheless she has discovered the business woman inside her with *SL* and she is very happy for it. She is a very pretty woman also in real life, nevertheless her avatar is more attractive than her, as is the case with the majority in *SL*. Though



(Top to down)

Figure 3.27 – Age of glamour in *Second Life*. Available at <http://bit.ly/ejsPot>. Retrieved 20.04.2011.

Figure 3.28 – X-rated scenes are very common parts of the *SL* experience. Available at <http://on.io9.com/fxhvu0>. Retrieved 20.04.2011.

Figure 3.29 – Proud owner of a *SL* avatar. Available at <http://nyti.ms/i1nULd>. Retrieved 20.04.2011.

Figure 3.30 – Modifying your avatar. Available at <http://bit.ly/hlFSkf>. Retrieved 20.04.2011.

Figure 3.31 – Swimming in the Caribbean of *SL*. Available at <http://bit.ly/g1rmle>. Retrieved 20.04.2011.

she sometimes receives complaints from her family members for spending too much time on her «second life», she tries to make time for it: In the end, «that is [her] business».

Turkle introduces us to other *SL* avatars in *Alone Together*. Audrey, a sixteen-year-old high school junior, has created a more social, even flirtatious version of herself in online worlds – and she aspires to be more like her online persona. An avatar, she explains, «is a Facebook profile come to life». Facebook or Myspace profiles, avatars, texting or instant messaging, for her all of these have one objective in common, the point is to do «a performance of you» (Turkle, 2011: 305).

Making an avatar and texting. Pretty much the same. You're creating your own person; you don't have to think of things on the spot really, which a lot of people can't really do. You're creating your own little ideal person and sending it out. Also on the internet, with sites like MySpace and Facebook, you put up the things you like about yourself, and you're not going to advertise the bad aspects of you. ... You're not going to post pictures of how you look every day. You're going to get your makeup on, put on your cute little outfit, you're going to take your picture and post it up as your default, and that's what people are going to expect that you are every day, when really you're making it up for all these people. ... You can write anything about yourself; these people don't know. You can create who you want to be. You can say what kind of stereotype mold you want to fit in ... maybe in real life it won't work for you, you can't pull it off. But you can pull it off on the internet (Turkle, 2011: 305).

For her, taking photographs with her cell phone or her camera all day and uploading them on Facebook is more than a way of life – «I like to feel», she says, «that my life is up there». And she admits that she would be devastated if Facebook were to disappear because it has «part of [her] life». She refers to her Facebook profile as «her little twin on the internet», though this twin is an *edited* version of her. She is preoccupied with which photographs to post. Which photographs put her in the best light? Which show her as a *bad* girl in potentially appealing ways? As Turkle infers, «If identity play is the work of adolescence, Audrey is at work all day» (Turkle, 2011: 306). While she works on her *twin*, the twin works back at her. The feedback she receives for her posts on Facebook help her to repeat or retreat an attitude,



Figure 3.32 – *Second Life* is an up and coming new sector of the real economy.

while she describes her relationship to the site as a relationship of «give-and-take». For example, if she tries out a «flirty» style and receives a good response from her Facebook friends, she ramps up the flirtatious tone. She tries out «an ironic, witty» tone in her wall posts. The response is not so good, and she retreats.

She has several avatars in *Second Life*, and talking about her online avatars, she highlights that they boost her real-life confidence. Like most avatars on *SL*, her avatar is more attractive than she is in the real life. On *SL*, Audrey's hair is modern and blunt cut, her body more developed, her makeup heavier, her clothes more suggestive. Indeed, *Second Life* is promoted as a place to «connect, shop, work, love, explore, be different, free yourself, free your mind, change your looks, love your looks, love your life». ⁴ «But is loving your life as an avatar the same as loving your life in the real?» Turkle asks her. For Audrey, as for many of her peers, the answer is unequivocally yes. Online life is practice to make the rest of life better, but it is also a pleasure in itself.



Figure 3.33 – Top left, Bahar Yüксеktepe, real life housewife, founder of the brand Dare-to-Bite in *Second Life*, together with her daughters in her actual home. Top right, Bahar Vega reading the newspaper in her *Second Life* home. Bottom, Bahar Vega in her *SL* flagship store. Though a very pretty woman herself, like several man and woman in *SL*, Yüксеktepe too, has a more attractive avatar than her actual self, a tall gorgeous brunette with big boobs and a tiny waist.

As we have investigated also in the second chapter, the *escape* into fantasy, or the *escape* from reality also has to do with the unsatisfactions derived from the urban space and one's real life. Darian Leader expresses it as choosing the possible instead of struggling with the impossible, in his article «As we grow second selves, are we heading for an identity crisis»:

It's tempting to see the proliferation of virtual worlds as a consequence of the impasse our real one has reached. What, after all, do people in virtual worlds do? As well as date and make friends, they buy property, land and rooms; furnish, build and decorate. In fact exactly the activities that are becoming increasingly impossible for the average urbanite (2006).

3.2.3.3 Merits of Fantasyland

Play has always been an important aspect of individual efforts to build identity. For the psychoanalyst Erik Erikson, play was a «toy situation» that allowed us to «reveal and commit» ourselves «in its unreality» (1950/1977: 44). Earlier in cyberspace, the MUDs provided an unparalleled opportunity for play of identities. One can build a character from scratch, create an imaginary environment and then live within this toy situation which could serve as a context for discovering who one is and who one wishes to be (Turkle, 1995: 184).

When the cyberspace literature chimed with discourses on the MUDs, being liberated from the flesh, leaving the body behind and games as laboratories for the construction of identity, the basic reason behind those ideas was basically summarized in what one player said about them in an interview with Turkle:

They don't look at your body and make assumptions. They don't hear your accent and make assumptions. All they see is your words (1995: 184).

Erik Erikson, who was the first to coin the term «identity crisis», defined it to be: «a time of intensive analysis and exploration of different ways of looking at oneself» (1970: 13). As we have also seen in the first chapter, in Erikson's theory identity is described as:

... a subjective sense as well as an observable quality of personal sameness and continuity, paired with some belief in the sameness and continuity of some shared world image. As a quality of unself-conscious living, this can be gloriously obvious in a young person who has found himself as he has found his communality. In him we see emerge a unique unification of what is irreversibly given – that is, body type and temperament, giftedness and vulnerability, infantile models and acquired ideals – with the open choices provided in available roles, occupational possibilities, values offered, mentors met, friendships made, and first sexual encounters (1970: 14).

Erikson elaborates his theory defining «Stages of Psychosocial Development», which is expanded further by James Marcia (1966, 1976, 1980). According to Marcia, the balance between identity and confusion lies in making a *commitment* to an identity. Thus his understanding of the four states of development that were previously discussed by Erikson is: identity achievement, moratorium, foreclosure and identity diffusion. Identity achievement is what occurs when an individual has investigated various different identities and made a commitment to one. Moratorium is the state of an individual that is actively involved in such an exploration but did not make a commitment yet, while foreclosure is when a person has made a commitment without an attempt of identity exploration. The fourth state is identity diffusion, which occurs when there is neither an identity crisis nor commitment.

Researchers have found that those who have made a strong commitment to an identity tend to be happier and healthier than those who have not. Those with a status of identity diffusion tend to feel out of place in the world and don't pursue a sense of identity. In today's rapidly changing world, identity crises are more common today than in Erikson's day. Exploring different aspects of yourself in the different areas of life, including your role at work, within the family, and in romantic relationships, can help strengthen your personal identity.

It is in this sense that the play of identities in the invisibility of cyberspace was compared to Erikson's moratorium (Turkle, 1995: 203-204). It is considered normal to let adolescents try new things and experiment, the moratorium facilitates the development of a core self, a personal sense of what gives life meaning. This period of «time out» is important for people to see what they need to achieve and before they can easily move ahead to other developmental tasks. According to Turkle, «MUDs are striking examples of how technology can play a role in these dramas of self-repair»:

... the adolescent moratorium is not something that people pass through but a mode of experience necessary throughout functional and creative adulthoods. We take vacations to escape not only from our work but from our habitual social lives. Vacations are times during which adults are allowed to play. Vacations give a finite structure to periodic adult moratoria. Time in cyberspace reshapes the notion of vacations and moratoria, because they may now exist in always-available windows. Erikson wrote that «the playing adult steps sideward into another reality; the playing child advances forward into new stages of mastery». In MUDs, adults can do both; we enter another reality and have the opportunity to develop new dimensions of self-mastery (1995: 204).

Indeed one of the interviewees that Turkle introduces us to in her book confirms this perspective on the MUDs, or more generally about video games. Sean is a forty-four-year-old lawyer, who keeps an old Atari computer on his desk so as to play the original versions of Asteroids and Space Invaders. He likes these games because they have clear rules and he can master them completely. «With these games I'm in complete control. It is a nice contrast with the rest of my life» (1995: 67). Sean with his comment also highlights another point: Video games, ever since their first appearance in the late 1970s, brought the computer culture into everyday life (1995: 67).

Since then, playing computer games has become an increasingly popular leisure time activity amongst adolescents, as well as higher age groups, on one hand the excessive amounts of time dedicated to it raises concerns in parents. A research on reasons for playing video games, related it to the functional concepts of «electronic friendship» and «self-esteem» (Colwell, Grady & Rhaiti, 1995). Results showed that playing computer games is equally popular with males and females, but males spend more time on

it. In particular males who were heavy players scored highly on the «preference to friends» need, but interestingly they were also likely to see their friends more often outside school, thus providing no support for the theory that computer games are taking the place of normal social interaction. For females there was evidence of a negative relationship between self-esteem and need of gratification through playing computer games.

Such pragmatic reasoning tells us that there is indeed something that we expect from the virtual worlds. Besides serving as a moratorium, not only for adolescents but for anyone willing to dedicate them time, there is an expectation of liberation from reality in these digital screens. At this point we probably should ask, does the comfortable invisibility of an «avatar» help human beings in the course of self-actualization? Turkle asks more questions on this theme which we will try to answer throughout this chapter and this dissertation:

Do our real-life selves learn lessons from our virtual personae? Are these virtual personae fragments of a coherent real-life personality? Why are we doing this? Is this a shallow game, a giant waste of time? Is it an expression of an identity crisis of the sort we traditionally associate with adolescence? (1995: 180).

One of the basic merits of virtual worlds can be considered as their role in exploration of one's options and limits, as suggested by Erikson and Marcia's theories of development. Identity switches act as evocative objects for thinking about the self. The variety of identities to choose from, the selection of tools to create and communicate our identities, the option to *practice* with them in the virtual worlds, role-playing games or the social networks give us an enormous library from which to know our actual selves better.

In this sense, we are not only having more space to develop our self-images, but also shorter distances to cover between our self-images and the images/identities that we communicate to our surroundings. The current case is very different than the traditional tools we used to have to create our identities, basically the family-school-business circles we attended. Extending our communication network and the feedback we receive on ourselves to embrace the whole world, could come to mean creating identity *drafts* as the new user-friendly interfaces for our self-realization.

A second important point could be the possible benefits of testing out our real identities in a way that is as harmless as possible for any party that is involved. Behind the screen we maintain a certain invulnerability even if we socialize and communicate ourselves. We can cut the communication at any point that we want without too many complications – which would not be the case with face-to-face communication. Nancy K. Baym, a researcher specialized in the conditions for the appearance of virtual communities, tells us that according to her research the majority of the users of social networks and

other forms of Computer-Mediated Communication tend to create online selves that are consistent with their real life identities (2003: 76). Then the reason to test our real life identities in virtual worlds could be to avoid feelings of insecurity that derive from anxieties about whether one will be liked, accepted, and respected by one's peers and significant others.

Self-esteem, in this sense, is a very important component of identity construction, be it online or offline. Sometimes people are aware of their insecurities, but often social setbacks of this type influence people's thoughts and feelings *automatically*, without a lot of deliberate thought and sometimes even entirely outside of their awareness. All they experience are negative reactions to the self or to social situations.

People with fewer insecurities, on the other hand, seem to have a range of automatic thought processes that make them confident and buffer them from worrying about the possibility of social rejection. Fortunately, our recent research shows that with enough practice, even people with low self-esteem can develop these beneficial thought processes that might allow them to gradually become more secure and self-confident.

Self-esteem is a surprisingly complex topic. Not all psychologists are even in agreement on what self-esteem is, let alone where it comes from or how to improve it. Still, virtual worlds provide us with a margin on the issue of self-esteem considering it is a person's attitude toward him or herself. People with relatively «high» self-esteem are generally secure in their own self-worth, and hold an attitude of self-respect and self-confidence. People with relatively «low» self-esteem are less secure, are unsure about their worth and sometimes are quite negative in their view of themselves.

Low self-esteem is maintained by several habits of thought. Focusing attention on negative self-aspects, constantly comparing oneself against perfectionistic or unreachable standards, and overgeneralizing from single negative events to draw broad negative conclusions about oneself, can lead to feelings of low self-esteem. These kinds of thoughts are closely tied to expectations about social relationships, for instance the anticipation that others will be rejecting or critical. Ironically, these kinds of negative expectancies can lead people to try to avoid rejection by withdrawing from the very people who care about them and do in fact accept and appreciate them.

In contrast, higher levels of self-esteem are maintained by different habits of thought. People with high self-esteem focus their attention on positive self-aspects and positive feedback from others. When they think of one of their weaknesses or failures they balance it out by thinking of things that they like about themselves. True high self-esteem is rooted in the sense that one's deepest and most authentic self is securely accepted by others, particularly by the significant or important others in the person's life. This

feeling may be based in current relationships, or may be based in earlier experiences of being loved and respected by another. In fact some researchers have argued that this sense of being securely related to others, along with feeling competent and self-directed, is the important thing: high self-esteem may just be a signal that these needs are being met, rather than something to be pursued for its own sake.

What is interesting about self-esteem and virtual worlds is that there our communication usually tends to be with strangers. An interior designer tells us her experience with somebody that she has met in a MUD, in her interview with Turkle:

I didn't exactly lie to him about anything specific, but I feel very different online. I am a lot more outgoing, less inhibited. I would say I feel more like myself. But that's a contradiction. I feel more like who I wish I was. I'm just hoping that face-to-face I can find a way to spend some time being the online me (Turkle, 1995: 179).

Communicating with a stranger and being able to pretend lets this woman to practice her ideal self and try to get closer to that. This could provide a context for working on one's self-esteem. Turkle, based on this example and several others discusses whether virtual worlds could be considered as psychotherapeutic and concludes by saying that, though we tend to feel that way, «taken by themselves, virtual communities will only *sometimes* facilitate psychological growth» (1995: 208). In a way that is similar to Rubin's «passing stranger» effect, one can tend to be more honest and disclose more about the self to a stranger to whom s/he has no vulnerability (1975). If an avatar in a game drops defenses that the player is unable to abandon in real life, this creates a slippage where the avatar and the self merge in order to compromise what the individual thinks of as her/his authentic self (Turkle, 1995: 185).

A third important point about the virtual worlds is that they provide one with experiences, though imaginary most of the time, that are hard to come by in real life. Once again, Sherry Turkle provides us with an example of an avatar in a virtual world:

Stewart is logged on to one MUD or another for at least forty hours a week. It seems misleading to call what he does there playing. He spends his time constructing a life that is more expansive than the one he lives in physical reality. Stewart, who has traveled very little and has never been to Europe, explains with delight that his favorite MUD, although played in English, is physically located on a computer in Germany and has many European players. [His persona] Achilles on the MUD is elegant and heavily influenced by Ralph Lauren advertising. He has named it «the home beneath the silver moon». There are books, a roaring fire, cognac, a cherry mantel «covered with pictures of Achilles' friends from around the world». «You look up... and through the immense skylight you see a breathtaking view of the night sky. The moon is always full over Achilles' home, and its light fills the room with a warm glow» (1995: 193-194).

In the past, such rapid cycling through different identities was not an easy experience to come by. Earlier in this century we spoke of identity as «forged». The metaphor of iron-like solidity captured the central value of a core identity. Now, in postmodern times, multiple identities are no longer so much at the margins of things. Many more people experience identity as a set of roles that can be mixed and matched, whose diverse demands need to be negotiated. Kenneth Gergen describes its multiplication of masks as a saturated self (1991/2001).

And finally a fourth important aspect of the virtual worlds is that the information missing in online communication is completed with one's imagination. One, sometimes, tends to enjoy such a way of communication even more than face-to-face communication, as they can idealize the other person as well as they do themselves. In terms interactions that have started in the virtual and then carried onto real life, the results of idealization could be disappointing. One tends to project her/his own imagination onto the other, and thus the communication results to be delusional. When virtual relations become real, the result is often, though not always, deeply unsatisfying, even traumatic. When we finally meet the person behind the second self, we often find something unsettling and unwelcome: the alien beneath the avatar. As one user puts it, «[On the MUD] I saw in her what I wanted to see. Real life gave me too much information» (Turkle, 1995: 207).

Direct experience is often messy; its meaning is never exactly clear. Interactive multimedia comes already interpreted. It is already someone else's version of reality.

Virtual worlds underscore the basic problem of double lives. At first glance, it might seem as if one's virtual self is the mask and one's real self the truth. But it's not so simple. Aren't our fantasy personas, in fact, sometimes more real than we are? They evoke parts of ourselves that we block out in everyday life. Our real selves are just false masks, empty husks we inhabit lifelessly. This is the paradox of double lives and second selves: the virtual world shows us that our real lives are profoundly artificial, and that perhaps they need to be for human society to function (Leader, 2006).

Turkle asks, «What is the self when it functions as a society? What is the self when it divides its labour among its constituent 'alters' or 'avatars'?» as she uses metaphors of disorder to define the current state of instability. She concludes her metaphors saying that «Those burdened by post-traumatic dissociative syndrome [multiple personality disorder] suffer the question; inhabitants of MUDs play with it» (Stone, 1995: 59).

3.2.4 From Virtuality to Visibility: Always-On

I am not the spider who weaves the web, and I am not even the fly caught in the web: I am the web itself, streaming, off in all directions with no center and no self that I can call my own (Elkins, 1996:75).

By 2004, about a decade after it was a popular medium accessed by a substantial percentage of the world population, the definition of Internet as we knew it changed completely. Full participation of the user thanks to Web 2.0, changed our perception of communication online radically, even though it was brought about by a limited amount of technical development. If the 1990s' web was mostly a publishing medium, in the 2000s it increasingly became a communication medium (Manovich, 2008). Communication between users, including conversations around user-generated content started to take place through a variety of forms besides email: posts, comments, reviews, ratings, gestures and tokens, votes, links, badges, photo, and video (Chan, 2008). The explosion of user-created media content on the web from 2004 onwards unleashed a new media universe.

On a practical level, this universe was made possible by free web platforms and inexpensive software tools which enable people to share their media and easily access media produced by others (Manovich, 2008: 1). Besides the changes in the structure of the web, rapidly fallen costs for professional-quality media capture devices such as HD video cameras; and addition of cameras and video capture to mobile phones, as well as the increased speed of internet connection all influenced the movement from media to *social* media. Suddenly, the invisibility of the cyberspace was replaced with a lot of visibility and visuality. Hence arrived the online social network.

With the arrival of Web 2.0, the main tendency of people became to combine their online identity with the real. With the possibilities of self expression expanded by the Web 2.0 tools, we observe a certain convergence between the concepts of identity and image. The research in the following chapters, hopes to light up some points in this sense, for example the answers to the questions such as how these new tools could help us express more of ourselves, or whether the possibility of experimenting with these new virtual identities would end up in more opportunities of self-realization. There is also the question of the loss of anonymity which was a previous joy of the virtual life and also a very discussed topic in the literature of the early days of communication in the internet. In the age of Facebook, where users tend to create accounts with their real names to be able to find their old friends and to be found by them, one user comment suggests that «etiquette and accountability threaten to squeeze some of the fun out of web surfing».



Figure 3.34 – Profile pictures and lifecasting on Facebook. Collage by Zeynep Arda(2009).

Creating online identities that are coherent with the real-life identities is the norm in Facebook, the most popular social networking site. The site where membership was initially limited to Harvard students, later expanded to other colleges in the Boston area, the Ivy League, and Stanford University. It later expanded further to include any university student, then high school students, and, finally, to anyone aged 13 and over. Users tend to sign up with their actual names, female users usually including even their maiden names, so that they are found by their old school friends. This simple point of nonanonymity, literally starts the convergence of our images, our images of ourselves and our actual identities and possibly attempts to find new balances within this trio. It tends to reveal the first one with our presence in the «book» of «faces», the second one with the way that we communicate ourselves in this «book» and finally the third one with how much of our actual identities we are willing to share with our «friends» over there.

Our relationships with ourselves as an attempt to balance our image with our identity dates back to what Jacques Lacan calls the «mirror phase». In this first challenge, where we first see with our own eyes that we are not a *part* of our mother, but a separate body, that we are not *one* with our mother but that we have a separate identity, starts the first identity crisis of the human being. This *inner identity crisis* is the restlessness of trying to find a personal, comfortable balance between what we see and what we visualize, the corporeal and the self. In traditional terms, this balance is searched for in a bipolarization of *nature versus culture*, where we look for the inherent aspects of the self and the later effects of the family upbringing and friendships. Hence the self is currently being put to test in the social environment, within processes of communication, while the image is parallelly created and being perceived. A spatial progress starting with the home, the school, the street and the city, provide the scene and the background for the progresses of the self and the image.

This was the history of our lives basically, in an extremely oversimplified definition. Well, not really. This is the story of our lives when the F2F (face-to-face) communication was the king. But in our contemporaneity, the virtual side is so indispensably part of our daily lives that we don't even notice the transitions from one to the other. The debates have changed radically from the early days of the internet, the bulletin boards, the ICQ and the MUDs (Multi-User Dungeons) as the human beings migrated into Web 2.0. Today internet is an undeniable part of everyone's lives, upto our grandparents who, once upon a time, had even found it difficult or *bizarre* to even talk on the phone or to watch television. If my generation has already be-friended her/his parents on the Facebook then something must have changed with regards to our relationship with the technology and hence with ourselves and our identities. Towards the end of 1990s, the identification by Turkle, of the computer as a «second self», was a consideration that identity-transforming relationships were almost always «one-to-one, a person alone with a machine» (Turkle, 1995). Turkle admits, as we all do, today this is no longer the case. We



Figure 3.35 – Schema designed by Zeynep Arda, based on the arguments raised by Andrew Chan (2011).

have a huge social life going on «there», one that even exceeds the actual one from time to time. Turkle explains the «networked», «always-on» condition of humanity as:

Within a decade, what had seemed alien was close to becoming everyone’s way of life, as compact smartphones replaced the cyborgs’ more elaborate accoutrements. This is the experience of living full-time on the Net, newly free in some ways, newly yoked in others. We are all cyborgs now. ... People love their new technologies of connection. They have made parents and children feel more secure and have revolutionized business, education, scholarship, and medicine. ... They have changed how we date and how we travel. The global reach of connectivity can make the most isolated outpost into a center of learning and economic activity (Turkle, 2011: 244).

Today with the huge power attributed to the social networking websites, to the visibility on Google and the «actuality» of the virtual in our *Second Life* roles, the virtual not only earned itself a much more decent presence but a irreversible and undeniable one. There are significant points to be assessed by each one of them, each being quite particular and with characteristics if its own. One very recent Time article discusses that Facebook is more popular than porn, at least so for 18- to 24-year-olds, for whom social networks rank first, followed by search engines, then web-based email – with porn sites lagging behind in fourth. Bill Tancer writes,

If you chart the rate of visits to social-networking sites against those to adult sites over the last two years, there appears to be a strong negative correlation (i.e., visits to social networks go up as visits to adult sites go down). It's a leap to say there's a real correlation there, but if there is one, then I'd bet it has everything to do with Gen Y's changing habits: they're too busy chatting with friends to look at online skin. Imagine (Tancer, 2009).

The virtual social life, even though it doesn't seem to be our reality today, was earlier defined by Sherry Turkle as:

The human subject of our day, terrified of being alone, yet all the same afraid of intimacy, experiences widespread feelings of emptiness, of disconnection, of the unreality of self. At this point computer enters the realm as a companion without emotional demands and offers a compromise. Taking the helping hand of the computer – and the whole world behind the screen, «you can be a loner, but never alone»; «you can interact, but need never feel vulnerable to another person» (Turkle, 1984: 307).

Now, not only has the virtual geography changed and integrated itself to our actuality on a daily basis, but also our perception of the city, as the hub of our social communication has changed. Richard Sennett's very classic definition of a city is as «a human settlement in which strangers are likely to meet», today has a very different reading to it (Sennett, 1978: 39). It's been long since young and middle-aged people – whose definitions also have changed with the obsession of being «forever young» – have turned to matchmaking sites to meet the love of their lives, resulting in a lot of sexual action and very little «happily ever after» stories. This unsatisfaction has to have other reasons than the ineffectiveness of the websites of this *raison d'être* as statistics indicate that one out of every eight couples that got married in the United States last year met online (Fisch, McLeod & Brenman, 2008).

Earlier, Turkle had associated the virtuality of our communications with the culture of simulation that surrounded the human beings and asked:

Disneyland and shopping malls are elements of a way of life I have called the culture of simulation. ... Computers and the virtual worlds they provide are adding another dimension of mediated experience. Perhaps computers and virtuality in its various forms feel so natural because of their similarity to watching TV, our dominant media experience for the past forty years. In both cases, the neighbourhood is bypassed. We seem to be in the process of retreating further into our homes, shopping for merchandise in catalogues or on television channels, shopping for companionship via personal ads. Technological optimists think that computers will reverse some of this social atomization, touting virtual experience and virtual community as ways for people to widen their horizons. But is it really sensible to suggest that the way to revitalize community is to sit alone in our rooms, typing at our networked computers and filling our lives with virtual friends? (Turkle, 1995: 235).

About two decades later, the answer to her question is «yes». Today our artificial experiences on the screen is our daily reality. The consequences of change are rarely discussed, and the virtues of self invention are taken for granted (Leader, 2006).

In terms of communication, the life on the social network seems to impersonalize our interpersonal relations day by day. As we update our statuses for our invisible audiences, we don't exactly distinguish to whom we are communicating ourselves. Our personal declarations are transferred to whoever is willing to follow us in the form of mass communication. We feel social. But do we ever miss personalized communication as everything, even friendships and identities are downsized to the image?

Such sentiments remind me of a comment by a high school junior who was upset by what she described as the flight of her friends to the internet. She complained, «Now they just want to talk online. It used to be that things weren't so artificial. We phoned each other every afternoon». ... We build our ideas about what is real and what is natural with the cultural materials available (Turkle, 2011: 237).

Having created identities and made ourselves known in some virtual universe, we can then sell our selves, literally – if the identity, or avatar, we have created is deemed desirable, it can be sold to other players. The self becomes a commodity. And, when our self-image is lost or questioned in real life, the result is often depression.

Reinventing yourself is often put forward as being liberating. Gone are the constraints of money, class and background. All we need is a computer. Our role models and idols once inhabited a separate space: stage, screen, sports field. We could aspire to be like them, but could never quite get there. But today celebrity TV series reveal how their daily lives are the same as ours. We see them shopping where we shop, eating what we eat, sweating as we sweat. And now we can even «meet» them. We can be part of

the conversation on Twitter as they open up and reach out to their fans. Bands such as U2 and McFly can check into the Habbo Hotel and rub shoulders with fans (Leader, 2006).

How does this relate to the relation between image- identity? How does it contribute to the hypothesis of image and identity becoming one? We do not have a constant here. We do not have one single identity that we reflect in a constant manner. Instead we have changing identities reflected by changing images. But does it all end up in a constant identity, that is reflecting its moods every day in a different way?

The term «identity crisis» was coined for the first time in 1954, but very probably, its use and application has never been so wide as it is today. Living in a period in which the traditional basis on which to construct an identity is almost nulled, and the contemporary tools to do so widely amplified, the exception which was once defined as the identity crisis could very well be the rule. We are searching for tools, toys, personalities or avatars to testify our presence and to mark our territory, if not only to prove

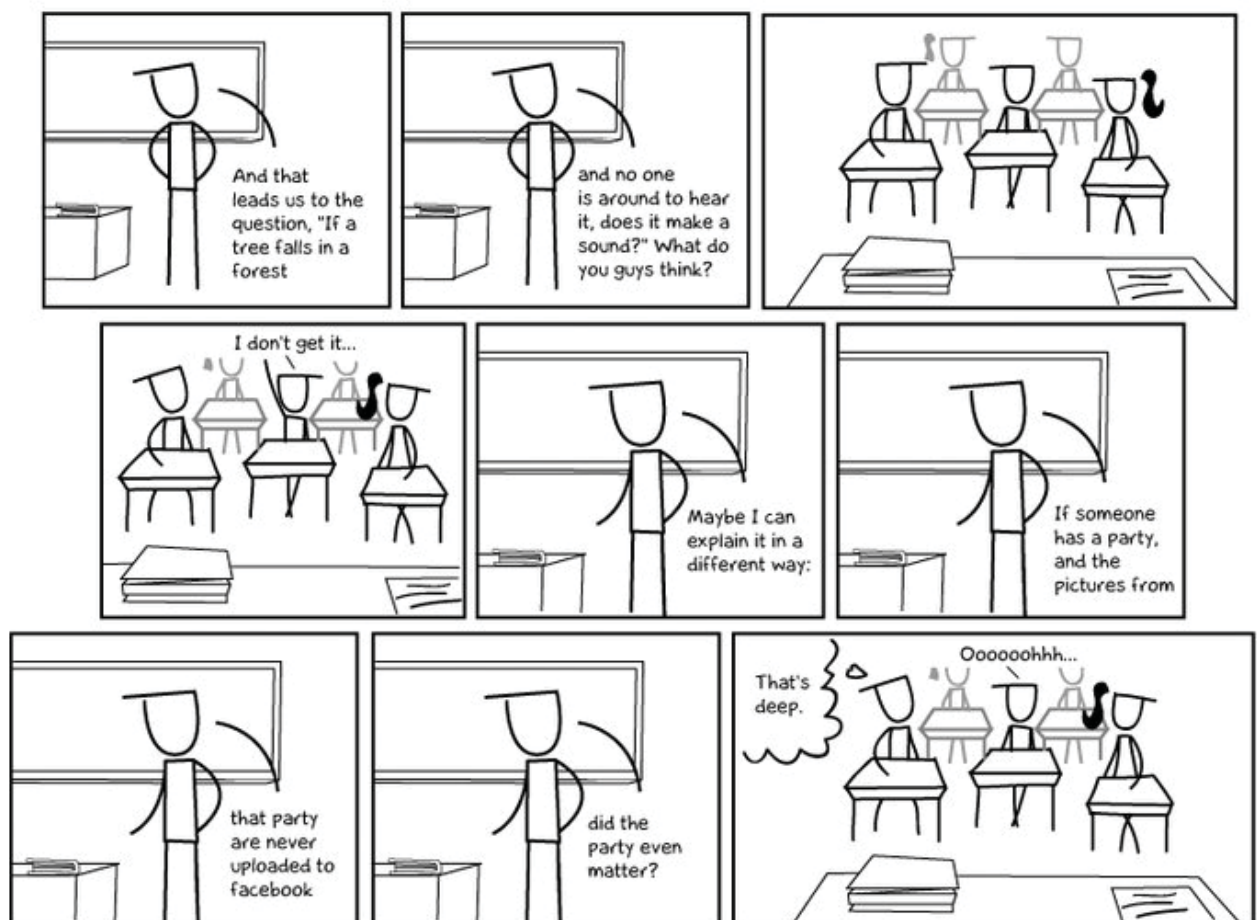
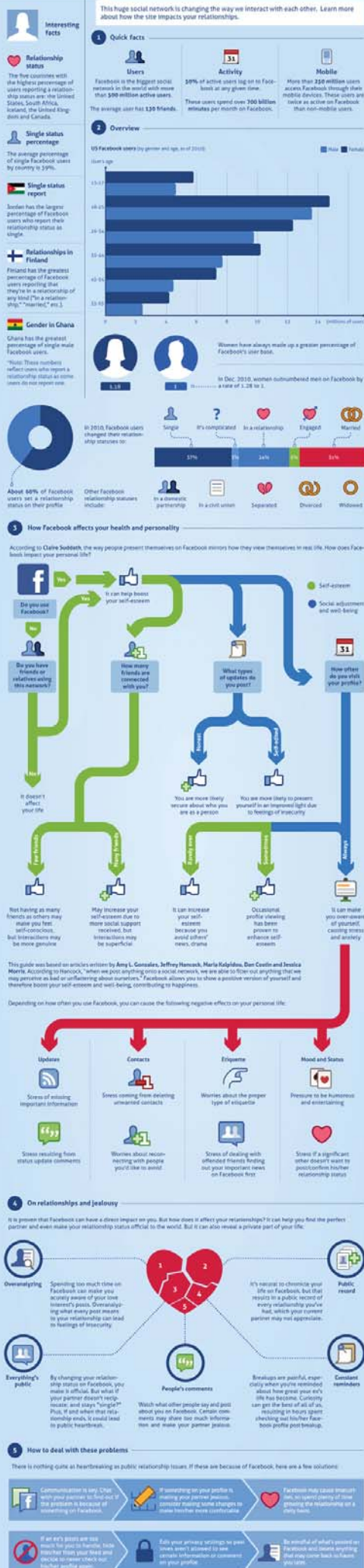


Figure 3.36 – «If someone has a party, and the pictures from that party are never uploaded to Facebook, did the party even matter?», Doghouse Diaries (2010).



our presence to ourselves. This search is a tough one, but quite more colourful and fun than the ones that we have previously known and maybe we can predict that it somehow ends up in individuals more pleased with themselves or with higher levels of self-realization achieved.

The current state of the human identity seems to be quite different than any other previously investigated. The internet provides new spaces in which we can do this, no matter how imperfectly, throughout our lives. So, adults as well as adolescents use it to explore identity – once again, in a new light:

When part of your life is lived in virtual places – it can be *Second Life*, a computer game, a social networking site – a vexed relationship develops between what is true and what is «true here», true in simulation. In games where we expect to play an avatar, we end up being ourselves in the most revealing ways; on social-networking sites such as Facebook, we think we will be presenting ourselves, but our profile ends up as somebody else – often the fantasy of who we want to be. Distinctions blur. Virtual places offer connection with uncertain claims to commitment. We don't count on cyberfriends to come by if we are ill, to celebrate our children's successes, or help us mourn the death of our parents. People know this, and yet the emotional charge on cyberspace is high. People talk about digital life as the «place for hope», the place where something new will come to them. In the past, one waited for the sound of the post – by carriage, by foot, by truck. Now, when there is a lull, we check our email, texts, and messages (Turkle, 2011: 245).

Figure 3.37 – How Facebook affects relationships, Mashable (2011).

And yet, it is not the human nature that is changing, not the identity but the way that we perceive, construct and communicate it. An interesting observation tells us how our human behaviours stay the same, even in the most artificial of virtual environments:

By the end of 2008, half of the world's 6.7 billion people will live in urban areas, according to a recent report by the United Nations. As the space around us becomes denser, people with wealth will search for new ways to separate themselves from the masses. Therefore interest in the issue of personal space – that invisible force field around your body – is intensifying in both real and virtual world contexts. Based on research evidence, some avatars' physical behavior in *SL* conforms with unspoken behavioral rules of humans, for example, on how to protect their personal space, even though they are but pixels on a screen. It was also observed that both humans and their digital representations tend to avert eye gaze if they feel someone is standing too close. They retreat to corners, put distance between themselves and strangers, and sit or stand equidistant from one another whereas men keep more space between each other than women. What the study therefore specifically found is that unwritten rules of personal space are so powerful, people even impose them on their cyberselves. [These] research findings suggest that a major part of virtual world inhabitants feel physiologically uncomfortable about breaking the rules, social norms and real-life stereotypes. Human nature may be the same no matter what brand new world we discover (Sonvilla-Weiss: 115).

Nonetheless, we cannot deny the superficializing effect the newly gained visibility of online digital communications have on the way identity is formulated. Downsizing it to the two-dimensional, the image takes over the identity. Speaking of photography, Susan Sontag writes that under its influence, «travel becomes a strategy for accumulating photographs» (Sontag as cited in Turkle, 2011: 195). In digital culture, does life become a strategy for establishing an archive? Young people shape their lives to produce an impressive Facebook profile. When we know that everything in our lives is captured, will we begin to live the life that we hope to have archived?



3.3 Identity Construction and Positive Mental Health



3.3.1 The Network that Gave Everyone a Face

Zeynep Arda – August 28, 2010 at 4:23pm

What do you think about «Facebook»?

Male, 56, Turkey – August 28, 2010 at 6:11pm

Facebook is a book that gives one a face.

Zeynep Arda – August 28, 2010 at 9:39pm

One didn't have a face before Facebook?

Male, 56, Turkey – August 29, 2010 at 12:07pm

This is the point that one doesn't count in this age! People by means of having a Facebook profile, are giving themselves a public identity, a *face*. There is a new kind of liberty: You can talk even though nobody is there to listen to you. Even if nobody responds you, you can go ahead and say something. And if they do reply – and there is always someone that would – then you tend to think that what you said did actually had its impact, hence you believe that you really exist. Similar to the phenomenon of a blog – nonetheless, the feeling of belonging, becoming part of a bigger whole is much stronger in Facebook. It is a sort of a mechanism that convinces you that you do have an identity, that you can express your ideas and you do have an attentive audience that is listening to you – and hence makes you believe that you that you *do* exist. (From a dialogue with one of the participants of Preliminary Facebook Survey, 2010).

If we had any intentions left for communicating face-to-face, they too, have diminished as Facebook arrived in our lives and changed our idea of human interaction once again. The largest online network that is the highest-impact product of the Web 2.0 movement, *Facebook*, came along early in 2004.

The concept of Web 2.0 was generated with the «bursting of the dot-com bubble» following the collapse of the technology-heavy NASDAQ exchange in March 2000 (Burrows, 2007: 15). This collapse caused the internet and its associated industries to go through an inevitable «thinning out» process, as the markets began to realize that much of the heavy speculative investment of the previous five years had created a sector that was vastly overvalued. Investors started to look elsewhere. However, we should note that stock market bubbles are a part of any emerging trend, and while many prominent players fell by the wayside, what remained were the real success stories of the industry – the Googles, Yahoos and Amazons, which were left in an even stronger position than before. Some evidence even suggests that when a market goes through this process it is sending out a signal that it has moved beyond up-and-coming fashionability into the realm of mainstream acceptance (Burrows: 15).

The idea of Web 2.0 came about during a conference brainstorming session at O'Reilly Media in 2003. The basic argument was that far from having collapsed, the web was, in practical terms, more important than ever, with new and innovative uses regularly coming into the picture. The conclusion of the session was that the dot-com collapse could be seen as a turning point for the web. The participants came up with specific examples that identified philosophical differences between the «old» web and the new and then developed series of specific themes. The three most important themes discussed were the web as a platform, the harnessing of collective knowledge, and the creation of a «rich» user experience (Burrows, 2007: 17).

Though it did not involve technical improvements in terms of its infrastructure, it did entail a new perspective onto the existing: Instead of thinking of the web as a place where browsers viewed data through small windows on readers' screens, it was now seen as a platform that allowed people to get things done. Thus instead of needing to buy and install software for word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, and editing your photographs, it would be possible to perform all of these activities using applications that were built into the website and used through the web browser.

Similarly, why would we need to download our entertainment content, such as music, films, or TV shows when we could simply access it via a web browser? Another focus of the Web 2.0 issues was social interaction, whether it be networking, sharing talents, and creating new relationships on MySpace; creating a dialogue through the use of blogs; tagging and sharing websites using Del.icio.us; or contributing to collective knowledge by editing Wikipedia.

Many of us were so amazed by the internet in its early years of development that we were quick and easy to forgive its shortcomings. It was slow, unreliable and difficult to use. Debates on a new web brought about a new era, where web designers sought to re-create the interactivity of a computer desktop on the web. Supported and fueled by the increased bandwidth, these new tools enabled web applications to behave in ways that were familiar to us from our use of traditional desktop applications.

By the same token, social networking and democracy were hardly new ideas as far as the internet was concerned. In fact, they were central pillars of its foundation and evolution. Personal websites have been around since the beginning of the web, and have always been used by some as a means to express personal views. Blogging seemed not too far to this concept, except for a detail: This time there was also an interactive aspect involved. If we take two people speaking to one another as an analogy, the personal website is one person delivering a lecture to another; while the blog opens up the floor for questions and even a possible dialogue.

Table No 3.3.1a: Brainstorming for Web 2.0

Web 1.0	Web 2.0
Double Click	Google AdSense
Ofoto	Flickr
Akamai	BitTorrent
Mp3.com	Napster
Brittanica Online	Wikipedia
Personal websites	Blogging
Domain name speculation	Search Engine Optimization
Page views	Cost per click
Screen scraping	Web services
Content management	Wikis
Directories (Taxonomy)	Tagging (Folksonomy)
Publishing	Participation

From Burrows, *Your Life Online* (2009).

The web revolution, which began during the first decade of the twenty-first century, has in fact caused traditional mass media to be absorbed into a new media mass, one in which anyone who so wishes can make their voice heard and their face known. This «democratized» media presence may take many everyday forms, including job references, CVs or conversations. It is because of this amenability to general use that social media, also known as Web 2.0, is now spreading like wildfire around the world; we are increasingly listening to each other's voices rather than to the Master's Voice. Individuals and ad-hoc communities communicate through the new media mass on the same level and use the same resources as the Masters' Voices of days gone by, such as corporations, politicians and traditional journalists. These elites held control of the mass media, while the rest of the population listened, watched, slept and consumed. However, their time has passed (Bloem, van Doorn & Duivestijn, 2009: 9).

Hence the term Web 2.0 implicates web applications which facilitate collaboration on the web, through interactive sharing of information, interoperability and user-centered design. Unlike the earlier websites where the user was a passive *consumer* of the content provided, a Web 2.0 site gives its users the option to express themselves, the free choice to interact or collaborate with one another in an open social media dialogue. This concept became clearer gradually as it was applied to social-networking sites, blogs, wikis, photo and video-sharing sites, mashups and folksonomies.

Almost all of the above are terms that we were introduced with as Web 2.0 advanced to become a part of our daily lives. In web development, a mashup is a web page or application that uses and combines data, presentation or functionality from two or more sources to create new services. The term implies easy, fast integration, frequently using open APIs and data sources to produce enriched results that

were not necessarily the original reason for producing the raw source data. Folksonomy is a system of classification derived from the practice and method of collaboratively creating and managing tags to annotate and categorize content; this practice is also known as collaborative tagging, social classification, social indexing, and social tagging. Folksonomies became popular on the web around 2004 as part of social software applications such as social bookmarking and photograph annotation. Tagging, which is one of the defining characteristics of Web 2.0 services, allows users to collectively classify and find information. Some websites include «tag clouds» as a way to visualize tags in a folksonomy.

With such new definitions, technology has made the web more dynamic and more responsive. However, it is the social interaction occurring on the web that is changing our perception of it even more. The impact of blogs, wikis, and social networks, along with the freer flow of information through instant messaging, email, RSS feeds, and other such means are what causes an evolution or change in the ways we live, the ways we communicate and express ourselves. But this change is not only about Web 2.0 or about the online social networking that it brought about. More broadly, cellphones and computers have transformed life.

They let people escape their cubicles and work anywhere. They shrink distances and handle countless mundane tasks, freeing up time for more exciting pursuits. ... For better or worse, the consumption of media, as varied as email and TV, has exploded. In 2008, people consumed three times as much information each day as they did in 1960. And they are constantly shifting their attention. Computer users at work change windows or check email or other programs nearly 37 times an hour, new research shows (Richtel, 2010).

Richtel, in his article in *The New York Times*, tells us the story of the «always on» Campbell family. The Campbells recently moved from Oklahoma to California to start a software venture. 43-years-old Mr. Campbell is a very heavy user of technology. *Naturally*, his life revolves around computers. The habits and struggles of Mr. Campbell and his family typify what many experience – and what many more will, if the current trends continue. For him, the tensions feel increasingly acute, and the effects harder to shake:

He goes to sleep with a laptop or iPhone on his chest, and when he wakes, he goes online. He and Mrs. Campbell, 39, head to the tidy kitchen in their four-bedroom hillside rental in Orinda, an affluent suburb of San Francisco, where she makes breakfast and watches a TV news feed in the corner of the computer screen while he uses the rest of the monitor to check his email. ... Major spats have arisen because Mr. Campbell escapes into video games during tough emotional stretches. On family vacations, he has trouble putting down his devices. When he rides the subway to San Francisco, he knows he will be offline 221 seconds as the train goes

through a tunnel. Even after he unplugs, he craves the stimulation he gets from his electronic gadgets. He forgets things like dinner plans, and he has trouble focusing on his family. His wife, Brenda, complains, «It seems like he can no longer be fully in the moment». Their 16-year-old son, Connor, tall and polite like his father, recently received his first C's [grades at school], which his family blames on distraction from his gadgets. Their 8-year-old daughter, Lily, like her mother, playfully tells her father that he favors technology over family. ... «I would love for him to totally unplug, to be totally engaged» says Mrs. Campbell, who adds that he becomes «crotchety until he gets his fix [of technology]». But she would not try to force a change. «He loves it. Technology is part of the fabric of who he is» she says. «If I hated technology, I'd be hating him, and a part of who my son is too» (Richtel, 2010).

Recent research indicates that different generations have different habits of consuming internet or technology in general. However, one thing seems to be certain: More and more, we become more dependent on and attached to our daily technology fixes. The public transportation is more silent now. We meet less people talking on their cellphones on the buses, but more people engaged with the screen of their smartphones, that would not raise their eyes up even when somebody asks them something or the bus bumps.

3.3.1.1 Facebook

Facebook is an online social networking website launched in February 2004. As of September 2011, it has 748,794,000 registered users all around the world, which makes the website *the official* monster of the Web 2.0 genre. It is privately owned and operated by Facebook Inc., where the founder/creator Mark Zuckerberg owns 24% of all shares. The name of the network originates from the colloquial name of the books given to students by the university administrations when they start university in the United States, with the intention of helping the students to socialize and get to know each other better.

On Facebook, users can add others as «Facebook friends»; send them messages or interact with them using features that are specific to Facebook; as well as updating their personal profiles to inform friends about themselves. Additionally, users can join networks organized by workplace, school, or college. At the first instance it is difficult to grasp why and how an idea so simple turned into something so powerful, nevertheless it is a fact today that Facebook has reshaped our daily communications.

Facebook was founded as *Thefacebook* by Zuckerberg, together with his college roommates and fellow computer science students Eduardo Saverin, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes. Zuckerberg was inspired, by an editorial in *The Harvard Crimson* about the Facemash incident he caused in Harvard in his sophomore year (Hoffman, 2008). He began writing code for a new website in January 2004. On February 4th, 2004, «Thefacebook» was launched.

Table No 3.3.1b: How different generations use the internet

	Online teens (age 12-17)	Gen Y (18-32)	Gen X (33-44)	Younger Boomers (45-54)	Older Boomers (55-63)	Silent Generation (64-72)	G.I. Generation (73+)
Internet Users (% of all)	93%	87%	82%	79%	70%	56%	31%
Online Activities (% of internet users)							
Email	73	94	93	90	90	91	79
Use social networking	65	67	36	20	9	11	4
Online banking	*	57	65	53	49	45	24
Create blogs	28	20	10	6	7	6	6
Read blogs	49	43	34	27	25	23	15
Get news	63	74	76	70	69	56	37
Instant messaging	68	59	38	28	23	25	18
Visit government websites	*	55	64	62	63	60	31
Buy travel service or make reservation	*	65	70	69	66	69	65
Watch videos online, such as on YouTube	57	72	57	49	30	24	14
Create a profile on a social networking site	55	60	29	16	9	5	4
Use search engine	*	90	93	90	89	85	70
Download podcast	19	25	21	19	12	10	10
Get info about a job	30~	64	55	43	36	11	10
Download music	59	58	46	22	21	16	5
Download video	31~	38	31	21	16	13	13
Visit virtual worlds	10	2	3	1	1	1	0
Get health information	28	68	82	74	81	70	67
Buy a product online	38	71	80	68	72	56	47
Research a product	*	84	84	82	79	73	60
Participate in an online auction	*	26	31	27	26	16	6
Rate person, product, thing	*	37	35	29	30	25	16
Job-related research	*	51	59	57	48	33	9
Get religious information	26~	31	38	42	30	30	26
Online games	78	50	38	26	28	25	18

* No teen data for these activities. Source for Online Teens data: Pew Internet & American Life Project Surveys conducted Oct.-Nov. 2006 and Nov. 2007-Feb. 2008. Margin of error for online teens is $\pm 4\%$ for Oct.-Nov. 2006 and $\pm 3\%$ for Nov. 2007 - Feb. 2008. The average margin of error for each age group can be considerably higher than $\pm 3\%$. Most recent teen data for these activities comes from the Pew Internet & American Life Project Teens and Parents Survey conducted Oct.-Nov. 2004. Margin of error is $\pm 4\%$. (Jayson, 2009). Available at <http://usat.ly/11f1>. Retrieved on 02.08.2011.

In the very beginning, the membership on Thefacebook was limited to Harvard students, but it rapidly expanded to cover other colleges in the Boston area, the Ivy League, and Stanford University, and later to high school students. The company dropped «The» from its name after purchasing the domain name facebook.com in 2005 for US\$ 200,000. Finally, since September 26th, 2006, anyone with a valid email address, who declares to be 13 years of age or over can have an account/profile on Facebook. According to the unofficial Facebook information source, Allfacebook.com, the site is available in more than 70 languages (O'Neill, 2009).

Other important milestones for Facebook include: Microsoft's purchase of 1.6% share of the company for US\$ 240 million on October 24th, 2007, thereby giving the company a total implied value of US\$ 15 billion, just three years after it was founded; Facebook turning its cashflow positive for the first time in September, 2009; and a *Compete.com* study ranking Facebook as the most used social network by worldwide monthly active users, followed by MySpace in January, 2009.

Today Facebook is a company with more than 1,500 employees, and an approximated value of US\$ 50 billion (by Goldman Sachs) which is scheduled to go public in April, 2012 (Cowley, 2011). It is on *Entertainment Weekly's* end-of-the-decade «best-of» list, with a witty comment: «How on earth did we stalk our exes, remember our coworkers' birthdays, bug our friends, and play a rousing game of Scrabulous before Facebook?» (Geier, Jensen, Jordan, Lyons, Markovitz et al, 2009).

But how did Facebook turn into a giant company? It is free to users and generates most of its revenue from credits and advertisements that are served from the website's Flyers application. Microsoft is Facebook's exclusive partner for serving banner advertising and due to the agreement Facebook only serves advertisements that exist in Microsoft's advertisement inventory.

But the Facebook experience is not about the actual advertisement on the site. Considering the traditional online advertising rating system, namely the clickthrough rate (CTR), Facebook generally rates lower for advertisements than most major websites. The banner advertisements on Facebook generally receive one-fifth the number of clicks when compared to the web as a whole. These variables indicate that a smaller percentage of Facebook's users have the tendency to click on advertisements. Comparing it with Google ads, while Google users click on the first advertisement for search results an average of 8% of the time (80,000 clicks for every one million searches), Facebook's users click on advertisements an average of 0.04% of the time (400 clicks for every one million pages) (Denton, 2007). Explanations for Facebook's low CTR include the fact that Facebook's users are more technologically savvy and therefore use ad blocking software to hide advertisements, the users are younger and therefore are better at ignoring advertising messages, and that on MySpace, users spend more time

browsing through content while on Facebook, users spend their time communicating with friends and therefore have their attention diverted away from advertisements.

However the statistics show a curious peak on Facebook Pages for brands and products. Here some companies have reported CTR as high as 6.49% for Wall posts (Klassen, 2009). Involver, a social marketing platform, announced in July 2008 that it managed to attain a CTR of 0.7% on Facebook (over 10 times the typical CTR for Facebook ad campaigns) for its first client, Serena Software, managing to convert 1.1 million views into 8,000 visitors to their website (Involver, 2008). These outputs indicate us that, what is valuable in the *Facebook way of communication* for brands and companies is not the classical banner ads, but the opportunity for consumers and brands to engage in a dialogue using the site's features – *just the way they communicate with their friends*.

On Facebook, users can create their profiles with photos, lists of personal interests, contact information and other personal information. Communicating with friends and other users can be done through private/public messages or a chat feature. Users can also create and join interest groups and pages, some of which are maintained by organizations as a means of advertising. To overcome privacy concerns, Facebook enables its registered users to choose their own privacy settings and define who can see what parts of their profile. Here are some other basic Facebook features that help define the new daily communications of our contemporaneity.

The Wall

«The Wall», is one of the Facebook features with which the users may interact. It is a space on every user's profile page that allows friends to post messages for the user to see and comment back. If allowed by the settings of the user, other friends that can see the semi-public wall messages can provide feedback, by «liking» the post, or commenting on it. Starting from July 2007, Facebook began allowing users to post attachments to the Wall, whereas the Wall was previously limited to textual content only.

The Poke

«The Poke», allows users to send a virtual «poke» to each other. As is the case with an actual poke, it is a gesture used to show interest or affection to the person, without saying anything else. When users receive pokes from friends, a notification appears on their home page telling tells them that they have been poked.

Photos

«Photos», is one of the most popular applications on Facebook, where users can upload albums and photos. Facebook allows users to upload an unlimited number of photos, compared with other image

hosting services such as Photobucket and Flickr, which apply limits to the number of photos that a user is allowed to upload. According to Facebook, on the site there are:

- 50+ billion user photos (Johnson, 2010).
- More than 1.5 petabytes (1.5 million gigabytes) of photo storage used (Vajgel, 2009).
- 220 million photos added each week which take up 25 terabytes of disk space (Beaver, 2007).
- 3+ billion photo images served to users every day (Beaver, 2007).
- 550,000+ images served per second during peak traffic windows (Beaver, 2007).

Status Update

«Status update», is your reply to the question «What's on your mind?» that Facebook presents you on your homepage. Previously it was in the format «**[username]** is ... », which only allowed to form sentences with adjectives, such as «**Zeynep Arda is happy**» or «**Zeynep Arda is thinking about the future**», thereby causing the user to refer to her/himself in third person. Nonetheless with the changes

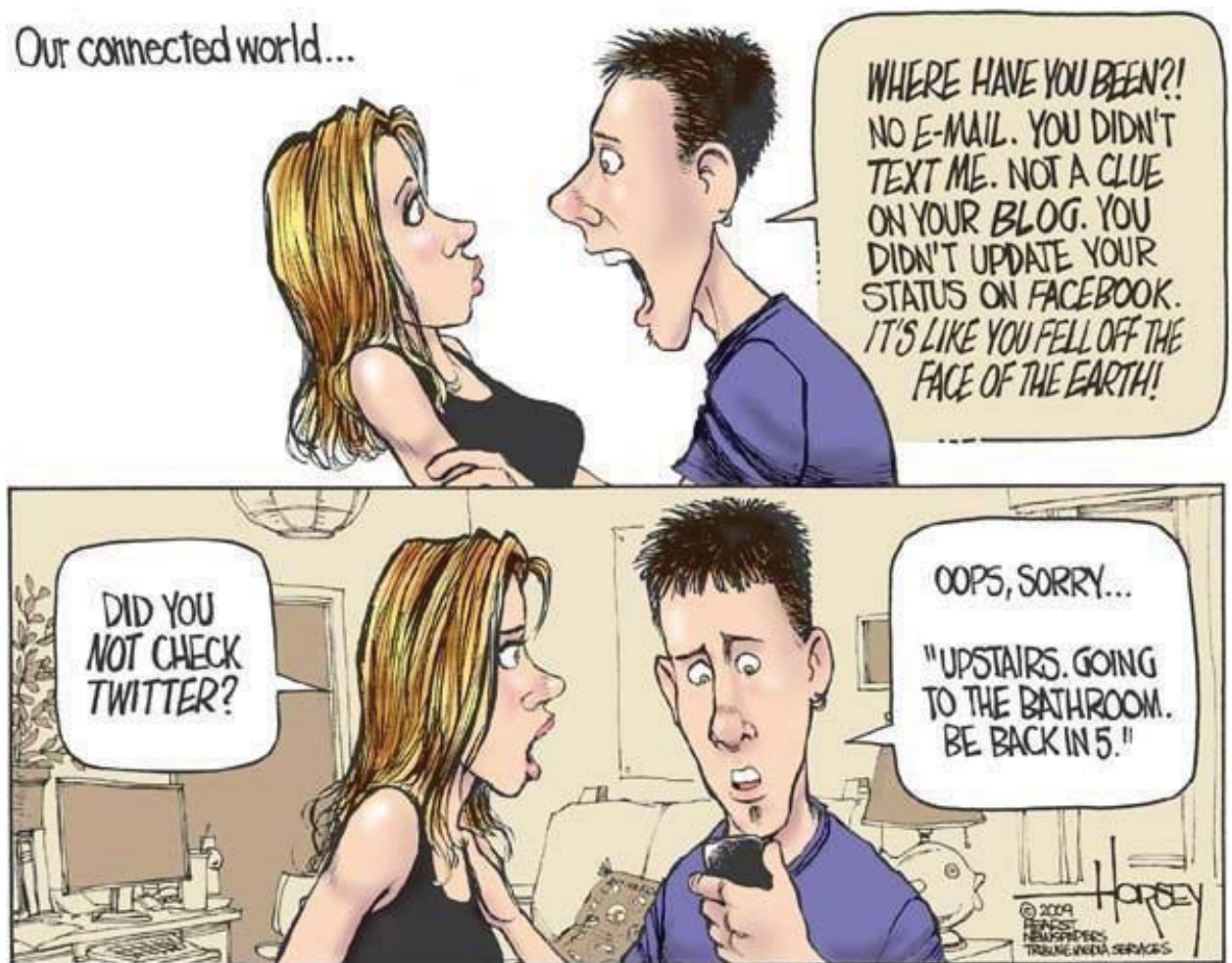


Figure 3.38 – Cartoon for Thursday, David Horsey (2009).

applied in 2009 now the user is allowed to enter any phrase that s/he feels like which allows users to inform their friends of their whereabouts and actions. The privacy level and the quantity of information disclosed in the status update depends on the user her/himself. I check my Facebook homepage as I conclude this paragraph and two status updates from my friends read: «urgh how can I live without a passport for 6 weeks!» and «I'd rather be in Sitges today».

News Feed

Another significant Facebook feature is, the «News Feed», announced on September 6th, 2006. News Feed is the information that appears on every user's homepage and combines information from Facebook friends, including profile changes, upcoming events, birthdays of friends etc. When it was first announced, the News Feed had caused dissatisfaction among Facebook users. Some people complained that it was too cluttered and that it consisted of undesired information, while others were concerned that it made it too easy for other people to track down individual activities like changes in relationship status, events or third-party conversations. This kind of tracking is informally referred to as «Facebook-stalking». There are several third-party applications that claim that they can find your stalkers, nevertheless usually they have problems fulfilling their promise. In response to the concerns raised by the News Feed, Zuckerberg issued an apology and the privacy features were fixed so as to allow users to control what type of information is shared automatically with friends and to prevent information from being shared as they see fit.

Tags

«Tags» is an important feature of Facebook's Photos application, which is the ability to create a social folksonomy, a way of categorizing and annotating your photos on Facebook, and hence creating a direct link between a person and her/his photos: The ability to «tag» or label users in a photo. For instance, if a photo contains a user's friend, then the user can tag the friend or her/himself in the photo. This sends a notification to the friend that they have been tagged, and provides them a link to see the photo.

Depending on your privacy settings, a person visiting your profile can see some or all of the photos where you have tagged yourself, or where your friends have tagged you. A person can remove the tags on the photos with which s/he does not want to be linked and identified with. As a similar measure, privacy settings can be defined for individual albums, limiting the groups of users that can see an album. For example, the privacy of an album can be set so that only the user's friends can see the album, while the privacy of another album can be set so that all Facebook users can see it.

Figure 3.39 – A humorous approach to Facebook's communication features by *El Jueves* (January 7th, 2009).



Edgar & Xavi están haciendo unas páginas

Muro Información Fotos +

TU ESTADO. Decir al mundo lo que estás haciendo en todo momento es superútil y necesario para la humanidad.

TU FOTO. Aquí, más que en ningún sitio, ha de ser falsa: para engañar a quien no te conoce, y para que quien te conoce no te reconozca.

Poner "Busco amistad" en el Feisbuc es el equivalente virtual a entrar en una discoteca al grito de "¡Xavi cuando se folle!"

Información básica

Sexo: Machotes
Buscando: Amistad
Ideología política: Punk / Ludismo
Creencias religiosas: Sasha Grey / Francmasonería

Vigila lo que escribes: cierta información puede ofender a algunas personas. Por ejemplo: no a todo el mundo le gusta La Oreja de Van Gogh

AMIGOS. En la vida real, amigo significa "persona con la que tienes una relación de afecto". En el Feisbuc, "alguien con quien estuviste una vez a menos de 10 metros".

Información personal

Actividades: Incendiar edificios públicos, escuchar La Oreja de Van Gogh, patear niños pequeños
Música favorita: Molotov / Mozart
Películas favoritas: La jungla de cristal III / 7 novias para 7 hermanos
Libros favoritos: Chapeau el Esmirriau / Crimen y castigo

Amigos
278 amigos (ver todos)



La cantidad de amigos que tienes en Feisbuc habla de ti. Menos de 10: "Soy un ser patético y asocial". Más de 300: "Soy un ser patético que además necesita aparentar."

Todo lo que se te pase por la cabeza tiene un grupo en Feisbuc. Y si no lo tiene, lo puedes crear tú. ¡Fascinante e inútil a partes iguales!

Grupos

Más (1,573)

Miembro de: Barceloneses en Feisbuc, Lectores de El Jueves en Feisbuc, Personas con dos ojos en Feisbuc, Amigos del vermú del domingo, Detractores de la Comic Sans, Soy consciente del cambio climático y espero que apuntándome a este grupo se pare solo, (...)

Aplicaciones Amigos conectados (2)

feisbuc

Inicio Perfil Amigos Mensajes

TU MURO: Aquí es donde otros usuarios te dejan mensajes y se publican automáticamente mensajes sobre ti. En este punto es cuando los que se preocupan por la privacidad pueden irse a casa.

Muro Información Fotos +

"No, no vamos a quedar. Si hace un montón que no nos vemos, será por algo. Asume que no somos amigos y déjame en paz. ¡Qué bonito sería escribir eso! Lástima que las normas de educación nos dicten respuestas como "claro que quedaremos" o "qué ilusión verte por aquí" (las normas de educación: útiles, pero sosas).



Raptor Jesus ha escrito a las 19:13 pm
eueeeh tío tío tío cuánto tiempo, hace un montón que no nos vemos, a ver si quedamos un día

Los tests del Feisbuc... Siempre descubriéndonos facetas de nuestra personalidad que desconocíamos!



Edgar & Xavi han hecho el test "¿Qué cantante hostiable eres?" y el resultado es Pau Donés.

Qué curioso esto del tiempo libre... que no tengas nada mejor que hacer que escribir obviedades.



Pedro Bear ha escrito a las 18:05 pm
¿Qué tal? Qué curioso esto del Facebook, hay un montón de gente por aquí.

Hazte fan de cosas! Que todos sepan lo que te gusta! Oh, sí! Espera a que nos cubramos los ojos! Tu personalidad nos deslumbra!



Edgar & Xavi se han hecho fans de Dormir mientras llueve.



Ruth ha escrito a las 17:31 pm
Eh tíos, ayer por la noche os dejasteis los calzoncillos en mi casa. A ver si venís a buscarlos y lo repetimos.

Hay una casilla donde pone "mensaje privado". A veces hay que marcarla. Muchas veces, en realidad. En otras palabras: Márcala, joder!



Edgar & Xavi asistirán al evento Cumpleaños de Kim

Eventos: porque no basta con decir al mundo qué estamos haciendo ahora... ¡Hay que anticiparles qué haremos luego!



Edgar & Xavi are playing Geo Challenge right now!



JL Martín ha escrito a las 10:34 am
¡Dejad de hacer el manta de una vez y poneos a trabajar!

Este mensaje es ficticio. Por suerte, la mayoría de jefes son viejunos y no pueden usar el Feisbuc para controlarte. ¡Aprovecha! Jugar al Geo Challenge en horas de oficina es un placer casi orgásmico.

On April 11th, 2011, Facebook launched a curious new feature for photo tagging – people can tag photos with a brand, product, company or person's Facebook page, similar to the way they tag their friends in photos.

Notes

Facebook «Notes» was introduced on August 22nd, 2006, a blogging feature that allowed tags and embeddable images. Users were later able to import blogs from Xanga, LiveJournal, Blogger and other blogging services.

Chat

During the week of April 7th, 2008, Facebook released a Comet-based instant messaging application called «Chat» to several networks, which allows users to communicate with friends and is similar in functionality to desktop-based instant messengers. Later, the chat feature was developed so as to connect seamlessly with MSN Messenger as well.

Gifts

«Gifts» were launched on February 8th, 2007, which allows users to send virtual gifts to their friends that appear on the recipient's profile. Each virtual Facebook gift costs US\$ 1.00 to purchase, and a personalized message can be attached to each gift.

Marketplace

On May 14th, 2007, Facebook launched «Marketplace», which lets users post free classified ads. Marketplace has been compared to Craigslist, a very popular site for classified ads, especially in the United States. The major difference between the two is that listings posted by a user on Facebook Marketplace are only seen by users that are in the same network as that user, whereas listings posted on *Craigslist* can be seen by anyone.

The Like Button

«Like Button» One of the basic feedback mechanisms of Facebook communication is the «like button». When a user posts a photo, a status update or a comment on another user's post, just underneath the post is the option to «like» it. This way, friends can respond with their own comments, and also press the «Like» button to show that they enjoyed reading/seeing your post. The like button is considered as a «silent», indirect nice gesture, which could correspond to a wink in face-to-face communication.

Comments

«Comments» are the direct feedback mechanisms used by users to give their opinion on their friends'

Facebook posts, photos or videos. Almost everything on Facebook has a small link below that suggests you to «comment». Clicking the link opens up a text box below, where your comment would appear right next to a small thumbnail of your profile picture and to your name. That way, your comment is directly perceived together with your Facebook image/identity. Anyone that is allowed by the user to see the post can also comment on it. The user is allowed to remove the comments that s/he does not like. There is also the option to «like»

Mobile App

«Facebook Mobile Apps» are the applications to access Facebook on-the-go, through your mobile devices. Many new smartphones offer access to the Facebook services either through their web-browsers or applications. An official Facebook application is available for both the iPhone OS and the Android OS. Nokia and Research in Motion both provide Facebook applications for their own mobile devices.

3.3.1.2 Twitter

Another *star* of the Web 2.0 era is Twitter, though it is quite difficult to understand its success in the first instance – or how communication on Twitter works for that matter. Mike Harvey wrote in 2009 that «Twitter is the latest way to send a message to the world», indicating it to be more than just a social networking site: «Tweeting is changing the way we think». To understand how it is possible, we should go back to the basic theory of communication.

A longstanding objective of media communications research is encapsulated by what is known as Lasswell's maxim: «who says what to whom in what channel with what effect» (1948), as named after one of the pioneers of the field, Harold Lasswell. Although simple to state, Lasswell's maxim has proven difficult to satisfy in the more-than 60 years since he stated it, in part because it is generally difficult to observe information flows in large populations, and in part because different channels have very different attributes and effects. As a result, theories of communications have tended to focus either on «mass» communication, defined as «one-way message transmissions from one source to a large, relatively undifferentiated and anonymous audience» or on «interpersonal» communication, meaning a «two-way message exchange between two or more individuals» (Wu, Hofman, Mason & Watts, 2011: 1). The primary aspect of Twitter is that it provides *mass* communication for the underprivileged part of the population – for the previously *unvoiced*. And yet, who is *listening* is not yet clear.

SOME INTERESTING FACEBOOK FACTS FROM WIKIPEDIA

#1 - In December 2008, the *Supreme Court of the Australian Capital Territory* ruled that Facebook is a valid protocol to serve court notices to defendants. It is believed to be the world's first legal judgement that defines a summons posted on Facebook as legally binding. In March 2009, the *New Zealand High Court* associate justice David Glendall allowed for the serving of legal papers on Craig Axe by the company *Axe Market Garden* via Facebook. Employers, such as *Virgin Atlantic Airways*, have also used Facebook as a means to keep tabs on their employees and have even been known to fire them over posts they have made.

#2 - By 2005, the use of Facebook had already become so ubiquitous that the generic verb «facebooking» had come into use to describe the process of browsing others' profiles or updating one's own.

#3 - In 2008, *Collins English Dictionary* declared «Facebook» as their new «Word of the Year».

#4 - In December 2009, the *New Oxford American Dictionary* declared their word of the year to be the verb «unfriend», defined as «to remove someone as a 'friend' on a social networking site such as Facebook». As in, «I decided to unfriend my roommate on Facebook after we had a fight».

#5 - In February 2008, a Facebook group called «One Million Voices Against FARC» organized an event that saw hundreds of thousands of Colombians march in protest against the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia, better known as the FARC (from the group's Spanish name).

#6 - American author Ben Mezrich published a book in July 2009 about Mark Zuckerberg and the stage at the Facebook – Saint Anselm College debates in 2008 founding of Facebook, titled *The Accidental Billionaires: The Founding Of Facebook, A Tale of Sex, Money, Genius, and Betrayal*.

#7 - Facebook has also been directly parodied in the American animated comedy series *South Park* in their «You Have 0 Friends» episode of April 2010.

#8 - *The Social Network*, a comedy-drama film directed by David Fincher about the founding of Facebook, was released on October 1, 2010. The film featured an ensemble cast consisting of Jesse Eisenberg (Mark Zuckerberg), Justin Timberlake (Sean Parker), Brenda Song (Joanna Simmons), Andrew Garfield (Eduardo Saverin). The script was written by Aaron Sorkin and adapted from Ben Mezrich's 2009 book. According to Box Office Mojo, *The Social Network*, has reached a box office score of US\$ 224,920,315. The film won three Academy Awards.

#9 - At the age of 102, Ivy Bean of Bradford, England joined Facebook in 2008, as one of the oldest people ever on Facebook. An inspiration to other residents, she quickly became more widely known, and several fan pages were made in her honour. She visited Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his wife Sarah in Downing Street early in 2010. Some time after creating her Facebook page, Bean also joined Twitter, when she passed the maximum number of friends allowed by Facebook. She also became the oldest person to ever use the Twitter website. At the time of her death, she had 4,962 friends on Facebook and more than 56,000 followers on Twitter. Her death was widely reported in the media and she received tributes from several notable media personalities.



Figure 3.40 – Facebook facts from Wikipedia. Designed by Zeynep Arda (2011).

In its simplest definition, Twitter is a micro-blogging site where you record and post your thoughts or what you are up to in 140 characters or less. The enforced brevity of the service is what it keeps concise and *meaningful*; users often highlight favorite stories on the web, post pictures or talk about news or TV shows. A Twitter message is called a «tweet», and it is a bit like status updates on Facebook. Unlike other social networking sites, it is not about connecting with people you know, it is about following the people that interest you. Instead of befriending your actual social capital digitally, as is the case in Facebook, in Twitter you choose whose updates to «follow». The tweets from the people you follow appear automatically on your Twitter home page. Though most people begin with a circle of friends, many find that they break out of this circle once they become regular users.

Twitter entered our lives on July 15th, 2006. It is the brain child of Jack Dorsey, whose fascination with the city life, police and ambulance radio frequencies, haiku of taxicab communications and programming led to his suggestion of creating a service that would allow anyone to write a line or two about himself, using a cell phone's keypad, and then send that message to anyone who wanted to receive it. «The short text alert, for him, was a way to add a missing human element to the digital picture of a pulsing, populated city» (Sano, 2009). Interestingly, similar to Zuckerberg, young Dorsey was also described as *shy* when it came to socializing (Kirkpatrick, 2011).

[W]e came across the word «twitter» and it was just perfect. The definition was 'a short burst of inconsequential information' and 'chirps from birds'. And that's exactly what the product was (Jack Dorsey as cited in Sano, 2009).

Twitter, celebrating its fifth anniversary, is now one of the signature social platforms of our day, drawing over 200 million users. Google, Microsoft, and Facebook have all reportedly been vying to buy the company for more than \$8 billion. And Twitter is so central to modern culture that when popular uprisings swept through the Middle East this year many of the protesters coordinated their movements by tweeting. Indeed, Dorsey's invention is yet another Web 2.0 application that is helping transform communication and political life across the globe.⁵

On Twitter, the posts, *tweets*, are publicly visible by default, however senders can restrict message delivery to their friends list. All users can send and receive tweets via the Twitter website, compatible external applications, such as, for smartphones, or by Short Message Service (SMS) which is available in certain countries. Twitter is sometimes described as the «SMS of the internet». In fact, the messages were initially set to 140-character limit for compatibility with SMS messaging indeed, introducing the shorthand notation and slang commonly used in these messages.

FIVE TWITTER TIPS

#1 - Find some people to follow. Use the «find people» feature or search for subjects that you might be interested in. Check the profiles of people who are following others who you follow. Try out a few. Follow at least 30 people to get a lively home page. Then start posting your updates. Don't expect many to follow you immediately. It will take some time and those you follow do not automatically follow you.

#2 - Be short and sweet. Quality matters more than quantity when it comes to «tweeting», so don't use your 140 characters every time. Keep it light and chatty. Some tweet ten times an hour, some ten times a month. Tweet as often as you have something to say and your network will build. If you attack people, people will shun you. Use Tiny URL to turn long web addresses such as http://technology.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/tech_and_web/the_web/article5565696.ece into this: <http://tiny.cc/hzYBB>.

#3 - Observe the etiquette. If someone you follow posts an interesting update or link - copy and paste it into your update box with RT (retweet) at the start and post it.

#4 - Reply to someone by putting «@» at the front of the name of the person you are responding to. Even if they are not following you, they are alerted to your post. Remember everyone can see these. If you want to message someone privately put a «D» (direct) or «DM» (direct message) in front of the name and then your message.

#5 - Experiment. Twitter.com is a great platform but it is not very user-friendly - try one of the applications that outside developers have built: a favourite is Tweetdeck but there are also Twhirl and Twitterific. These give you a stand-alone home page where you can search Twitter, and they provide instant URL shortening, @replies and retweeting, among other things.



Figure 3.41 – Five tips to make the best of Twitter from *Mashable*. Designed by Zeynep Arda (2011).

Figure 3.42 – The Egyptians attribute a significant role to the online social networks in the revolution they realized in February, 2011.

Time Magazine's collaborating technology author Steven Johnson describes the basic mechanics of Twitter as «remarkably simple»:

As a social network, Twitter revolves around the principle of followers. When you choose to follow another Twitter user, the user's tweets appear in reverse chronological order on your main Twitter page. If you follow 20 people, you'll see a mix of tweets scrolling down the page: breakfast-cereal updates, interesting new links, music recommendations, even musings on the future of education (Johnson, 2009).

Users can group posts together by topic or type by use of hashtags – words or phrases prefixed with a «#». Similarly, the letter «d» followed by a username allows users to send messages privately only to the designated user. Finally, the «@» sign followed by a username is used for mentioning or replying to other users. In late 2009, the «Twitter Lists» feature was added, making it possible for users to follow (as well as mention and reply to) lists of authors instead of individual authors.

Twitter collects personally identifiable information about its users and shares it with third parties. The service reserves the right to sell this information as an asset if the company changes hands. While Twitter displays no advertising, advertisers can target users based on their history of tweets and may quote tweets in ads.

According to information tweeted by Twitter Inc. on their official Twitter profile, the service had 400,000 tweets posted per quarter in 2007. This grew to 100 million tweets posted per quarter in 2008. By the end of 2009, 2 billion tweets per quarter were being posted. In the first quarter of 2010, 4 billion tweets have been posted. Currently, about 65 million tweets are posted each day, equalling about 750 tweets sent each second, according to data provided by Twitter Inc.

In August 2009, San Antonio-based market research firm Pear Analytics analyzed 2,000 tweets originating from the United States and in English, over a 2-week period and distinguished six categories defined according to their content:

- Pointless babble – 41%
- Conversational – 38%
- Pass-along value – 9%
- Self-promotion – 6%
- Spam – 4%
- News – 4% (Ryan, 2009: 5).

Social networking researcher Danah Boyd responded to the Pear Analytics survey by arguing that what the Pear researchers labelled «pointless babble» is better characterized as «social grooming» and/or «peripheral awareness», which she explains as persons who «want to know what the people around them are thinking and doing and feeling, even when co-presence isn't viable» (Boyd, 2009). Nonetheless, in March, 2009, the comic strip *Doonesbury* began to satirize Twitter. Many characters highlighted the triviality of tweets although one defended the need to keep up with the constant-update trend (Trudeau, 2009). *SuperNews!* similarly satirized Twitter as an addiction to «constant self-affirmation» and said tweets were nothing more than «shouts into the darkness hoping someone is listening» (Faure-Brac, 2009).

Twitter is mainly used by older adults who might not have used other social sites before Twitter, says Jeremiah Owyang, an industry analyst studying social media: «Adults are just catching up to what teens have been doing for years». It also stated that 5% of users accounted for 75% of all activity, and that New York has the most Twitter users (Ryan, 2009: 9).

CNN April, 14th, 2010 declared that Twitter is now keeping track of world history: Twitter and the Library of Congress announced that every public tweet posted since Twitter started in 2006 will be archived digitally by the federal U.S. library. The purpose, according to a blog post by Library of Congress communications director Matt Raymond is to document «important tweets» as well as gather information about the way we live through the sheer masses of tweets on the site. «I'm no PhD., but it boggles my mind to think what we might be able to learn about ourselves and the world around us

from this wealth of data» Raymond said in the post. And I'm certain we'll learn things that none of us now can even possibly conceive» (Gross, 2010).

Veteran Twitterers report its usefulness as a way of soliciting advice, assistance or directions; celebrity users relish it because it allows them to forge a more direct dialogue with their viewing public, often to the quiet irritation of those in charge of their public image.



Figure 3.43 – %75 percent of the tweets are produced by the *loud mouths* who constitute only %5 of all Twitter users. Image by David McCandless (2009).

Evidence of Twitter's cultural impact and its exponential rise in popularity are easy to find but discovering why anyone should want to dedicate time informing everyone in the world what s/he is up to at any given moment is harder to fathom. The answer, though, lies in the idea of «being in the loop». To most of us, the phrase means no more than being «in the know», privy to information known only to a privileged inner circle. To be cut out of the loop, by contrast, is to be distanced from your colleagues and excluded from a hallowed circle of power – which nobody wants nowadays.

3.3.1.3 How Communication and Identity Was Revolutionized

The results of a research carried out and announced by Nielsen Company in March 2009, indicated an epochal change on the internet use: Time spent on social networks by internet users worldwide had for the first time exceeded the amount of time internet users spent on email. By the same token, according to the *Digital Life Scale* carried out as part of this dissertation in 2011, %34.3 of 528 participants indicated online social networking to be their most frequent online activity.

A new form of communication had gone mainstream. Total time spent on social networks grew a healthy 63 percent in 2008 around the world. Facebook, however, was in another league. It outdistanced every other service Nielsen measured. Time spent on Facebook had increased 566% in a year, to 20.5 billion minutes (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 274).

David Kirkpatrick evaluates the growth of Facebook in his book *The Facebook Effect*(2010) with an amazed attitude. Indeed the exponential growth of Facebook in a relatively short time is impressive.

Improbable statistics continue accumulating. In seventeen countries around the world, more than 30% of all citizens – not internet users but citizens – are on Facebook, according to the Facebook Global Monitor. [These countries] include Norway (46%), Canada (42%), Hong Kong (40.5%), the United Kingdom (40%), Chile (35%), Israel (32.5%), Qatar (32%), and the Bahamas (30.5%). In tiny Iceland, 53% of people are on the service. Facebook is the number-one social network in Brunei, Cambodia, Malaysia, and Singapore, among other countries. It surpassed MySpace in global visitors in May 2008, according to comScore. And in mid-2008 the word Facebook passed sex in frequency as a search term on Google worldwide (2010: 274).

This point was identified earlier in 2007, by Bill Tancer, a Time magazine columnist and general manager of *Hitwise*, a global online competitive intelligence service which collects data directly from ISP networks to aid website managers in analysing trends in visitor behavior and to measure website market share. Tancer had indicated in his article that, surprisingly, online social networking started to rank even higher than porn on the internet: «Gen Y [has] changing habits: they're too busy chatting with friends to look at online skin».

Perhaps a more interesting – and more accurate – way to figure out where college students are going online is to assess which of the 172 web categories tracked by Hitwise get the most hits from 18- to 24-year-olds. Here's a shocker: Porn is not No. 1. I've actually been puzzled by the decrease in visits to the Adult Entertainment category over the last two years. Visits to porn sites have dropped from 16.9% of all site visits in the U.S. in October 2005 to 11.9% as of last week, a 33% decline. Currently, for web users over the age of 25, Adult Entertainment still ranks high in popularity, coming in second, after search engines. Not so for 18- to 24-year-olds, for whom social networks rank first, followed by search engines, then web-based email – with porn sites lagging behind in fourth. If you chart the rate of visits to social-networking sites against those to adult sites over the last two years, there appears to be a strong negative correlation – visits to social networks go up as visits to adult sites go down (Tancer, 2007).

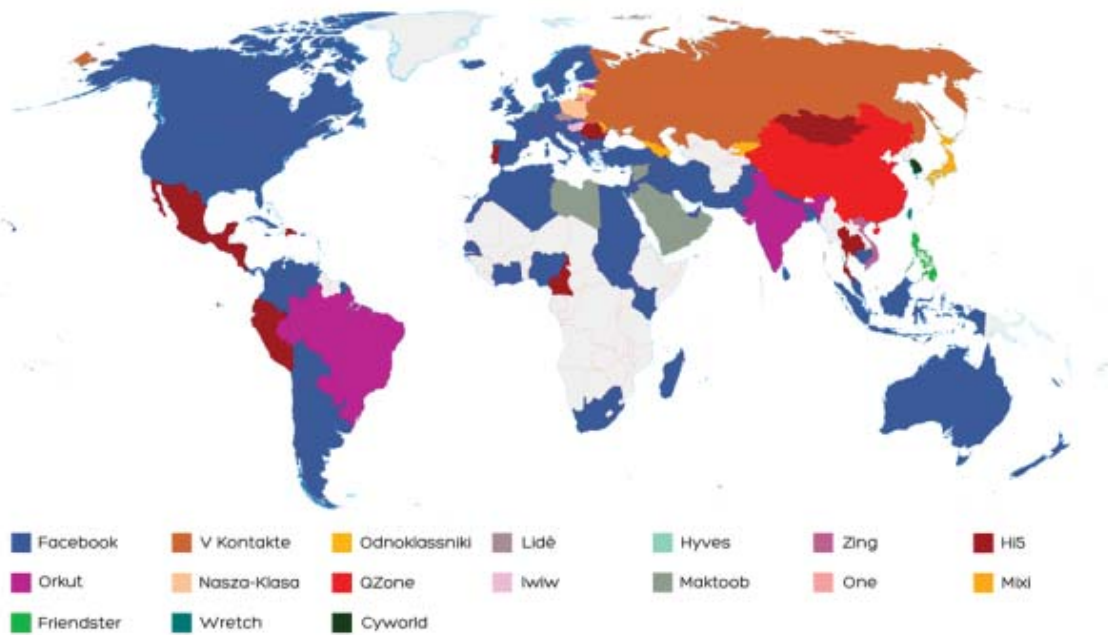
Turkle, in *Alone Together* (2011), describes the experience of Generation Y as «tethered». As she provides us with an example from her own daughter, she finds it somehow sad that they cannot experience the «moment», as they constantly have an ongoing digital life to attend to:

Our new experience of place is apparent as we travel. Leaving home has always been a way to see one's own culture anew. But what if, tethered, we bring our homes with us? ... The director of a program that places American students in Spanish universities once complained to me that her students were not «experiencing Spain». They spent their free time on Facebook, chatting with their friends from home. ... I was sympathetic, thinking of the hours I had spent walking with my teenage daughter on a visit to Paris, the summer after she first got her mobile phone. As we sat in a café, waiting for a friend to join us for dinner, Rebecca received a call from a schoolmate who asked her to lunch in Boston, six hours behind us in time. My daughter said simply, «Not possible, but how about Friday?» Her friend didn't even know she was out of town. When I grew up, the idea of the «global village» was an abstraction. My daughter lives something concrete. Emotionally, socially, wherever she goes, she never leaves home. I asked her if she wouldn't rather experience Paris without continual reminders of Boston. She told me she was happy; she liked being in touch with her friends. She seemed to barely understand my question. I was wistful, worried that Rebecca was missing an experience I cherished in my youth: an undiluted Paris. My Paris came with the thrill of disconnection from everything I knew. My daughter's Paris did not include this displacement (93).

The main motive for digital socialization among the younger generations is to «stay connected» to their friends. The idea of being «in the loop» is older than we think. It can be traced back seventy years to an idea called cybernetics, whose progenitors imagined was the perfect human society – one that would see us all hitched to an electronic information loop defined by a continuous cycle of messaging and feedback among all those who were involved in it. Norbert Wiener, the American mathematician and father of cybernetics, convinced himself that society was in danger of spiralling out of control; and that only by putting us into constant touch with each other could he prevent it from careering towards collapse (1950/1989: 131).

WORLD MAP OF SOCIAL NETWORKS

June 2009



June 2011

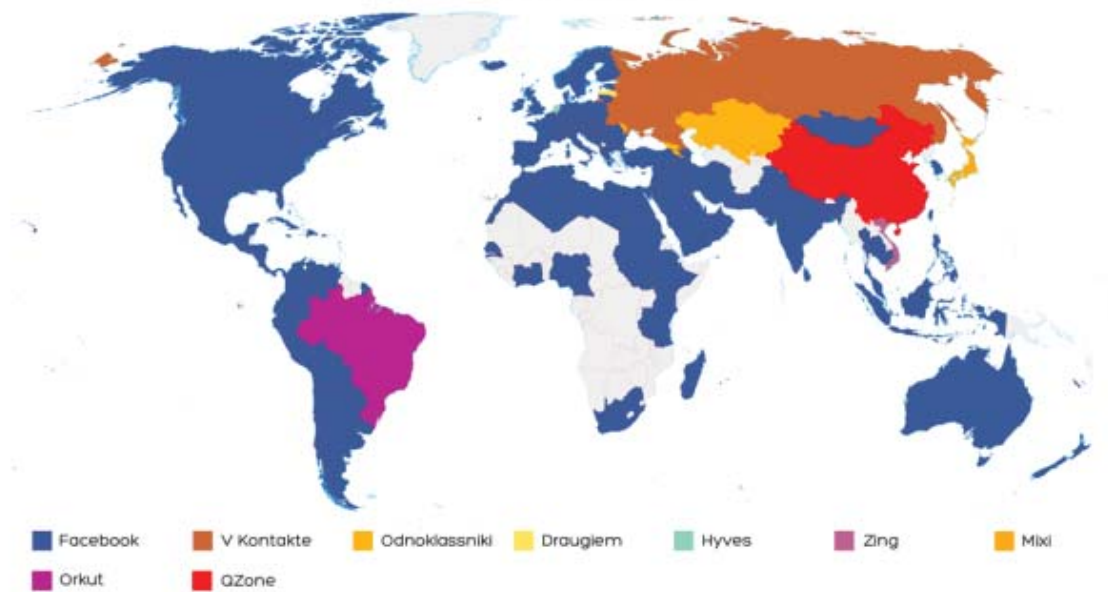


Figure 3.44 – Facebook conquers the world. Graphic by Vincenzo Cosenza (2011).

A while later, in the 1960s, Marshall McLuhan famously predicted, that an electronic information loop was going to shake modern society to its foundations, tying everyone and everything together in a «new electronic interdependence». The impact of this electronic information loop coursing through all our veins, McLuhan thought, could only enhance our ability to understand one another. It would, he felt sure, precipitate the rise of a «global village» and a new era of greater responsibility and understanding (1964/1994: 333). At the time McLuhan was only talking about the radio, not even the television.

Over the past decade, millions of us have quietly migrated to a vast electronic suburb to dedicate large periods of time messaging and responding to a constant stream of information from our electronic ties. When we, inhabitants of the screen/network, return there compulsively to check for updates, we are not only trying to be more efficient and more productive, but to ward off a persistent fear of «falling out of the loop».

When McLuhan argued that «the medium is the message» nearly half a century ago, he meant that the content of a medium is often less important than the difference it makes in us just to have it around. It was a good point, but McLuhan did not live long enough to see his aphorism twisted around. The world we now inhabit is one in which messages are rapidly becoming the medium – electronic messages sent back and forth between us at dazzling speed on a never-ending electronic information loop. The coming global electronic village, as McLuhan feared in his less optimistic moments, might not give rise not to a village-like harmony after all but precipitate a new kind of voyeurism. The danger, he once announced, was that that we would emerge into «a world in which you don't necessarily have harmony but an extreme concern with everyone else's business, and much involvement in everybody else's life» (1964/1994: 45).

Several participants in the Preliminary Facebook Survey realized by the author in August 2010, have mentioned the role of Facebook in maintaining social relationships with friends, family and «second-degree» acquaintances, while one participant indicated the «obligation» to be on Facebook: «Cause I know, if I am not on Facebook, there will be a huge void in my social life, I will be disconnected from my people».

Though not a new concept peculiar to Facebook, a commonly mentioned motive for presenting self online, beyond its use for self-expression is setting up a virtual meeting point through which family members and friends can stay in touch. The idea was digitally present earlier with the personal web pages, but probably it has never been truer of any particular website before Facebook, home to about 750 million personal profiles. It was openly indicated in its initial homepage:

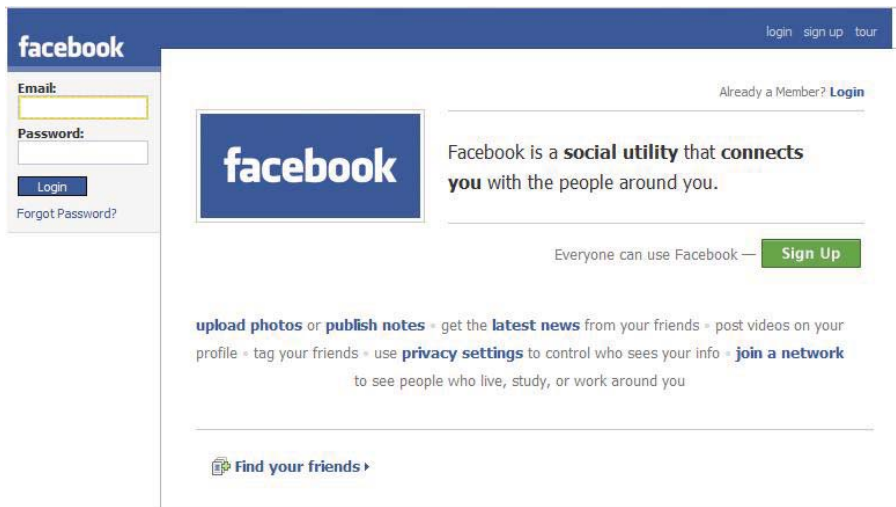


Figure 3.45 – «Facebook is a social utility that connects you with the people around you» (2007).

And in its later revised form:



Figure 3.46 – «Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life» (2009).

And recently, Facebook does not even need an explanation. Everybody already knows that Facebook is, like Nokia, «connecting people». On its initial page it just reminds you to be connected on the move as well, and that the service is free and always will be. Even if you are not by your computer, make sure you are «connected» through your smartphone or your Ipad:

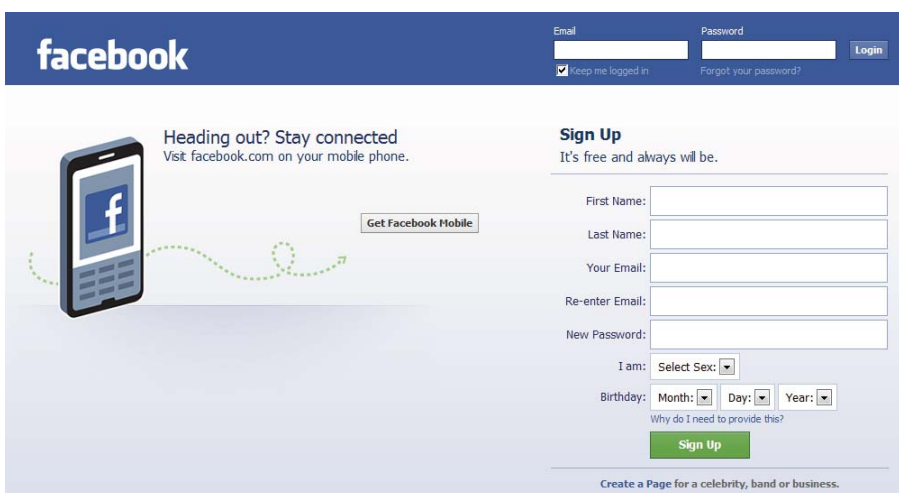


Figure 3.47 – «Heading out? Stay connected. Get Facebook Mobile» (2011).

As we have observed in the previous pages, Twitter takes a further step in being the virtual meeting point and minimizes the *meeting* to 140 characters while it insists on its instant nature:



Figure 3.48 – With Twitter we meet a new form of knowing about the people in our lives. We get to know what they are doing everytime they bother to update their status message (2009).

Earlier in internet history, scholars have shown interest in personal home pages as a digital medium of self-presentation. Dominick found that the strategies employed in personal home pages were similar to interpersonal strategies of self-presentation (1999: 649). For example, individuals used links on their personal home pages as a means of social association and sought positive reinforcement by inviting visitors to email them or sign and view their «guestbooks» (a collection of visitor signatures and comments). A similar taxonomy of web-based invitational strategies were identified through the following items: feedback mechanisms such as email, guestbook, and others; vertical hierarchies as in the position of items on the page from top to bottom; personal expertise; external validation in terms of awards bestowed upon the site; direct address; and personality. Links on personal home pages were considered as means of «social association». For example, by providing links to other sites, by listing their interests, people indirectly defined themselves (Papacharissi, 2002c: 348-9; 2002a: 644). A very similar comment was made about Facebook, by yet another participant of the Preliminary Facebook Survey:

(Female, 27, Turkey – August 29, 2010 at 11:35pm) It definitely makes the distances shorter. I believe I express myself better with the photos that I upload, with my wall posts and the links I share. I share my feelings with others by commenting on their posts or «liking» their photos. I befriend the new people I meet [in real life] on Facebook, hence I get more intimate with them and get to know them better through their Facebook profiles (2010).

According to Papacharissi, earlier in the case of personal web pages, another reading of the feedback mechanisms was probable:

Feedback mechanisms like email, guestbooks, counters, and other methods all reflected, on the one hand, a desire for interpersonal communication and, on the other, a need for social approval. Needs for communication and approval that are frequently manifested in off-line communication are similarly demonstrated in communication through personal websites. The use of guestbooks could even be interpreted as a request for affirmation that the presentation of self has been well received and that the management of expressions given and given *off* has resulted in a successful performance. ... As Goffman argued, the performer may implicitly request that her/his observers confirm that the «character they see actually possesses the attributes he appears to possess» a need communicated in the online setting through the use of interactive mechanisms like guestbooks, counters, and short surveys (2002a: 654).

Despite the frequent testimony that Facebook provides a medium for *real* self-expression, we are familiar with Turkle's earlier observation of the online identity. Her research on multi-user domains or MUDs in particular revealed how users put their online personae to sleep when exiting a MUD and returning to their real life personae, thus cycling through different environments and identities (1984/2004: 288). As it becomes our *real* medium of self-expression, Facebook provides a more adequate example to take the game metaphor used by Goffman as early as 1952. Our social interaction is like a «con» game, we are all like «con artists» (confidence tricksters) scheming to win the confidence of others with our contrived and self-serving presentations of self (Treviño, 2003: 18). In this sense, the social actor is an exploiter and manipulator of situations. Papacharissi also employs Goffman's metaphor while writing about the earlier personal websites. She talks about the «con» nature of the self-presentation online and that the study of «how people manipulate, reinvent, or reveal aspects of their identity in the context of online communities» has concerned scholars (2002a: 644).

Personal home page authors may share traffic concerns similar to commercial sites, but their primary goal is to use interactivity to complete a more effective self-performance online. Interactive elements could, for example, be used to project a more extroverted self, eager to interact with others online (Papacharissi, 2002a: 649).

Today evidence suggests that the motive of the online «con artist» on Facebook is much more of «impressing» than that of «self-exploration». Another significant point about our representation with *images* on Facebook, and *words* on Twitter is that we are being represented non-stop, 7/24, every day of the year where we are not present. Before Web 2.0, even cyberspace interaction required for you to be *there* to communicate. A minimum of synchronization was crucial to construct the «virtual confidentialities». Today though this may still be true for the type of communication and socialization that *Second Life* or *World of Warcraft* offers, nonetheless, on Facebook, Twitter and other similar popular networks, everybody takes their time to communicate whenever they feel like it, while their representation is right there continuously attending curious guests 7 days a week, 24 hours a day.

A humorous song, by the comedy duo Rhett and Link, elaborates our idea of communication on Facebook:

I wouldn't call myself a social butterfly
And there's not much that separates me from the other guy
But when I login I begin to live

There's an online world where I am king
Of a little website dedicated to me
With pictures of me and a list of my friends
And an unofficial record of the groups that I'm in.

Before the internet friendship was so tough
You actually had to be in people's presence and stuff
Who would've thought that with a point and a click
I could know that Hope Floats is your favorite flick

Facebook (Facebook)
I'm hooked on Facebook
I used to meet girls hangin out at the mall, now I just wait for them to write on my wall.
(It's more than a want, it's more than a need; I'd schivel up and die without my minifeed)
Take a look. (You're hooked) on Facebook.

Oh Link's status changed. It says he's playing the recorder...

How do you know this person?
Did you hook up with this person?
Do you need to request confirmation?
Or did you just think they looked cute... from their picture on Facebook?

If the internet crashed all across the land
Or my Facebook account was deleted by the man
I'd carry around a picture of my face
And a summary of me typed out on a page.

Interestingly, as we have seen earlier, while the *trivial* nature of such communication is discussed by some, and its significance in «social grooming» is defended by others (Boyd, 2009). We do claim to *know* people through these representations that are constituted by some words, links and images. We could say that the rapid pace of life in the urban space does not give us much time to know other people *deeper* and we confine ourselves to the limited and superficial information we gather. Another explanation could be found in Papacharissi's elaboration of the personal web page:

The frequent use of links reflected an effort to present the interests of the author, as well as to structure an identity for the author by associating him/her with certain types of sites available online. Moreover, it presented an attempt to express social status in an environment where more traditional status markers like appearance, accents, and other nonverbal behaviors were absent. In face-to-face situations, people who meet for the first time frequently go through the social ritual of exchanging likes and dislikes, such as favorite drinks, movies, hobbies, and other interests. Listing links on a website seemed to be the web page equivalent of that social ritual. Beyond simply stating their likes and dislikes directly, web authors preferred to enhance the presentation of that aspect of their personalities with hyperlinks to relevant sites. This was a gesture offered in support of the textual statements made and an indirect attempt to state one's place within society (2002a: 654).

Another common critic to Facebook-Twitter way of communication comes from exaggerated sharing of one's whereabouts. As Blackman and Choquelle highlight in their research, *lifecasting* on the online social network became a way of «updating existence» (2011: 15). Social networking, supported also by the smartphone and mobile applications have accustomed users to openly promote every aspect of their lives. Rapid snapshots from the iPhone on the move, journeys, the bagels for breakfast, champagne at the waterfront, new boyfriends/girlfriends smiling happily in the profile pictures. What was once *private life* is now *self-expression*: «A bad mood, a new job, a spiritual reflection, a sudden rant... anything is good for sharing and everything is done to encourage this update frenzy» (Blackman & Choquelle, 2011: 15). An ironical point of view onto the current tide of communication is very appropriate here:

I have nothing to say and I'm saying it! (John Cage as cited in Fletcher, 2001: 31).

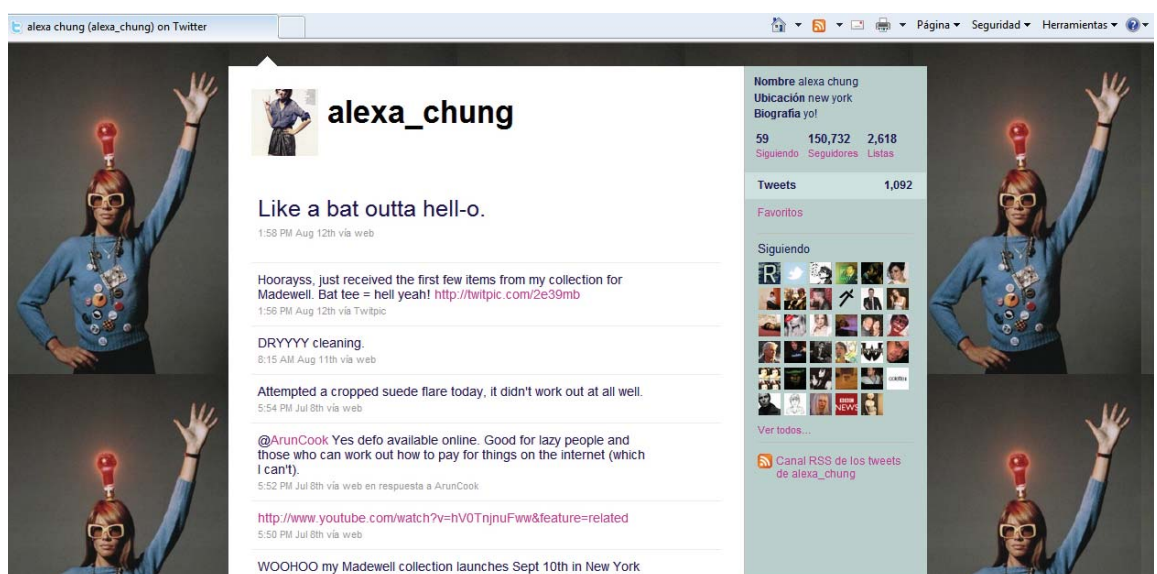


Figure 3.49 – Alexa Chung tweets: «DRYYYYY CLEANING». StyleCaster retweets and asks Alexa: «Ask yourself, Alexa, was this worth tweeting? The unexamined life is not worth living after all». Alexa Chung, a television presenter, model and contributing editor at the British Vogue magazine, has 400,014 followers on Twitter.

As our social interactions are reduced from face-to-face communication to *facebook-to-facebook communication*, are human beings getting more social or completely asocial? Instead of meeting up, having a coffee and a chat with a friend, or at least a phone call which at least allowed us to hear the voice of one another, we prefer to inform us about what our friends are doing through their status updates and FB albums, we leave sweet comments below their photos, we celebrate their special days by sending a bunch of virtual flowers. Are we overconnected and completely disconnected from one another reaching out only from behind our screens?

Female, 30, Turkey – September 14 at 9:07am – I do think that Facebook is an important social network. We know who/where/what without actually meeting up. On the other hand I think that this is a new, contemporary type of socializing... Instead of communicating face-to-face, or even talking on the phone, we communicate through Facebook. This sort of a communication is on one hand totally unreal, but on the other hand maybe this is the best that a busy person of the contemporary metropolis could do in her/his busy schedule. Maybe this is the only way to keep in touch with friends, and it relatively keeps you from absolute alienation of yourself – your complete isolation in your loneliness... On the other hand the people who write down a status update with every little thing that they do, that upload a photo wherever they go seem very exaggerated to me... It seems that they have very little to do during the day, or that all they actually do is to update their FB, upload new things... At this extreme, I see it as an addiction... Or even a type of exhibitionism... It's just like peeping into the celebrity lives through tabloids and magazines, just that here we voyeur the lives of common people. There is a constant voyeurism going on, no matter what... I guess it fulfills the need to be special, to be important, to stand out from the crowd, to be seen... I also think, as real values, actually producing ideas, efficiency, creativity fade away; people spend more time on Facebook and waste their time on evacuated activities :) (2010).

Facebook, Twitter and the similar networks became our mediums of self-expression and rapid communication in less than a decade. While giving everyone a digital *face* and a *voice*, they also started to minimize our existences to these new aspects of digital identity. But yet, if we are to quote Goffman, from an article he wrote in 1967 it is once again difficult to say that we are in a new transformation. It could just be another stage or a more pronounced repetition of the society of the spectacle:

In «On Face-work», Goffman's central focus is on the concept of face, or that positive image of self, charged with pride and honor, that individuals project during encounters with others. Goffman makes it clear that face, as a sociological construct of interaction, is neither inherent in nor a permanent aspect of the person; rather, it «is diffusely located in the flow of events in the encounter» and «on loan to him from society» [1967: 7, 10]. Once individuals project that positive social self, that face, to others, they are then committed-constrained, in fact-to live up to its demands. «Approved attributes and their relation to face», writes Goffman, «make every man his own jailer; this is a fundamental social constraint even though each man may like his cell» (Trevino, 2003: 37).

Nonetheless, as we were in the earlier version of the web, we are still behind the protective surface of the screen, free to manipulate our identities and our images. The online identities that become our inexhaustable representations, also become our risk-free selves: Selves that are almost place-holders, selves that are not us, selves that are temporary – selves that are harmlessly consumed and even disposed of, when no longer needed.

In this sense, the social media becomes a medium not only for the marketing of goods, but also of commodified human-beings. Once reduced to the choice of images, constructing an identity becomes constructing a *corporate* identity, a brand identity. Indeed, if we are to observe the parallels between the motives in each case and the two processes of construction, we could observe why and how we started to construct ourselves as brands.

Real corporate identity is about behaviour as much as appearance, and certainly about reality, as much as symbolism. Whenever behaviour and appearance are linked, real corporate identity emerges. The need for a new corporate identity most often manifests itself when a country, or for that matter any organization, is in a volatile state, when its management has changed, when it wants to expand, move in new directions – or alter its structure, when it wants or needs to demonstrate a new sense of direction to the various groups of people among whom it lives (Wally Olins as cited in Fletcher, 2001: 491).

As we have discussed at several points in this dissertation, a difficulty of choice highlights the difficulties of individuals in several fields today. Starting off from a basic theory of consumption, human beings confront a task of choosing among a very wide range of possibilities and quite undefined metacriteria to help with the process of selection. It gets even more complicated when the choice is not only about picking a car, but also a *face*.

The wicked witch in L. Frank Baum's book *Return to Oz* had a collection of thirty beautiful heads and selected a different one each morning («Princess Langwidere»⁶ as cited in Fletcher, 2001: 491).

3.3.2 The Stories We Tell Ourselves: Self-Representations Online

I quote others only to better express myself (Michel de Montaigne, 1580).

We are experiencing a turning point in history, where our psychological reflexes are learning to adapt rapidly to a series of very unusual challenges. How to express yourself when you don't know who might be reading you? How to give a real sense of your personality in three images and a list of film preferences? How to say you are «in love» to your friends, without all your colleagues at work knowing?

Defining ourselves in this public networked universe demands a whole new approach, and a whole set of survival tactics to be heard, to be seen, to *be*.

Borrowing from Goffman's classical study of symbolic interaction in the form of theatrical performances, Papacharissi in her research on the presentation of self in virtual life claims that the web provides the ideal setting for the Goffmanian type of «information game», allowing maximum control over the information disclosed (2002a: 644; 2002c: 348). Online performances and the motives for such performances differ profoundly from the earlier anonymous interaction online when the actual name and identity are revealed, as is the common case with Facebook. Having exhausted Turkle's intensive research on the creation of early web-based communities and the interaction that took place there, in this chapter we will first focus on the earlier home pages that could be considered as an older version of the Facebook user profiles. Several of the ideas that were developed on these earlier sites in terms of how they contribute to self-expression and identity of individuals can be evaluated in a new light with regard to the Web 2.0 way of self (re)presentation.

There are different levels of masking and unmasking involved in the online identities. However, besides the masking that an individual can apply, there are limitations to the level of information that can be obtained from one's online behaviour and her/his crafted online presence. When Goffman conceptualized the presentation of self in everyday life as an ongoing process of information management, he distinguished between the expressions one *gives* and the expressions *given off*, specifying that expressions given off are more theatrical and contextual, usually nonverbal, and presumably unintentional (1959: 4). Expressions one gives are easier to manipulate than expressions one gives off. An obvious implication of the online interaction is that the participants in interaction are stripped from the physical clues that are central to this information exchange.

Online interaction also means having a «record of every interaction» that took place (Turkle, 1995: 207), which as a participant of the pre-survey mentioned as a reason for not liking Facebook as an enterprise: «Someone out there has a moment-to-moment follow-up of my life and it's all recorded. All my correspondence, my social interaction, who are my closest friends, what I like, what I don't like, my political view, where I finished primary school, my whereabouts at every instant and more...». This aspect of online interaction, as Turkle noted gives a unique opportunity that real life never has given:

Since it is not unusual for players to keep logs of their MUD sessions with significant others, Peter had something that participants in real-life relationships never have: a record of every interaction with Beatrice. When he read over his logs, he remarked that he could not find their relationship in them. Where was the warmth? The sense of complicity and empathy? ... When everything is in the log and nothing is in the log, people are confronted with the degree to which they construct relationships in their own minds (Turkle, 1995: 207).

Nonverbal elements enhance or validate verbal communication. If these two types of signals conflict, or in other words, if the nonverbal fails to support the verbal, then self presentation is questioned by others and the individual is exposed. In cyberspace, however, it is easier to bridge the potential disparity between these two types of expressions. The absence of nonverbal elements may render communication less rich, but simultaneously allows individuals to be more inventive with self presentation. There is greater control of expressions given off and thus less risk that identity manipulation may be exposed (Papacharissi, 2002a: 645).

The information that can be obtained through physical interaction, in Goffman's account, gives us the ability to evaluate a person, verify his identity and extrapolate so as to predict his future behavior:

For those present, many sources of information become accessible and many carriers (or «sign-vehicles») become available for conveying this information. If unacquainted with the individual, observers can glean clues from his conduct and appearance which allow them to apply their previous experience with individuals roughly similar to the one before them or, more important, to apply untested stereotypes to him. They

Figure 3.50 – Body language is completely useless in today's digital communication, except for its role in digital images. Yet nonverbal clues, as expressions *given off* give a lot of information about the identity of a person in social interaction. The Sartorialist, Scott Schuman who took the photos in Florence, Italy comments: «I don't know what they're saying but I love to watch them talk» (2011).



can also assume from past experience that only individuals of a particular kind are likely to be found in a given social setting. They can rely on what the individual says about himself or on documentary evidence he provides as to who and what he is. If they know, or know of, the individual by virtue of experience prior to the interaction, they can rely on assumptions as to the persistence and generality of psychological traits as a means of predicting his present and future behaviour (1959: 1).

On the online social networks, it is almost impossible to say that a particular kind of individuals are to be found in a social setting, and once again, to the contrary, according to Mark Zuckerberg, it is completely the opposite what makes them valuable. He stated his preliminary goals for creating Facebook to *Wired* magazine in 2010: «The thing I really care about is the mission, making the world open» (Vogelstein, 2009). For connecting more than half a billion people; wiring together a twelfth of humanity into a single network and mapping the social relations among them; for creating a new system of exchanging information and for changing how we live our lives, Mark Zuckerberg was selected *Time Magazine's* 2010 Person of the Year. As the related article in *Time Magazine* goes on to explain, «if Facebook were a country it would be the third largest, behind only China and India. It started out as a lark, a diversion, but it has turned into something real, something that has changed the way human beings relate to one another on a species-wide scale» (Grossman, 2010).

It has been claimed that Zuckerberg's legendarily awkward social manner was one of the essential motives for him for creating such a network (Kirkpatrick, 2010). Considering research on personality traits that affect online interactions, Papacharissi also focuses on the personality characteristics that may affect self-disclosure online as well as the motives that lead to communicating online or maintaining a personal profile. According to uses and gratifications (U&G), a psychological communication perspective that looks at how people use media, communication needs interact with social and psychological factors to produce motives for communicating (2002c: 349).

Investigating the motives for maintaining online profiles, researchers have focused on two variables, namely the «contextual age» and «the unwillingness to communicate». Contextual age, a life-position construct developed by Rubin and Rubin (1981) to account for the limitations of using chronological age in communication research, is a way of overcoming the stereotypes associated with demographic variables and measuring the quality of life more accurately. Based on Papacharissi's analysis of online presentations, «the desire to pursue self-presentation and social activity online could be influenced by the overall quality of one's offline existence» (2002c: 349).

Previous media and new media research has pointed in that direction; beyond that, however, estimating individuals' overall satisfaction with their lives could help us understand where the internet fits into their daily routines, how it compares to other communication outlets, and whether it is used as

an alternative channel for communication. Yet in the perspective of this dissertation, it is more significant for us to estimate the role of overall satisfaction with one's self in the context of online communication and presentation choices based on the hypothesis that it is a factor that effects why and how individuals represent themselves online, hence *Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale* (1965) was adapted as part of the *Digital Life Scale* and was exploited to obtain such insight.

Beholding the «unwillingness to communicate» perspective conceptualized by Burgoon (1976), this choice is supported, as unwillingness to communicate has been linked to anomie and alienation, introversion, low self-esteem, high communication apprehension, and reticence. It has two dimensions: (a) reward, which includes distrust, perceived isolation, evaluations of the utility of communication, and an individual's perceptions of the value of his or her communication to others; and (b) approach-avoidance, which includes anxiety, introversion, and amount of participation in various communication contexts. Those who are more apprehensive about face-to-face communication and find their offline life communication with friends and family less rewarding could perhaps feel more confident when communicating through their personal home page, which is why measuring unwillingness to communicate, should help explain personal home page use (Papacharissi, 2002c).

Papacharissi's findings gives us an overall comparison of anonymous and pseudonymous online communication with its named counterpart. Regarding her findings, self-expression tended to be a motive for people who were not anxious while communicating interpersonally and found interpersonal interaction to be rewarding. The same respondents had lower mobility, economic security, and life satisfaction, which is why home pages presented a functional alternative for self-expression, and communication with friends and family. Although they do allow the author to control the information s/he chooses to disclose and the manner in which this is done, online profiles are not anonymous as other forms of net-based communication (2002c: 362).



Figure 3.51 – Mark Zuckerberg on the cover of TIME Magazine as the Person of the Year 2010. For the occasion, Zuckeberg shared photos from his family album, just like any good Facebook user would.

For instance, Facebook's official *Statement of Rights and Responsibilities* says, «Facebook users provide their real names and information, and we need your help to keep it that way». Facebook goes on to explain the commitments we make to them for registering and maintaining the security of our account, on how we should behave to stay on its grounds:

1- You will not provide any false personal information on Facebook, or create an account for anyone other than yourself without permission.

2- You will not create more than one personal profile.

3- If we disable your account, you will not create another one without our permission.

<http://www.facebook.com/#!/terms.php>. Retrieved 16.03.2011, after the author's account was banned for 24 hours while trying to utilize Facebook to get more people to participate in the *Digital Life Scale*.

Considering identified computer-mediated communication, those apprehensive of face-to-face communication did not seem to be eager to talk about themselves online or offline. The emerging pattern was that of people using the personal home page to enhance their quality of life and to augment their avenues for communication. (Papacharissi, 2002c: 362-363). The higher level of personal information disclosure for self-expression, according to these results, suggested that those who viewed their personal home pages as a self-expression tool posted more personal information online. At the same time, those who used their pages as a tool for professional advancement avoided posting personal information online, this finding underlining how the home page author's sense of audience influenced her/his page content. This made sense since extensively personal details are not likely to draw or impress any employers and, as a result, were avoided with professional uses of the web page (Papacharissi: 364). A similar behaviour can be observed on Facebook use today, as well as by comparing Facebook profiles with LinkedIn profiles, which is an online social network of professional use.



Figure 3.53 – Everybody is happy on Facebook (or at least in their profile photos).

Besides the physical clues of one's identity, one very significant point that is almost disregarded today when face-to-face interaction is compared to the social interactions online is the difference between speech and text.

Be that the earlier personal web pages or the online profiles that Facebook provides us with, the absence of nonverbal or other social cues restricts the information exchanged to the specific facts the creator of the online representation wants to communicate (Papacharissi, 2002a: 644). Papacharissi also highlights that personal web pages, lacking in media richness and social presence, restrain nonverbal communication (2002a: 645).

Web 2.0, by enhancing the participation of users in the creation of media content and making the user-friendly tools available within the reach of the intermediate-to-beginner computer user has already allowed media richness in possible online representations of the identity. Nowadays, usually our computers come equipped with webcams and everyone is quite familiar with the digital cameras, as well as with the concept of «Let's take a photo over there and we'd upload it to Facebook!». Even if the individual chooses to use a pseudonym in her/his online profiles, a photo or a video showing her/his actual physical appearance is commonly made available. Besides the restrictions one intentionally makes regarding the amount of information made public, one's competence in manipulating such technology should also influence how successful the online performance is.

Nevertheless, research has shown that it is even possible to communicate nonverbal signals online, through the use of hyperlinks, emoticons, animations, and other technological conventions. Based on in-depth qualitative content analysis, in synchronous chat transcripts, four categories were found to be employed for better self-expression and for compensating the lack of visual clues in computer-mediated communication: emoticons, use of repeated punctuation, use of all capital letters, and the use of abbreviations (Walther, 2001: 344).

Below is a brief analysis of an online dialogue between a librarian and a client where the use of such facilitators in computer-mediated communication are investigated:

Librarian: We have a book here called the Gale Encyclopedia of Multicultural America: Primary Documents. You may want to check when you go to the other libraries to see if they have it. {Use of word «may» is deference to the user, a suggestion rather than a command. Librarian is also beginning the Closing Ritual by talking about future steps.}

Client: Awesome! This gives me a great starting point for Saturday's research! Thank You VERY MUCH!!!!!!! {The word «Awesome!» and the next sentence both end with exclamation}

point for emphasis indicating deference through praise and expression of admiration. The «Thank You» follows up with more deference. The use of «VERY MUCH!!!!!!!» is compensation for lack of nonverbal cues by using all capitals and repeated punctuation. Also the Closing Ritual is begun by the client, in responding to librarian's suggestion for the next step and in the use of «Thank You.»}

Librarian: You're very welcome! A transcript of this session will be sent to you if you need any of the information we've talked about. {The librarian defers to client in using polite expression «You're very welcome» with the exclamation point (!) for emphasis. Also librarian offers confirmation to the user by use of «if you need» and «we've talked about.» Here the user is included as a partner in the encounter.}

Client: Okay! thanks again! bye! {The client again defers to the librarian by agreeing to what has been suggested, offering more thanks with exclamation point and concludes the closing ritual by use of informal language «bye!»}

Librarian: Bye. {The librarian also finishes the closing ritual and mirrors the client's informal language with the use of «Bye»} (Walther, 2001: 344).

The use of these auxiliary cues, without doubt, are not limited to a basic dialogue for information exchange but could be employed similarly in case of a more informal or intimate dialogue as is the case for the individuals using the internet to meet potential dating partners. Such a case presents individuals with new challenges in regard to self-presentation and self-disclosure behaviors (Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006: 153). Although similar in many respects, these strategies may differ from those employed in traditional face-to-face initial meetings, which do not typically provide the same opportunities for deliberate self-presentation.

Walther has termed this to be «selective self-presentation», as with the two basic features of the computer-mediated communication, namely the reduced communication cues as discussed above and the potentially asynchronous nature of the online communication would place greater emphasis on controllable verbal and linguistic cues and would eventually lead the online self-presentation to be «more selective, malleable, and subject to self-censorship in CMC than it is in face-to-face interaction» (1996: 20). Likewise, the asynchronous nature of computer-mediated communication gives users more time to consciously construct their messages and hence the opportunity to present themselves positively and deliberately.

Any message about the self that an individual communicates to another, self-disclosure, has been found by several researchers to be a key component in the development of personal relationships as it fosters closeness and intimacy (Gibbs Ellison & Heino, 2006: 156). According to interpersonal theories based on

face-to-face communication, such as the social penetration theory, self-disclosure is a type of communication through which individuals make themselves known to other people, and when others reciprocate by revealing aspects of their identity, leads to intimacy and relational development (Taylor & Altman, 1987).

There are certain ambiguities to how self-disclosure functions in the computer-mediated communication settings. The hyperpersonal perspective suggests that the limited cues in CMC are likely to result in overattribution and exaggerated or idealized perceptions of others and that those who meet and interact via CMC use such limited cues to engage in optimized or selective self-presentation (Walther, 1996). Accordingly, the increased opportunities for self-presentation and identity manipulation may result in such online self-disclosure to be less honest. And as we have previously investigated, other theorists like Turkle (1995) and Stone (1991, 1996), argue that when anonymity is rendered possible, computer-mediated communication encourages individuals to experiment with new forms of representation that diverge substantially from their «real life» identities. The anonymous and textual nature of cyberspace allows one to overcome identity fixes, such as gender, looks, and disabilities. People choose to explore certain sides of their personalities more extensively online, or even invent virtual life personae different from their real life personalities (Papacharissi, 2002a: 645).

An alternative perspective is that the anonymous nature of communicating on the web could encourage more honest and intimate self-disclosure due to Rubin's «passing stranger» effect, a phenomenon based on his study of self-disclosure among airline travelers in Boston. This study suggested that with the certainty that they would never interact with the out-of-town participants again, the self-disclosures made to and by them were far more intimate and longer than those of Boston residents (Rubin, 1975).

The anonymity of computer-mediated communication is also thought to accelerate intimacy as participants in computer-mediated communication engage in more intimate questions and a deeper level of self-disclosure than face-to-face interactants, once again suggesting that online environments enable individuals to be more, rather than less, open and forthcoming about aspects of the self (Gibbs, Ellison & Heino, 2006: 156). Additionally, barriers to disclosing potentially negative aspects of the self to others are lessened online because users are less likely to face disapproval from those close to them, such as friends or family (Bargh, McKenna & Fitzsimons, 2002).

The identity expression opportunities provided through online presentations of the self could have positive effects on our lives, or they could expand our cyber-circles while alienating us from our off-line social circles. Amid conflicting research on the social potential of the internet, this study adds to the

body of literature examining the role of the internet as a revitalizer of social relations. Papacharissi, as several other researchers, claims that it remains to be seen whether social interaction online persists at the expense of or as a complement to offline interaction (2002a: 645). Interviewed for a USA Today article, «For teens, a friend online is usually a friend offline, too», Baym, however, draws our attention to how they overlap, instead of focusing on the differences and distinctions: «There's been a fascination about new relationships and trying to pit what happens online against what happens face-to-face. It's never been the case that they are in opposition to one another. It always overlaps» she says. «If you track relationships over time, you can't tell the difference between a relationship that started online and one that began to face-to-face» (Jayson, 2009).

Nonetheless, the mass communication nature of communicating via the online profiles should also be taken into account, as this is different than using the internet as a medium of one-on-one interpersonal communication and moves it to the terrain of one addressing many as innermost thoughts are made available to the world via blogs and web pages. As Dominick pointed out, «prior to web pages, only the privileged – celebrities, politicians, media magnates, advertisers – had access to the mass audience» (1999: 647).

... Personal home pages present a new channel of mass communication. Hosting a personal home page is convenient, affordable, and allows people to present a multi-mediated self, using audiovisual components and text to communicate to potential mass audiences. ... web authors are not merely sharing information with others, they are also engaged in establishing a sense of self on virtual terrain (Papacharissi, 2002c: 346).

Personal websites represent a new channel of mass communication that allows everyone to become a producer of media content, providing people with access to a mass audience that they would otherwise be unable to reach (Papacharissi, 2002a: 656).

It is indeed through these media-enhanced visual online identities that today our digital stories become more credible in representing parts of our real life identities. Facebook, as well as several other Web 2.0 sites, allows to upload photographs, videos, use links to newspaper columns, indicate official group memberships as well as to make visible one's offline social rings, as a list of Friends is exposed on the profile page of all the registered users. Hence, a powerful combination of complex and intangible personal concepts such as lifestyle, belief, identity, relationships and social forces are brought together and displayed – all enhanced with the use of visual material. Data that only a private detective could have put together in a personal file about the individual is collected, organized and presented on the Facebook profile with the people that our predefined privacy setting permits, with the hackers that have the capabilities to find out, and most probably with several brands and companies that are trying

to convey their messages to their target audiences through Facebook Ads and buying this compiled personal information from Facebook Inc.

As these dimensions of the self do not have a physical existence, the visual clues provided by the Facebook albums serve to create the metaphors that communicate material, psychological and spiritual aspects of the identity. Individuals naturally use metaphors in everyday communication to capture a set of feelings and ideas within the simple scope of a particular image – and as we all know, a picture is worth a thousand words. Building visual metaphors with their own hands, participants seem to have a strong connection with them, and feel that the metaphorical items enable them to convey an imaginative understanding of emotional or psychological states.

This sort of creativity, that allows us to form online representations of ourselves also suggests a path to discovering our *true* selves. Neuroscientific research and the contemporary philosophies of consciousness suggest that there is no ready-made «me» inside the brain, that works like a manager who responds to things coming in. Rather, processing happens across the brain, all the time, with consciousness just dealing with the «highlights». However, artistic and creative activities might give us the opportunity to «dig» more deeply into the unconscious activities of the brain. This was suggested in the early twentieth century by Jung, who asserted that creative activity gives individuals the opportunity to work on deep psychological issues, potentially leading to breakthroughs which instantaneous speech may not have arrived at (1953). Moreover, individuals are well used to creating symbolic systems of objects to represent aspects of their identities, as part of everyday life. The collection of photographs and souvenirs attached to a person's fridge for example, is already an informal and unsystematic way of expressing «who I am», and is an everyday case of someone making a visual self-presentation (Gauntlett, 2007: 185-186).

In the Lego identity study carried out by Gauntlett, where the participants were asked to represent their identities using the pieces of Lego made available to them, «the notion that «I» have «an identity», which could be represented in some way (such as in Lego), was already accepted by all participants». The participants' concerns were along the lines of how to show and what to use and not *what* to show: They took it for granted that they *did have* an identity, and that this could be represented in some way. Therefore, «identity» is not merely an external theoretical construction of philosophers or sociologists, but is already embedded in everyday life (Gauntlett, 2007: 186). This finding by Gauntlett also lends support to the argument that, in modern Western societies, individuals come to see self-identity as a personal project to be worked upon as argued, for example, by Giddens (1991, 1992).

Thus we meticulously work on our Facebook profiles and our online identities, we construct the online «windows» to ourselves from the things that we like here and there, a quote from a philosopher, noted down while listening to the radio finds its way to our Facebook status update and several times the actual philosopher that we quoted just (conveniently) disappears on the way. Not only do we become public, but also the public starts to become our private. We link the music videos that we like from Youtube, to be presented on our Facebook walls and express our fondness of the artist's voice, or the creativeness of the video, while we also assume our share of creative success or the talent embedded as we express our admiration. And it works both ways, as we *check-out* or *sneak peek upon* on our fellow Facebook friends, we start to «mediate» a Ricoeurian way of «knowing» the identities of these people – as we do with our own selves.

On one last note, we should observe that our online presentations also work as means for «overselling ourselves», as Ratliff highlights in his article in *Wired*:

Immodesty thrives on Facebook and Twitter because they enable what social scientists call self-enhancement – the human tendency to oversell ourselves. ... Social networking tends to create self-reinforcing spirals of reciprocal kindness. You like my cat pictures, so I celebrate your job promotion. ... In the Facebook world, we can Like or Hide things, but there's no «Dislike» button – even when you need one (Ratliff, 2009: 21).

Nevertheless, Ratliff considers this tendency to oversell as a plus for online social communications:

And why not? In a modern world that bombards us with reasons to feel bad about ourselves, maybe there's room for a little extra public celebration when things go well. Online, we're safe to note our achievements, our loves, our tiny daily triumphs in a bid for a little positive feedback. So go ahead and, as marketing gurus say, tend the Brand of You. Just don't be me-first. Roll as many logs to others as you do back to yourself. Promote those deserving friends too humble to promote themselves and you'll be tending the entire social-network ecosystem (2009: 22).

As Ricoeur noted, the mere fact of existing and thinking is «abstract and empty» until it is «mediated» by «ideas, actions, works, institutions, and monuments» that give it form and shape (1970: 43). Since we cannot just «know» other individuals, in everyday life, we have to develop an understanding of them via the «long route» of interpreting the stuff that they produce – which includes their speech, but also what they do with their appearance, clothing and signs and symbols in their home or office, emails, messages and any other «clues» we can gather.

Among the several metaphors Goffman has employed to better define social interactions was his «frame» metaphor, where the metaphor, «social life-as-a-picture-frame», gives us the image of a picture (the event) and the perspective from which it is viewed (the frame). Thus, similar to the Ricoeurian narrative, Goffman suggests that social experience is structured by «frames,» schemes of interpretation, that guide us in defining the multitudinous social situations we find ourselves in. Social interaction is made meaningful because frames help us to make sense of what is going on (Treviño, 2003: 20).

The interface form is a mode of exposure, a way to lay out the knowledge, to organize it. ... An exposure mode is what we might call a manner of speaking, but it is a technical way of speaking, that is the distillation of a series of vectors that come from different dimensions and that in turn report these dimensions with their own ways of organizing knowledge. Any form of exposure acts dialectically, as it feeds on the surplus produced in the material that helps them to expose themselves, letting them appear as a specific basic scheme (Catalá, 2010: 111).

As we construct, as we copy-paste our collages, as we build our online *images*, as the Goffmanian roles we play eventually come back to construct the self, we start to be overwhelmed by our images... and that is when we start to believe the digital stories we tell *ourselves*.

Movements of the camera, the images that it captures and produces, are embodiments of a sentence, an optical unconscious. ... The optical unconscious is equivalent to the technological device that hides behind the supposed transparency of image captured by the camera or even from one set of images that have produced the man as a visual statement, with his conscience. ... Foucault (1979: 173) distinguishes between the utterance of a sentence pronounced by a writer in his daily life and that same quote attributed to a character in the novel that he is writing: «the material order to which the statements necessarily obey then, is the order of the institution rather than the spatio-temporal» (Catalá, 2010: 113-114).

3.4 Chapter Conclusions



By the end of the twentieth century, technology, while it transformed the urban and the social space, posited a new threat on the identity formation of individuals. Cyberspace, as a *new* technology circulating outside of the human experiences of space and time, not only changed the perception of space and time but also that of the body. The more technology favored the imaginary instead of the symbolic, and the cybernetic instead of the organic, the more human beings got confused in their search for a distinct identity. The continuous image attacks of everyday life together with the changing conception of space, has made establishing one's self-image a difficult task to achieve. Not being able to distinguish the borders of the self, one tended to attain wholeness by identifying with the surrounding world of images.

Earlier cyberspace, as an electronic, invisible space, allowed the computer or television screen to substitute for urban space and urban experience or *for the body and the bodily experience*. Freed from the limitations of the flesh, one was able to try the limits of his dual self, in a perspective where the self is not in the body – but mostly in the psyche. The virtual role-playing did let us overcome the *failures of the flesh* and the multiplicity that it implied was just a daily game that we played. Back then we discussed whether it was possible to sustain multiple selves in one single body, yet today the conversation has shifted to whether we live multiple lives distributed to our physical, digital and mobile worlds.

The *escape* into fantasy, or the *escape* from reality also had to do with the dissatisfaction derived from the urban space and one's real life. It is also in this sense that still today, *Second Life* is promoted as a place to «connect, shop, work, love, explore, be different, free yourself, free your mind, change your looks, love your looks, love your life».

Online life is practice to make the rest of life better, but it is also a pleasure in itself. Today, we no longer call our interactions on the Internet to be «in the cyberspace». Living in the screen is no longer science-fiction to us. Over the past decade, millions of us have quietly migrated to a vast electronic suburb to dedicate large periods of time messaging and responding to a constant stream of information from our electronic ties. Our daily transition into the digital is absolutely seamless and this *life mix* is our nature now. The simultaneity of identities is replaced with the simultaneity of lives, whatever we do online is not virtual and invisible but *is* an essential part of one's life mix - the mash-up of what you have on- and offline. As the technology advanced to remind us that we are inevitably visible beings, as it turned its spotlights on to light up every corner of the cyberspace of invisible communications, the cape

of invisibility fell off. Today we no longer perceive the passage between the virtual and the real, we live intertwined lives. We do not ask to be satisfied in our lives, but in our life mixes.

The advance of audio-visual technologies and the increased speed of connection to Internet allowed for messages, images, photographs, videos to be delivered at a sensible speed and prepared the end of fantasy – thus started the age of the *digitally visible*, and shortly after, the age of Facebook. As cyberspace was gradually replaced by the participatory architecture of Web 2.0 and the widespread use of digital image production and sharing, we started to feel the presence of Web 2.0 in our lives, our communications and our identities. Soon we were to communicate online without being able to hide our «faces» and usually with some witnesses around to credit or discredit our *performances*.

One of the *joys* of cyberspace was the margin it provided for the fantasy, with the actual identity of the people communicating was reduced to the name of their avatars, or characters, or simply their screen names. This gave people the chance to express multiple and often unexplored aspects of the self, to play with their identity and to try out new ones – a type of *play* that was possible before the Internet as well, however, required one to travel away from one's daily environment, to be «away from home». According to Turkle, on the web, the idiom for constructing a «home» identity was to assemble a «home page» of virtual objects that corresponded to one's interests. One constructs a home page by composing or «pasting» on it words, images, and sounds, and by making connections between it and other sites on the web.

«We tell ourselves stories in order to live,» is the opening line of Joan Didion's *White Album*. It is indeed through these media-enhanced visual online stories that today our digital identities become more credible in representing parts of our real life identities. Facebook, as well as several other Web 2.0 sites, allows us to upload photographs, videos, use links to newspaper columns, indicate official group memberships as well as to make visible one's offline social rings, as a list of Friends is exposed on the profile page of all the registered users. Hence, a powerful combination of complex and intangible personal concepts such as lifestyle, belief, identity, relationships and social forces are brought together and displayed – all enhanced with the use of visual material. Data that only a private detective could have put together in a personal file about the individual is collected, organized and presented on the Facebook profile in the form of our *collage* identities.

Probably, as we assumed the life on the screen to be «natural» and as part of our daily lives, and as we started to opt for appearing with our actual identities online and even starting to prefer merging the online and offline identities, what remains us from our earlier experience of the cyberspace is not our own invisibility, but also, or even more importantly, the invisibility of the other to the absence of whom

we also adapted ourselves with this exercise. We got so used to communicating with «nobody» being actually present with us that after some point – it stopped to matter. Or even worse, face-to-face communication started to be too much of a hassle, when compared to the unbearable ease of communication online. As long as there was some feedback to support our «lives well lived», we were feeling fine with the spotlight of our consciousness just on us – and on us *only*.

In gameplay, when you enter a person's fantasy world, when you enter a person's fantasy character, when you become friends with a person's fantasy character, you become friends with a part of them that they've hidden from most of society. Today, it is exactly the opposite. We become Facebook friends with a person's *public* character – what a person wants to impose onto the society as her/his *actual* identity.

Endnotes

¹ Almost all of the modern states today possess the relevant technology to watch the lives of its citizens minute by minute. Nonetheless, we do not see a lot of evidence of this power being exercised, unless for resolving criminal cases. Yet one very recent event, the secret information made public by Wikileaks has shown us that if Big Brother does exist, it probably cuts both ways. Evaluating the significance of Wikileaks' presence in today's world, Umberto Eco says: «Formerly, back in the days of Orwell, every power could be conceived of as a Big Brother watching over its subjects' every move. The Orwellian prophecy came completely true once the powers that be could monitor every phone call made by the citizen, every hotel he stayed in, every toll road he took and so on and so forth. The citizen became the total victim of the watchful eye of the state. But when it transpires, as it has now, that even the crypts of state secrets are not beyond the hacker's grasp, the surveillance ceases to work only one-way and becomes circular. The state has its eye on every citizen, but every citizen, or at least every hacker – the citizens' self-appointed avenger – can pry into the state's every secret. ... How can a power hold up if it can't even keep its own secrets anymore? It is true, as Georg Simmel once remarked, that a real secret is an empty secret (which can never be unearthed); it is also true that anything known about Berlusconi or Merkel's character is essentially an empty secret, a secret without a secret, because it's public domain. But to actually reveal, as WikiLeaks has done, that Hillary Clinton's secrets were empty secrets amounts to taking away all her power. WikiLeaks didn't do any harm to Sarkozy or Merkel, but did irreparable damage to Clinton and Obama.» ECO, U (2010): «Not such wicked leaks» in *Liberation* dated 02.12.2010, Paris. Available at <http://bit.ly/hqe13n>. Retrieved 05.12.2010.

² «Possibility of incest would require both persons and names – son, sister, mother, brother, father. Now in the incestuous act we can have persons at our disposal, but they lose their names in as much as these names are inseparable from the prohibition that proscribes them as partners; or else the names subsist, and designate nothing more than prepersonal intensive states that could just as well «extend» to other persons, as when one calls his legitimate wife «mamma», or one's sister his wife.» Quoted from Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus* by Aracagok in «Event: The Grammar of Cannibalistic Language», in endnote #14.

³ Lingis, in his reading of Deleuze and Guattari's body without organs, forms an analogy between the image of the contented infant – as a surface of pleasure – and the concept of body without organs. «Freud even reduced a great deal of the charm of babies to our fascination with the image of narcissism, of closed individuality».

⁴ For more on *Second Life*, see the official statement «What Is Second Life», <http://secondlife.com/whatis> (accessed June 13, 2010).

⁵ Blogging culture started to develop at the end of the 1990s and has now moved into new versions on different «social networking sites». However, we can still see examples of how these new performance spaces such as blogs playing an important role as mediational means and narratives as cultural tools. An online article by Masserat Amir Ebrahimi (2004), describes how blogs in Tehran represent an important performance space for certain groups in their redefinition of the self and consolidation of new identities. She discusses how, in Western democratic societies, cyberspace is often viewed as an «alter» space of information, research and leisure that functions in a parallel or complementary fashion to existing public spaces and institutions. In countries where public sphere is closely monitored and regulated by traditional and state forces, the internet has become a means to resist the restrictions imposed on these spaces. As she explains, for people living in these countries, especially marginalised

groups such as youth and women, the internet can be a space more «real» than everyday life. From this perspective, an analysis of internet use is an important tool by which to study socio-cultural forms hidden in everyday life but revealed in the virtual world. She goes on to explain how, since the revolution in Iran in 1979, «multiple personalities» have become second nature to their society. To maintain their security in social spaces, individuals must obey assorted codes that are particular to each space (private, public, official etc.) or vis-à-vis their counterparts (women/men, youth/elders, children/ parents, students/instructors, ordinary individuals/morality enforcers). The dissimulation and social invisibility in terms of appearances and behaviours are constantly shifting according to variables such as place, time and spectators, and they are defined according to the status, gender and age of social actors (Lundby, 2008: 33).

⁶ Princess Langwidere is a fictional character who appears in *Ozma of Oz*, the third book in the Oz series, based on the famous tale, *Wizard of Oz*. Her name is a pun on the words «languid» and «dear» or «languid air». Princess Langwidere's most unusual feature is that she has 30 heads that are interchangeable on her neck – instead of changing her clothes every day, she simply changes her head. The heads, which inexplicably stay alive even when not being «worn», are kept in a bejeweled boudoir, and are described as all being very beautiful, running through all combinations of hair and eye colors (except for gray hair and red, tired eyes of course), skin tones, and even noses of different shapes to represent different ethnicities. Langwidere generally spends every waking moment of her life admiring whichever head she's currently wearing in a large mirrored hall, and «changing» heads whenever she wants to adopt a new look.





Figure 4.1 - Are we living to be photographed? Photo by Garance Doré (2011).



Now, *here*, you see, it takes all the running you can do, to keep in the same place. If you want to get somewhere else, you must run at least twice as fast as that! (Lewis Carroll as cited in Bauman, 2000).

«Why do people have identity problems?» is a question that social scientists have been asking ever since the middle of the twentieth century. Though it is extremely difficult to give a straight answer, psychology has pinpointed some trends to understand our modern difficulty with self-definition. Baumeister sums these trends up into three main categories:

First, traditional means of self-definition have failed and their replacements have relied on more complex and problematic processes of self-definition. ... Second, identity has become an increasingly abstract, elusive entity; [...and] third, the desire for individuality – the desire to be special or unique – has become more widespread and difficult to fulfill (Baumeister, 1986: 121).

As we have examined in the previous chapters, the *well-defined* identity has two pillars: continuity over time and differentiation from others. Starting off from these two basic definitions, Baumeister defines two processes that have caused the dysfunctioning of the components that hold these pillars in place.

The first process is «destabilization», which indicates a failure in the «unifying» function of several identity components. One good illustration to the components that have undergone destabilization could be how we relate to «our homes». Up until 1950s, one used to live in the same home all through her/his life, only leaving that home to get married and build one of her/his own. Living one's entire life in the same home, in the same neighbourhood was a powerful source of continuity in the sense of self nonetheless, today one tends to change homes, change jobs and even change spouses several times throughout a lifetime. As Bauman observes in *Liquid Modernity*:

... in its heavy stage, capital was as much fixed to the ground as were the labourers it engaged. Nowadays capital travels light – with cabin luggage only, which includes no more than a briefcase, a cellular telephone and a portable computer. It can stop-over almost anywhere and nowhere needs to stay longer than the satisfaction lasts (2000: 58).

According to Turkle, «every era constructs its own metaphors for psychological well-being». Not so long ago, stability was socially valued and culturally reinforced – though it no longer is the case:

Rigid gender roles, repetitive labor, the expectation of being in one kind of job or remaining in one town over a lifetime, all of these made consistency central to definitions of health. But these stable social worlds have broken down. In our time, health is described in terms of fluidity rather than stability. What matters most now is the ability to adapt and change – to new jobs, new career directions, new gender roles, new technologies (Turkle, 1995: 255).

The second process that Baumeister indicates is «trivialization», or in other words, the failure of the «differentiating» functions of the identity component. A clear distinction between the self and others is possible only through fairly important components of differentiation. But once these components are «trivialized», their contribution to defining the borders of identity disappears (Baumeister, 1986: 122).

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one's class status was an extremely important part of one's identity. Though in the consumer society it still proves to be true, its defining criteria is destabilized and trivialized, if not minimized to just one component: wealth, or in better words, *visible wealth*. Well into the early modern period, status symbols were clearly defined and visibly present in one's appearance making one's social rank apparent to her/his audience. You could tell one's place in the hierarchy of the society even before a word was spoken (Sennett, 1974). As your class status was basically defined by blood or by wealth, it was also very difficult to change this component of your identity. Today, as we have seen earlier in the first chapter, there are still symbols of wealth, but not only do they have cheaper copies, but they are also «for rent» for the inspired: You can rent a *Louis Vuitton* bag, a *Ferrari* or a *Valentino* gown and pretend that you are superstar rich – even if it lasts only a week.

The early modern period saw a conflict between wealth and blood as the essential criteria of social status, and in a sense, wealth won out. Today, social class is a function of wealth; and even social scientists refer to it as «socioeconomic status» instead of social rank (Baumeister, 1986: 131). Hence, wealth is publicly recognized as a mark of achievement, but it does not denote an intrinsic difference in personal worth the way it once did. And as class is reduced to wealth, its symbols are reduced to what high-end brands have to offer to the wealthy, and probably the secret of actually showing how wealthy you are is hidden in keeping up with the new symbols that come up each season with the changing fashion, almost in a way to justify Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption as inspiring also of today:

The code of reputability in matters of dress decides what shapes, colors, materials, and general effects in human apparel are for the time to be accepted as suitable; and departures from the code are offensive to our taste, supposedly as being departures from aesthetic truth. The approval with which we look upon fashionable attire is by no means to be accounted pure make-believe. We readily, and for the most part with utter sincerity, find those things pleasing that are in vogue. Shaggy dress stuffs and pronounced color effects, for instance, offend us at times when the vogue is goods of a high, glossy finish and neutral colors. A fancy bonnet of this year's model unquestionably appeals to our sensibilities today much more forcibly than an equally fancy bonnet of the model of last year; although when viewed in the perspective of a quarter of a century, it would, I apprehend, be a matter of the utmost difficulty to award the palm for intrinsic beauty to the one rather than to the other of these structures (Veblen, 1899/2003: 88).

Nevertheless, as we will investigate shortly, today even on the forefront of the social status, instead of the «authority of *the* fashion», we see more of a pluralistic approach and it is not at all *tasteful* to be a «fashion victim» (Polhemus, 1994: 328).

Another important component of identity that is undergoing significant change is the age. Naturally, age cannot be destabilized because it continually changes for everyone. However modern society has defined an age stratification that is different than its predecessors: The value that was previously attached to the elderly, «experience and wisdom has diminished because their 'wisdom' is seen as obsolete in rapidly changing times» (Baumeister, 1986: 132). Today the young are the *ideal*, not only in terms of their rapid capacities of adaption and their being «in the loop», but also because their appearance and presentability are highly favored by the society more than ever.

In the pre-industrial society, the bodily characteristics were part of one's identity, usually taking the form of nicknames. In the modern society, they started to have a new relevance:



Figure 4.2 – *Le Courtisan suivant le Dernier Édît* by Abraham Bosse depicts a French courtier casting aside his lace, ribbons and slashed sleeves in favor of sober dress in accordance with the Edict of 1633.

The demise of the system of arranged marriage has increased the importance of physical beauty and charm as a means of attracting members of the opposite sex. Many people exert considerable effort to make themselves attractive, and it seems likely that one's attractiveness is an important component of one's self-concept and self-esteem (Baumeister, 1986: 133).

When we add to this equation, the limited amount of time that one has during her/his busy day to dedicate to know a person, it is not difficult to understand why we start to take people for «face value», because knowing a person, understanding his values takes a lot of time which the urban dweller does not have. Besides, in the modern big city, there are too many people to know, as there is a very high mobility due to the mobilization of the capital starting from the 1990s. In the city, the people that you know, your friends and your neighbours may be gone in five or ten years. Thus, the new type of rapid social environment enhances the identity components that can be communicated rapidly to a stream of new acquaintances, such as: physical (especially sexual) attractiveness, income and possessions, age and charm. For people who meet at a congress or at a bar, it is easy to grasp these characteristics of each other nonetheless it is difficult to get to deeper qualities such as loyalty or honesty.

Medieval man *was* his occupation; the modern individual *is expressed by* occupation (Baumeister, 1986: 148). The person's *real* identity was once equated with surface phenomena; now it is equated with hidden, presumed causes of those phenomena – yet the person is taken at her/his surface value. However, as the individual came to be thought of as existing prior to and apart from all assumed roles (MacIntyre, 1981), identity became an abstract, hidden matter.

While this is what happens on the interpersonal level, on the inside there is an increasing need for people to tend to their self-images and generate a self-definition internally. Traditionally, people defined themselves partly by how they do things and how they get along with others. In such a definition, one's personality is important as it gives the self content, distinguishes from others and helps

to create continuity over time. Beginning with the industrial revolution, along with personality traits, ownership has also entered the equation. «Conspicuous consumption», defined by Veblen in 1899, intends to explain how we define ourselves through the material acquisition of status symbols.

Beginning with Veblen's conspicuous consumption, the visible signs of wealth and taste are taken to indicate one's personal quality or value. In addition, modern advertising fosters the impression that identities are created by buying certain products. Of course, no product can provide an individual

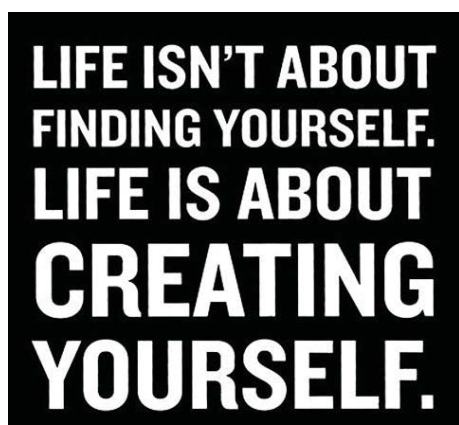


Figure 4.3 – «Life is about creating yourself»
George Bernard Shaw.

identity; it simply assigns one a spot among the prefabricated set of social identities. Brands play with these components even better than advertising does. They create «personalities» that are already defined by the consumption of a certain brand and all that is left to us is to identify ourselves with one.

Thus this context created by the consumer society helps us understand how and why identity is abstracted. Once identity was imposed by the society and all that one had to do was construct her/his identity from a set of concrete givens. Now identity is almost «optional», constructed through an increasingly hidden and abstract set of priorities and values that can only be selected and interrelated by the individual. In the traditional sociological model, where one's identity was assigned by the society, we observed the simplest and the most effective form of self-definition – acquiring identity by having it assigned to you. It is definitely more problematic to acquire identity by acts of choice, especially in the absence of guidelines. It is not surprising that identity problems emerge due to this shift from adaptation to abundance of choice. Thus, self-definition mostly means choice now and making any choice today is highly complicated. Accomplishments, hobbies, and the acquisition of possessions all require decisions and then willful implementation of those decisions. You have to make the *effort* and *create* your identity.

A major social trend over the last half dozen centuries has been to offer the individual an increased range of possibilities for what he may be and to leave it up to him to choose among them. If you have no option except to be «X», as was the case in the Middle Ages, then your identity is «X». If, however, you can be either «X» or «Y» or «Z» as is the case today, then you must choose. In order to choose, you need to find a criterion for comparing and evaluating «X», «Y» or «Z».

The modern dilemma of identity only applies to those who seriously confront the plurality of options available in modern life. The introduction of choice into identity has thus brought about the need for «metacriteria» that help individuals choose (Baumeister, 149). However, there simply aren't enough good metacriteria on which to base all these choices. A choice between a medical and a legal career cannot be made on a purely objective basis – and many people would probably be equally happy in either field. Still, somehow, the choice must be made.

... the most taxing and irritating of the challenges consumers confront is the need to establish priorities: the necessity to forsake some unexplored options and to leave them unexplored. The consumers' misery derives from the surfeit, not the dearth of choices. «Have I used my means to the best advantage?» is the consumer's most haunting, insomnia-causing question (Bauman, 2000: 63).

The comment by Habermas (1973) that «meaning» is a scarce resource that is becoming ever scarcer could be applied to the difficulty of individual decision-making. In the absence of both internal and external criteria for making choices, identity becomes quite difficult to assemble. Hence is the appeal of metaphors like «finding oneself» or «searching one's soul» for concerns on identity.

From this perspective the confusion has two layers, first you need to choose *your* identity components and then you need to create a coherence among these various components. In this context, it is almost plausible that the modern means of self-definition would tend to promote fragmentation of identity. Having lots of identity components creates anew the problem of finding a unity and continuity among them to establish a clear sense of identity out of the *collage* identity that one formulates. This definition of identity construction resembles significantly the process of designing. We tend to *design* our identities, just like a graphic designer would design a corporate identity manual or a fashion designer his new autumn line.

By the same token, as we have seen, the increased desire for identity appears to trigger an increased desire for differentiation, - placing it much higher in comparison to personal continuity and stability. Once again, Baumeister distinguishes two trends that have probably made people more desirous than their predecessors for being special, unique, and different: an increase in individualistic child-raising and a cultural shift from valuing collectivity toward valuing individuality (1986: 142).

If we are brought up to believe that we are unique and special, we would tend to think of ourselves that way as adults. If as a child we have received love in connection with our being special or unique, we would most probably value differentiation and seek it for ourselves as adults. Taking the desire for differentiation to the extreme, higher levels of this desire for achievement through work and for fame, have given way to the desire to be a *celebrity*: a desire to be loved and admired for oneself or for one's personality regardless of one's achievements. In the consumer society, celebrities are the new *role-models* that help the confused individuals in how to make a choice (Bauman, 2000: 67). And moreover, with the online social network, *everyone* is a *celebrity*, influencing the choices that the others make.

Life in the twentieth century was marked by this peculiar contradiction: individualistic values amidst collective life. The spread of urban, industrial, bureaucratic life and the development of a consumer economy with mass media and advertising have resulted in the «mass society» with its collective behaviour patterns. The individual lives in the midst of society and is totally dependent on it. Society provides the individual with a means of livelihood, information, food and clothing, entertainment, and so forth, but it refuses to provide a *meaning* for life other than its system of extrinsic rewards – as in

earning lots of money. Growing up in the modern family, with its individual concern and affection, making every child feel special about her/himself is probably making people all the more susceptible to this indifference of the society.

Although we may at first feel anguish at what we sense to be a breakdown of identity, Gergen believes we will eventually come to embrace the new possibilities. «Individual notions of self vanish into a stage of relatedness. One ceases to believe in a self that is independent of the relations in which s/he is embedded» (Gergen, 1991/2001: 17).

In this chapter, we will make a multifaceted preview of the historical conditions that have traditionally defined identity and how they have transformed into the blurred components that they are today, in an attempt to delineate the conditions for the contemporary identity crisis.

4.1 The Dis-ease with the Self



4.1.1 To Commit or Not to Commit?

The context in which the identity construction became problematic basically went in parallel with the altering conditions of personal fulfillment throughout the modern era. As Turkle also remarks in *Life in the Screen*, «the history of a psychiatric symptom is inextricably tied up with the history of the culture that surrounds it» (1995: 260).

In the Romantic era, with the decline of the marriage arranged by families, passionate love came to be considered as an essential part of a fulfilled life. Nonetheless, together with several other factors that modern life and industrial capitalist society brought about it had a substantial effect on the «trivialization» and «destabilization» of identity (Baumeister, 1986).

One of the basic reasons for the changes in the construction of identity was the changing perspective on the relationship between the individual and the society. In the eighteenth century the basic assumption was that ideal development would reveal human nature to be a constant, nonetheless, the nineteenth century rejected the idea that everyone would be the same, supporting instead the belief that optimal conditions for development would produce unique individuals (Simmel, 1950). The Romantic era nurtured the idea that «life's frustrations and miseries were blamed on current social conditions, and this attitude helped to produce a view of society as oppressive to the individual» (Baumeister, 1986: 60). It was mainly due to this point of view that in assembling a secular model of self-actualization, besides the introduction of creativity and passionate love, a third component, «the cultivation of one's inner self or latent potentiality» became apparent (Baumeister: 62).

When individuals started to look for their own potentials, the *introspective* gaze became the basis of identity construction, more than the *interpersonal*, as was the case before and after this era. As people began to want to be different from each other, the growth of «personality» as a major component of identity was probably inevitable. As people with extraordinary talents and qualities made it to the front

row of the society, for the less-talented, personality was the basis of differentiation from the other, though in Baumeister's view «personality could [only] be regarded as the untalented or lazy person's route to individuality» (1986: 64). In both cases, however, the individual needed the society to provide her/him with an identity. The central issue for self-definition was acceptance of one's role in society. If the identity that society offered you was unacceptable, you had to battle to get society to offer you something better.

Another sign of the increasingly central role of personality was seen in the way people dressed. Clothing began to be understood as an expression of the personality of the wearer, extending even to the inner traits of the hidden self (Sennett, 1974). Moreover, it was a matter of status; besides following what was fashionable, having «good taste» in dressing up was «a distinguishing quality that many men and women of means aspired to possess» (Welters&Lillethun, 2007: xx).

As the industrial, urban life started to become determinant of the society later in the nineteenth century, and the individuals found themselves surrounded by strangers in the urban space that was getting denser by the day, in everyday life they increasingly sought happiness in home and family, which was seen as a refuge from society rather than as an integral part of society. The transcendentalists brought about the tendency to look for fulfillment in private experience that carried them beyond the oppressive and mundane conditions of society. In trying to resolve the conflict between the individual and society, where the Romantics struggled to win from it the freedom to be themselves *within* it; the transcendentalists preferred to turn their backs on society (Baumeister, 1986: 65). The transcendentalist retreat from public to private life was, and still is an important milestone for the unfolding of identity, as the inner-directed attitude to personal fulfillment became apparent.

The Victorian era brought about delicate distinctions between what was tolerable in the public and private realms as well as the precise differentiations between the classes. Public life in society was linked to the «higher» values of civilization and culture; while private life was linked to «nature», which indicated the «lower» human functions like eating, sleeping, and procreating (Sennett, 1974).

The immediate causes of the Victorian preoccupation with involuntary disclosures of inner traits may have lain in social mobility and the bourgeoisie's desire to pass for aristocrats. The real aristocrats resisted and resented such pretensions, and they began to emphasize increasingly subtle and changing signals as indicators of membership in the upper class (Baumeister, 1986: 73).

It was also in the Victorian era that the behaviour in public took the form of «public silence». In the eighteenth century it was considered proper for people to speak to strangers without embarrassment.

Indeed an example of such condition was that in the coffee houses, «distinctions of rank were temporarily suspended, anyone sitting in the coffee houses had a right to talk to anyone else» (Sennett, 1974: 81). The nineteenth century brought about a new right however, the new attitude was that people had a «right to sit by themselves without talking to anyone», which formulated the «mute individual of the city» as we have investigated earlier. Thus the private realm seized many of the functions of human interaction and companionship that had formerly belonged in the public realm.

In this sense, we observe the detective story to be a tool, invented to cope with the significance and the uneasiness of the *visible*, considering its emphasis on the interpretation of silent and sneaky visual observation. In its origin, lied the notion that it be investigating the functions that are peculiar to the masses in a big city, as well as the concept of *alienation*, with the urban space becoming where «the masses appear as the asylum that shields an asocial person from his persecutors». «It is almost impossible,» wrote a Parisian secret agent in 1798, «to maintain good behaviour in a thickly populated area where an individual is, so to speak, unknown to all others and thus *does not have to blush in front of anyone*» (Benjamin, 1973: 40, *emphasis added*).

Not knowing the other and the rising urban paranoia was at the heart of such alienation. Alienation was the combined feeling of powerlessness, meaninglessness and frustration under the present circumstances. The protagonist of the twentieth century urban scene was unable to find fulfillment in the range of options available within society, was unable to bring about a change in her/his condition or in social conditions generally, and could not be consoled for these failures with a sense of personal worth, dignity or value in the struggle itself. In this setting, the earlier belief in the «perfectability of society» was also proving to be improbable, «[what] seemed imminent a century before, [now] seemed increasingly remote. It became apparent that some things were getting worse, not better» (Baumeister, 1986: 83).

In the urban industrial space, the origins of the detective story were rooted in the issue of visibility, which became apparent first, of all the menacing aspects of the masses. Detectives were, what every man and woman had to be when they wanted to make sense of the street. Baudelaire wrote: «An observer is a prince who is everywhere in possession of his incognito» (as cited in Benjamin, 1973: 40). A piece from one of the most famous detective fictions of the era, Arthur Conan Doyle's, *A Case of Identity* humorously reflects the situation in the urban setting:

A young woman walked into Holmes's Baker Street flat; and Holmes took only one glance at her: «Do you not find» he said, «that with your short sight it is a little tiring to do so much typewriting?» The girl, and as always Watson were amazed that Holmes could deduce this.

After she left, Watson remarked: «You appeared to have read a good deal upon her that was quite invisible to me».

To which Holmes made the famous reply: «Not invisible but unnoticed, Watson. You did not know where to look, and so you missed all that was important. I can never bring you to realize the importance of sleeves, the suggestiveness of thumbnails, or the great issues that may hang from a boot-lace» (1930: 96).

Though its causes started to take shape in the two centuries that preceded, it was in the twentieth century that the «identity crisis» earned its pathological definition. Erik Erikson coined the term «identity crisis» in the early 1940s to refer to a specific, severe form of psychopathology. By 1950s, scholars began to offer various interpretations of the general difficulty of self-definition. By that time, the emphasis on alienation diminished and was replaced by a new attitude of learning to accommodate to life in mass society, while at the same time incorporating the personal struggle for identity: Probably *the* major sociological change introducing the twentieth century was the *economic interdependence* far beyond past circumstances. Each person became far more dependent on the system and network of exchange of goods than had been the case in past centuries (Baumeister, 1986: 78). Hence it was impractical if not impossible, to seek fulfillment in isolation, away from society because of city life and economic interdependence. The individual as the consumer became determinant in the society:

Toward the end of the nineteenth century the great advances in manufacturing technology produced a new situation – manufacturers could produce more than people needed. At this point the limiting factor became consumer demand. The main restriction on how much you could sell was now how much other people wanted to buy. The result of this new circumstance was the rapid growth of advertising, an institution whose purpose is to stimulate demand for products (Baumeister, 1986: 80).

Advertising as a psychologically intrusive form of communication aims to *make people want* a particular product, while in the meantime, also creates a second relationship between advertising and identity: The growing exploitation of desirable identities. In the society of consumption, together with the process of creating «brands», advertisers market their products less and less on the basis of the product's merits, and more and more by associating a «dream identity» with the possession of a given product. The suggestion is that the possession of a particular brand of car, cigarette or jeans would furnish you with the identity of a successful, attractive, worthy person. The message is as clear as daylight: Accumulating things is the new effective means of achieving identity and actualizing one's potential.

Erich Fromm wrote as early as in 1942 that «modern man lives under the illusion that he knows what he wants, while he actually wants what he is *supposed* to want» (278). If it was true in 1942 that motives and desires were instilled in the individual from the external world, it is even truer now: Advertising accomplished this transformation systematically, and probably we have reached the advanced level of such transformation: Today it even has a new medium which we call the *social* media.

Fromm also foresaw how the desire constructed as external to the individual could lead to uncertainties about one's identity: «If I am nothing but what I believe I am supposed to be [then] who am 'I'?» (1942: 280). If thought and desire are structured by the society, then the individual is hardly self-directed. Instead, such a person conforms to Riesman's «other-directed» personality type who is guided by the behavior of others (Baumeister, 1986: 88). Riesman, Gitlin, Glazer and Denney, in the *Lonely Crowd*(1950), describe a society where individuals seek their neighbors' approval and they live with the fear of being outcast from their community. This lifestyle has a coercive effect, which compels people to abandon «inner-direction» of their lives, and induces them to take on the goals, ideology, likes, and dislikes of their community. Ironically, this creates a tightly grouped crowd of people that is yet incapable of truly fulfilling each other's desire for companionship (Riesman, Gitlin, Glazer & Denney, 1950/2001: 165).

Fromm also remarked that, behind such tendency was the alteration of the concept of knowledge – that knowledge became the domain of specialists (1942). The ordinary person no longer had the hope of understanding the ramifications and complexities of anything important, and so only knew to rely on experts in everything. If no experts are to be found «the mass media would step in and help people know what to think» (Baumeister, 1986: 89).

Fueled by the desire to be different, these tendencies show us how the concept of individuality, the concept of looking for one's identity, one's uniqueness can be downsized to self-expression in very simple ways, even in ways that could seem trivial. The product choices one makes to display how different one is, seems to be defining the type of individuality at stake at the beginning of the twentieth century – yet it even rings true of today.

The type of individuality embodied in the «inner-directed» person, the person who lives life by internal values and goals, is largely obsolete for two reasons: First, the modern «other-directed» person is crucially sensitive to and guided by the reactions of others. Second, the inner self has fallen under the manipulation of mass society by advertising (Baumeister, 1986: 92).

Two main personal goals and ideals seem to persist even today: To earn a lot of money and to become a celebrity. Becoming a celebrity is a matter of being admired or loved for one's personality, which thus

celebrates uniqueness that is merely claimed, as was implied by Baumeister, unlike fame which must be earned or achieved (Lasch, 1979). Lasch, associates these desires with both the psychological and social dimensions of narcissism:

... the character traits associated with pathological narcissism, which in less extreme form appear in such profusion in the everyday life of our age: dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings. Nor do they discuss what might be called the secondary characteristics of narcissism: pseudo self-insight, calculating seductiveness, nervous, self-deprecatory humor. Thus they deprive themselves of any basis on which to make connections between the narcissistic personality type and certain characteristic patterns of contemporary culture, such as the intense fear of old age and death, altered sense of time, fascination with celebrity, fear of competition, decline of the play spirit, deteriorating relations between men and women. For these critics, narcissism remains at its loosest a synonym for selfishness and at its most precise a metaphor, and nothing more, that describes the state of mind in which the world appears as a mirror of the self (Lasch, 1979: 33).

It is probably no accident that individuality should take this form in the century of advertising, technology, and mass consumption. Advertising teaches people to believe that identity follows naturally from the possession of items, implying that constructing the self is as easy as choosing what toothpaste or car to buy (Baumeister, 1986: 91). At this point what pushes the individual towards a narcissistic existence could also be searched in loss of authenticity and decline of self-esteem.

The concept of authenticity was named and explicated by Heidegger (1927). To think and behave in one's own way as opposed to acting in the commonly prescribed, accepted, and stereotyped way, to accept responsibility for one's own actions, and to experience things in their «true» relation to oneself – instead of in a manipulative, exploitative, or dependent fashion – is the nature of authenticity. Total authenticity is, in the final analysis, impossible: yet man's capacity to question himself and his relation to «his» world makes possible a range of degrees of authenticity.

To gain authenticity one must learn in what sense one's experience is really one's own. And when the individual looks upto «dreams of advertisement» it definitely is difficult to talk about authenticity. Through Riesman's «other-directedness» and Fromm's «wanting what one is *supposed* to want», in trying to explain today's society we find ourselves once again in Lasch's *culture of narcissism*.

The other-directedness, in this context, indicates a necessity for approbation and an inherent lack of self-esteem. It starts to become difficult to make choices and one does not know where to look for the criteria. As Bauman observes, this was the point when «the life conditions in question prompt[ed] men

and women to seek examples, not leaders» (2000: 71). As «the images of a happy society painted in many colours» in the course of the past two centuries proved to be «either unattainable or unliveable» (Bauman: 134), people lost their confidence in the leaders that they used to follow, as they did in the possible «salvation by society».

Baumeister suggests a different point of view, as he observes that evidence about individuality and authenticity in the twentieth century points in contrary directions:

Various thinkers and social scientists have remarked on the seeming demise of individuality [Adorno, 1951; Fromm, 1941; Habermas, 1975; Landmann, 1971]. ... On the other hand, individuality is still valued, uniqueness and the «personal touch» are sought, and privacy is coveted, all of which suggest that individuality is alive and well. Perhaps the best way to reconcile these disparate observations is to suggest that the appetite for individuality persists, but the possibility of achieving individuality flourishes. Narcissism, self-help books, personalized luggage, and the rest may have arisen from a frustrated desire for individuality (1986: 93).

Thus we can say that in such fluidity of definitions of identity and desperation with the society, an identity crisis is a natural outcome. Although our knowledge about identity crises increased significantly in the past decades, it is still difficult to define what an identity crisis is, also because not all identity crisis have the same kind of process. Baumeister basically defines two types of crisis based on identity deficit and identity conflict (1986).

Habermas in *Legitimation Crisis* (1973), defines two basic paths for the disease with one's self. The *identity deficit*, which corresponds to Habermas's «motivation crisis,» refers to the inadequately defined self, characterized by a lack of commitment to goals and values. Without such commitments, the person lacks internal, consistent motivations. The person thus has no basis for making consistent choices and decisions. The stereotypical adolescent male identity crisis fits into this category. The adolescent does not know what he wants to be or how to decide. He questions himself and the world, looking for new sources of meaning, fulfillment, and value (1973/1992: 75). The *identity conflict*, related to Habermas's «legitimation crisis», refers to the multiply defined self whose multiple definitions are incompatible. Putting it more simply, in this second case, the different components of someone's identity are in conflict.

Erikson has argued that some form of identity crisis is a normal and possibly universal part of human development. He suggested that adolescence is the common time for this crisis, in part because adolescence is characterized by a «psychosocial moratorium» – an opportunity to experiment with

different possible identities, free from the necessity of making a definite, firm commitment to one of them (1968).

James Marcia tried to explain why some individuals undergo crisis during their self-definition and others do not through his classification of the causes of identity deficit. In the Marcia approach, an interview is used to determine whether the subject has had an identity crisis (including one in progress) and whether the subject is committed to some ideology and occupational goal; the method then ascribes one of four classifications to the subject. If the answer is Yes to both, the person is classified as *identity achieved* – someone who has had an identity crisis and has resolved it by a commitment to definite goals and values. Crisis but no commitment constitutes a *moratorium* status. Moratorium subjects are usually currently in the midst of an identity crisis, hence the lack of definite commitments.

The other two classifications of identity status refer to people who have not had an apparent identity crisis. People who show evidence of firm commitments to goals and values, without having had identity crises, are called *identity foreclosures*. These persons are typically committed to the values and goals their parents taught them; they have never had to reject, revise, or even seriously question the basic framework of these values, although there may be small differences between theirs and their parents. Most children presumably have «foreclosed» identities up to a point – that is, to the point at which they either have an identity crisis or abandon their parents' values.

The final category, *identity diffusion*, refers to persons who have never had an identity crisis and are also uncommitted to any definite set of goals and values. Consistent with Erikson's ideas, this category is generally regarded as the most maladaptive, and even pathological, of the four.

As Habermas suggests, a crisis is a state of a system. If you reject the entire system you have no crisis – you have nothing. A crisis occurs when you reject, or at least put on trial, a large enough part of the system that the system may have to change fundamentally. But there still has to be some continuity, to judge the trial and guide the changes. Despite what he may say, it is probably impossible for an adolescent to reject everything he has been taught and begin a new identity from nothing.

Nonetheless, the difficulties to define one's identity do not only arise during adolescence, and the confusion that we observe about identity today with the rise of the digital world is not basically an adolescent identity crisis, though other paths of research could identify it to be more problematic for younger age groups.

Another possible identity crisis observed by psychologists is mid-life crisis. Once again attributed mainly to the male population, mid-life crisis is described as a failure of the values and goals that have sustained the man for the past two decades of his life – roughly from age twenty to age forty (Levinson, Darrow, Klein, Levinson & McKee, 1978). According to this theory, every male could have a crisis state concerning «the dream» they have about how their life would unfold. The relationship to one's dream could have two forms. One could feel that his life-long values have failed him for not having achieved his dreams, or on the contrary, one could fulfill his dream and find out that it is not satisfactory, which thus causes a questioning of one's values in return. Either way, then, the mid-life male finds himself unable to continue structuring his life around this *dream* – and this deficit constitutes the mid-life crisis.

The crisis is often provoked by an acute sense of nonfulfillment. Failure to achieve one's «dream» or disappointment upon reaching it, sets off the crisis and necessitates a reassessment of one's potential. The heightened awareness of mortality, the sense that time is running out, is also disturbing precisely because it denotes a limit on one's potential. As a second important component, one's general values and priorities undergo reevaluation and change. And a third point is that the interpersonal aspect of identity is also subjected to reassessment and change during mid-life crisis. Finally, the process of «turning inward» implies that one's approach to interpersonal relationships is altered fundamentally. The subjective experience of an identity deficit involves a wide range of emotional turmoil and activity.

An identity crisis based on a *deficit*, a lack of commitment to values is very different than one that is based on a *conflict*. The essential prerequisite for an identity conflict is a strong personal and emotional commitment to two distinct identity components that become incompatible. As long as a person has a reliable way of making those choices, he or she is unlikely to have an identity crisis.

The identity conflict differs from the identity deficit in that the conflict presents no vacuum to fill; there is no need for exploration, experimentation, or new information. An example for such identity crisis could be the female conflict between pursuing a career and becoming a mother. The dramatic behaviour patterns of the new identity deficit, such as finding a new hobby, new lover, new job, or new ideology, have no value in solving an identity conflict. Hence, in this dissertation, in evaluating the effects of the online social networks as a possible factor in identity crisis, we will focus mainly on the identity deficit.

The recurrent themes mentioned by those who have studied identity deficits include the following: vacillating commitment and confusion about values, periodic feelings of vagueness, feelings of emptiness, preoccupation with great, seemingly unresolvable questions, and the disturbingly increased self-consciousness (Baumeister, 1986: 212). The tension between fear of unfulfilled potential and desire for stable commitments is thus common to the identity deficits of mid-life as well as adolescence.

As a fundamentally new form of communication, Facebook leads to new interpersonal and social effects. One of the basic promises of Facebook is keeping us in contact with the people that we already know, helping us to share our life with our friends, family or acquaintances (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 29). In this sense, lifecasting on Facebook lets us know several details of the daily *lives* of the people that we know, which also allows for comparing lives – which could provoke positive or negative psychological reactions – and even crises.

Baumeister quotes James Baldwin, on the painful recognition that «between what one wishes to become and what one has become there is a momentous gap, which will now never be closed» (1986: 215). Facebook provides individuals with a lot of material that could trigger one's self-evaluation in this sense, as well as comparing one's personal achievements with those of other –though what we see reduced to two-dimensional images on Facebook, is neither one's identity, nor one's life. Nonetheless, ever since it has taken over our perception of real, if one comes out with a negative balance from Facebook comparisons, finding out what our old friends are upto could be a total depression instead of a joy. Setting out from this point, we have formulated the «FBComparison» variable in the Digital Life Scale, to see the possible correlations between lifecasting on Facebook and its effects on identity crisis – if there are any.

Another possible correlation that new forms of communication powered by Facebook could produce is through the feedback mechanisms of the medium. As Facebook has components like «the wall», «the poke», «the like button» and the opportunity to comment on almost anything that is shared on Facebook, one's footsteps on the digital social network and the responses of her/his Facebook friends are traceable and even measurable.

For someone with no vulnerabilities, these features are trivial elements to provoke simple, momentary fun. Nonetheless, for anyone with low self-esteem, negative self-regard, or a tendency to evaluate oneself in an «other-directed» light, too much feedback could be overwhelming. Subjects classified, for example, as having moratorium-status identity are unusually susceptible to influence. These subjects are more likely than others to go along with the group, to express an opinion that seemed obviously false but agreed with what everyone else was saying (Baumeister, 1986: 219).

On the other hand, lifecasting and comparing lives could also be helpful for one in choosing one's values and making one's commitments, thus for coming out of an identity crisis. Since the moratorium state of an identity is considered to be a period of experimentation, trial and error, Facebook could provide *case studies* to learn from one another. Moreover, the interpersonal aspect of identity is centrally and decisively involved in the process of identity crisis. Erikson (1968) portrayed the adolescent

moratorium as a process of experimentation, and he noted that one way the adolescent judged the outcome of a given «experiment» was by how others reacted; the adolescent tries out various modes of behaving to see how others respond.

The identity deficit is a lack of commitment that is resolved when the commitments are made. An identity deficit is not a lack of a specific, known component but is rather an inadequacy in one's identity for dealing with the basic issues of identity – one's values and priorities, one's guiding image of personal potential, and one's interpersonal self. Once a set of basic values and beliefs is accumulated, the first stage of resolving the identity deficit can be completed by making one's system of values and beliefs complete and consistent. Resolving the value issues enables the person to form an abstract goal, a vague concept of a desired future self. The person can then move to the second stage of resolving the identity deficit. In the second stage, that abstract goal or vaguely envisioned future self must become a specific, viable ambition; the person then initiates activities designed to fulfill that goal. The basic and abstract values resulting from the first stage must be translated into specific behavioral patterns. Finally, the person settles on a particular option or pattern and begins to work toward it. This constitutes the commitment, and the identity crisis is ended.

On the one hand, an identity crisis is a «problem», an illness, a form of psychopathology. It is listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Vol 3*, by the American Psychiatric Association. On the other hand, many people seem to regard an identity crisis as a valuable and desirable experience. Erikson felt that adolescent identity crises were essential to proper growth and development (1968). People who experience identity crises – especially those who have had them and have successfully resolved them – tend to be superior to others on various dimensions, including academic achievement, achievement motivation, the ability to adapt and perform under stress, and interpersonal intimacy (Baumeister, 1986: 228). The evidence is more consistent with the notion that identity-deficit crises are good – rather than bad – for you.

4.1.2 Self-Love, Self-Hatred, Self-Esteem and Narcissism

The turbulence of our times demands strong selves with a clear sense of identity; competence, and worth. With a breakdown of cultural consensus, an absence of worthy role models ... and disorientingly rapid change a permanent feature of our lives, it is a dangerous moment in history not to know who we are or not to trust ourselves. The stability we cannot find in the world we must create within our own persons. To face life with low self-esteem is to be at a severe disadvantage (Branden, 1994: xi).

According to the identity theory, two dimensions of self-esteem have particular consequences for bringing self-esteem and identity together. The first one is the esteem composed of feelings of self-worth based primarily on reflected appraisals and the second is the esteem formulated through feelings of efficacy based on observations of the effects of one's own actions, as well as on social comparisons (Owens, Stryker & Goodman, 2001: 32-33). Considering both of these dimensions, the social turmoil of our day encourages and discourages the individual's self-esteem through constant digital stimuli and feedback. As such, the online social network extends the interaction and the affect attached to these relationships online. Hence, on the self-esteem side there is a growing awareness of specificity – namely, *global* and *role-specific* self-esteem.

Self-esteem has to do with persons' affective responses to themselves and their evaluations of who they are (Rosenberg, 1965). Identity on the other hand, in most of its several definitions is a cognitive variable. Positioning identity together with self-esteem signifies building a common framework of role-choice behaviour, through which we understand the contemporary social behaviour as «a product of jointly operating cognitive and affective variables» (Owens, Stryker & Goodman, 2001: 31).

Popular psychology and self-help books repeatedly insist that loving the self is necessary for loving the other, hence for healthy interpersonal relationships. Among the several authors that defend the significance of loving thyself is Nathaniel Branden, psychologist and psychotherapist best known for his work on self-esteem psychology from a humanistic perspective. Branden notes that «it is not difficult to see the importance of self-esteem to success in romantic relationships» and makes explicit reference to the phrase «If you do not love yourself, you will be unable to love others» (Branden, 1994: 7-8). Lesser known authors echo his point. As one author notes in a description of his book, loving is becoming intimate with your real self, «You may well have noticed that people who love themselves find it easy to love others and to accept love from others» (Dolan as cited in Baumeister & Campbell, 2004: 85).

In his theory of psychosocial development, Erikson postulated that a sense of identity had to be established before intimacy with another could be achieved (Erikson, 1950). In Erikson's scheme, the task of establishing identity arose primarily in the teen and early young adult years. These years were spent wrestling with a crisis between achieving a solid sense of self and being trapped in a state of role confusion. If this early identity crisis was resolved appropriately, the young adult years became a time to experience intimacy. As Erikson put it, the crisis became one of intimacy versus isolation (Baumeister & Campbell, 2004: 79). Nevertheless he had not explicitly mention the role of high self-esteem in the process.

Baumeister and Campbell intended to answer the question «is loving the self necessary for loving another?» in a research by the same name, dated 2004. In their perspective, some research has supported Erikson's idea regarding the importance of achieving identity before the establishment of intimate relationships (2004: 79). However, in his conceptualization, a stable view of the self is more central to identity formation than a positively valenced view of the self.

Longitudinal data have shown that the establishment of identity in the teen years predicts stable intimate relationships in the young adult years, both in terms of marital status and marital stability [Kahn, Zimmerman, Csikszentmihalyi, & Getzels, 1985]. These findings however, do not equivocally support the notion that self-love is a necessary precursor to loving others. Although a clear sense of self or identity is associated with a degree of high self-esteem, stable self-views do not necessarily imply self-love (Baumeister & Campbell, 2004: 79).

Baumeister and Campbell also suggest that the humanistic perspectives developed by Rogers (1961) and Maslow (1962) have also played an unconscious role in focusing society on the importance of self-love. These authors emphasized the importance of living up to one's ideals, even becoming self-actualized. This self-actualization was, of course, presumed to have beneficial effects on interpersonal relationships. Self-actualization includes an accurate view of self, and an acceptance of the failings, problems, and shortcomings that the self contains. Self-actualization is more closely related to self-acceptance than self-love, but some of this detail may have been lost in the popularization of Roger's work.

Maslow's (1968) hierarchy of needs ... explained that people first address the most urgent, basic needs and only move on to higher needs when the basic ones are satisfied. In Maslow's hierarchy, belongingness needs are more basic to human functioning than self-esteem needs and self-actualization. Thus, in his theory, receiving love is a prerequisite for self-love, rather than the other way around. In sum, it would be a misreading of Maslow's views to propose that self-love leads to loving others (Baumeister & Campbell, 2004: 80).

Baumeister and Campbell have concluded their analysis claiming that what the popular view predicts, that high self-esteem would be related to love for others did not appear to be the case, although high self-esteem was associated with greater passionate love (2004: 82). Nonetheless, they have also identified that low self-esteem may damage romantic relationships in other ways. Low self-esteem individuals may develop «a pattern of emotional neediness in relationships». They find it difficult to fathom that someone could care about them all that much. Not surprisingly, if you do not like yourself, you tend to assume that others will not like you. Researchers have found that individuals low in self-esteem, at least when they were depressed, constantly seek reassurance from close others (Joiner, Alfano, & Metalsky, 1992). As explained in detail in the sixth chapter, some correlations were identified

in the *Digital Life Scale* results that have indicated a similar relation between low self-esteem and Facebook use of individuals.

However, on the other extreme of the scale, high self-esteem is found to be related to narcissistic behaviour and unrealistic self-regard on some levels tending towards megalomania (Baumeister, 1997; Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides & Elliot, 2000 as cited in Coşkan & Gençöz, 2008).

One study of marital interactions yielded a negative relationship between narcissistic grandiosity (and instability) and positive interactions with the spouse, suggesting that some forms of self-love are detrimental to good relationship maintenance. This effect was especially noticeable when participants discussed ego-threatening topics [Schuetz, 1998]. Self-acceptance, however, did predict liking for and positive interactions with the spouse. Self-esteem may also be implicated in violent or aggressive responses to self-esteem threat [Baumeister, Smart & Boden, 1996]. Such threats, for example, may include jealousy stemming from one's partner's desire to leave the romantic relationship. This violence may serve some purpose in maintaining a relationship but may also seriously damage any benefits gained from it. Finally, high self-esteem may be associated with exit behaviours in response to relationship conflict [Rusbult, Morrow & Johnson, 1987]. In other words, people with favorable opinions of themselves are more likely to respond to relationship conflict by doing things that might end the relationship, possibly because they begin looking for alternative partners. This may be good for the self but detrimental to the relationship. Of course, it is possible that leaving a bad relationship may lead to a better future relationship. For example, research has noted that a lack of alternatives often leads individuals to remain in abusive relationships, whereas the presence of alternatives helps them exit [Rusbult & Martz, 1995]. Still, these findings confirm that self-love can prove detrimental to relationships, contrary to the simple view that self-love breeds love for others (Baumeister & Campbell, 2004: 84).

Another common belief relates narcissism with self-love, which in fact is quite the contrary. Freud believed that some narcissism is an essential part of all of us from birth (1914b). Andrew P. Morrison claims that, in adults, a reasonable amount of healthy narcissism allows the individual's perception of his needs to be balanced in relation to others (1986). Interestingly in Spanish, especially in Spain, where psychoanalysis is not used in public health, the word «narcissism» has a different meaning: «overindulgence at considering one's faculties or acts». Thus, in this particular case, the term «healthy narcissism» is replaced by «healthy self-love»¹.

Narcissism appears realistically to represent the best way of coping with the tensions and anxieties of modern life, and the prevailing social conditions therefore tend to bring out narcissistic traits that are present, in varying degrees, in everyone. These conditions have also transformed the family, which in turn shapes the underlying structure of personality. A society that fears it has no future is not likely to give much attention to the needs of the next

generation, and the ever-present sense of historical discontinuity – the blight of our society – falls with particularly devastating effect on the family. The modern parent's attempt to make children feel loved and wanted does not conceal an underlying coolness – the remoteness of those who have little to pass on to the next generation and who in any case give priority to their own right to self-fulfillment. The combination of emotional detachment with attempts to convince a child of his favored position in the family is a good prescription for a narcissistic personality structure (Lasch, 1979: 50).

According to Freud, identification of narcissistic behaviour is more commonly linked to self-hatred instead of self-love: «If the love for the object ... takes refuge in narcissistic identification, then the hate comes into operation on this substitutive object». He explains such self-hatred as the vicissitude of identification with the object of loss: «The self-tormenting in melancholia [signifies] a satisfaction of trends of sadism and hate which relate to an object, and which have been turned round upon the subject's own self» (Freud as cited in Mijolla, 2005: 1570).

From a similar perspective, Erich Fromm articulated that the self as the object of love should be overcome, if real intimacies with other people were to be founded:

... the main condition for the achievement of love is the overcoming of one's narcissism. The narcissistic orientation is one in which one experiences as real only that which exists within oneself, while the phenomena in the outside world have no reality in themselves, but are experienced only from the viewpoint of their being useful or dangerous to one. The opposite pole to narcissism is objectivity; it is the faculty to see people and things as they are, objectively, and to be able to separate this objective picture from a picture which is formed by one's desires and fears. All forms of psychosis show the inability to be objective, to an extreme degree. For the insane person the only reality that exists is that within him, that of his fears and desires. He sees the world outside as symbols of his inner world, as his creation. All of us do the same when we dream. In dreams we produce events, we stage dramas, which are the expression of our wishes and fears (although sometimes also of our insights and judgement), and while we are asleep we are convinced that the product of our dreams is as real as the reality which we perceive in our waking state (1957: 93).

As stated previously, this research does not intend to define the social media behaviour of online social network users as pathological narcissism, nonetheless, does not deny either that some common behaviours and motives can easily be identified with narcissistic symptoms. Two specific concepts within the framework of self-esteem, self-love, self-hatred and narcissism can be investigated in this light: Pseudo self-esteem and the spotlight effect.

Nathaniel Branden labeled external validation as «pseudo self-esteem», arguing that «true self-esteem» comes from internal sources, such as self-responsibility, self-sufficiency and the knowledge of one's own competence and capability to deal with obstacles and adversity, regardless of what other people think.

Pseudo-self-esteem is the illusion of self-efficacy and self-respect without the reality. It is a nonrational, self-protective device to diminish anxiety and to provide a spurious sense of security – to assuage our need for authentic self-esteem while allowing the real causes of its lack to be evaded. It is based on values that may be appropriate or inappropriate but that in either case are not intrinsically related to that which genuine self-efficacy and self-respect require (Branden, 1992: 36).

Identities constructed, edited and meticulously polished on social networking sites can and are willing to be subject to the opinion of the Other. Whether it is given in the form of a positive feedback or perceived simply as the identity/image of the person behind the profile, these identities could serve as boosters of pseudo self-esteem for the narcissistically weak. Instead of seeking self-esteem through consciousness, responsibility, and integrity, one may seek it through popularity, prestige, material acquisitions or sexual exploits. Instead of valuing personal authenticity, one may value belonging to the right clubs. Instead of seeking self-respect through honesty, one may seek it through philanthropy. Instead of striving for the power of competence, one may pursue the «power» of manipulating or controlling other people. Though this was always-already possible in all sorts of social encounters, today the participatory web brings it to our fingertips, facilitating any sort of reflexive work on the self.

On the online social network, the possibilities for self-deception are almost endless – all the blind alleys down which we can lose ourselves, not realizing that what we desire cannot be purchased with counterfeit currency. Self-esteem, as we have already identified, is an intimate experience; it resides in the core of our being. It is what we think and feel about ourselves, not what someone else thinks or feels about us.

I can project an image of assurance that fools virtually everyone and yet secretly tremble with a sense of my inadequacy. I can fulfill the expectations of others and yet fail my own; I can win every honor, yet feel I have accomplished nothing; I can be adored by millions and yet wake up each morning with a sickening sense of fraudulence and emptiness. To attain «success» without attaining positive self-esteem is to be condemned to feeling like an impostor anxiously awaiting exposure (Branden, 1992: 37).

Thus in this context, the «spotlight effect» goes hand in hand with the pseudo self-esteem boost of online protagonism and the digital reach:

Most of us stand out in our own minds. Whether in the midst of a personal triumph or an embarrassing mishap, we are usually quite focused on what is happening to us, its significance to our lives, and how it appears to others. Each of us is the center of our own universe. Because we are so focused on our own behavior, it can be difficult to arrive at an accurate assessment of how much – or how little – our behavior is noticed by others. Indeed, close inspection reveals frequent disparities between the way we view our performance (and think others will view it) and the way it is actually seen by others. Whether making a brilliant point in a group discussion, contributing to a successful project, or executing the perfect jump shot on the basketball court, we sometimes find that the efforts we view as extraordinary and memorable go unnoticed or underappreciated by others (Gilovich, Medvec & Savitsky, 2000: 211).

Gilovich, Medvec and Savitsky dub this «putative phenomenon» as the *spotlight effect*: People tend to believe that the social spotlight shines more brightly on them than it really does. Their research explores how egocentric tendencies akin to those they examined tend to distort people's assessments of the extent to which their efforts are the subject of others' attention. Through the «Barry Manilow t-shirt experiment» that they carried out they compiled empirical data to demonstrate the spotlight effect. Students got self-conscious when they were required to wear a t-shirt with an unpopular picture to classes. The students believed more than 46 percent of their classmates would notice their shirts and judge them, when in fact fewer than 19 percent even noticed the t-shirt (Gilovich, Medvec & Savitsky, 2000: 211).

By the same token, though we get exhausted to «maintain face» on the social networkings sites and meticulously edit our online identity/images for personal impression management, the spotlight effect is at work. The majority of the times, energy dedicated to Facebook could be a disappointing waste of time as 95% of the status updates on Facebook go unnoticed (Blackman & Choquelle, 2011).

4.1.3 Hysteria > Paranoia > Schizophrenia > Narcissism

As we have mentioned earlier, in trying to identify the current condition of human identity, it is common in academic literature to associate the contemporary definition with disorder and disease. Nevertheless, the idea that the identity is in crisis and that it is associated with several disorders over the past decades should not block our view that all definitions of sane and insane are already porous. As we have previously quoted Freud, anyone who believes to be «normal» could cross the border of sanity several times during the day. And yet it should also be kept in mind that we are only utilizing the disease metaphors to pinpoint transformations, and not to refer to actual pathologies taking over all the individuals of the society.

Who does not realize that the line distinguishing the normal from the deviant is so far from being merely fine as to be utterly porous? Yet, we do not talk about the conclusive fact of social life that must issue from this realization that the line between the good and bad is one drawn by the invisible hand of social structures. ... Prisons and mental hospitals, like detention halls and soup lutchens, are the reminders that there is a limit, even if, on average, those on the inside differ from those on the outside only by virtue of the bad luck of the hands dealt them. Even so, where the difference is real, we temporarily on the outside understand perfectly well the methods of those incarcerated in any structured imprisonments of an orderly society. ... *The naive expectation of normals with a calling that they are deservedly superior to the deviant is the Big Lie of social order. The truth is that we are all perverse.* The rules of the interaction order are those that, above all others, demand that behaviors directed toward the presentation of self, or to the reaccreditation of a lost face, are precisely and exclusively about information control. It is not that the abnormal are like us, but that we who presume are *like them* (From Lemert's introduction, Treviño, 2003: xvi, *emphasis added*).

Through time, sociological changes inevitably bring about new definitions of healthy and insane. In *Flexible Bodies*(1994), the anthropologist Emily Martin argues that the language of the immune system provides us with metaphors for the self and its boundaries. In the past, the immune system was described as a private fortress, a firm, stable wall that protected within from without. Today we talk



Figure 4.4 – Dr. Philippe Pinel at the Salpêtrière, by Robert Fleury (1795). Pinel ordering the removal of chains from patients at the Paris Asylum for insane women.

about the immune system as flexible and permeable: It can only be healthy if adaptable to the changing conditions (Turkle, 1995: 255).

Every age develops its own peculiar forms of pathology, which express in exaggerated form its underlying character structure. In Freud's time, hysteria and obsessional neurosis carried to extremes the personality traits associated with the capitalist order at an earlier stage in its development – acquisitiveness, fanatical devotion to work, and a fierce repression of sexuality. In our time, the preschizophrenic, borderline, or personality disorders have attracted increasing attention, along with schizophrenia itself. This «change in the form of neuroses has been observed and described since World War II by an ever-increasing number of psychiatrists» (Lasch, 1979: 41).

The overcrowded industrial city once evoked the utilization of urban paranoia for the people living in the cities and had no way of knowing all the people that surrounded them. Then cyberspace came up many many years later and suggested «dispersed identities», which in Sherry Turkle's definition, indicated sort of a Multiple Personality Disorder in the screen. Today, the over-exposure, sort of exhibitionism of the self is leading us to make an inevitable reference to narcissism.

With cyberspace communications that we have examined in detail in previous chapters, online switches among different identities started to seem natural. Emily Martin called them «practicums» and considered them to be a kind of practice:

On a WELL discussion group about online personae participants shared a sense that their virtual identities were evocative objects for thinking about the self. For several, experiences in virtual space compelled them to pay greater attention to what they take for granted in the real. «The persona thing intrigues me» said one. «It's a chance for all of us who aren't actors to play [with] masks. And think about the masks we wear every day» (Turkle, 1995: 256).

Even though we can consider the switches between personae, different roles or performances to be «identity drafts», in this chapter we will try to identify the different conditions that have led to different *diseased* definitions of identity, from the lonely trap of hysteria to the paranoia of the unknown urban crowds, from the dispersed schizophrenic identity of late capitalism to the current debate on narcissism.

Turkle, in *Life in the Screen*, defines the history of psychopathology to be dynamic: «If in a particular time and place, certain behaviors seem disruptive, [then] they are labeled [as] pathological» (1995: 284). For instance, in the nineteenth century society, sexual repression was considered to be a «good and moral» behaviour, nonetheless, when women lost sensation, or the ability to speak and express themselves, the troubling symptoms were considered as a disease, which was later identified as hysteria. With more outlets for women's sexuality, hysterical symptoms declined, and others took their place.

Now, we have symptoms born of fears of isolation and abandonment. In my study of growing up in the networked culture, I meet many children and teenagers who feel cast off. Some have parents with good intentions who simply work several jobs and have little time for their children. Some have endured divorce – sometimes multiple divorces – and float from one parent to another, not confident of their true home. Those lucky children who have intact families with stable incomes can experience other forms of abandonment. Busy parents are preoccupied, often by what is on their cell phones. When children come home, it is often to a house that is empty until a parent returns from work (Turkle, 1995: 285).

On a different note, for Baudrillard, the path to the contemporary claustrophobic individual started off from the alienation of the human within the space of technology and with the ecstasy of communication:

It is our only architecture today: great screens on which are reflected atoms, particles, molecules in motion. Not a public scene or true public space but gigantic spaces of circulation, ventilation and ephemeral connections. ... In a subtle way, this loss of public space occurs contemporaneously with the loss of private space. The one is no longer a spectacle, the other no longer a secret. ... Certainly, this private universe was alienating to the extent that it separated you from others – or from the world, where it was invested as a protective enclosure, an imaginary protector, a defense system. But it also reaped the symbolic benefits of alienation, which is that the Other exists, and that otherness can fool you for the better or for worse. Thus consumer society lived under the sign of alienation, as a society of the spectacle. But just so: as long as there is alienation, there is spectacle, action, scene. It is not obscenity – the spectacle is never obscene. Obscenity begins precisely when there is no more «spectacle», no more scene, when all becomes transparence and immediate visibility, when everything is exposed to the harsh and inexorable light of information and communication. ... We are no longer a part of the drama of alienation; we live in the ecstasy of communication. And this ecstasy is obscene. The obscene is what does away with every mirror, every look, every image. The obscene puts an end to every representation (Baudrillard, 1985: 150).

Today, in the midst of a «delirium of communication», human beings feel more trapped inside themselves than ever. This contemporary uneasiness also highlights a fundamental difference between other types of psychoses and narcissism. Narcissism is characterized by the individual closing upon oneself, while this is not the case in the clinical definitions of hysteria, paranoia or schizophrenia.

In his infamous *Culture of Narcissism* dated 1979, Christopher Lasch takes narcissism as a metaphor of the human condition. Though he refers to a much earlier period, today we still see the truth of his sociological observations. According to Lasch, one of the basic triggers for a narcissistic society was the surge of uncertainty, as hopes of creating a better society through scientific developments was lost almost completely. «The natural sciences, having made exaggerated claims for themselves, now hasten to announce that science offers no miracle cures for social problems» (Lasch, 1979: xiv).

The lost hopes of creating a better society have turned the gaze of the individual inward, towards attaining and/or maximizing personal happiness, as a collective one was deemed impossible. In Lasch's words, «culture of narcissism» described a way of life that was dying: «the culture of competitive individualism, which in its decadence has carried the logic of individualism to the extreme of a war of all against all, [also carried] the pursuit of happiness to the dead end of a narcissistic preoccupation with the self» (1979: xiv). Hence a new individual was created as the economic man himself had given way to the psychological man of our times, as the final product of bourgeois individualism. The new narcissist is haunted not by guilt but by anxiety. He seeks not to inflict his own certainties on others but to find a «meaning» in life. As he is liberated from the superstitions of the past, or the collective concerns and worries of the society, he doubts even the reality of his own existence.

In a narcissistic society – a society that gives increasing prominence and encouragement to narcissistic traits – the cultural devaluation of the past reflects not only the poverty of the prevailing ideologies, which have lost their grip on reality and abandoned the attempt to master it, but the poverty of the narcissist's inner life. A society that has made «nostalgia» a marketable commodity on the cultural exchange quickly repudiates the suggestion that life in the past was in any important way better than life today. Having trivialized the past by equating it with outmoded styles of consumption, discarded fashions and attitudes, people today resent anyone who draws on the past in serious discussions of contemporary conditions or attempts to use the past as a standard by which to judge the present (Lasch, 1979: xvii).

Having formulated his theory on the American society, Lasch indicates that after the political turmoil of the sixties, Americans have retreated to purely personal preoccupations. Having no hope of improving their lives in any of the ways that matter, people have convinced themselves that what matters is psychic self-improvement: getting in touch with their feelings, eating health food, taking lessons in ballet or belly-dancing, immersing themselves in the wisdom of the East, jogging, learning how to «relate» overcoming the «fear of pleasure» (1979: 5). Thus people, developing a new «therapeutic sensibility» have left behind hopes of personal salvation for embracing the «the feeling, the momentary illusion, of personal well-being, health, and psychic security».

It is no longer then the traditional obscenity of what is hidden, repressed, forbidden or obscure; on the contrary, it is the obscenity of the visible, of the all-too-visible, of the more-visible-than-the-visible. It is the obscenity of what no longer has any secret, of what dissolves completely in information and communication (Baudrillard, 1985: 151).

Thus in the visibility and intimacy of all, where the play was lost, it was cyberspace that brought back fantasy by its way of «veiling» the apparent once again. Turkle highlights one more point, when she reclaims hysteria, which Baudrillard rejects in today's world, as she points out that «today we suffer

[hysteria] not less but differently» (1984: 279). In her perspective, the human subject of our day, terrified of being alone, yet all the same afraid of intimacy, experiences widespread feelings of emptiness, of disconnection, of the unreality of self. At this point computer enters the realm as a companion without emotional demands and offers a compromise. Taking the helping hand of the computer – and *the whole world behind the screen*, «you can be a loner, but never alone»; «you can interact, but need never feel vulnerable to another person» (Turkle, 1984: 280).

The hysteria defined by Turkle is certainly different from the clinical definition of the pathology. Nonetheless, the strength of the metaphor lies in the once «suppressed» nature of human identity. Hysteria refers to a condition of human identity when the essence was thought to be deep inside the psyche.

For Freud the psychic materials of hysteria appear to be arranged in strata, starting from a kernel of traumatic memories. ... The goal of the analysis is to «penetrate ... to the nucleus of the pathogenic organization», an operation that requires considerable effort on the part of the therapist, who must overcome the patient's resistance in order to unearth the buried memory that is the source of the problem. The means used to overcome this were still rudimentary, gentle, physical pressure applied to the points of the forehead, and an increasing barrage of questions intended to «extort» a patient's secrets. Even though the method was claimed to be successful, Freud concluded, «No doubt fate would find it easier than I do to relieve you of your illness. But you will be able to convince yourself that much will be gained if we succeed in transforming your hysterical misery into common unhappiness. With a mental life that has been restored to health, you will be better armed against that unhappiness» (Freud as cited in Mijolla, 2005: 1672).

As the conditions that identified hysteria to be the mainstream pathology have changed within the newly dwelled urban spaces, the metaphor for the human condition was also transformed and this time, it was identified to be the paranoia of the crowds as we have discussed in detail in the second chapter of this dissertation. The undercurrent for paranoia was an ebb-and-flow, predicating on the ambiguity of the experience of the crowd. And even in this era where the minimal separation of the inside and the outside was preserved, identity was still kept distinct; there were already marks of the schizophrenic subject everywhere. Headed by the terror of paranoia from within, the subject tended to merge with the crowd, in order to be nondescript, removing the borders of the self though only on the outside. Perhaps it was the limitedness of the space as yet, which kept schizophrenia from taking the lead. Engels describes the scene of London, in order to define the locked-up crowd and the identity:

... But the sacrifice which all this has cost became apparent later. After roaming the streets of the capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty through the human turmoil and the

endless lines of vehicles, after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realizes for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization which crowd their city... The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? ... And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing stream of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honour another with so much a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest, becomes the repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space (Engels as cited in Benjamin, 1973: 57-58).

Yet in the movement from the physical space to the cyberspace of the telephone, radio, television and finally the internet, the already porous human subject of the modern, standing every now and then, at the edge of schizophrenia, has yet confronted a new era of being digitalized, achieving an even painful «electronic porosity» (Stone, 1995: 166). However destructive it sounds, on the path of the all-too-visible of the urban and the invisible of the cyber – and back again, the pendulum of the human came out of the battle defeated, and all the same victorious. On the eyes blazed by the brilliant yellow glow of the computer screen, there was yet another glow to be read, one of reclaiming back the space in which to dream, to fantasize. This recognition of the space for dreaming was a mirage in the midst of all the threat on the human identity. Drawing on Turkle's argument in *The Second Self*, this was a space necessary for the identity to be reclaimed; as Turkle characterized computers to be intimate machines and at the same time, as the new location for dreaming, which is a central identity formation process (as cited in Hakken, 1999: 87).

Pathologically defining schizophrenia, the originality of Lacan's thought in this area was to have considered schizophrenia essentially as a language disorder and to have linked schizophrenic experience to a whole view of language acquisition as the fundamental missing link in the Freudian conception of the formation of the mature psyche. What we need to retain from this is the idea that psychosis, and more particularly schizophrenia, emerges from the failure of the infant to accede fully into the realm of speech and language. The schizophrenic thus does not know personal identity in our sense, since our feeling of identity depends on our sense of the persistence of the «I» and the «me» over time (Jameson, 1982: 136-137).

Going back to the invisibility of cyberspace, we take it to be the space which allowed for the fantasy to exist, for the play of identities. For on the surface, there was no identification, no possibility of play. As Deleuze and Guattari engraved it, «there is no longer an I, for every I is a multiplicity. There is no one, for

every one is a multiplicity» (1988). If an identity was to be defined for human in this schizophrenic society of merges that they considered, then cyberspace must have been the exact *plateau* for this identity, considering the convergence of cyberspace and fantasy that we have traced. Cyberspace was the plateau where each and every human being was given the possibility of being any «one» that they desire to be, by being able to choose from the multiplicity.

Operating within the framework «identity» (negative difference) versus undifferentiation (confusion) «leaves a body three options». Becoming the person it is said to be: the slow death of stable equilibrium. Opting out of that path, into its opposite: neurosis and eventual breakdown. Or shopping-to-be: Not exactly mental stability, but not quite breakdown either. The frenzy of the purchasable – potential experienced as infinite choice between havings rather than becomings. Stealing away from the shopping mall on an exorbital path tangent to identity and undifferentiation is called «schizophrenia». Schizophrenia is a breakdown into the unstable equilibrium of continuing self-invention (Massumi, 1992: 92).

Also within the context of schizophrenia, Howard Rheingold referred to Gergen's notion of a «saturated self», the idea that communication technologies have caused us to «colonize each other's brains» (1991/2001: 148). Gergen describes us as saturated with the many «voices of humankind – both harmonious and alien». He believes that as «we absorb their varied rhymes and reasons they become part of us and we of them. Social saturation furnishes us with a multiplicity of incoherent and unrelated languages of the self». With our relationships spread across the globe and our knowledge of other cultures relativizing our attitudes and depriving us of any norm, we «exist in a state of continuous construction and reconstruction; it is a world where anything goes that can be negotiated. Each reality of self gives way to reflexive questioning, irony, and ultimately the playful probing of yet another reality. The center fails to hold» (Turkle, 1995: 257).

Nonetheless, the idea of the schizophrenic subject was not only within the psyche, but also indicated the subject as divided between the mind and body. Indeed the idea, the notion, the *ideal* of cyberspace, the whole schema of *escape* took its leverage from the mind-body duality. Slenderly appearing under the skin, was the pulse to «get rid of the meat» to merge with the matrix out there (Sobchack as cited in Dery, 1996: 310). Borrowing from Dery again, «If religion is the opiate of the masses and Marxism the opiate of the intellectual, then cyberspace is the opiate of the twenty-first-century schizoid man, polarized between mind and body» (1996: 252).

Narcissism tells us a completely different perspective: the individual closing upon her/himself and being the absolute center of her/his world and perception.

Mary: Tell me, Edmund: Do you have someone special in your life?

Edmund: Well, yes, as a matter of fact, I do.

Mary: Who?

Edmund: Me.

Mary: No, I mean someone you love, cherish and want to keep safe from all the horror and the hurt.

Edmund: Erm... Still me, really. (Lloyd, 1989).

Pathologically defined, narcissism is the gaze closing upon one's own self, the ego-centric moment of being the center of attention within one's own world.

The question arises: What happens to the libido which has been withdrawn from external objects in schizophrenia? The megalomania characteristic of these states points the way. This megalomania has no doubt come into being at the expense of object-libido. The libido that has been withdrawn from the external world has been directed to the ego and thus gives rise to an attitude which may be called narcissism. But the megalomania itself is no new creation; on the contrary, it is, as we know, a magnification and plainer manifestation of a condition which had already existed previously. This leads us to look upon the narcissism which arises through the drawing in of object-cathexes as a secondary one, superimposed upon a primary narcissism that is obscured by a number of different influences. ... This extension of the libido theory – in my opinion, a legitimate one – receives reinforcement from a third quarter, namely, from our observations and views on the mental life of children and primitive peoples. In the latter we find characteristics which, if they occurred singly, might be put down to megalomania: an over-estimation of the power of their wishes and mental acts, the «omnipotence of thoughts», a belief in the thaumaturgic force of words, and a technique for dealing with the external world – «magic» – which appears to be a logical application of these grandiose premisses (Freud, 1914b: 74-75).

The name «narcissism» is derived from Greek mythology. According to the legend, Narcissus was a handsome Greek mythological hero who has been thought to be tragically drowned in a pond after falling in love with his own reflection. The nymph Echo – who had been punished by Hera for gossiping and was cursed to forever have the last word – had seen Narcissus walking through the forest and wanted to talk to him, but, because of her curse, she was not able to speak first. As Narcissus was walking along, he got thirsty and stopped to take a drink; it was then he saw his reflection for the first time, and, not knowing any better, started talking to it. Echo, who had been following him, then started repeating the last thing he said back. Not knowing about reflections, Narcissus thought his reflection was speaking to him. Unable to consummate his love, Narcissus pined away at the pool and changed into the flower that bears his name, the narcissus. From these times, the word «narcissist» is used in common sense to describe individuals whose vanity, grandiosity, self-centeredness and sense of entitlement are unrealistically boosted.

The term entered twentieth century psychology literature with the first psychiatric definition of Havelock Ellis in 1898: «a tendency for the sexual emotions to be lost and entirely absorbed in self-admiration». The concept was further elaborated by Paul Nacker in 1899, as he discussed a perversion where an individual treated his own body as one might treat the body of a sexual partner (Mijolla, 2005: 1104). Rising discussions of narcissism had begun with psychodynamic works of Freud followed by those of Kohut and Kernberg. Starting at 1914, Freud made use of narcissism both in his metapsychological theories and in his clinical practices; in the aftermath, narcissism as a personality trait became scientific focus of interest for several theorists especially from psychodynamic and object relations approaches; to name a few: Kohut, Kernberg, Mahler and Modell (cited in Raskin, & Terry, 1988). By proposing the notion of narcissism, Freud meant to show how four different phenomena were related: narcissism as sexual perversion; narcissism as a stage in development; narcissism as libidinal cathexis of the ego; and narcissism as object-choice. He also described an ego-ideal as the heir of infantile narcissism and as a psychic agency of self-observation (Mijolla, 2005: 1105).

The consideration of narcissism as a disorder dates back to 1971 with the terminological use of Kohut as «Narcissistic Personality Disorder». Later on, narcissism was registered as a separate diagnostic category in the third version of the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders due to high scientific interest and researches on the topic in those years. First appearance of Narcissistic Personality as a disorder in DSM-III had revealed the following clinical criteria: grandiose sense of self-importance or uniqueness; preoccupation with fantasies of unlimited success, power, brilliance, beauty, or ideal love; exhibitionism; inability to tolerate criticism, the indifference of others, or defeat; entitlement or the expectation of special favors without assuming reciprocal responsibilities; interpersonal exploitativeness, relationships that alternate between extremes of overidealization and devaluation; and lack of empathy (American Psychiatric Association, 1980).

A special and unique view of self, a belief of entitlement to more positive outcomes than others, thought of being more intelligent and physically attractive than they actually are and a conviction of being better than others in terms of dominance and power (agentic traits) is evident in narcissists. Additionally, exploitative tendencies, inability to empathize with the needs and feelings of other people and an extreme form of envy is present in their interpersonal relations (Coskan & Gencoz, 2008).

DSM-IV highlights several points in the definition of the narcissistic personality disorder including, the need for admiration, the feeling of being right at all costs, manipulating the weaknesses of others for personal interests and for pursuing personal goals, lack of empathy even in situations where the narcissist identifies and realizes the needs and emotions of others but is unwilling or indifferent in their fulfillment, high levels of envy for others or the belief that everybody else envies the narcissist, display of arrogant, self-complacent behaviour.

In such a definition, the narcissist's self-esteem is based on external interest, admiration and approval, so that when not received, the narcissist is disappointed and deeply hurt. The appearance and the manners of the narcissist is regulated by the wish to attain such admiration and approbation, hence when her/his expectations are not met, her/his self-esteem tends to diminish rapidly, causing soreness and various levels of depression. The pathological narcissist socializes and even abuses social encounters to praise her/himself or to display grandiose. Their friendships tend to be based on such interest and they are recognized as selfish and ego-centric in their relationships. Martin Buber pointed out in his essay «Ich and Du», dated 1923, that narcissistic regard often leads the narcissist to relate to others «as objects» instead of «as equals».

Though the narcissistic personality disorder is not at all pleasant for interpersonal relationships, a healthy level of narcissism might exist in all individuals and according to Freud, constitutes an essential part in normal development of the self (1914b: 84). Healthy narcissism is a structural truthfulness of the self, achievement of self and object constancy, synchronization between the self and the superego and a balance between libidinal and aggressive drives: the ability to receive gratification from others and the drive for impulse expression. Healthy narcissism forms a constant, realistic self-interest and mature goals and principles and an ability to form deep object relations. Though it is considered as «healthy», a basic component of narcissism is not absent from healthy narcissism, as a feature related to it is the feeling of greatness, which is often used to compensate for insecurity or inadequacy.

Moreover, healthy narcissism has to do with a strong feeling of «own love» protecting the human being against illness. Eventually, however, the individual must love the other, «the object love to not become ill». The person becomes ill, as a result of a frustration, when he is unable to love the object. In pathological narcissism such as the narcissistic personality disorder and schizophrenia, the person's libido has been withdrawn from objects in the world and produces megalomania. Several clinical theorists including Kernberg, Kohut and Millon all see pathological narcissism as a possible outcome in response to unempathic and inconsistent early childhood interactions and they have suggested that narcissists try to compensate in adult relationships.

With regard to the condition of healthy narcissism, it is suggested that this is correlated with good psychological health. Self-esteem works as a mediator between narcissism and psychological health. Therefore, because of their elevated self-esteem, deriving from self-perceptions of competence and likability, high narcissists are relatively free of worry and gloom (Sedikides, Rudich, Gregg, Kumashiro & Rusbult, 2004). Other researchers suggested that healthy narcissism cannot be seen as «good» or «bad»; however, it depends on the contexts and outcomes being measured. In certain social contexts such as initiating social relationships, and with certain outcome variables, such as feeling good about oneself,

healthy narcissism can be helpful. Nevertheless in other contexts, such as maintaining long-term relationships and with other outcome variables, such as accurate self-knowledge, healthy narcissism can be unhelpful.

Even though one can identify vague similarities between the ego-centric behaviour of the narcissist and the online presentation of the self 2.0, the point of this dissertation is neither to say that Facebook is the evil of mankind, nor labelling all social media users as pathological narcissists. It rather is to acknowledge, that in this very transparent, «public» environment, most of us will show a tendency to perform for an audience with varying degrees of awareness and intention. Performing in front of an undefined audience, one feels a pressure to present one's A-game at all times when communicating on Facebook and the like.

Whether you are a professional anarchist, Italian food lover, or proud new mum, the pressure is ON to get your performance in shape. While the lack of identifiable audience is a major factor in this pressure – it could be your mum looking at your profile, or a boy you secretly fancied for years – there are other elements that exacerbate it. Social platforms are imbued with their own linguistic culture that promotes the limelight gaze. Whether it revolves around «likes», «fans», «followers», «diggs», we are tacitly reminded of the high expectations we have to live up to, of what others want to see and hear from us, and not just twice a week. Mobile social connectivity and geo-location services now mean we are increasingly expected to be here, there and everywhere, in real time, simultaneously (Blackman & Choquelle, 2011: 4).

In *The Culture of Narcissism*, Christopher Lasch defines a narcissistic culture as one in which every activity and relationship is defined by the hedonistic need to acquire the symbols of wealth, this becoming the only expression of rigid, yet covert, social hierarchies. It is a culture where liberalism only exists insofar as it serves a consumer society, and even art, sex and religion lose their liberating power.

Such a society of constant competition does not allow allies and alliances to exist and allows for very little transparency. The threats to acquisitions of social symbols are so numerous, varied and frequently incomprehensible, that defensiveness, as well as competitiveness, becomes a way of life. Any real sense of community is undermined – or even destroyed – to be replaced by virtual equivalents that strive, unsuccessfully, to synthesize a sense of community.

As the family loses not only its productive functions but many of its reproductive functions as well, men and women no longer manage even to raise their children without the help of certified experts. The atrophy of older traditions of self-help has eroded everyday competence, in one area after another, and has made the individual dependent on the state, the corporation, and other bureaucracies. ... Narcissism represents the psychological dimension of

this dependence. Notwithstanding his occasional illusions of omnipotence, the narcissist depends on others to validate his self-esteem. He cannot live without an admiring audience (Lasch, 1979: 10).

According to Lasch, it was the mass media that has invented the «cult of celebrity» and with their conscious attempt to «surround it with glamour and excitement», they have made the American society a nation of «fans and moviegoers» (1979: 21). In this way the media fomented and intensified narcissistic dreams of fame and glory, encouraging the common man to identify himself with the stars, making it more and more difficult to accept the banality of everyday existence.

The modern propaganda of commodities and the good life has sanctioned impulse gratification and made it unnecessary for the id to apologize for its wishes or disguise their grandiose proportions. But this same propaganda has made failure and loss unsupportable. When it finally occurs to the new Narcissus that he can «live not only without fame but without self, live and die without ever having had one's fellows conscious of the microscopic space one occupies upon this planet», he experiences this discovery not merely as a disappointment but as a shattering blow to his sense of selfhood. «The thought almost overcame me», Exley writes, «and I could not dwell upon it without becoming unutterably depressed» (Exley as cited in Lasch, 1979: 22).

The narcissistic dependence on the society despite the dissatisfaction with the quality of personal relations causes the narcissist to consider not making too large an investment in love and friendship, to avoid excessive dependence on others, and to live for the moment – the very conditions that created the crisis of personal relations in the first place. The relationships, as they are guided by capitalist competition cannot be reformulated.

Richard Sennett in the *Fall of Public Man* provides us with a critique of narcissism, implying a similar devaluation of the personal realm. The best things in the Western cultural tradition, in Sennett's view, derive from the conventions that once regulated impersonal relations in public. These conventions, now condemned as constricting, artificial, and deadening to emotional spontaneity, formerly established civilized boundaries between people, set limits on the public display of feeling, and promoted cosmopolitanism and civility (1974: 28). In eighteenth-century London or Paris, sociability did not depend on intimacy. «Strangers meeting in parks or on the streets might without embarrassment speak to each other» (1974: 80). They shared a common fund of public signs which enabled people of unequal rank to conduct a civilized conversation and to cooperate in public projects without feeling called upon to expose their innermost secrets. In the nineteenth century, however, reticence broke down, and people came to believe that public actions revealed the inner personality of the actor. The romantic cult of sincerity and authenticity tore away the masks that people once had worn in public and eroded the

boundary between public and private life. As the public world came to be seen as a mirror of the self, people lost the capacity for detachment and hence for playful encounter, which presupposes a certain distance from the self. By the same token, Sennett also reminds us that narcissism has more in common with self-hatred than with self-admiration (Lasch, 1979: 31).

Within the narcissistic perspective, when the individual is distanced even from her/his own self for the sake of public performance, we find ourselves once again in a moment of image becoming identity. As the narcissistic traits of our age, dependence on the vicarious warmth provided by others combined with a fear of dependence, a sense of inner emptiness, boundless repressed rage, and unsatisfied oral cravings, pseudo self-insight, calculating seductiveness and nervous self-deprecatory humor take over the interpersonal communication, be that on the street, or more obviously on Facebook, one tends to perceive the *disease* to be the norm. Lasch defines the situation as:

Thus they deprive themselves of any basis on which to make connections between the narcissistic personality type and certain characteristic patterns of contemporary culture, such as the intense fear of old age and death, altered sense of time, fascination with celebrity, fear of competition, decline of the play spirit, deteriorating relations between men and women (1979: 33).

«People talk constantly», Daniel Boorstin has written, «not of things themselves, but of their images» (as cited in Lasch, 1979: 61). In a society in which the dream of success has been drained of any meaning beyond itself, men have nothing against which to measure their achievements except the achievements of others. Self-approval depends on public recognition and acclaim, and the quality of this approval has undergone important changes in its own right. The good opinion of friends and neighbors, which formerly informed a man that he had lived a useful life, rested on appreciation of his accomplishments. Today men seek the kind of approval that applauds not their actions but their personal attributes. They wish to be not so much esteemed as admired. They crave not fame but the glamour and excitement of celebrity. They want to be envied rather than respected. Pride and acquisitiveness, the sins of an ascendant capitalism, have given way to vanity (Lasch, 1979: 59).

Today, as Facebook becomes the *Vanity Fair* of the non-celebrities, this symptom of the «monopolistic mass culture» was pronounced earlier by Theodore Adorno as well:

Advertising becomes information when there is no longer anything to choose from, when the recognition of brand names has taken the place of choice, when at the same time the totality forces everyone who wishes to survive into consciously going along with the process. This is what happens under monopolistic mass culture. We can distinguish three stages in the

developing domination of needs: advertising, information and command. As a form of omnipresent familiarization mass culture dissolves these stages into one another. The curiosity which it kindles brutally reproduces that of the child which already derives from compulsion, deception and renunciation. The child becomes curious when its parent refuse to provide it with genuine information. It is not that original desire to look with which ontologies ancient and modern have obscurely connected it, but a gaze narcissistically turned upon itself. The curiosity which transforms the world into objects is not objective; it is not concerned with what is known but with the fact of knowing it, with having, with knowledge as possession (as cited in Douse, 2006).

Hence the digital environments we inhabit provide us with the narcissistic mirrors of our own gaze. The *masses* that we communicate with become objects for validation, as was identified by sociologist David Riesman, long time ago, concerning the American turn from an inner- to an other-directed sense of self: «Without a firm inner sense of purpose, people looked to their neighbors for validation. Today, cell phone in hand, other-directedness is raised to a higher power. At the moment of beginning to have a thought or feeling, we can have it validated, almost prevalidated. Exchanges may be brief, but more is not necessarily desired. The necessity is to have someone be there» (Turkle, 2011: 282).

As can be observed also in newly-created terms like «egosurfing» or «narcissurfing», which indicate the narcissistic digital behaviour of compulsively searching your own name in Google, to see how many results come up, friends become objects of affirmation of one's ego-centric perspective. On a similar note, Turkle introduces us to Ricki, a fifteen-years-old freshman at Richelieu, a private high school for girls in New York City, who describes the necessity for friends as: «I have a lot of people on my contact list. If one friend doesn't 'get it,' I call another». This marks a turn to a hyper-other-directedness. This young woman's contact or buddy list has become something like a list of «spare parts» for her fragile adolescent self. When she uses the expression «get it» Turkle thinks that she means «pick up the phone». Nonetheless when she checks with her if she has gotten this right, Ricki says, «'Get it,' yeah, 'pick up,' but also 'get it,' 'get me'». Ricki counts on her friends to finish her thoughts. Technology does not cause but encourages a sensibility in which the validation of a feeling becomes part of establishing it, even part of the feeling itself (Turkle, 2011: 283).

Technology, be that the smartphones or Web 2.0, on their own, do not cause this new way of relating to our emotions and other people. But it does make it easy. Over time, a new style of being with each other becomes socially sanctioned. In every era, certain ways of relating come to feel natural. In our time, if we can be continually in touch, needing to be continually in touch does not seem a problem or pathology but an accommodation to what technology affords. It becomes the norm.

We know that it is not what Web 2.0, or Facebook In particular, that has brought about the image obsession as we read Lasch re-defining the society of the spectacle in 1979, long before internet was part of our daily lives:

Life presents itself as a succession of images or electronic signals, of impressions recorded and reproduced by means of photography, motion pictures, television, and sophisticated recording devices. Modern life is so thoroughly mediated by electronic images that we cannot help responding to others as if their actions – and our own – were being recorded and simultaneously transmitted to an unseen audience or stored up for close scrutiny at some later time. ... The intrusion into everyday life of this all-seeing eye no longer takes us by surprise or catches us with our defenses down. We need no reminder to smile. A smile is permanently graven on our features, and we already know from which of several angles it photographs to best advantage (47).

And even though identifying the contemporary behaviour online as narcissistic seems quite an exaggeration, we could use the simplicity in which Fromm defined narcissistic regard in 1957 to understand that such distortion could be very widespread and common on a daily basis:

The insane person or the dreamer fails completely in having an objective view of the world outside; but all of us are more or less insane, or more or less asleep; all of us have an unobjective view of the world, one which is distorted by our narcissistic orientation. Do I need to give examples? Anyone can find them easily by watching himself, his neighbours and by reading the newspapers. They vary in the degree of the narcissistic distortion of reality. A woman, for instance, calls up the doctor, saying that she wants to come to his office that same afternoon. The doctor answers that he is not free this same afternoon, but that he can see her the next day. Her answer is: But, doctor, I live only five minutes from your office. She cannot understand his explanation that it does not save him time that for her the distance is so short. She experiences the situation narcissistically: since she saves time, he saves time; the only reality to her is she herself (Fromm, 1957: 93).

4.2 Pathologies of the New Millennium

4.2.1 Comparison

«Facebook is a tool to arrange intimacies, even those of «love» and sex, without knowing too much about the person behind the profile picture. A tool to compare lives. Most of the time the only witness to our existence, the only witness that sees that we are actually living» (A male participant of the Preliminary Facebook Survey, 41 years old, from Turkey, 01.09.2010).

When identity is reduced only to its performative instances, to only what is «staged», then «comparing our insides with other people’s outsides» becomes the only reflexive way of working on our self-images. Compulsively, we compare ourselves with those around us and find our lives wanting: other people seem to have found meaning, while we are still searching. Beneath our unease with our selves, this seems to be a basic point of conflict, especially as part and consequence of the consumer society: Comparing ourselves with the other. Socially, economically, physically and as immature as it may sound, even in terms of who is *cooler*. But of course, as one can never exactly know what is going on inside the mind of another human being, as Burkeman very smartly puts it, we are «comparing [our] insides with other people’s outsides» (2010).

This is what each of us knows from introspective insight: this is what our own biographies, when scrutinized in retrospect, teach us about the world we inhabit. Not so, however, when we look around: as to the other people we know, and particularly such people as we know of – «seen from a distance, [their] existence seems to possess a coherence and a unity which they cannot have, in reality, but which seems evident to the spectator». This, of course, is an optical illusion. The distance blurs the details and effaces everything that fits ill into the Gestalt. Illusion or not, we tend to see other people’s lives as works of art. And having seen them this way, we struggle to do the same: «Everyone tries to make his life a work of art» (Camus as cited in Bauman, 2000: 82).

As we have examined earlier, this work of art that we want to mould out of life is called «identity». Every human being knows very well on the inside that identities are very fragile and even volatile. Nevertheless, whenever we speak of identity, there is at the back of our minds a faint image of harmony, logic, consistency. But as we know of ourselves, we know of others as well, that the search for identity is an ongoing struggle to arrest or slow down the flow, to solidify the fluid and to give form to the formless.

Identities seem fixed and solid only when seen, in a flash, from outside. Whatever solidity they might have when contemplated from the inside of one's own biographical experience appears fragile, vulnerable, and constantly torn apart by shearing forces which lay bare its fluidity and by cross-currents which threaten to rend in pieces and carry away any form they might have acquired. ... Given the intrinsic volatility and unfixity of all or most identities, it is the ability to «shop around» in the supermarket of identities, the degree of genuine or putative consumer freedom to select one's identity to hold to it as long as desired, that becomes the royal road to the fulfilment of identity fantasies. Having that ability, one is free to make and unmake identities at will. Or so it seems (Bauman, 2000: 82).

While we form our ideas of the others based on a complete set of perceptory data that we have formulated to be the image of that person, on the inside we construct, deconstruct, destroy and rebuild our self-images, based on our selves and based on what we think people think of us based on the mental image that they have formed. We live in a constant «panopticon» where being seen is the least of our worries, as our self-images become more and more dependent on the society.



Figure 4.5 – «Personality begins where comparison ends» by Karl Lagerfeld, the famous designer who runs the Chanel fashion house.

The social philosopher Jeremy Bentham, best known for his espousal of utilitarianism, proposed a device called the Panopticon, which enabled a prison guard to see all prisoners without being seen. At any given moment, any one prisoner was perhaps being observed, perhaps not. Prisoners would have to assume they were being observed and would therefore behave according to the norms that the guard would impose, if watching. Individuals learn to look at themselves through the eyes of the prison guard. Foucault has pointed out that this same kind of self-surveillance has extended from the technologies of imprisonment to those of education and psychotherapy. We learn to see ourselves from a teacher's or a therapist's point of view, even in their absence (Turkle, 1995: 247).

Especially times of lower self-esteem imply that we compare ourselves with the «performances» of others and come out feeling miserable out of the upward social comparisons that we make. If

communicating through the social media or building our brand selves could be a measure for handling the negative after-effects of such comparison, then it is not surprising how we embrace the presence of social media in our daily lives.

As we have seen earlier in Marcia's states of identity development, people, especially adolescents that are in a *moratorium* status are unusually susceptible to external factors, opinions and feedback. In today's world, with the identity crisis spreading over a lifetime, one can easily take Facebook to be the external force effecting such individual in crisis.

As a female participant of the Preliminary Facebook Survey remarks that Facebook «encourages people to carry out a continuous upward social comparison. Makes you think everybody is very happy, except for you, everybody is constantly on vacation, travelling, partying, makes you question 'why the hell I can't have a life like that too?' and eventually causes you to have a false perception of yourself as well as of others. Hence I believe that it has a serious negative impact on human psychology. I don't actually believe that anyone is having a really good time checking the profiles of others on Facebook. But as everyone wants to be 'in the game' somehow, everybody's there» (2010). On Facebook, just like in commercials, everybody is happy. According to Bauman:

[The] society of consumers is perhaps the only society in human history to promise happiness in *earthly life*, and happiness *here and now* and in *every* successive «now»; in short, an *instant* and *perpetual* happiness. ... also the only society that stubbornly refrains from *justifying* and/or *legitimizing* any variety of unhappiness, refuses to *tolerate* it... (2007: 44).

When the invisibility of cyberspace was lost, people could no longer safely hide behind their wizard avatars or their fantasy selves. Yet with the advent of the 'nonanonymous' networks and public rating systems, social media tools became part of real life, not just for meeting fellow wizards, but finding a job, or seducing a wife. As a result digital identity creation stopped being a game, and became quite a serious matter, requiring a considerable amount of conscious thought to

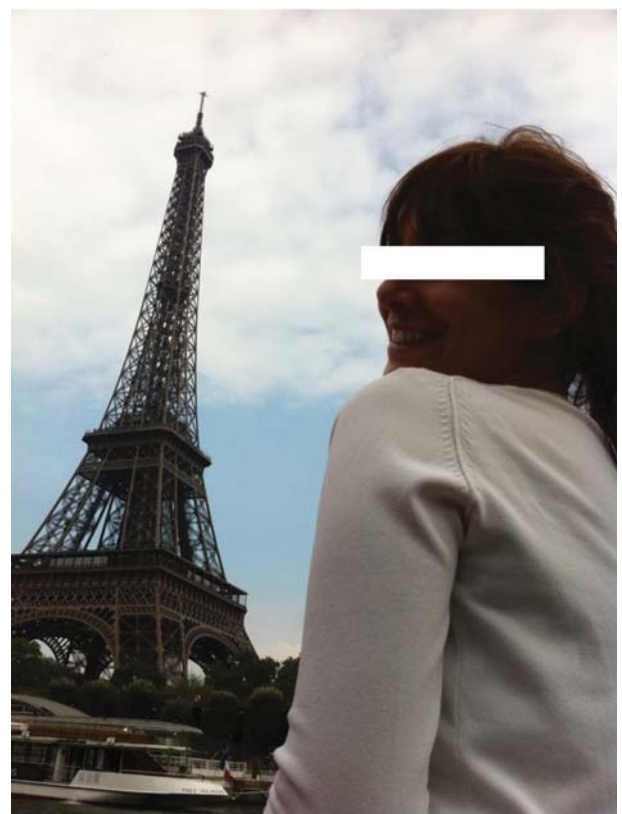


Figure 4.6 – From Facebook.

represent ourselves in a way we feel happy with. And as the goals of these networks became more precise, the pressure became more elevated to perfect our role.

We have seen in the previous chapters that role-playing and the notion of «performance» is nothing new to identity creation. Goffman demonstrated that identity is a continual performance that we adapt, mostly unconsciously, in function of our social situations, to fit into societal norms. Yet in the digital world this performance culture has taken on a life of its own, becoming a very conscious activity. Today, what emerges with Twitter and Facebook users is a clear tendency to use social media instrumentally for self-conscious commodification. In other words we create our online identities for the purpose of *being consumed by others*.

But when comparison with the digital image is concerned, indeed researchers have found possible negative effects for the presence of online social networks and for our «always on» state, suggesting that our social performances are so augmented that they are starting to have a negative effect on their audiences, fuelling deep dissatisfaction as they compare Facebook profiles with the reality of their own lives (Turkle, 2011; Aboujaoude, 2011; Blackman & Choquelle, 2011).

Classic social comparison theory regards «uncertainty» as the main motive for social comparison activity (Festinger, 1954). As discussed earlier, people that have defined their identity commitments do not tend to compare or be influenced as much as the people that have not reached a clearly-defined commitment. Festinger argued that when objective sources of information for self-evaluation are lacking, people would turn to others in their environment. Similarly, Schachter (1959) stated that when individuals feel uncertain about the appropriateness of their emotions, they tend to reduce this uncertainty by socially comparing and by adjusting their emotional reactions to those of others.

Another important assumption in Festinger's theory is that others who are similar will be preferred for comparison, because information about similar others is most informative for self-evaluation. His theory is further elaborated to «maintain that perceiving similarity between oneself and others can lead one to take the others' perspectives, thus prompting experience of empathic identification (Gazzaniga, 1985: 239).

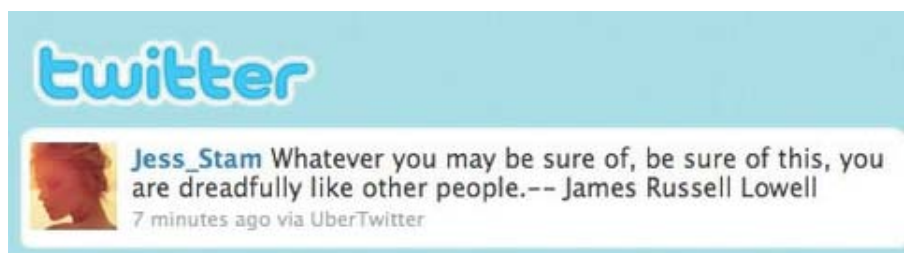


Figure 4.7 – Quoting James Russell Lowell on your Twitter update.

According to Festinger's theory of social comparison, interpersonal comparison can be very potent, can make people ill, affect prevention efforts, and facilitate coping with acute and chronic health threats (Suls & Wallston, 2003: xvii). Bauman, in *Liquid Modernity*, quotes Melody Beattie, the author of an extremely popular self-help book, who warns her readers: «The surest way to make ourselves crazy is to get involved with other people's businesses, and the quickest way to become sane and happy is to tend to our own affairs» (2000: 65). We cannot completely disregard positive outcomes, however the effects of social comparison tend to be deeper towards the negative:

The seventeenth-century English monarch Charles I is said to have announced 12 «good rules» one of which was «Make no comparisons». Charles was known to be physically unattractive so this strategy may reflect his personal self-protective strategy or his appreciation that social comparisons can lead to envy and frustration, emotions about which monarchs need to be concerned. ... Comparisons with other people, for example, can aid in the interpretation of physical symptoms, provide social validation for personal health practices and facilitate adaptation to health threats. These comparisons do not even need to be with actual people; they may be fabricated. Social comparisons also have the potential to do harm. Certain kinds of motivated comparisons can provide validation and apparent support for unhealthy «health» practices, create unrealistically optimistic expectations, and provide discouragement to those grappling with serious illness (Suls, 2003: 249).

The basis of our urge to compare can be found in the uncertainty, and even more fundamentally the consequent necessity to be affirmed when we are uncertain of ourselves. The significance of the other's approving gaze was expressed precisely by Lasch in the *Culture of Narcissism*, and his emphasis on female body will be investigated in detail in the following sections as his observations appear to ring true also today:

All of us, actors and spectators alike, live surrounded by mirrors. In them, we seek reassurance of our capacity to captivate or impress others, anxiously searching out blemishes that might detract from the appearance we intend to project. The advertising industry deliberately encourages this preoccupation with appearances. ... A booklet advertising beauty aids depicted on its cover a nude with the caption: «Your Masterpiece – Yourself» (Lasch, 1979: 92).

This tendency to construct yourself as your «masterpiece» indeed connotes the commodification of the human subject. A number of theorists have recognized that consumption is now a key process in the construction of self-identity (Giddens, 1991, Bauman, 2000, Blackman & Choquelle, 2011). And certainly, the consumer society in its essence forms a significant basis of comparison. As we have already seen in the first chapter, the consumer is competitive by definition. Capitalist interest requires us to be competitive, which results in a constant comparison of who has a better job, who has a higher social

rank, who has a more attractive partner. Thus what matters is not only consumption per se, but Veblen's «conspicuous consumption» once again. In consuming objects we are, in fact, consuming various class-linked meanings, comparing what we consume with what the others consume and always try to stay in the upperhand of the deal.

Conspicuous consumption is lavish spending on goods and services acquired mainly for the purpose of displaying wealth. In the mind of a conspicuous consumer, such display serves as a means of attaining or maintaining social status. As the higher classes search for objects that distinguish them from the lower classes by choosing less affordable ones, lower classes intend to imitate the recent status symbols as good as they can. However, once the lower classes successfully imitate the status objects of the upper class, the latter abandons these and selects new objects that, once more, distinguish it from those below (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 420).

Trying to consume the class-linked lifestyles for the lower classes is not only an intention to convince the other, but also to convince one's own self, making that lifestyle one's part of one's self. In this sense, ironically, the mass-produced appliance is a tool of individual identity. In Bauman's words, «identity – 'unique' and 'individual' – can be carved in the substance everyone buys and can get hold of through shopping» (Bauman, 2000: 84).

The other distinctive emotional quality of comparison today is envy and envy is one of the causes of modern misery. The major theorist of envy was Melanie Klein who saw envy as a primitive form of oral and anal sadism. While some of her suppositions are dubious, what is important is her insight on how envy wants to destroy the goodness of the Other, and in terms of this analysis, that goodness is the subjectivity imputed to exist behind the appearance of the Other (Shields, 1992: 69-70).

Postmodern envy is not so much in wanting your neighbour's spouse or even wanting [her/his] various possessions, leisure and travel pursuits. Envy is a comparison of one's own subjectivity to that of the Other. This creates what might be called a relative deprivation of selfhood. Comparisons to the Other make one's own subjectivity feel discredited or degraded and the self becomes envious of the Other's being ... What is distinct about postmodern envy is that the envied subjectivity of the Other is itself likely to be a commodified fantasy, a simulacra of selfhood no more substantial than that of the envier. Or, commonly, the envied is a character of media or the manufactured star of the «unreality industry» who plays her or him. ... In so far as the commodified images of the hyper-real characters of movies, TV and the commercials seem to have more recognition and gratification than we do, we feel especially envious (Shields, 1992: 70).

Today we see that on the other end of compliments and all other positive empowerments there is an emptiness of a degraded self that needs to appropriate the subjectivity of the Other. One attends to the other almost in order to receive back a relieving feedback. Trying to look down on the other is also out of compensation for a weak self-esteem, much more than it is out of hostility to the other. Shields further explains why the Other must be destroyed to overcome one's envy:

Thus to envy is to want to be like the Other, whose subjectivity is seen to be more valued than one's own and must hence be degraded. The Other's subjectivity must be destroyed so it is turned into an object that can be appropriated. What is envied today is not the possessions and lifestyle of the Other but the subjectivity that these would seem to indicate. Thus it is only in amusement society that subjectivity can be reified as if it were the objects it possesses. But given what we see as the more fundamental dialect of recognition, to envy the Other is to destroy the recognition s/he provides and to become the Other is to be without [her/his] recognition. Just as panic cannot be alleviated by consumption, neither can envy be overcome in the possession of objects in lieu of substantiated selfhood (Shields, 1992: 70).

Hence consumption, especially of something temporary and rather ephemeral like fashion, is an exemplary reflection of this trend toward individuality, rather than any social hierarchy. Fashion is defined by its relatively unbridled pursuit of novelty, fantasy and subjective expression. Thus consumption can be seen, in this view, as conscious, strategic lifestyle choices made by the consumer against a backdrop of mostly unconscious tastes characteristic of a class habitus (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 420).



Figure 4.8 – The more we buy, the more we need to buy to live up to our images. Is it so? Garance Doré (2011).

Marketing helps to construct the consumer by assembling the rituals of everyday life and connecting them to a commodity in order to give it meaning. The recognition of the complex, multidimensional relations between subjects and the objects they consume has led to a focus on what has been called «lifestyle shopping» (Shields, 1992). Lifestyle shopping, then, refers to a series of experimentations with modes of subjectivity, interpersonal relations and social community. What is being consumed are not objects so much as lifestyles with accompanying objects. Motivated by an embodied discomfort and lacking economic and cultural capital, the lower classes inspired by an upward movement «adopt a learning mode of life, consciously educating [themselves] in the field of taste, style, lifestyle» (Featherstone as cited in Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 420).

Thus we reach a phase where the concerns with identity acquire an entirely new gloss, leading to, «an ironic selfhood» in Bauman's terms:

The «age of irony» passed to be replaced by an «age of glamour» in which appearance is consecrated as the only reality ... Modernity thus moves through a period of «authentic» selfhood to one of «ironic» selfhood to a contemporary culture of what might be termed «associative» selfhood – a continuous «loosening» of the tie between «inner» soul and the «outer» form of social relation. Identities, thus, are continuous oscillations (Bauman, 2000: 87).

It is how the contrived necessity of identity building and rebuilding feels, how it is perceived from «inside», how it is «lived through», that matters. Whether genuine or putative to the eye of the analyst, the loose, «associative» status of identity, the opportunity to «shop around», to pick and shed one's «true self», to «be on the move», has come in present-day consumer society to signify freedom. Consumer choice is now a value in its own right; the activity of choosing matters more than what is being chosen, and the situations are praised or censured, enjoyed or resented depending on the range of choices on display.

In the midst of such confusion, today we compare, identify with and follow celebrities, who supposedly, will lead us to firmer grounds. They, through creating a showcase of their own lifestyles, set «examples» to the rest of us, confused individuals. Bauman illustrates his point with Jane Fonda, who was the most popular celebrity introducing aerobic to the masses through out the 1980s. Talking about her body, as her «masterpiece», she says «I like to think a lot of my body is my own doing and my own blood and guts. It's my responsibility». She is also very clear and straightforward about putting herself up as an example that her readers and watchers should follow. Nonetheless, she does not intend to act as an authority, nor a norm-setter, preacher or teacher, she is just «offering herself as an example» (Bauman, 2000: 66-67). In the meantime, through the chat shows, reality TV and the paparazzis following the celebrities, we get the information with which to compare ourselves to the celebrities and through which we build a

parasocial relationship. Then when we have a celebrity as the «face» of a brand, our task is relatively easier, we can even identify with the brand for already having identified with the celebrity.

Comparing your life with the famous people that provide only edited versions of themselves is yet another classic case of «comparing your insides with other people's outsides». But admiration is not the same as comparison, and research suggests the «parasocial» relationships that we have with celebrities can sometimes boost self-esteem, making us feel closer to our ideal selves. Moreover, the researchers noted that imagined friendships carry a «low risk of rejection», so they're oddly secure to vulnerabilities (Burkeman, 2010).

Nevertheless today there are two more trends that we need to identify concerning the «celebrities». First of all, there is the concept of the «non-celebrities», the «ordinary» men and women «like you and me», that we see on television. Secondly, there is also another trend of «banalizing» the celebrity through Twitter and similar communications which *digitally socialize* our parasocial relations. *Laymen* celebrities, have significantly changed our perspective onto the celebrity lifestyle, but they also had an unignorable impact on our gaze upon ourselves and the separation between the private and public life.

Celebrities with enough capital of authority to make what they say worthy of attention even before they say it are far too few to furnish the innumerable TV chat-shows, but this does not stop the chat-shows from being daily compulsive viewing for millions of guidance-hungry men and women. The authority of the person sharing [her/his] life-story may help viewers watch the example attentively and add a few thousand to the ratings. But the absence of the story-teller's authority, her not-being-a-celebrity, his anonymity, may make the example easier to follow and so may have a value-adding potential of its own. The non-celebrities ... who appear on the screen only for a fleeting moment (no longer than it takes to tell the story and to get their share of applause for telling it, as well as the usual measure of rebuke for withholding tasty bits or dwelling on the uninteresting pieces for too long) are people as helpless and as hapless as their watchers, smarting under the same kind of blows and seeking desperately an honourable exit from trouble and a promising road to a happier life. And so what they could have done, I can do as well; perhaps even better. I may learn something useful from their victories and their defeats alike (Bauman, 2000: 67-68).

We could think that such chat-shows or reality TV programs are *trash*, we could condemn or ridicule the chat-show addiction, but it is undeniable that besides unleashing the eternal human greed for gossip, they also answer a genuine demand: A hassle-free and completely harmless way of learning from the mistakes of others. For a mass of spectators that already know that any change that they want to make in their lives depends on them, it is vital to know how other people, when faced with similar challenges, cope with the difficulties. Yet this is not the only benefit:

[N]aming the trouble is itself a daunting task, while without attaching a name to the feeling of unease or unhappiness there is no hope for cure. Yet, while suffering is personal and private, a «private language» is an incongruity. Whatever is to be named, including the most secret, personal and intimate sentiments, is properly named only if the names chosen have public currency, only if they belong to language which can be interpersonally shared and public and are understood by people who communicate in that language. Chat-shows are public lessons in an as-yet-unborn-but-about-to-be-born language. They offer the words which may be used to «name the problem» – to express, in publicly legible ways, what has been so far ineffable and would remain so if not for that offer (Bauman, 2000: 69).

Through the chat-shows, intimate experiences that used to be considered as unfit public discussion are suddenly open to discussion, as well as to «universal approval, amusement and applause». That way, the unspeakable is rendered as speakable, the shameful as decent, and the ugly secret is transformed into a matter of pride (Bauman, 2000: 69). Hence one thinks, «I no longer have to suffer in silence, feel ashamed or worried of being frowned upon, after all, everybody talks about these in the presence of millions of viewers». Thereby private problems become public issues for everyone to compare to their own stories and to reflect upon. In this way, such content on television also «legitimizes public discourse about private affairs» (Bauman: 69), thereby preparing us for the age of Facebook, where we no longer distinguish between what we keep private in our circle of intimacy, but we lifecast details of our daily lives which otherwise would have remained unknown to our acquaintances, thus creating the framework for the comparison of lives.

We compare without an end. But when it comes to constructing our own identities, we probably should be remembering Oscar Wilde's brilliant statement: «Be yourself, everyone else is already taken».

4.2.2 Reduced to a Body

«I know what you mean» said Goethe. «It's just those details – poorly chosen clothes, slightly flawed teeth, delightful mediocrity of soul – that make a woman lively and real. The women on posters or in fashion magazines, the ones almost all women nowadays try to imitate, lack charm because they're unreal, because they're merely the sum total of a set of abstract instructions. They're not born of human bodies but of computers!» (Kundera, 1978/1999: 191-192).

The media world is becoming increasingly fixated on appearances. And the number of tricks used to achieve the increasingly exaggerated ideals is correspondingly growing. Those who suffer the psychological consequences of such idealization are women, much more than men, as the female body has longer been the object of defining aesthetics and selling products. Nonetheless, it has never been

truer than today that women – and even men – have to be beautiful. Many models have plastic surgery and even more are retouched in Photoshop so they appear to have bigger breasts, smaller stomachs or fuller lips.

Women compete to attract men; while, men compete for power and dominance, thus to be more attractive to women. These conditions have given rise to such enormous mercantile empires as Revlon, Max Factor, and L’Oreal; created myriad occupations from nail stylists and barbers to cosmetic chemists, liposuction technicians, and plastic surgeons; and contributed mightily to the growth of such industries as advertising and clothing manufacture – all merely to help men and women look better. Pursuit of greater physical attractiveness has created a \$160-billion-a-year global industry ranging from weight-loss preparations, cosmetics, skin and hair care, and perfumes to cosmetic surgery, health clubs, and hormone injections. Americans spend more money each year on beauty enhancements than they do on education (Patzner, 2008: 7). As early as in the year 1987, the body-conscious Americans spent \$74 billion on diet foods, \$5 billion on health clubs, \$2.7 billion on vitamins and \$738 million on exercise equipment (Bauman, 2000: 81).

It shouldn’t come as a surprise that we clinged to a slim hope of abandoning the body, leaving it behind, considering that today’s world is overflowing with obsession with the body, the «body beautiful» and the representation transcending the original to such an extent that it is no longer possible to talk of a representation. It is a rebel to the order of the real, which surrounds and penetrates the individual in the medium of the city, of the communication; after the so-called liberation of the body, which was the case in the last century, had thrust back. The body became more obvious than ever before. Today media spurts us images of perfect body and the primary issue on our agenda appears to be achieving that body through diets, exercise or whatever it takes. As in the example of bodybuilding that Mark Dery suggests; the way that the

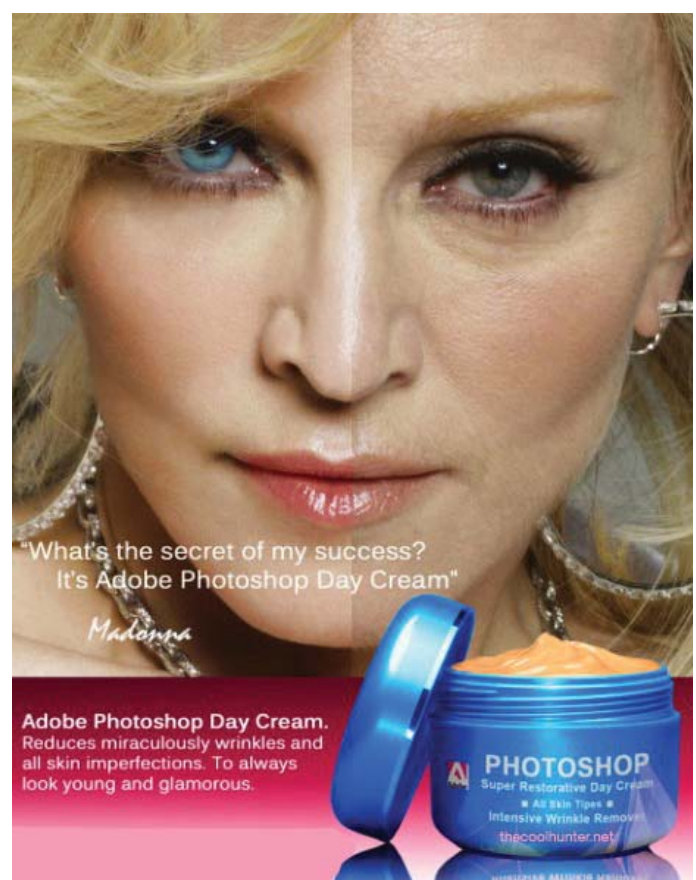


Figure 4.9 – The secret to Madonna’s success.

liberation movement of the body thrust back is obvious and the last attempts to make the human *belong* to her/his body fail sadly:

Bodybuilding represents a last-ditch attempt to hold the body together at a time when genetic engineering and the Human Genome Project remind us, disconcertingly, that a human being is «little more than a cloud of information» to borrow Thomas Hine's memorable phrase (1996: 260).

Thus, the human being falls back into the prison of the flesh. Nevertheless alienated and irritated:

For nearly a century, modern culture has sought to liberate the human body, to set it free in particular from the sexual phobias, silences, and prejudices of earlier eras. Yet a great chasm exists between modern images of the body and bodily experience. Just as few soldiers taste the movie pleasures of ripping other bodies apart, marketable images of sexual pleasure have very little to do with real lovers' sexual experience. Few films show two elderly naked people making love, nor naked fat people; movie sex is great the first time. The imagery of bodily pleasure in the mass media supposes a flight from one's own body (Sennett, 1994: 60).

What underlies the alienation is a strong notion of «body beautiful» imposed on human, especially on women ever since the prepotency of the patriarchal culture, penetrating ever fortified into our day. It is hard to believe that once upon a time, before our minds were clouded by the media ideal, women were actually celebrated for their natural god-given bodies. In fact, the female standard of beauty has gone through many drastic changes over the last several hundred years.

Observing a timeline of all the major trends over the past 600 years, starting with the Renaissance up until the last decade tracks everything from body types to hair and makeup, surprisingly displays how the definition of sexy has changed so drastically over the years. Accordind to Mark Dery, all through this timeline, technology had one subtler objective, brought about by culture, to bear on women's bodies in the service of male fantasies:

The corset produced the heaving bosom of romance novels even as it hindered respiration, restricted mobility, and rearranged the internal organs; the bustle thrust the buttocks up and back, approximating «the posture of a female animal in heat» (Dery, 1996: 237-238).

The remodeling of the female body in accordance with bourgeois ideals certainly does not end with the passing of the corset and the bustle. The consumer culture of industrial modernity merely emphasizes the economic subtext of such practices. Stuart Ewen remarks that, even in the 1920s, advertising educated American women «to look at themselves as things to be created competitively against other women: painted and sculpted with the aids of the modern market» (1976: 180).

According to Simone de Beauvoir, a woman dressed up for her role is no longer herself, she already belongs to the imaginary realm, and women are almost only themselves, when alone, or in «backstage activity» where the male audience is absent.

Even if each woman dresses in conformity with her status, a game is still being played; artifice, like art, belongs to the realm of the imaginary. It is not only that girdle, brassiere, hair-dye, make-up disguise body and face; but that the least sophisticated of women, once she is «dressed» does not present *herself* to observation; she is, like the picture or the statue, or the actor on the stage, an agent through whom is suggested someone not there – that is, the character she represents, but is not. It is this identification with something unreal, fixed, perfect as the hero of a novel, as a portrait or a bust, that gratifies her; she strives to identify herself with this figure and thus to seem to herself to be stabilized, justified in her splendour (de Beauvoir as cited in Goffman, 1959: 57).

An observation that probably is still true today as it was decades ago. Such behaviour, consciously or unconsciously, has its roots in the demise of the arranged marriage. As «finding a good husband» becomes part of the capitalist competition, women find themselves obligated to «dress to impress». Thus what remains *natural* and truthful in their interpersonal relationships are «female only» activities – that are popularized on TV shows like *Sex and the City* or *Desperate Housewives*. Women find it very easy to identify with characters like Carrie, as this is almost as intimate as it gets for them:

What gives value to such relations among women is the truthfulness they imply. Confronting man woman is always play-acting: she lies when she makes believe that she accepts her status as the inessential other, she lies when she presents to him an imaginary personage through mimicry, costumery, studied phrases. These histrionics require a constant tension: when with her husband, or with her lover, every woman is more or less conscious of the thought: «I am not being myself». The male world is harsh, sharp edged, its voices are too resounding, the lights are too crude, the contacts rough. With other women, a woman is behind the scenes; she is polishing her equipment, but not in battle; she is getting her costume together, preparing her make-up, laying out her tactics; she is lingering in dressing-gown and slippers in the wings before making her entrance on the stage; she likes this warm, easy, relaxed atmosphere ... For some women, this warm and frivolous intimacy is dearer than the serious pomp of relations with men (Goffman, 1959: 112).

In today's modern society, where the gender roles are blurred but still not yet eradicated, one has to accept that the identity construction, as well as the roles that we play, are different for men and women. Also indicated vaguely by the results of the *Digital Life Scale*, females, when in «backstage» intimacy tend to share and put more of their selves out there:



DEFINITION OF SEXY THROUGH THE AGES

Renaissance: From the 1400s to the early 16th century

The ideal Renaissance woman was more voluptuous than any other time in history. Paintings from this era depict women who would be considered overweight by today's standards- but at that time, these full-figured ladies were the epitome of sexiness. For the first time in recorded history, women were prized for their natural bodies. The term «blondes have more fun» may have stemmed from the Renaissance, because they believed that the lighter the hair color, the better. As for makeup, pale ivory skin was considered sexy, and vermillion was used to tint the lips to a deep red color. Pale complexion and blood red lips- it seems like the Renaissance era may have originated the popular vampire-chic look.



Victorian Era: From 1837 to 1901

Unlike Renaissance women, Victorian women were very body conscious. Sexy meant having the smallest waistline humanly possible - in order to achieve this look, women wore corsets. Some corsets were wound so tight that women could hardly breathe, to the point where sitting down was completely out of the question. Many women would even break ribs trying to get their waistlines down to an inconceivable 12 inches. Layered petticoats, hoops, and bustles became very popular, all of which magnified the largest parts of the body. Modesty was the operative word when it came to Victorian makeup. Highclass women were expected to use makeup sparingly. Bold colors were considered trashy, and reserved for prostitutes. Some religions at the time even proclaimed beauty products to be «the look of the devil».



The Roaring 20s

The era that brought us Coco Chanel, shorter hemlines, and flappers. The 1920s was a decade when women didn't want to look like women at all. We can't imagine that men today would find this sexy, but some women of the '20s era would even bind their chests with strips of cloth to achieve a «little boy» look - quite contradictory to some of the measures that today's women take in order to amplify their chests. The loose silhouette of the flapper dress was in stark contrast to the corseted waist of the Victorian era. Going right along with the boyish look, the hair bob or finger wave was a big trend. Bold makeup, that was once considered «trashy» was now sexy. Powder was applied to make the skin look as pale as possible and eyebrows were lifted and penciled in to appear thin and bold. Kohl was used to line the eye and achieve an overall dramatic look.



The 1930s to 1950s: Hollywood's Golden Age

As they became more body conscious, women started to pay attention to what they ate. Fashions accented the arms and legs, so women lifted light weights to build muscle tone. The new padded stretch cotton bra was introduced. Designers like Chanel, Dior, and Elsa Schiaparelli started designing glamorous attire that allowed women to show off their feminine curves. Hairstyles became more feminine than they had been in the 1920s. Hair color varied depending on which movie star one was trying to emulate. Jean Harlow made platinum blond a trend, meanwhile, Rita Hayworth made being a redhead popular, Marlene Dietrich represented all the brunettes out there. Makeup became a little less drag, more girl-next-door than in the 1920s. Women started opting for foundations closer to their natural complexions.



The 1950s: A Step Back to Conservative

The desired shape in the mid-century was the hourglass figure popularized by movie stars like Marilyn Monroe and Grace Kelly. Women were told that their primary goal was to «catch a man» and have a family - so they were taught to dress to allure. Rule number one of the 50s was that women were never supposed to leave the house looking sloppy - meaning that our convenience store runs in sweatpants and sneakers would have been deemed completely unacceptable. Hair was usually kept short at just below the shoulders, and was worn in soft, curly, or wavy styles. Straight styles were considered undesirable - so rollers became a girl's best friend. Women began to focus more on having flawless skin than anything else. The goal was a peaches and cream complexion.

The 1960s: The era that brought us hippies, Twiggy & bell-bottoms

Mimicking the popular skinny models of the day, like Twiggy, women became obsessed with being rail thin. In terms of fashion and beauty, two polar opposites emerged: the hippie flower child and the modern swinging 60s woman. The hippies put more of an emphasis on peace & love, than on style & beauty, though the «Twiggy-girl» put some time into her appearance & body. Mini skirts became popular again. Hippies went for low to no maintenance hairstyles. For them, the natural was the best. Needless to say, the flower children usually avoided makeup all together. More modern girls also picked low maintenance 'dos, but they opted for short pixie cuts as opposed to long hair. The big emphasis was on the eyes - bigger the eye appeared, the better. Fake eyelashes were a must-have, and mascara was applied to achieve the popular tarantula lashes.



The 1970s: It's all about the Farrah Fawcett hair

The 60s forever changed the way women viewed their bodies. By the 1970s, the thinking-thin phenomenon was in full force - we all know the tragic story of Karen Carpenter. It was official: being thin equaled being sexy. Clothing was loose and flowing, but the mini skirt of the 60s gave rise to the micro mini of the 70s. The late Farrah Fawcett revolutionized the way women styled their hair. Her long, layered, feathery haircut became the look that every woman wanted to have. This decade also marked the beginning of the bronzed beach look and with it, the popular tanning booth trend. Women began relying on bronzers and self-tanners, things many women (and some men) still can't do without.



The 1980s: The decade of big hair and The Material Girl

The aerobics exercise craze of the 80s further emphasized fitness for women. Women were expected to maintain a certain weight, but still appear toned, all without being too muscular. With all these body stipulations, it's no wonder that the prevalence of eating disorders skyrocketed in the 80s. This decade also epitomized over-the-top fashion. Bright neon, matching suits with football-player-sized shoulder pads, and spandex were just a few of the quintessential trends of the decade. There are only two words to describe '80s hair: big and hairspray. We can't imagine how men found this sexy, but over-the-top makeup was the look of the day led by Madonna. Women opted for brighter colors, like the infamous blue eye shadows and liners. Also, thanks to Brooke Shields, bushy eyebrows were considered very sexy.



The 1990s: The era that brought us Beverly Hills, 90210 and Saved by the Bell

Models like Kate Moss further perpetuated standards of extreme thinness. The «heroin chic» trend also came about in the 90s: a strung-out and emaciated look was in. A few rebellious kids in Seattle gave rise to the popular grunge look: flannel shirts and an overall unkempt look. On the other side of the spectrum, the spandex and fluorescent color trends of the 80s stuck around for a good part of the 90s. Lycra was introduced, becoming perhaps the biggest trend of the decade. Midriff-bearing tops also became fashionable coinciding with the rise of pierced belly buttons. One of the most popular hairstyles was the «Rachel cut» named after Jennifer Aniston in Friends. Other popular hair trends included the bob, bangs and bleach blond color. Kate Moss epitomized the androgynous ideal, which led many women to take a minimalist approach to makeup.



The New Millennium (2000 to present): An era of choice and expression

Although we're currently in an age where women have more choice than ever before, women are still expected to live up to an impossibly thin body shape. The fact is that now, more than ever, the price of beauty is extremely high. This is evident in the huge investment in plastic surgeries of the last decade. We're see a re-emergence of almost every major fashion trend of decades past. We aren't all copy-cats though, the emergence of low-rise, super skinny jeans is unique to our generation. There is no one big trend in hair and makeup. Possibly for the first time, the definition of beauty doesn't seem to be so concrete. Hair extensions are a big trend today: allowing women the freedom to have virtually any hairstyle they desire. Makeup can range anywhere from the new coral makeup trend to subtler nudes or smoky eyes - the choice is theirs.



The female friendships that she succeeds in keeping or forming are precious to a woman, but they are very different in kind from relations between men. The latter communicate as individuals through ideas and projects of personal interest, while women are confined within their general feminine lot and bound together by a kind of immanent complicity. And what they look for first of all among themselves is the affirmation of the universe they have in common. They do not discuss opinions and general ideas, but exchange confidences and recipes; they are in league to create a kind of counter-universe, the values of which will outweigh masculine values. Collectively they find strength to shake off their chains; they negate the sexual domination of the males by admitting their frigidity to one another, while deriding the men's desires or their clumsiness, and they question ironically the moral and intellectual superiority of their husbands, and of men in general (Goffman, 1959: 161).

According to Jean Kilbourne, the image that is imposed on women today is the basic reason for their disease with their selves. Based on the fact that advertising is the foundation of the mass media, Kilbourne claims that women fall victim to the primary purpose of advertising: To sell products. Advertising does sell products of course, but as we all know, it also sells a great deal more than products. It sells values, it sells images, it sells concepts of love and sexuality, of romance, of success, and perhaps most importantly of normalcy. To a great extent, advertising tells us who we are and who we should be. What advertising tells us today about women, just as it did ten, twenty or thirty years ago is that «the most important thing about a woman is how she looks». Advertisers use female beauty to sell anything, they surround us with the image of ideal female beauty, so we all learn how important it is for a woman to be beautiful:

Women learn from a very early age that we must spend enormous amounts of time, energy and money, striving to achieve this ideal and [that we should feel] ashamed and guilty when we fail. And failure is inevitable, because the ideal is based on absolute flawlessness. She never has any lines or wrinkles, she certainly has no scars or blemishes, indeed, [according to fashion magazine images] she has no pores. Women's bodies continue to be dismembered in advertising; over and over again only one part of the body is used to sell products, which is of course the most dehumanizing thing you can do to someone. Not only is she a thing, but just one part of that thing is focused on (Kilbourne, 2000).

Kilbourne in her video *Killing Us Softly 3: Advertising's Image of Women*(2000), not only tells us, but also shows us with clear examples that «women are acceptable only when we are young, thin, white, beautiful, carefully groomed and polished. Any deviation from that ideal is met with contempt and hostility». She asserts that only 5% of female population on earth has the «ideal» body type that advertisements portray. Nonetheless, this is the only body type that we ever see in mass media. As a result, one of the greatest contempts today is for women who are in the least bit overweight. Almost

Figure 4.10 – (On the previous two pages)Text and images from StyleCaster's «A Timeline of Sexy Defined Through the Ages».

20% of all women has an eating disorder today, most commonly anorexia or bulimia. Kilbourne considers advertising to be as the underlying force that pumps the media with images of thin, gorgeous women with big breasts, hypersexualizes even the teenagers, and asks: «Now where else could this image of thinness come from if not, at least in part from the media images that surround us and that tell us in order to be acceptable, we need to be painfully, unnaturally thin?»

Advertising is one powerful force that keeps us trapped in very rigid roles and in very crippling definitions of femininity and masculinity. We need to get involved with whatever way moves us to change, not just the ads, but these attitudes that run so deep in our culture that effect each one of us so deeply whether we are conscious of it or not. Because what is at stake for all of us, men and women, boys and girls, is our ability to have authentic and freely chosen lives, nothing less (Kilbourne, 2000).

The question is whether such bombardment on female identity would lead to self-improvement or self-destruction. The barrage of messages about thinness, dieting and beauty tells *ordinary* women that they are always in need of adjustment – and that the female body is an object to be perfected. Today with the addition of Facebook to the equation, such messages start to come even from the people that we know and not only from the advertisement sector. Being another «shop-window» of the capitalist society, Facebook already has it well-accepted: The profile you create on Facebook is «how you want to present yourself to the society», so you better edit it, just like any celebrity would before stepping out into the public view.

Women that have long learned to compare themselves to other women, and to compete with them for male attention, turn to Facebook for yet another phase or medium of competition. Such intense focus on beauty and desirability «effectively destroys any awareness and action that might help to change that climate» (Kilbourne, 2000); and thus becomes the basic responsible of constructing «an image» and not your authentic identity.

Men do not (yet) live in a world where their bodies are scrutinized; only women do. In societies where modernity is well developed, self-identity becomes an inescapable issue. Even those who would say that they have never given any thought to questions or anxieties about their own identity will inevitably have been compelled to make significant choices throughout their lives, from everyday questions about clothing, appearance and leisure to high-impact decisions about relationships, beliefs and occupations. Whilst earlier societies with a social order based firmly in *tradition* would provide individuals with (more or less) clearly defined roles, in *post-traditional* societies we have to work out our roles for ourselves.

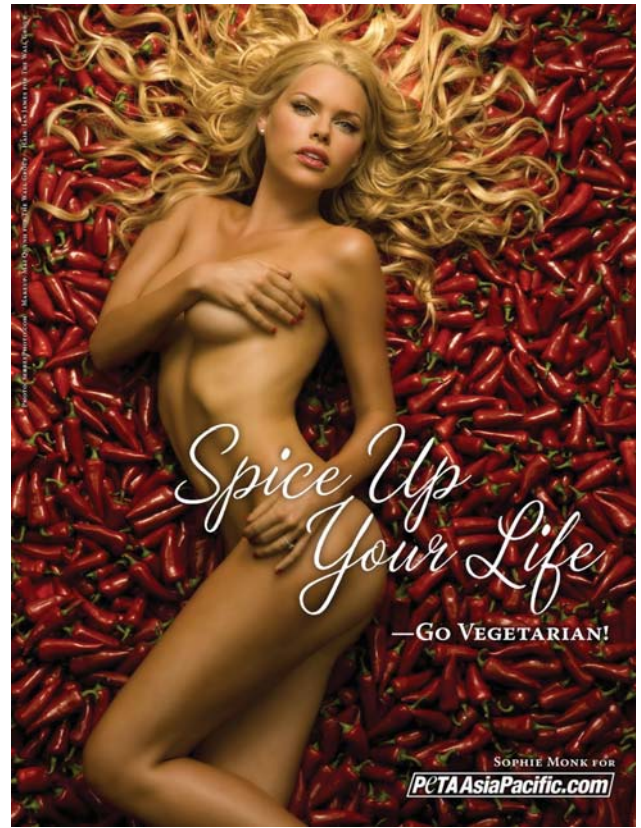
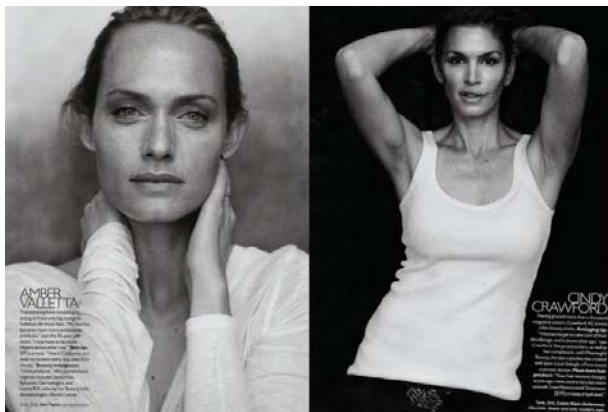
Under the circumstances of disease that we have covered upto this point, it is not surprising that women are attempting to attain the ideal appearance, the ideal image of women that is desirable, while men are in crisis trying to perform the ideal image of rich and powerful man that this ideal imaginary woman would like to be with. It should not come as a surprise that identity is evacuated, along with the ideas, not *ideals* of femininity and masculinity that construct a very basic part of such identities that we wish to construct.

The ideas of «masculinity» and «femininity» have been pulled through the social changes of the past few decades in quite different ways. Masculinity is seen as the state of «being a man», which is currently somewhat in flux. Femininity, on the other hand, is not necessarily seen as the state of «being a woman»; instead, it's perceived more as a stereotype of a woman's role from the past. Men like their identities to fit within «masculinity», even if we have to revise that term as attitudes change. Modern women are not generally very bothered about fitting their identity within the idea of «femininity», though, perhaps because feminists never really sought to *revise* femininity, preferring to dispose of the fluffy, passive concept altogether. Femininity is not typically a core value for women today. Instead, being «feminine» is just one of the performances that women can choose to employ in everyday life – perhaps for pleasure, or to achieve a particular goal (Gauntlett, 2008: 11).

Giddens, in explaining how the body becomes problematic in the construction of one's identity, uses examples from yet another hot topic of our age: Self-help books. Self-help books are another source of lifestyle information in the modern world. These populist guides would usually be sneered at by academics, but Giddens has studied them to gain some insight into the more popular ways in which modern living is discussed. In one such book, *Self-Therapy*(1989) by Janette Rainwater, Giddens finds support for his idea that therapy is basically about helping individuals to sort out a strong self-identity based on a coherent and fully understood narrative of the self: a thoroughly modern and reflexive «methodology of life-planning» (Giddens, 1991: 180).

But the language of self-help offers new elements too, such as «being true to oneself», which means that the reader has to construct an ideal self which they can then try to be «true» to. Self-help books are typically about self-actualisation, fulfilling personal potential, and so the self, and the narrative of the self, could be directed towards particular, selected *goals*. So, from self-help books we acquire a picture of the self as based on a quest for particular achievements, seeking happiness, and trying to put together a narrative in which obstacles are overcome and fulfilment is ultimately reached.

However, when the ideal that one is trying to achieve concerns the body, than the obstacle on the way to self-actualization is seen as the human flesh itself:



(Top to down, left to right)

Figure 4.11 – Cindy Crawford, with and without make-up. The supermodel once said, in a 1993 interview in People’s magazine: «I wish I looked like Cindy Crawford». She was admitting what so many of us already recognize, that no woman looks like the women we see on the pages of our favorite glossy magazines (Kilbourne, 2000).

Figure 4.12 – With fashion’s full-fledged youth obsession it’s easy to forget that beauty is something that has nothing to do with age. In the September issue of Harper’s Bazaar (2009), eight of the most enduring beauties around go bare faced for Peter Lindbergh and the results are thought provoking. Amber Valletta, Shalom Harlow, Kristen McMenemy, Helena Christensen, Nadja Auermann, Cindy Crawford, Claudia Schiffer and Tatjana Patitz are all stunning but seeing them without makeup, excessive retouching or complicated styling adds a new layer to their allure.

Figure 4.13 – Using the female body-object to sell almost anything. In this image, model and pop singer Sophie Monk is advertising the vegetarian way of life (ironically) for PETA [People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals].

Both life-planning and the adoption of lifestyle options become integrated with bodily regimes. It would be quite short-sighted to see this phenomenon only in terms of changing ideals of bodily appearance (such as slimness or youthfulness), or as solely brought about by the commodifying influence of advertising. We become responsible for the design of our own bodies, and in a certain sense noted above are forced to do so the more post-traditional the social contexts in which we move (Giddens, 1991: 102).

The reflexivity of the self *extends to the body*, which comes to be understood more as part of the action system, than just a mere passive object. The conscience of the body implies the exigencies of exercise and diet, in such a way that it reminds us of the bodily regimes practiced as part of the religious traditions, especially the eastern ones. In fact, Giddens observes that even the self-help books, like the one he is examining in detail, Rainwater's *Self-Therapy* write about self-realization or contemporary psychotherapy, and they usually resort to these bodily regimes in the programs that they suggest their readers should undertake. Nonetheless, the differences between the original regimes and the self-help versions are noticeable: While Rainwater presents the bodily conscience to be a medium «for constructing a differentiated self», the traditional religious bodily regimes target «the dissolution of the ego». Whichever is the case, the body continues to be at the core of any attempt for identity construction, or for the resolution of an identity crisis.

The body is an object in which we are all privileged, or doomed, to dwell, the source of feelings of well-being and pleasure, but also the site of illnesses and strains. ... [I]t is an action-system, a mode of praxis, and its practical immersion in the interactions of day-to-day life is an essential part of the sustaining of a coherent sense of self-identity (Giddens, 1991: 99).

In *The Beauty Myth: How Images of Beauty Are Used against Women* (1991), Naomi Wolf gives us an earlier version of Kilbourne's worries and indicates the unattainable ideal promulgated by the beauty industry, tracking the issue back from the presence of editable digital imagery in our lives – a pernicious fantasy that has made crash dieting, eating disorders, cosmetic surgery, and the onset of a chronic self-loathing rites of passage for too many American women. In cyberculture, notes Wolf, digital systems have enabled the creation of truly posthuman paragons of beauty: the impossibly flawless models in ads and fashion layouts in women's magazines exist only as digitized photos, retouched with computer graphics software. «Airbrushing age from women's faces is routine» even in general interest publications, she reports, and «computer imaging ... has been used for years in women's magazines' beauty advertising» to remake reality to corporate dictates. This issue, she contends,

is not trivial. It is about the most fundamental freedoms: the freedom to imagine one's own future and to be proud of one's own life... to airbrush age off a woman's face is to erase women's identity, power and history (1991: 82-83).

At the end of *The Beauty Myth*, Wolf warns that women are endangered by their failure to understand that the unnecessary fictions about the body beautiful that cage women's lives have finally been uncoupled from the human frame of reference. «We still believe that there is some point where [cosmetic] surgery is constrained by a natural limit, the outline of the 'perfect' human female» she writes:

That is no longer true. The «ideal» has never been about the bodies of women, and from now on technology can allow the «ideal» to do what it has always sought to do: leave the female body behind altogether to clone its mutations in space. The human female is no longer the point of reference. The «ideal» has become at last fully inhuman ... Fifty million Americans watch the Miss America pageant; in 1989 five contestants were surgically reconstructed by a single Arkansas plastic surgeon. Women are comparing themselves and young men are comparing young women with a new breed that is a hybrid non-woman (1991: 266-267).

Strengthening and amplifying this opinion, not only on women but on human in general, is the «armored cyborgs» of Hollywood, «the remnants of their humanity impregnable behind heavy metal hardware, speak to a growing sense of human irrelevance in what is, more and more, a technological environment» (Dery, 1996: 243). Similarly, Bukatman sees, in *RoboCop* and the *Terminator*, «an uneasy but consistent sense of human obsolescence, and at stake is the very definition of human. ... [O]ur ontology is adrift» (1993: 20).

The reply comes from Haraway, «The cyborg is our ontology, [and] it gives us our politics» (1989a: 150). Unlike *RoboCop* and other aggressive symbols of an embattled status quo, Haraway's *cyborg* is the personification of the future untroubled by ambiguity and difference. It re-establishes the relationship between mechanism and organism, culture and nature, simulacrum and original, science fiction and social reality in a single body. A utopian monster, born of a «pleasure in ... potent and taboo fusions» and «resolutely committed to partiality, irony, intimacy, and perversity» Haraway's cyborg is a living symbol of difference – sexual, ethnic, and otherwise – that refuses to be resolved or repressed (1989a: 151; 173).

When Haraway declares that we are all cyborgs, she means it both literally – medicine has given birth to «couplings between organism and machine» bio-technology and communications technologies are «recrafting our bodies» – and figuratively, in the sense that «we are living through a movement from an organic, industrial society to a polymorphous, information system» (1989a: 150; 161; 164). In short, technology is reversing the polarities of the world we live in:

Late twentieth-century machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally-designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines. Our machines are disturbingly lively, and ourselves frighteningly inert (1989a: 152).

Through the introduction of cyberspace, technology ironically takes the blame on its guilt, its penitence in alienating human from her/his body, suggesting one more way out for human identity, one into the fantasy of the cyberspace, a flight off the body to repossess the bodily sensations, a dream, which will end with a return to consciousness which remains rooted in the physical, never minding whether the physical is human or cyborg.

Though the invisibility of the cyberspace was a good attempt to liberate us from the body, as soon as the new medium was conquered by visibility and the advertising visuality, the body came back even *stronger*. As we have investigated in this chapter, the extreme focus on the body image resulted in the increased *disease* with the self, which is clinically identified as the body dysmorphic disorder.

Body dysmorphic disorder (BDD) is a psychological somatoform disorder in which the affected person is excessively concerned about and preoccupied by a perceived defect in his or her physical features. Depending on the individual case, BDD may either be a somatoform disorder or part of an eating disorder or both: BDD always includes a debilitating or excessive fear of judgment by others, as is seen with social anxiety, social phobia and some OCD problems; or, alternately, it may be a part of eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa and compulsive overeating. The term «body dysmorphic disorder» itself describes only those excessive social-acceptance fears that relate to one's personal body image. Depending on the individual, it may or may not also be part of one of these wider or related syndromes.

Earlier perspectives did focus on women as the main effected group of body dysmorphic disorders ranging from social phobias to eating disorders, nonetheless, research indicates that even this gap has been filled, BDD is often misunderstood to affect mostly women, but research shows that it affects men and women equally:

Body image isn't just a women's problem. Many studies reveal that a surprisingly high proportion of men are dissatisfied with, preoccupied with, and even impaired by concerns about their appearance. One American study, for example, found that the percentage of men dissatisfied with their overall appearance (43%) has nearly tripled in the past 25 years and that nearly as many men as women are unhappy with how they look (Philips & Castle, 2001: 1015).

This perspective on the body, in an oversimplified manner, explains the fundamentals of our current image obsession in constructing our digital identities.

4.2.3 Image Obsession

We judge the female body by the beauty ideal of advertising. We judge the book by the cover. We have long been doing that. As the modern society today takes a rhythm that is hard to keep up to, increasingly we take less and less time to know a person, and thus we judge a person by her/his appearance and we stay with the image of a person as her/his identity. And to make it even worse, we have our all-time judgement of favouring the beautiful. Under these circumstances it is difficult not to agree with Goffman, as he puts it: «Universal human nature is not at all a very human thing» (1967: 45).

Perceptions of physical attractiveness contribute to generalized assumptions based on those attractions. Across cultures, what is beautiful is assumed to be good; attractive people are assumed to be more extroverted, popular, and happy. Studies show attractive students get more attention and higher evaluations from their teachers, good-looking patients get more personalized care from their doctors and handsome criminals receive lighter sentences than less attractive convicts (Lorenz, 2005). The *ugly* truth is that plain people earn 5% to 10% less than people of average looks, who in turn earn 3% to 8% less than those deemed good-looking (Hamermesh & Biddle: 1993).

According to Dr. Gordon Patzer, who has spent more than three decades studying and writing about physical attractiveness, human beings are hard-wired to respond more favorably to attractive people. Even studies of babies show they will look more intently and longer at prettier faces. «Good-looking men and women are generally judged to be more talented, kind, honest and intelligent than their less attractive counterparts» Patzer says, «Controlled studies show people go out of their way to help attractive people – of the same and opposite sex – because they want to be liked and accepted by good-looking people» (Lorenz, 2005).

[People] have allowed what they *see* of a person to strongly influence what they *feel* and *believe* about that person. Almost from the moment of birth, each of us is judged – silently, unconsciously, and nearly instantly – on the basis of our height (or lack of it), our weight and bulk, the shape and symmetry of our facial features, the length and style of our hair, our mode of dress, our grooming – everything that goes into the mix of qualities known as «physical attractiveness» (Patzner, 2008: 3).

As we have seen in the previous section, what we look like, or more importantly, how others perceive us, shape our lives in dozens of subtle ways from the cradle to the grave. Just as the rise of the mass media has shaped public perceptions on the parameters of personal attractiveness, personal attractiveness has in turn reshaped the media itself. Where television news reporters once were unremarkable in

appearance, it is now virtually impossible to find a man or woman reading news copy to a camera who could not be described as attractive or good-looking. Fueled by an explosion of media images that glorify youth and beauty, millions of Americans have turned their waking lives into endless quests for enhanced physical attractiveness, often at the expense of their health. So powerful are these media images that in the twentieth century, once-rare conditions such as anorexia and bulimia are commonplace throughout the Western world (Patzer, 2008: 4).

As cruel as it may sound, it is in fact true that we favor the beautiful. Humans are acutely sensitive to their physical appearance which some scientists theorize for reasons of evolution (Darwin, 1871; Fisher, 1930; Koeslag, 1990; Singh, 1993; Grammer&Thornhill, 1994). While the effects of physical attractiveness are amplified by mass media, the phenomenon itself is older than history: There is even evidence that some Stone Age women in southern Europe styled their hair (Patzer, 2008: 5). History began with the written word, and it seems that, glamour immediately followed. Today, physical attractiveness also has a profound influence on how we define role models, who govern us, what products we buy, and what services we consume.



Figure 4.14 – Creative uses of Facebook's new feature, profile albums, gives a good boost to your online ego.

Even Aristotle, ancient Greece's premier observer of human nature, recognized the importance of attractiveness. He wrote: «Personal beauty is a greater recommendation than any letter of reference». In an age where our identities are reduced to our bodies or our faces, an image definitely says more than a thousand words.

The face is symbolically constructed as a container, a surface, and therefore necessarily a point of division. Aristotle's model de-emphasizes that heterogeneity by purporting an unimpeded logical and biological continuity between essence and appearance – one which is echoed by Saint Jerome «The face is the mirror of the mind, and the eyes without speaking confess the secrets of the heart», Cicero «The face is the mirror of the soul, for this is the only part of the body capable of displaying as many expressions as there are emotions» (Kahn, 2010).

Turning to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the anatomical face is the word's primary association, nonetheless, a number of linguistic appropriations deal with the face in terms of its surface qualities. Continuing in that vein, many additional definitions and appropriations of the linguistic face treat it as not only superficial, but dissociated in that superficiality from its supposed premises. The word «appearance» is frequently featured in these definitions, as in, «external appearance, look or semblance of (anything)». In such an approach to superficiality, the concept of semblance is crucial in its notable divergence from presumed equivalence: Appearance, not essence, is the requisite condition for semblance. The presumed rigor and fixedness of the Aristotelian discourse are challenged by English Language phrases such as: «making a face», «putting on one's face (with make-up)», «putting on a brave/happy face», being «two-faced», and «bold-faced lie». Such phrases delineate the surface as distinct from the content, and furthermore, as malleable.

Face and its performative capacity, was used by Goffman in defining the roles that we play. The face projects a contrived identity by mobilizing the assumptions of the spectator-Other. Apparent in the use of masks, for instance, a role is adopted and enacted by adopting the facial signs appropriate to it: A happy character would wear a smiling mask.

Goffman's essay, «On Face-work», focused on the concept of face, which is the positive image of self that individuals have when interacting with others. Goffman believed that face «as a sociological construct of interaction, is neither inherent in nor permanent aspect of the person» (Treviño, 2003: 37). Once an individual gives out a positive self-image of themselves to others they then feel a need to keep or live up to that set image. When individuals are inconsistent with how they project themselves in society, they risk being embarrassed or discredited, therefore the individual remains consistently guarded, making sure that they do not show themselves in an unfavorable way to others. Goffman himself, was

described by one of his former students as, «[He] was drawn to disjunctive scenes. He had a voyeur's interest in the intimate details of other people's lives and a strong eye for the ironic and poignant» (as cited in Treviño, 2003: 6). According to this description of his person, Goffman probably would have loved Facebook had he lived to see it.

With Facebook, besides several other modalities, we were also introduced to the concept of profile picture as our *face*. A digital photograph that represents the person on her/his Facebook profile does not sound new at all. Nonetheless, contrary to the early-web era, profile pictures are nowadays a living, breathing part of our online life and no longer mere representations of our virtual persona in the form of an avatar.

With the introduction of profile albums, Facebook has intensified the need to play around with the way we decide to portray ourselves, encouraging users to display ever-changing depictions of their moods through time. And of course, this also means paying acute attention to the way your image is being displayed by others. Monitoring party pictures and past-bedtime updates has become more than a necessary evil. Tag-management is a skill, mastered by even the lightest users who painstakingly remove tags from embarrassing or unflattering pictures or even add them to pictures that do them more justice

According to the item fcb05 of the Digital Life Scale, which states «It is important for me to have a cool photo as my profile picture», 46.5% of the participants agree or strongly agree that having a «cool» profile picture on their Facebook profile is important, while 27.9% feel neutral about it and it is not important for the rest of the participants.

In fact, people do employ a surprising amount of creative energy to formulate their ideal image. The recent Facebook profile page re-design provides even more opportunities to get an original profile. Numerous services outside Facebook offer solutions for users to play with their own image. *Photofunia* for example allows you to integrate your own picture into a specific scene without any editing skills needed. A sign of evolution, profile pictures can now even serve as a media to express political opinions or belonging to a certain cause. *Instagram*, a very popular iPhone application, lets the user apply cool professional effects on the photos taken by the iPhone camera. Rollip.com make these effects available online for those that do not own an iPhone, not to miss out on the cool effects on their Facebook profiles.

Ultimately, profile pictures are the perfect means to become as attractive as possible for friends and potential love interests alike. Shooting yourself in the best light possible a serious matter. Rules and

guidelines have been conceived, discussed and challenged. Among the infamous tricks are the «Myspace angles» placing the camera above the face, cropping most of the body.

The number of profile-tweaking addicts is reaching such height that shooting the perfect profile picture has even been broken down into *an art form*. It has been rigorously made fun of by *Fastcompany's* hilarious chart and very seriously studied by dating website Okcupid, which revealed the key components for taking the perfect eye-catching profile picture. Apparently, using a flash will add seven years to your face and a shallow depth of field will make you more appealing.

Fastcompany explains in detail on its website, the motives behind wanting a cool Facebook profile picture and the best tactics to shoot one in a *scientific* manner. In other words, it wittily mocks the image obsession of Facebook users:

Everyone is aware of how significantly Facebook has impacted modern technologies such as online communication, information aggregation – and boyfriend stalking. Less noticed, but just as profound, is its influence on art. Just as refinements in mirror crafting led to an increase in self portrait production during the Renaissance, Facebook's steady, unrelenting invasion of every crevice in the civilized world has led to a new renaissance in *portraiture*, notable for its creation by people who wouldn't know good art if it friend requested them.

These office workers and bored teens have replaced Okies and deranged shut-ins as the ultimate outsider artists; not only do they lack formal artistic training, most lack even the desire to create art. However, with this humble, ad hoc genre a complex visual dialogue has emerged and its unique vocabulary reveals much about the modern world. Like all art forms, Facebook portraiture has its own lazy tropes – the laptop camera shot, the blue sky background, the blinding flash in a bathroom mirror – but even these thoughtlessly captured snapshots yield unintended insights about their subjects: How is the photo cropped? Can we see the subject's abs? Why is she giving us the finger?

This chart will hopefully help you view specific Facebook portraits within the context of the larger genre, and therefore lead to a richer, more complex appreciation of Facebook portraiture as *an emerging form of banal, eye-numbing expression* (Horner, 2010, *emphasis added*).

Another contribution of Web 2.0 to our daily lives is the presence of websites where you can mix'n'match imaginary fashion items to compose and share your personal style. This personal content-centric trend materializes best through recent websites that encourage curating, remixing and sharing a unique patchwork of existing content. Among several websites of this genre, including those fueled by the leading fashion magazines, *Polyvore.com* is a wonderful example. The shopping website

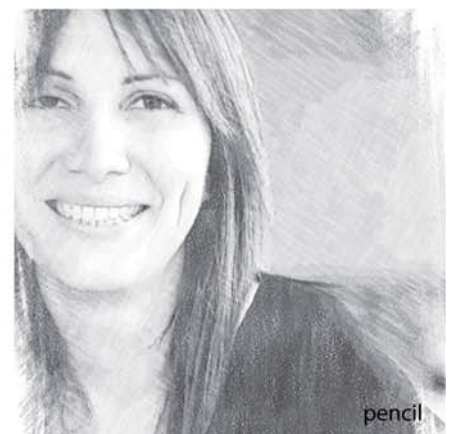
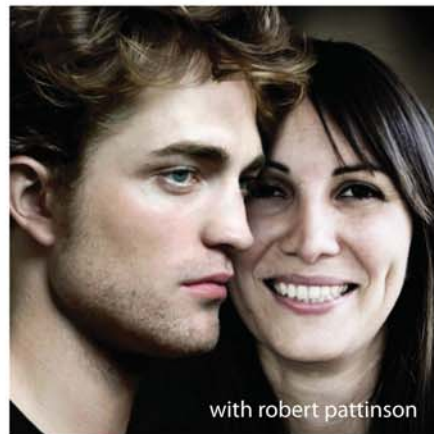


Figure 4.15 – Images elaborated by Zeynep Arda, using Photofunia, Instagram and Rollip (2011).



doubles as a collective fashion trend exploration tool where users can compose their own «lookboards» from selected shop items. The boards are then shared, rated and discussed; the most popular being featured on the homepage. You can shape yourself as a fashion expert, depending on the popularity and relevance of your creativity and choice.

Polyvore and similar websites do not only express how much we care about our appearance, but they also substitute the fashion magazines in a new manner. Also a tribute to the plurality of styles, it demonstrates that people no longer follow the leader; they create, share, vote and construct their appearances democratically. And certainly, they still fuel consumption:

Consumer goods work in harmony to create a consistent, meaningful whole. Buying a new pair of shoes creates a disharmony with an outfit that is old; thus, one must buy a new skirt, a new blouse and a new purse so all consumer objects can be unified (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhoft, 2001: 418).

With that much emphasis on the image, it is not surprising to find that our self-images start to have a significant weight in our identity crises. A disease similar to the body dysmorphic disorder, Dorian Gray Syndrome, is a cultural and social phenomenon characterized by the excessive preoccupation of the individual with her/his own appearance. Not surprisingly, this symptom is accompanied by difficulties in coping with aging processes. The disease is named after Dorian Gray, the narcissistic hero of Oscar Wilde's famous novel, *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891).

In the novel, when Dorian comes to imagine that:

[T]here would be a day when his face would be wrinkled and wizen, his eyes dim and colourless, the grace of his figure broken and deformed. ... He would become dreadful, hideous and uncouth. As he thought of it, a sharp pang of pain struck him through like a knife (Wilde, 1891/2000: 27).

These words predefine the ending of the novel, where Dorian strikes the portrait that has taken on the signs of his age and sins and dies. It is the absolute perfection of his image and the pleasure of contemplating it which determine the supposition of a possibly flawed image and the slide into the opposite emotion:

Beauty and youth are set from the start against the menace of their decline, and pleasure is marked as necessarily ephemeral: the world will belong to the perfect youth only «for a season». In seeing himself in an image of perfect beauty, Dorian also sees that image as

potentially disfigured: the fulfilled idea suggests the risk of its failing. Similarly, the «pleasure» and «joy» of that rapturous recognition of a completed image of himself imply an inevitable disappointment, that looker and image will not always be the same (Bowlby, 1993: 8).

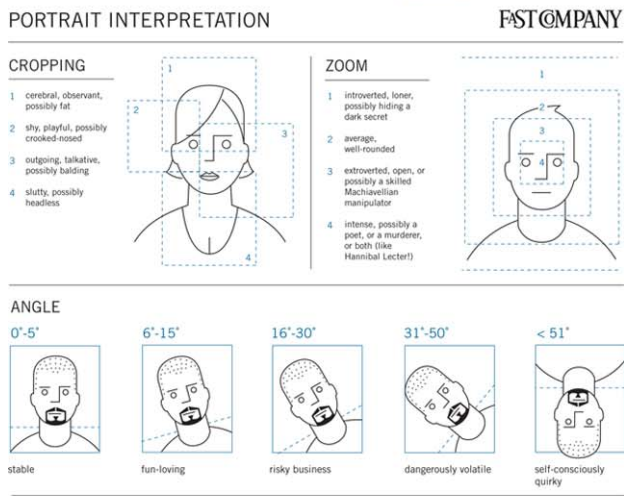
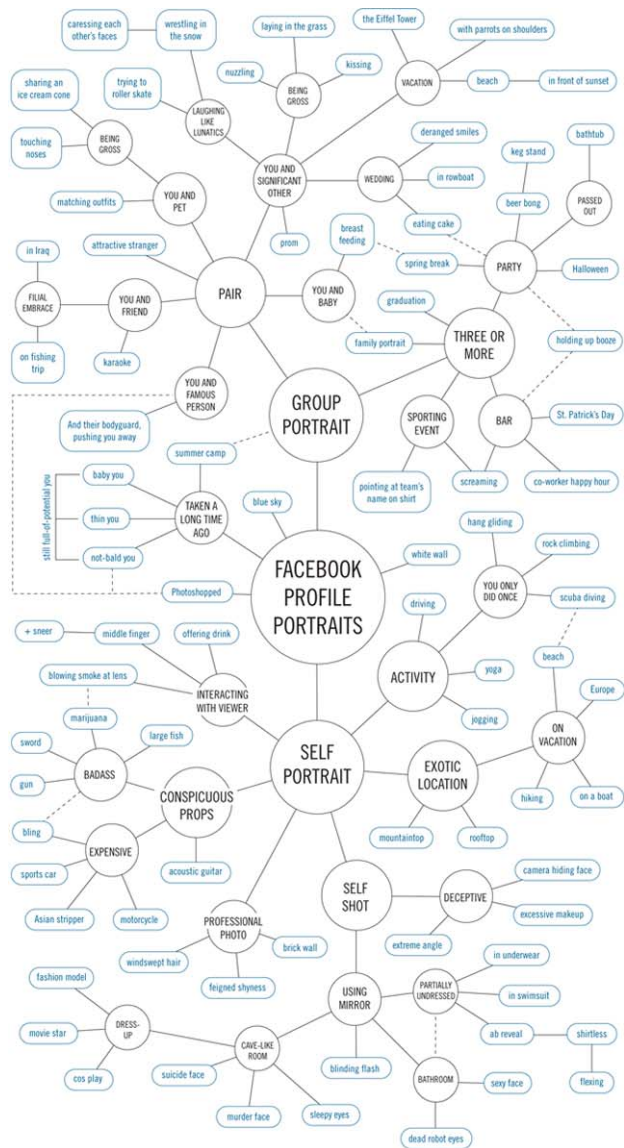
The Dorian Gray Syndrome is characterized by a triad of symptoms combining diagnostic signs of body dysmorphic disorder, narcissistic character traits and arrests in psychic maturation. Dorian Gray patients frequently are excessive users of «lifestyle drugs and aesthetic medicine». Almost an identical representation of the worries of the contemporary individual, in Wilde's novel, Dorian refuses to grow old. As a handsome young man, he looks at a just-painted portrait of himself and wishes that the painting could grow old in his place. He is then unable to mature, and «gives his soul away» in order to resist time and nature. Wilde's artistic condensation in the form of the Dorian Gray portrait both cites and transgresses narcissistic mirror motives, and eternal beauty and the process of aging and maturation are represented by the person and mirror duo. As such, Wilde's artistic creation serves as a background for the clinical description of the contemporary syndrome.

«Yes», he continued, «I am less to you than your ivory Hermes or your silver Faun. You will like them always. How long will you like me? Till I have my first wrinkle, I suppose. I know, now, that when one losses one's good looks, whatever they may be, one loses everything. Your picture has taught me that. Lord Henry Wotton is perfectly right. Youth is the only thing worth having. When I find that I am growing old, I shall kill myself» (Wilde, 1891/2000: 28).

In the actual syndrome, an interplay between narcissistic tendencies («timeless beauty»), the inability to progress and mature («developmental arrest») and, finally, as a defense, the use of «medical lifestyle» products such as hair growth restorers, erectile dysfunction drugs, weight loss medication, mood lifters, laser treatment of the skin, and aesthetic surgery to remove signs of the aging process are seen. While Dorian Gray patients display diagnostic features of these disorders, the syndrome describes a common



Figure 4.16 – Lookboards from Polyvore.com (2011).



DESIGNED BY DOOGIE HORNER * in 2% of portraits, cropping and angle is due to drunkenness, laziness, or lack of artistic process, and doesn't otherwise reflect subject's character

Figure 4.17 – Fastcompany's profile picture suggestions.

underlying psychodynamic behind these disorders in form of a narcissistic defence against time-dependent maturation – the seeking of eternal beauty.

The metaphor that defines the syndrome, also tells us that the phenomenon is actually not neither contemporary nor new. Human beings have always wanted eternal beauty. But they never had in any earlier era, the variety of tools they have today to fight back at their nature.

Clinically, if the utilization of lifestyle products as mechanisms of defense is not sufficient to preserve the patient's beauty, depressive episodes and suicidal crisis are often observed in patients that suffer the syndrome. If the defensive «acting out» character of the syndrome is not understood properly and the patient continuously uses lifestyle products without noticing the psychodynamics involved, a chronic state of depression or narcissistic emptiness can arise.

Going back to Wilde's novel, at the very moment when Dorian Gray acquires an identity, then, that identity is seen as both vulnerable and ambiguously divided, between an image and a spectator of that image (Bowlby, 1993: 8-9). But in the Faustian pact that follows – «If it were I who was to be always young, and the picture to grow old! ... I would give my soul for that!» (Wilde, 1891/2000: 28) – Dorian and the portrait change places. «Life imitates art», according to Wilde's critical dictum and Dorian can now

parade in person as Lord Henry's «visible symbol» of the nineteenth century, categorically removed from the vulgar realistic constraints of physical deterioration or «wooden» conformity to an ordinary type. As Bowlby explains it: «Unlike Sybil Vane, who fell from grace by assuming a personal identity outside art, Dorian Gray finds his unique self in the form of an idealized artistic representation» (1993: 9).

On Facebook, people are invited to manage their identities, strategically providing a polished example of their idealised selves, almost as an artistic representation. The pictures of social celebrations, holidays, weddings, and children, convey how people would like to be imagined. The more mundane aspects of uploading photographs, editing profiles, and managing privacy settings are overlooked, yet they are really what make the site tick. Mobility is praised and addressed as the symbol of a «state-of-the-art», «young and hip» individual. Photos uploaded from phones are given credit as «mobile uploads», others, presumably from a computer at home or at the office, are not given such acknowledgment.

In the ultimate instance, the social «face», «photos», image, and appearance, is what the site is really about. Showing your *digitally edited face* on the network is part of the image game. It is almost natural to question, why someone that you know, as a colleague, or even as a friend of a friend wouldn't let you see her/his photographs on Facebook. It's commonplace to hear dialogues such as a colleague speaking to another with whom s/he is not Facebook friends with and questions why. The other replies «But I don't want you to see all my photos», implying that there are probably too many embarrassing images for a work colleague to witness. The latter replies: «but the photos are the whole point». In a sense, we are still in a new phase of the «society of the spectacle».

It says nothing more than «that which appears is good, that which is good appears». The attitude which it demands in principle is this passive acceptance, which in fact it has already obtained by its manner of appearing without reply, by its monopoly of appearance (Debord, 1967: 5).

A critique of «visual» culture exists in everyday life social theory where some works and methodologies have addressed the dominance of the visual in Western culture. Michel de Certeau's critique of visual culture as a destructive element in modern societies that measures «everything by its ability to show or be shown» provides a challenge to Facebook in a very different way to that of Goffman (1984: xxi). De Certeau, before Facebook was even conceived, argues that «our society is characterized by a cancerous growth of vision, measuring everything by its ability to show or be shown and transmuting communication into a visual journey» (1984: xxi).

Ultimately de Certeau asserts his concern that the use of the visual image is a form of robbery that both denies experience and makes people passive in their pursuits, «what is given to the eye is removed from the hand» (1997: 18). He urges us to consider how we can be involved when we thirst for only the images of lived experiences, rather than living. This assertion is something that Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* highlights as a similar point. For him the predominance of seeing and looking has become the mode through which people live and it has ultimately «turned into a trap». He argues that we work, consume, and understand «on the basis of image» (1991: 75-76).

Reading (an image or a text), moreover, seems to constitute the maximal development of the passivity assumed to characterize the consumer, who is conceived of as a voyeur in a «show biz society» (de Certeau, 1984: xxi).

Is Facebook the ultimate frontier of the society of the spectacle? Have we already made a Faustian pact with the digital image?

4.2.4 Voyeurism vs. Exhibitionism

We all need someone to look at us. We can be divided into four categories according to the kind of look we wish to live under. The first category longs for the look of an infinite number of anonymous eyes, in other words, for the look of the public. ... The second category is made up of people who have a vital need to be looked at by many known eyes. They are the tireless hosts of cocktail parties and dinners. They are happier than the people in the first category, who, when they lose their public, have the feeling that the lights have gone out in the room of their lives. This happens to nearly all of them sooner or later. People in the second category, on the other hand, can always come up with the eyes they need. ... Then there is the third category, the category of people who need to be constantly before the eyes of the person they love. Their situation is as dangerous as the situation of people in the first category. One day the eyes of their beloved will close, and the room will go dark. ... And finally there is the fourth category, the rarest, the category of people who live in the imaginary eyes of those who are not present. They are the dreamers (Kundera, 1984/1999: 23).

A 1903 essay by Simmel, «The Metropolis and Mental Life» drew a complicated portrait of the city as a site of emphatic sensation and kaleidoscopic variety. The «swift and continuous shift of external and internal stimuli» provoked new mental attitudes in its inhabitants, and this «intensification of emotional life» was neither entirely positive nor unswervingly negative (325). A commitment to commerce reduced human beings to numbers or quantities, and generalized them as «the crowd», but the city's

size also offered opportunities for personal exploration and growth, as well as economic. The economic imperatives of the city might «hollow out the core of things» and flatten distinctions between people and objects, but it was an expansive environment: in the city, «the individual's horizon [was] enlarged» (Simmel, 1903: 324-330). It was easy to get lost in the metropolis; it was also possible to define oneself anew.

The city, after its invasion by technological developments, became the proud screen for displaying the power of technology, first by the machine, and later even more so by the computer. The noise of technology was so loud that the muteness of the human subject was barely heard. First, as the machine entered the urban land, technology drew many people to cities, reducing the human subject to exist under the tag of *labour*. So there was the crowd that veiled the silent scream of the human subject, as it disappeared into the void. As if the turbulence that the sudden apparentness of the machine, as a means of production, was not sufficient; out came the machine, crawling out of the production place, invading the streets, the buildings, and even the open spaces. It walked firmly still, into our private spaces and lives. In our living room was the TV that stared blankly and indifferently at us. We moved swiftly on the streets crowded with cars and more cars, we were strong and rigid in our automobile armors, but weak and fragile, if we ever tried to resurrect the *flâneur* of good old *modern* Paris.

All the same, these waves of change, allowed a cavity for a metaphorical *space of literature*, where the impact of these changes on the identity could be traced, ranging from the early literal definitions of daily life by the *physiologies* of nineteenth century Paris, to the later originated idea of the *detective stories* and then on the extension of the journey beyond the modern, *the science fiction literature*, that narrated «the dissolution of the most fundamental structures of human existence» (Bukatman, 1997: 8). These new genres that evolved in the course of the time with the substantial changes were not only witnesses to the change that took place, but also evidences by themselves if we concern the way that they were generated.

Exploring the primary departure for the journey of the human body in the changing space, we may go back to the beginning of the nineteenth century in Paris. In parallel with the significant alteration of the economical life and the public space, the urban social geography was also changing, through the swift passages in between these phases. The transition to modernity was captured as Baudelaire moved fearfully into the traffic-laden boulevards of Haussman's Paris:



Figure 4.18 – I watch Facebook (2011).

I was crossing the boulevard, in a great hurry, in the midst of a moving chaos, with death galloping me from every side (Baudelaire as cited in Benjamin, 1986: 159).

Baudelaire's words drew attention to a chaotic and anxious perception of the modern city as well as to a crowded space which manifestly displayed an overflow of activity on the outside, nevertheless the evacuation of the sense of public from within. As Sennett witnesses the transition; to an old women of Paris, surviving into the 1880s, the contrasts between the city of her youth and the city of her old age might have appeared to her as the feverish growth of public life in the nineteenth century, and to tell her that the city was ceasing to be a public culture would have drawn a snort of derision (Sennett, 1977: 125).

In the modern, the impact of the space, as well as that of the mass of strangers on the human subject, was deep but clear. The convergence of the inside and the outside occurred, slowly but surely, blurring the border that kept them distinct, replacing the inside with the outside every now and then. This convergence was also removing gradually the border that kept the public distinct from private, the one that kept the human subject as an «individual» out of the crowd. But the convergence and the replacement was such that in every act of losing the border, it appeared anew, in every step of substitution the distinction was underlined and more apparent than it was before. To trace the steps of this process, one could follow those of the flâneur, who strolled on the wide boulevards and arcades of Paris in the nineteenth century; «who turn[ed] the boulevard into an interieur», «who [went] botanizing on the asphalt»:

The street becomes a dwelling for the flâneur, he is as much at home among the façades of houses as a citizen is in his four walls. To him the shiny, enameled signs of businesses are at least as good a wall ornament as an oil painting is to a bourgeois in his salon. The walls are the desk against which he presses his notebooks; news-stands are his libraries and the terraces of cafés are the balconies from which he looks down on his household after his work is done (Benjamin, 1973: 37).

Nevertheless, the flâneur's convergence of the inside and the outside as such was still an innocent one, and one where the two realms had approached one another, but yet had not merged into one. One could see in the reversal of the inside and the outside, still the opposite duality of the two, perhaps even highlighted. One could see the «porosity» of the *membrane* that kept them from merging (Lacis as cited in Buck-Morss 26). The flâneur who turned the street into a living room committed an act of transgression, which reversed an established distinction between public and private spaces.

Lefebvre finds both that, around 1910, «a certain space was shattered» and that «it did not disappear». The phallogentric abstract space of capitalist modernity survived to inhabit the representational space of aesthetic modernism (Burgin, 1993: 38). Indeed, it survives into the present day. It is not that one spatial formation was replaced by another. It is rather as if a superior *layer* of spatial representations itself became permeable, «porous», and allowed an inferior layer to show through. Lefebvre himself supplies the appropriate analogy. He notes that early in the genesis of a biological organism, «an indentation forms in the cellular mass. A cavity gradually takes place. ... The cells adjacent to the cavity form a screen or membrane which serves as a boundary ... A closure thus comes to separate within from without, so establishing the living being as a 'distinct body'».

This «closure», however, is only ever relative: «The membranes in question remain permeable, punctured by pores and orifices. Traffic back and forth, so far from stopping, tends to increase and become more differentiated, embracing both energy exchange (alimentation, respiration, excretion) and information exchange (the sensory apparatus)». Burgin translates this point that Lefebvre had made as «Closure, then, rather than belonging to the natural order, is a creation of the social order» (Burgin, 1993: 38). This was easily observed in the development of the public, as the «individual» of the pre-capitalist era opened up the borders that kept the self apart from the public, and then at the same time closed down the border to keep the public as the other, as the stranger.

Thus, Lefebvre writes: «A defining characteristic of (private) property, as of the position in space of a town, nation or nation state, is a closed frontier. This limiting case aside, however, we may say that every spatial envelope implies a barrier between inside and out, but that this barrier is always relative and, in the case of membranes, always permeable» (1991: 175-176). Then it was the same case with the individual, who sought to achieve a closure of the self with advent of the modern, detaching further from his nature, nevertheless remaining fragile with his porous membrane.

Vitalizing this porous membrane and being vitalized through it, the *flâneur* exists, trying to make sense of the new. The *flâneur*, was one of the leading characters of the so-called *physiologies*, which began to appear late in the first half of the nineteenth century. These were short articles published in the newspapers and journals of the time which sought to describe the various characters found in the crowd. For Benjamin, the emergence of *physiologies* was the solidification of the response to the «quantitative change in human numbers and its qualitative impact on human experience» (Gilloch, 1996: 140).

As Benjamin notes, the first reaction of one who observed the crowd was that of «fear, revoltion and horror» and thus the urban *physiologies* that had appeared were the literary expression of the desire to

allay the paranoia engendered by a life among strangers (1973: 131). Supposedly humorous sketches of the crowd, these texts presented rather crude and facile stereotypes for the reassurance of the readers. A physiognomist, as defined in Benjamin's description of the writer Heinrich Heine von Hoffman, was, one who perceived the extraordinary, in specific people, things, houses, objects, streets: «As you have perhaps heard, one calls people who are able to discern people from people's faces, from their gait, from their hands or from their head-shape, their character, occupation, or even their fate, 'physiognomist'». This definition predicated upon Benjamin's notion of monadological approach, in his concern of the city as a *monad*, an entity that encapsulates the characteristic features of modern social and economic structures, and thereby as the site for their most precise and unambiguous interpretation (Gilloch, 1996: 5-6).

The conceit of physiognomy was very much different than that of the detective story, that evolved in turn; particularly on the point that the physiognomy implied the observation of the normal daily life in the metropolis, and hoped to seek a way to cope with the paranoia that was bound to arise with the crowd; while the alleviation of panic was not the goal of the second genre. Detective stories were the products of a dubious eye, wandering over the crowd, seeking to play upon with and exacerbate the fear. Unlike the «dull» physiologies, the detective story «was to have a great future» as «the literature which concerned itself with the disquieting and threatening aspects of urban life» (Benjamin, 1973: 40).

The rise of the detective story was the fall of a common point made by the physiologies; the way that they had pictured the stranger as eccentric and simple, attractive or severe was a description with an undercurrent that implied the stranger to be «harmless» and «of perfect bonhomie» had to decline (Benjamin, 1973: 37). With the detective story, the uneasiness of a special sort peculiar to the crowd, was finally voiced and pronounced. This was also the end of a particular bourgeois fantasy of the crowd as safe haven, the comfortable and comforting assumption not that you were just like everyone else, but that everyone else was really just like you (Gilloch, 1996: 140).

This apparent outcome highlighted the distinction between the self and the other, and yet the self as a closed entity, enclosed in a vulnerable and fragile, bordered yet porous body. The visibility of the body and yet the isolation of the self was a lucid contradiction that challenged the individual in maintaining individuality, yet defining the self a separate identity. The daily life, previously thought to be indispensable to forming the identity, ended up in the blossom of a «flower of evil», that never died out until then, that never vanished from the face of the earth of the *self*. The body, and all the same the identity, was now threatened by its visibility, by the realization of the porous membrane that it was contained in. In the terror of the vulnerable, when everyone was somewhat a conspirator, everybody would be in a situation where they have to play detective. This involved yet another emphasis on the visible.

As Baudrillard beautifully describes; this was «the era of the discovery and exploration of daily life» (Baudrillard, 1987a: 143). Indeed it was exploration of the limit, which was not transcended yet. In other words, it was for most part, the days of a *promenade*, that wandered along the streets and boulevards – not an automobile ride that erased the distinctions of the space into a continuum; the days of the urban «scene» – not the television image that reduced the «surrounding universe to a control screen» (Baudrillard: 127). By the same token, the individual maintained existence, though slipping slightly into the realm of immanence.

What was significantly at stake was also the issue of visibility, which brought about the withdrawal of the self into the depth of the inside, into the isolation of its enclosed space, where one could never be left alone. This engendered a new sense of vision on the outside, a safe and pleasurable one, as long as it remained on the outside.

It was under these circumstances that the flâneur enjoyed a kind of voyeurism, «deriving pleasure from his location within the crowd», of his passive participation. Balzac called it the «gastronomy of the eye»; one could just watch, without the need to become a participant, enmeshed in a scene (Sennett, 1977: 27). This was also apparent, this motive of the crowd, in the narrator of Poe's story *The Man of the Crowd*, who found enormous joy in examining the crowd, watching the crowd go by. Here, in this story it was not the «man of the crowd», but the narrator that was worth noting, who was fascinated by the crowd. Set in London, its narrator was a character who, after a long illness, ventures out again for the first time into the hustle and bustle of the city. In the late afternoon hours of an autumn day he installs himself behind a window in a big London coffee-house. He looks over the other guests, pores over advertisements in the paper, but his main focus of interest is the throng of people surging past his window in the street:

[The] latter is one of the principal thoroughfares of the city, and had been very much crowded during the whole day. But, as the darkness came on, the throng momentarily increased; and by the time the lamps were well lighted, two dense and continuous tides of population were rushing past the door. At this particular period of the evening I had never before been in a similar situation, and the tumultuous sea of human heads filled me, therefore, with a delicious novelty of emotion. I gave up, at length, all care of things within the hotel, and became absorbed in contemplation of the scene without (Poe, 1982: 475).

Nevertheless as Benjamin notes, Poe's observer succumbs to the fascination of the scene, which finally lures him outside into the whirl of the crowd (1973: 129). His intensions and his drive in merging into the crowd is still one of vision, one of voyeurism.

The passivity, the withdrawal rendered on the substitution of the operations of the ear by those of the eye, or to put it more bluntly, by the eradication of language. «As the flâneur parades down the street, people watch him; they do not feel free any longer to go up and speak to him. The passive spectator, the onlooker silent and amazed...» sums up the condition of the spectator, Sennett in *The Fall of the Public Man*(1978). People had to adapt themselves to this new and rather strange situation, one that is peculiar to big cities. Simmel has felicitously formulated what was involved here:

Someone who sees without hearing is much more uneasy than someone who hears without seeing. In this there is something characteristic of the sociology of the big city. Interpersonal relationships in big cities are distinguished by a marked preponderance of the activity of the eye over the activity of the ear. The main reason for this is the public means of transportation. Before the development of buses, railroads and trams in the nineteenth century, people had never been in a position of having to look at one another for long minutes or even hours without speaking to one another (Benjamin, 1973: 37).

This new situation was, as Simmel recognized, not a pleasant one. The uneasiness was not only one of *being seen* by others, but also the obligation of having to *see* the others, while it was no longer possible to be relieved by depicting them as harmless, benign figures. What led to the emergence of the detective story was yet this unceasing «horror» involved in the crowd. As Benjamin indicates, there would have been no tendency to examine such «motifs» of the crowd, if it was not for the uneasiness.

The science of reading character from appearances was everywhere tinged with the portrayal of anxiety in the acts of reading, as it was made to seem a dangerous necessity. The inhabitant of the modern city was not only seeking to read a great deal from the appearances, but also inducing himself into his own closure to avoid detection in the street, «to deny to probing eyes a knowledge that should come to none indiscriminately in the city» (Thackeray as cited in Sennett, 1977: 169). There was a world of shaded lamps, hooded bonnets, rides in closed carriages. Indeed, beyond all the mystification produced by the machine, the very belief that appearance is an index of character would prompt people to make themselves non-descript in order to be as mysterious, as little vulnerable, as possible.

Nevertheless this undercurrent for paranoia was an ebb-and-flow, predicating on the ambiguity of the experience of the crowd. And even in this era where the minimal separation of the inside and the outside was preserved, identity was still kept distinct; there were marks of the schizophrenic subject everywhere. Headed by the terror of paranoia from within, the subject tended to merge with the crowd, in order to be nondescript, removing the borders of the self though only on the outside. Perhaps it was the *limitedness* of the space as yet, that kept schizophrenia from taking the lead. Engels describes the scene of London, in order to define the locked-up crowd and the identity:

... But the sacrifice which all this has cost became apparent later. After roaming the streets of the capital a day or two, making headway with difficulty through the human turmoil and the endless lines of vehicles, after visiting the slums of the metropolis, one realizes for the first time that these Londoners have been forced to sacrifice the best qualities of their human nature, to bring to pass all the marvels of civilization which crowd their city... The very turmoil of the streets has something repulsive, something against which human nature rebels. The hundreds of thousands of all classes and ranks crowding past each other, are they not all human beings with the same qualities and powers, and with the same interest in being happy? ... And still they crowd by one another as though they had nothing in common, nothing to do with one another, and their only agreement is the tacit one, that each keep to his own side of the pavement, so as not to delay the opposing stream of the crowd, while it occurs to no man to honour another with so much a glance. The brutal indifference, the unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest, becomes the repellent and offensive, the more these individuals are crowded together, within a limited space (Engels as cited in Benjamin, 1973: 57-58).

The flâneur only seems to break through this «unfeeling isolation of each in his private interest» by filling the hollow space created in him by such isolation, with the borrowed – and fictitious – isolations of strangers. Next to Engels's clear description, it sounds obscure when Baudelaire writes: «The pleasure of being in a crowd is a mysterious expression of the enjoyment of the multiplication of numbers» (Benjamin, 1973: 59).

For Baudelaire, and for Benjamin, the crowd is both generative of experience, producing intoxication, yet simultaneously destructive of it, leading to boredom. A shifting, fragile balance. On the one hand, destructive of genuine experience and diversity, the crowd rigorously regiments the individual and denies his or her autonomy. The crowd is the negation of individuality and the self. On the other hand, despite its brutalizing tendencies, the crowd retains a certain allure for the outcast who wishes to remain undetected. In the crowd one is able to lose oneself. The crowd is the finest setting in which to be alone, to find precisely that solitude which Benjamin found most desirable, to experience the «loneliness peculiar to the city» (Buck-Morss, 1978: 128).

In this sense, the flâneur can be regarded very symbolic, in displaying the exact ambiguity that awaited the individual, for the flâneur enjoys being part of the crowd, nevertheless rejects *disappearing into the crowd*. «The flâneur is that character who retains his individuality while all around are losing theirs» (Gilloch, 1996: 153). The flâneur derives pleasure from his location within the crowd, but simultaneously regards the crowd with contempt, as nothing other than a brutal, ignoble mass. The flâneur «becomes their accomplice even as he dissociates himself from them. He is precisely the one who heroically resists incorporation into the milieu in which he moves. Indeed, the disappearance of the flâneur into the crowd, the instant in which they become «one flesh», is the moment of extinction of the flâneur.

With the *ecstasy of communication*, the body, landscape and time all disappeared as scenes. The public space, «the theater of the social» was reduced more and more to a large soft body with many heads, where one could no longer detect the borders of the self, even if s/he intended to do so. Loss of the public space indicated simultaneously the loss of the private. «The one is no longer a spectacle, the other no longer a secret» said Baudrillard of the transformation (1987a: 130).

And the instant that the other is *visible* all too apparently before our eyes, is the moment that the pendulum would not swing back to paranoia. That's the ecstasy of communication. The one and the other both are effaced in an obscenity, where the most intimate processes of our life becomes the virtual feeding ground of the media. All secrets, spaces and scenes are abolished in a single flow of information. That's obscenity, that abolishes even paranoia, to define a new *schizophrenic*.

There also, one can perhaps make use of the old metaphors of pathology. If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject, a pathology of expression, of the body's theatrical and operatic conversion; and if paranoia was the pathology of organization, of the structuration of a rigid and jealous world; then with communication and information, with the immanent promiscuity of all these networks, with their continual connections, we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. No more hysteria, no more projective paranoia, properly speaking, but this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore (Baudrillard, 1987a: 132).

As such, the visual representation of reality as spectacle in late nineteenth century Paris had created a common culture and a sense of shared experiences through which people might begin to imagine themselves as participating in a metropolitan culture because they had visual evidence that such a shared world, of which they were a part, existed. In short, «spectacular realities» in urban culture need to be added to such processes as the democratization of politics, the fruitlessness of mass uprisings, and increased standards of living, as part of the foundations of «mass society» (Schwartz, 1998: 6).

The transformation of the society could also be reflected upon Foucault's model of interiorization and individuation created by the panoptic machine. For Foucault, the «crowd» disappeared into a «collection of separated individualities» in a disciplinary society. Unlike the model of Panopticon wherein everyone could be seen, urban spectacle, rather, urged everyone to see. Tony Bennett's formulation of the «exhibitionary complex» which stresses the multiplicity of institutions of exhibition rather than those of confinement, is a parallel to Foucault's carceral archipelago and makes a good deal of sense when conceptualizing modern urban culture. Bennett, however, still employs Foucault's idea of

voluntary self-regulation, here instilled by seeing rather than by being seen (Bennett as cited in Schwartz, 1998: 5).

In all his glory, the transgressional magic of the flâneur was to make the interior appear on the *wrong side* of its bounding wall, the wrong side of the façade. Today, as Facebook-way-of-life starts to be the mainstream, the identity starts to appear on the *wrong side* of the wall, one starts to formulate it more on the outside where everything is visible, rather than following the inner elaboration of the isolated self as was the case a few decades ago. Nevertheless, if we were to substitute «flâneur» with «Facebook user» and the descriptions of the urban with internet uses today in the above passages, we would have a similar picture of the passive communication on the border of the inside and the outside.

Represented on Facebook, identities take on a new definition of virtuality. On one side, as we become advanced flâneurs, watching passively the lives of others as we click through profiles and albums, on the other hand we build up our digital performances to be observed by the other, fellow flâneurs. It starts to become less important what the *undefined* eyes out there know about the details of our daily lives and our private spheres. In today's online identity, flâneur survives in his strolling through the other's without intervening, without becoming part of it, but never disappearing into the crowd.

Yet in the age of the *evacuated identities*, where images do not refer to anything and where the reality is already attacked by the spectacle, this possibility is needed since it leaves the human beings the interval in which to be – the interval between the spectacle of life and the image of death.

The flâneur that once strolled in the Parisian streets in the early days of the industrial revolution without becoming part neither of the inside, nor the outside, has moved over to the digital world today. On Facebook, we can have a sneak peak on the lives of friends of our friends, nobody knows, nobody gets hurt. We do inform ourselves about our friends or simply the people that we know, without a mere touch, sometimes without even letting them know that we inform ourselves about them like a peeper or a voyeur would do.

The new flâneur clicks her/his way through the Facebook profiles and photo albums in what Zuckerberg calls a «trance» and «checks out» lives and identities without becoming a part of them. This new type of voyeurism gradually normalizes the curiosity of the Other, makes it a routine of the daily live. The busy individual of the metropolitan life, that does not have enough time to get to know another deeply, finds pleasure in these small voyeurisms, contributing to the transformation of image into identity once again.

As with instant messaging and texting, speed is of the essence when it comes to online reading and supersedes any other consideration. We should be able to view the information quickly, then minimize the page and go check e-mail or update our Facebook status to inform people of what we just read. This tendency has been successfully exploited by Twitter, the microblogging service where information is squeezed, compressed, anything-superfluous-wrung-out, so that it can be made to fit within the 140-character limit that the site imposes on entries. «It's not too many words, but that makes it great» announces Twitter's homepage. «Twitter means you do not ever have to read long messages». Here is the 140-keystroke description of Twitter by Michael Liedtke, of the Associated Press: «It's a potluck of pithy self-expression simmering with whimsy, narcissism, voyeurism, hucksterism, tedium, and sometimes useful information». Its name is as appropriate as Google's and encapsulates the service perfectly, in that to «twitter», according to Dictionary.com, is to «talk lightly and rapidly, especially of trivial matters» Aboujaoude, 2011: 109).

In psychoanalytical theory, voyeurism is a deviant manifestation of sexuality that involves looking without being seen in order to obtain sexual pleasure. Freud, in «Instincts and Their Vicissitudes» (1915), provides a metapsychological explanation for the instinct of looking, which involves the voyeur-exhibitionist pair and the reversal of activity into passivity in connection with a precise object: «the sexual member». The different instinctual currents of seeing are inflected by the voyeur, who tries to see the other's genitals while hiding his own, but who also tries to be seen looking, in order to respond to what he believes is the other's desire to see (Mijolla, 2005: 1842-1843).

Freud continued to emphasize the visual component of the perversions, but for him the specificity of voyeurism is important because of the vicissitude of the instinct of looking rather than its role in perversions. Rather than allowing the evolution of the instinct (component) of looking to develop in different directions, the voyeur reduces the sexual and the visual in sex to a narrow, stereotypical sexual situation.

He appears to do away with the sexual, the multiplicity of objects and choices, by wrapping them in a rigid fantasy. He tries to block the aggression in the instinct in order to obtain pleasure, to the detriment of the other. By splitting the ego, he uses sex for the purpose of discharging instinctual violence. By appropriating the other as image, the voyeur makes it an object of pleasure, while remaining uninvolved in the other's intimacy. The voyeur does not seek any form of exchange or relationship, but obtains pleasure by seizing the other's image against its will. The goal is not only the sight of parts of the body that are concealed out of modesty or cultural opprobrium, but also to dismember the body of the other. The voyeur watches what is forbidden in order to destroy the physical integrity of the person by substituting a dismembered body for the unified image (Mijolla, 2005: 1843).

Because voyeurism turns the other into an image, an object of envy and covetousness, it appears to also bear witness to the visual focus of Western society. Seeing at any cost is an imperative that is often confused with science's objective of mastery. In an «omnivisual world», according to Jacques Lacan's expression, the voyeur becomes the one who does not allow her/himself to be blinded by sexual difference but cannot support the truth. More than anyone, he denies what he sees: the rift between the sexes, the fracture of bodies (Mijolla:1843).

On the online social network, we watch the lives of our friends, of ordinary people as we used to watch the private lives of celebrities on newspapers, magazines and on the television. As one participant of the Preliminary Facebook Survey indicated, Facebook becomes the «non-celebrity tabloid» that we don't want to look at, but we just cannot stop the curious urge. While on one side it serves the voyeuristic, on the other hand the over-disposure on the social network sites can be interpreted as the fulfilling of the exhibitionist urge. Maybe the Facebook, Twitter feedbacks satisfy a need to be important, to be special, to be cared for by a lot of people – or even simply, the need to be seen by others.

I outlined a series of potentially dangerous impulses that are unleashed by the internet and showed how they can turn the user's psychology on its head. Although for clarity's sake I have separated them into distinct forces – tendencies toward immoderation, self-aggrandizement, dark thoughts, impulsivity, and infantile regression – we are all capable of exhibiting all of these qualities simultaneously or in succession. The part of our psyche that usually reins in these instincts – what psychoanalysts have traditionally called the superego – finds a worthy competitor in the internet-assisted id, with its infantile self-centeredness and its dark dreams that demand to be satisfied. The new disequilibrium, brought about by virtual life, between the brake system that keeps us in check and the stubborn urges that lie underneath the surface, helps unleash an online self that can be quite foreign to the person sitting behind the computer. ... In reality, there is a constant back-and-forth between our online and offline lives – and the border between the two is quite porous. The rudeness we are capable of in our e-mails and the lack of judgment we show in our online purchases and sexual hookups do not stay «there» (Aboujaoude, 2011: 163).

«Exhibitionism» pathologically denotes a sexual perversion in which satisfaction is linked to the displaying of one's genital parts. As a more widespread human behaviour, it is downsized to the desire to show one's self off, and as it is with the pathological desire to show off the genitals, one's need to be seen is linked to the needs for reassurance and knowledge (Mijolla, 2005: 535).

What does it mean that we are increasingly living our lives in public? Are we turning into a nation – and a world – of exhibitionists? Many see Facebook as merely a celebration of the minutiae of our lives. Such people view it as a platform for narcissism rather than a tool for communication. Others ask how it might affect an individual's ability to grow and change if

their actions and even their thoughts are constantly scrutinized by their friends. Could it lead to greater conformity? Are young people who spend their days on Facebook losing their ability to recognize and experience change and excitement in the real world? Are we relying too heavily on our friends the facebook effect for information? Does Facebook merely contribute to information overload? Could we thus become less informed? (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 13-14).

4.2.5 The Disappearance of the Subject

It was a generally accepted principle that one could not attend to oneself without the help of another. Seneca said that no one was ever strong enough on his own to get out of the state of *stultitia* he was in: «He needs someone to extend him a hand and pull him free». In the same way, Galen said that man loves himself too much to be able to cure himself of his passions by himself; he had often seen men «stumble» who had not been willing to rely on one another's authority (Foucault, 1981: 97-98).

Reconciling the highlights of the new condition in which the identity of human is to be formulated, the continuous image bombardments of everyday life, the undiminishing presence of the machinic, together with the changing conception of space and the mobile life has made stabilizing human identity a difficult task to accomplish – if not impossible. The struggle to distinguish one's identity from the milieu, from the surface causes a meltdown of the self, thus digital images become the screen – no longer the Lacanian mirror – in which one looks for self-perception. The urban space, which is neither the Debordian spectacle nor Baudrillard's scene now, has squashed what is human into the binary grid of the digital, into a flattened mass, leaving no distance, between the surface and the individual in which to *be*.

Everything is so intimate that intimacy has lost meaning, it was evacuated, like many other concepts that we have lost along the way. Without the distance, the human subject, all-too-visible in the urban space, is no longer visible in the horizon. «No more expenditure, consumption, performance, but instead regulation, well-tempered functionality, solidarity among all the elements of the same system, control and global management of an ensemble» says Baudrillard for this new ideal. For him, our new world is one where the «scene» and «mirror» no longer exist; instead there is a «screen» and «network». «In place of the reflexive transcendence of the mirror and the scene, there is a nonreflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold: the smooth operational surface of communication» (Baudrillard, 1987a: 126-127). And this visionary philosopher is not even talking about the era of the online social network.

It is on this surface that a «distance towards fantasy» was lost (Zizek, 1997: 19). With absolute transparency, absolute emergence of the apparent in the modern world, where, in Zizek's words, the

«truth is out there», a room for fantasy became anorexic, a long and painful process which redeemed the subject and the distinctions that supported the subject *as subject*.

[The] traditional closed universe is thus in a sense *more* «open» than the universe of science: it implies the gateway into the indefinite Beyond, while the direct global model of modern science is effectively «closed» – that is to say, it allows for no Beyond. The universe of modern science, in its very «meaninglessness», involves the gesture of «traversing the fantasy», of abolishing the dark spot, the domain of the Unexplained, which harbours fantasies and thus guarantees Meaning: instead, we get the meaningless mechanism (Zizek, 1997: 160).

Today, as the individual strolls the streets, with smartphone in hand, checking in here and there on Foursquare or Gowalla, taking photos, filtering them in Instagram and posting them onto Facebook, Twitter or Flickr to share with the world, taking notes for status updates or blog entries as proof of days lived, s/he is feeling the flâneur deep inside, probably much more than ever. As everyone is living on the border of the inside and the outside, not being part neither of one or the other, slowly the Other disappears into the background. The Other is no longer there to define the self, the Other is no longer there to serve as criteria for the boundary that separates. The Other is only there to witness and applause if possible. The Other is there to «like» our narcissistic existence, not to give it a meaning, which was still the case in the earlier days of cyberspace.

The play of identities was indeed enjoyed by the inhabitants of MUDs, MUSHes and MOOs. One of the inhabitants explained the underlying cause very briefly; «Virtual communities are, among other things, the co-saturation of selves who have been, all their lives, saturated in isolation» (Turkle, 1997: 268). If there was any uneasiness concerning multiplicity of identities, in the cyberspace construct, then it must have only been predicated on valuing stability, which is in our day a slow death. But once the standard unitary view of identity is abolished, there seemed to be nothing wrong with the play. Embedded in this play were our previous investments in the body, our previous uneasiness with our isolated selves, and limited lives. If cyberspace was offering fantasy back, why not take it? If the human subject was more content and satisfied and more *human*, being schizophrenic, then why not be schizophrenic? And today, if we are better off by being the only focus of our limited/unlimited mobile lives, then be it.

Turkle concluded her book, dated 1997, emphasizing that we stand on the boundary between the real and the virtual in today's world, drawing from anthropologist Victor Turner's term – a liminal moment. A liminal moment is a moment of passage when new cultural symbols and meanings can emerge, a time of tension, extreme reactions and great opportunity. Based on this view of transition, she called the inhabitants of MUDs, «our pioneers» (Turkle, 1997: 268). This called for the fact that cyberspace was here to stay with all its uncanniness, nonetheless with its gratification of human desire. If it was to be the new locus of human desire and fantasy, the dark spot in which to reclaim fantasy, then why try to avoid it?

There is no meaning without some dark spot, without some forbidden/impenetrable domain into which we project fantasies which guarantee our horizon of meaning. Perhaps this very growing disenchantment with our actual social world accounts for the fascination exerted by cyberspace: it is as if in it we again encounter a Limit beyond which the mysterious domain of phantasmic Otherness opens up, as if the screen of the interface is today's version of the blank, of the unknown region in which we can locate our own Shangri-las or the kingdoms of She (Zizek, 1997: 160).

Nonetheless, the invisibility and the anonymity that gave cyberspace the very much needed *dark spot* for the fantasy to survive did not last long. There came the era of Facebook transparency, as Zuckerberg likes to call it and the fantasy drowned into oblivion once again with this time the *digital all-too-visible*.

Lasch quotes Susan Sontag on photography in 1979, when the digital image was not even invented, and yet even back then, the image was considered the death of the real:

The proliferation of recorded images undermines our sense of reality. As Susan Sontag observes in her study of photography, «Reality has come to seem more and more like what we are shown by cameras». We distrust our perceptions until the camera verifies them. Photographic images provide us with the proof of our existence, without which we would find it difficult even to reconstruct a personal history (1979: 48).

Digital images became part of the mobile life very rapidly, even more rapidly than any camera has ever been throughout the history of photography. Digital cameras were cheap, no-fuss, small and light. They entered every pocket and every bag, as photography kissed paper goodbye. Later, in the last decade, cameras were integrated into the mobile phones as they were also transformed into internet objects. Shoot a photo and upload it directly onto your profile, let the world see your talent and vision. And when Facebook very cleverly integrated the photos and the tagging of the people in them into its service, digital imagery found yet another very significant use:

Now there were two ways on Facebook to demonstrate how popular you were: How many friends you had, and how many times you had been tagged in photos. ... Sittig, Marlette, and Hirsch had also stumbled onto a perfect new use for photographs in the age of digital photography. More and more people were starting to carry cell phones with built-in cameras, using the cameras for quick snaps of daily activities. If you always had a camera with you, you could take a picture simply to record something that happened, and then put it on Facebook to tell friends about it. The tags on a photo automatically linked it to people throughout the site. This was very different from the way photos were generally used on My Space. MySpace was a world of carefully posed glamour shots, uploaded by subjects to make them look attractive. In Facebook, photos were no longer little amateur works of art, but rather a basic form of communication. In short order the photos feature became the most popular photo site on the internet and the most popular feature of Facebook (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 155-156).

Photos application was built in a way to encourage what Zuckerberg calls the «Facebook trance» that kept people clicking through pages on the service. And yet the trance became so powerful that it converted the people into their images to browse through.

If we are today condemned to our own image (condemned to cultivate our body, our look, our identity, and our desire), this is not because of an alienation, but because of the end of alienation and because of the virtual disappearance of the other, which is a much worse fatality. In fact, the paradoxical limit of alienation is to take oneself as a focal point [*comme point de mire*], as an object of care, of desire, of suffering, and of communication. This final short-circuiting of the other opens up an era of transparency (Baudrillard, 1993b: 55-56).

In an earlier, probably more naïve perspective, Goffman defines the need for the Other as:

Whatever it is that generates the human want for social contact and for companionship, the effect seems to take two forms: a need for an audience before which to try out one's vaunted selves, and a need for teammates with whom to enter into collusive intimacies and backstage relaxation (1959: 206).

Today evacuated intimacies are shared and taped, and tested once again on the digitally intimate audience. Narcissism in our age surges in a manner which was defined not only by Freud, but also by Lasch or Foucault as «an alternative reality», «a defensive adaptation to the wider world through withdrawal from it» within the framework that we have defined throughout this dissertation. As such, narcissism reveals a potential for transcendence, it «may become the source and reservoir for a new libidinal cathexis of the objective world – transforming this world into a new mode of being» (Giddens, 1992: 166-167). While for Levinas the definition persists, «as thinking being, man is the one for whom the exterior world exists» (1998: 15).

Santayana, very early in twentieth century, highlights the significance of the Other in producing one's own, in a manner which was echoed by Baudrillard in «Otherness Surgery / The Plastic Surgery for the Other» (1993).

I am glad that Freud has resisted the tendency to represent this principle of Love as the only principle in nature. Unity somehow exercises an evil spell over metaphysicians. It is admitted that in real life it is not well for One to be alone, and I think pure unity is no less barren and graceless in metaphysics. You must have plurality to start with, or trinity, or at least duality, if you wish to get anywhere, even if you wish to get effectively into the bosom of the One, abandoning your separate existence. Freud, like Empedocles, has prudently introduced a prior principle for Love to play with; not Strife, however, but Inertia, or the tendency towards peace and death. Let us suppose that matter was originally dead, and perfectly content to be so, and that it still relapses, when it can, into its old equilibrium. But the homogeneous when it is finite

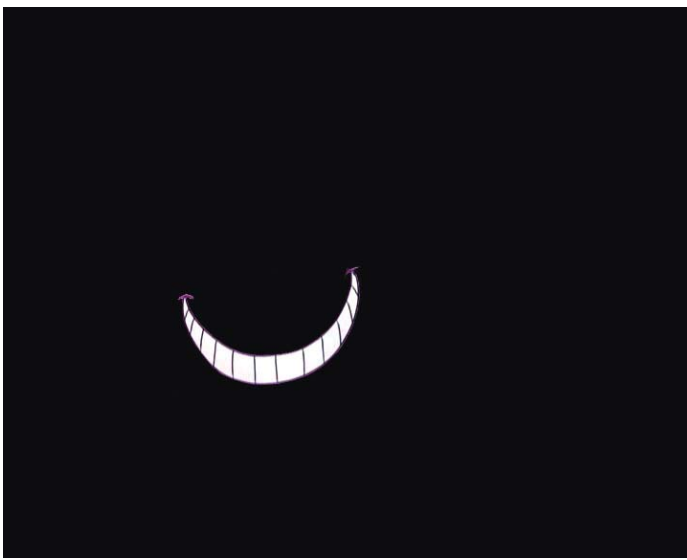


Figure 4.19 – «Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?»

«That depends a good deal on where you want to get to», said the Cat.

«I don't much care where – » said Alice.

«Then it doesn't matter which way you go», said the Cat. « – so long as I get *somewhere*», Alice added as an explanation.

«Oh, you're sure to do that», said the Cat, «if you only walk long enough»

(Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* as cited in Wilson & Blumenthal, 2008: 31).

The subject disappears but it leaves its ghost behind, its narcissistic double. It's a bit like Carroll's Cheshire Cat, whose grin still hovers in the air after the rest of him has vanished (Baudrillard, 2009: 27).

is unstable: and matter, presumably not being co-extensive with space, necessarily forms aggregates which have an inside and an outside. The parts of such bodies are accordingly differently exposed to external influences and differently related to one another. This inequality, even in what seems most quiescent, is big with changes, destined to produce in time a wonderful complexity. It is the source of all uneasiness, of life, and of love (Santayana, 1933: 90).

Advancing from a similar perspective, Baudrillard says that «The Other is no longer an object of passion but an object of production»:

Maybe it is because the Other, in his radical otherness [alterite], or in his irreducible singularity, has become dangerous or unbearable. And so, we have to conjure up his seduction. Or perhaps, more simply, otherness and dual relationships gradually disappear with the rise of individual values and with the destruction of the symbolic ones. In any case, otherness is lacking and, since we cannot experience otherness as destiny, one must produce the other as *difference*. And this is a concern just as much for the body as it is for sex, or for social relationships. In order to escape the world as destiny, the body as destiny, sex (and the other sex) as destiny, the production of the other as difference is invented (1993b: 51).

Yet this invention is also the invention of «nothing». The gaze that used to separate real from fantasy, as it even did the mind from the body, closed down upon itself. As fantasy was doubled and forced onto reality, one started to fold the identity onto the body ending up in the image obsession of our day:

This (successful?) merger of a masculinely projected hysteria onto femininity is renewed by every individual (man or woman) on their own bodies. An identification and an appropriation of the body as if it was a projection of the self, of a self no longer seen as otherness or destiny. In the facial traits, in sex, in illnesses, in death, identity is constantly «altered». There is nothing you can do about it: that's destiny. But it is precisely that which must be exorcized at any cost through an identification with the body, through an individual appropriation of the body, of your desire, of your look, of your image: plastic surgery all over the place. If the body is no longer a place of otherness [alterite], a dual relationship, but is rather a locus of identification, we then must reconcile to it, we must repair it, perfect it, make it an ideal object. Everyone uses their body like man uses woman in the projective mode of identification described before. The body is invested as a fetish, and is used as a fetish in a desperate attempt at identifying oneself. The body becomes the object of an autistic cult and of a quasi-incestuous manipulation. And it is the likeness [resemblance] of the body with its model which then becomes a source of eroticism and of «white» self-seduction to the extent that this likeness virtually excludes the Other and is the best way to exclude a seduction which would emerge from somewhere else (Baudrillard, 1993b: 54-55).

Though Baudrillard desperately looks for a solution in this 1993 article, by 2009 he admits defeat in *Why Hasn't Everything Disappeared Yet?*. In the last two decades, the «worst alienation» he defines as «not to be dispossessed *by* the other but to be dispossessed *of* the other, that is to say to have to produce the other in his absence, and thus to be continuously referred back to oneself and to one's image», reaches its peak and today is a normal part of the daily life already. And this is how our gaze closes upon our own selves, how the narcissistic gaze takes over the process of constructing one's identity.

What is the solution? Well, there is none to this erotic movement of an entire culture, none to such a fascination, to such an abyss of denial of the other, of denial of strangeness and negativity. There is none to that foreclosing of evil and to that reconciliation around the Same and his proliferated expressions: incest, autism, twinning, cloning. We can only remember that seduction lies in not reconciling with the Other and in salvaging the strangeness of the Other. We must not be reconciled with our own bodies or with our selves. We must not be reconciled with the Other. We must not be reconciled with nature. We must not be reconciled with femininity (and that goes for women too). The secret to a strange attraction lies here (Baudrillard, 1993b: 56).

Before admitting defeat completely, one final way of articulating these social elements, could be drawing on theories of performativity (Butler, 1990) both as a means of showing impact on the experience and the discourses of identity, and as a means of keeping people's agency in the discussion.

... we can explore technology's engagement with bodily practices fruitfully by seeing them as a performance for self and others. I do this in full awareness that human beings have considerably less control over ways of being and doing inside the body than over external manifestations. However, both concepts present people dynamically, being changed and changing others as a matter of course. The notion of performativity is used here to understand the doing of identity. The notion of performance is presented as a way to understand the interactions possible in specific contexts. Looking this way, the constraints and the opportunities that exist despite these constraints can be brought into relief (Light, 2010: 584).

Butler described performativity as «that reiterative power of discourse to produce the phenomena that it regulates and constrains». The concept places emphasis on manners in which identity is passed or brought to life through discourse. Performative acts are types of authoritative speech. This can only happen and be enforced through the law or norms of the society though. These statements, just by speaking them, carry out a certain action and exhibit a certain level of power. Examples of these types of statements are declarations of ownership, baptisms, inaugurations, and legal sentences. Yet today, if performativity functions, it also does function towards the oblivion rather than to the contrary. Bauman defines the conditions at the beginning of the twentieth century and compares them with today:

Heavy, Fordist-style capitalism was the world of law-givers, routine-designers and supervisors, the world of other-directed men and women pursuing fixed-by-others ends in a fixed-by-others fashion. For this reason it was also the world of authorities: of leaders who know better and of teachers who tell you how to proceed better than you do. Light, consumer-friendly capitalism did not abolish the lawproffering authorities, nor did it make them redundant. It has merely brought into being and allowed [numerous authorities to coexist]. [These authorities are] too numerous for any one of them to [be able to] stay in authority for long, let alone to carry the «exclusive» label. «Numerous authorities» is, come to think of it, a contradiction in terms. When the authorities are many, they tend to cancel each other out, and the sole effective authority in the field is one who must choose between them. (2000: 64).

This is the point where the authority as «leader» is contrasted with the authority as «consultant». The Other that we looked upto earlier, in certain situations for knowing more than we do, no longer knows more than we do. As we google every single topic and form our ideas through the forums, we are all in the know, we sit down to discuss our brain surgery with the neurosurgeons, but nevertheless pay life coaches to help us figure out what to do with our *selves* and with our lives.

There is, of course, no shortage of those who claim to be in the know, and quite a few of them have numerous followers ready to agree. Such people «in the know», even those whose knowledgeability has not been publicly doubted, are not, however, leaders; they are, at the most, counsellors – and one crucial difference between leaders and counsellors is that the first are to be followed while the latter need to be hired and can be fired. Leaders demand and expect discipline; counsellors may at best count on the willingness to listen and pay heed. That willingness they must first earn by currying favour with the would-be listeners. ... Counsellors, on the contrary, are wary of ever stepping beyond the closed area of the private. Illnesses are individual, and so is the therapy; worries are private, and so are the means to fight them off (Bauman, 2000: 64-65).

Hence the followers that the leaders once had are quite different than the concept of *followers* we have on Twitter today. The «leader» was a by-product, and a necessary supplement, of the world which aimed at the «good society», or the «right and proper» society however defined, and tried hard to hold its bad or improper alternatives at a distance. Today, «there is no such thing as society» as Margaret Thatcher had once claimed (Bauman, 2000: 65). Thus, as Peter Drucker highlights, «no more salvation by the society either»; «redemption and doom alike are of your making and solely your concern – the outcome of what you, the free agent, have been freely doing with your life» (Drucker as cited in Bauman, 2000: 65).

What was inside is becoming part of what is held up to public scrutiny and judgment, but not in a way that we are used to seeing and being seen. We might argue that translucency is the worst of all worlds: encouraging interpretation, seemingly knowable and yet obscure. It is not, as presented here, a way of speaking about the inevitable ambiguity of identity; it is, at worst, the clumsy rendering of society's most reductive understandings of personhood, dressed in the language of transparency (Light, 2010: 596).

This is pretty much what happens to identity today with Facebook transparency, or in an even better articulation, Facebook *translucency*. As David Kirkpatrick also notes in *The Facebook Effect*, «people from the beginning intuitively realized that if this service was intended as a way for them to reflect online their genuine identity, then an element of that identity was their views and passions about the issues of the day» (2010: 6). Thus people project *something*, or *nothing* as their identity on the online social network, which we later take as our new reality. One both believes and doesn't believe, as Baudrillard says about the myths in the archaic societies. We create our own myths on social networking sites and we believe ourselves.

But this belief may be thought to be as ambiguous as the one attached to myths in archaic societies. ... The myth exists, but one must guard against thinking that people believe in it. That is the trap of critical thought, which can only be exercised given the naivete and the stupidity of the masses as a presupposition (Baudrillard, 2007: 99-100).

Believing in the projected identity/image, as we will also observe in the results of the Digital Life Scale is quite ambiguous. Facebook users are not convinced that a digital profile created on the online social network is good enough to reflect their «true selves», nonetheless, when asked if the Other can be known through her/his digital profile the answer tends to be affirmative. This ambiguity is probably how the *reality* ends up lost in the implosion of meaning, in a hyperreality of communication.

With all content nullified, perhaps there is still a revolutionary and subversive use-value of the *medium as such*. Yet – and this is where McLuhan's formula at its extreme limit leads – there is not only the implosion of the message in the medium; in the same movement there is the implosion of the medium itself in the real, the implosion of the medium and the real in a sort of a nebulous hyperreality where even the definition and the distinct action of the medium are no longer distinguishable. ... The fact of this implosion of contents, of absorption of meaning, of the evanescence of the medium itself, of the re-absorption of the whole dialectic of communication in a total circularity of the model, of the implosion of the social in the masses, can appear catastrophic and hopeless. But it is only so in regard to the idealism that dominates our whole vision of information. We all live by a fanatical idealism of meaning and communication, by an idealism of communication through meaning, and, in this perspective,

it is very much a catastrophe of meaning which lies in wait for us. ... The essential thing today is to evaluate this double challenge – the defiance of meaning by the masses and their silence (which is not at all a passive resistance) – and the defiance of meaning which comes from the media and its fascination. In regard to this challenge all the marginal and alternative attempts to resuscitate meaning (Baudrillard, 2007: 100).

This is also the story of implosion of identity, as the gaze closes upon itself, losing any possibility of definition, but that of the image. And Baudrillard himself gives up on the human being in his latest work:

The human species is doubtless the only one to have invented a specific mode of disappearance that has nothing to do with Nature's law. Perhaps even an art of disappearance (Baudrillard, 2009: 10).

4.3 Chapter Conclusions



The identity crisis became evident in the twentieth century through the *destabilization* of the pillars that hold one's identity in place and through the *trivialization* of the components that separate one's identity from that of the other. The crisis in identity construction not only had internal consequences but also reflected onto the changes in the evaluation of one's value in the eye of the society.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, one's class status was an extremely important part of one's identity. The consumer society witnessed the minimization of one's identity down to one's appearance and wealth, or in other words, down to what is immediately visible to the eye. Bauman defines it as the passage from the «age of irony» to the «age of glamour»: The appearance is consecrated as the only reality and modernity moves from earlier periods of «authentic» and «ironic» selfhood to a contemporary culture of «associative» selfhood, a continuous loosening of the tie between «inner» soul and «outer» form of social relation.

In the early modern period, status symbols were clearly defined and visibly present in one's appearance identifying one's social rank explicitly to her/his audience. Back then, as class status was basically defined either by blood, or by wealth, it was also very difficult to change this component of identity. Today these symbols are not only blurred, but they are also available for rent – hence adding another level of trivialization. When we also add to this equation, the limited amount of time one has during the busy work day to dedicate to know a person, it is not difficult to understand why we start to take people at «face value». Knowing a person, understanding her/his values requires a lot of time that the urban dweller does not have. For people who meet at a congress or at a bar, it is easy to grasp physical attractiveness, socioeconomic status, age and charm, however, it is difficult to get to deeper qualities such as loyalty or honesty.

The visible signs of wealth and taste as indicative of one's personal quality or value have been theorized beginning with Veblen's «conspicuous consumption». It is also within this context of the consumer society that we find the underlying reasons and process of the abstraction of identity. Once identity was imposed by the society and all that one had to do was to construct her/his identity from a set of concrete givens. Now it is almost «optional», constructed through an increasingly hidden and abstract set of priorities and values, that can only be selected and interrelated by the individual. It comes as no surprise that the construction of identity becomes more problematic in this shift from adaptation to abundance of choice.

Advertising as a psychologically intrusive form of communication aims to *make people want* a particular product, while in the meantime, also creates a second relationship between advertising and identity: The growing exploitation of desirable identities. Accumulating things becomes the new effective means of achieving identity and actualizing one's potential. Fromm elaborated how the desire constructed as external to the individual could lead to uncertainties about one's identity, raising the question «If I am nothing but what I believe I am supposed to be [then] who am 'I'?» This *lifestyle* has a coercive effect, which compels people to abandon «inner-direction» of their lives, and induces them to take on the goals, ideology, likes, and dislikes of their community. Ironically, this creates a tightly grouped crowd of people that is yet incapable of truly fulfilling each other's desire for approval and companionship. The modern other-directed person is crucially sensitive to and guided by the reactions of others, while the inner self has fallen under the manipulation of mass society by advertising.

As a fundamentally new form of communication, Facebook leads to new interpersonal and social effects. James Baldwin reminds us the painful recognition that «between what one wishes to become and what one has become there is a momentous gap, which will now never be closed». Facebook, in this sense, provides individuals with a lot of material that could trigger one's self-evaluation – though what we see reduced to two-dimensional images on Facebook, is neither one's *identity*, nor one's *life*. Lifecasting on Facebook lets us know several details of the daily *lives* of the people that we know, which also allows for comparing lives, which could provoke positive or negative psychological reactions – and even more crises.

Endnotes

¹ RAE Dictionary – consulted on 29.04.2011

Narcisismo – Excesiva complacencia en la consideración de las propias facultades u obras.

Amor propio – 1. m. El que alguien se profesa a sí mismo, y especialmente a su prestigio.

2. m. Afán de mejorar la propia actuación.



CHAPTER 05



Figure 5.1 - Brand whores.



Image is how others see us. And until recent decades we seemed to care less about it, as we were more concerned with searching for our *true* selves. With the *Facebook effect*, today we have a different, manipulated impression on the society to live up to. We are all celebrities, we all have [Twitter] followers, we all have [Youtube] subscribers we all have [Facebook] albums. Today it is easier to understand and sympathize with Andy Warhol, who used to say «I'm everything my scrapbook says I am».

In this chapter we will investigate the commodification of human beings and the changing role of brands in our lives. We no longer only want to consume them, but we want to devour them or become one of them. In the first epigraph of this chapter, in a Baudrillardian perspective, the «implosion of meaning» and the evacuation of communication is undertaken. The way social media has transformed our perception is analysed in the light of the relationship between self, self-image and image; as we explore how our images start to have more «perceived value» than our selves.

As interpersonal communication tends towards an undefined mass communication, we tend to brand ourselves so as to stand out from the crowd and get our voices heard. As brands eavesdrop on Facebook to identify with, understand and react to the wishes of their audiences to maximize their benefits, so do we. Branding ourselves becomes one of the main factors in the self-presentation 2.0 and spreads beyond Facebook and Twitter as our «scrapbooks» spring back to affect our actual selves.

The new modalities of communication provide the performing self, in its narcissistic position, as elaborated by Goffman and Lasch, with seamless possibilities of affirmative feedback and unlimited audiences to perform to. The audiences where, according to Lasch, we used to «seek reassurance of our capacity to captivate and impress others» (1979: 92), today, allow for feedback through platforms like Facebook and Twitter, serving as the digital mirrors to our brand selves.

Today in constructing our identities, we owe a great deal to our long-term advertising *education*, that has prepared and encouraged us to see the creation of our selves as the highest form of creativity. As we

have investigated in the previous chapters, while the concept of character in the eighteenth century stressed the elements common to human nature, in the nineteenth century human beings started to see personality as the unique and idiosyncratic expression of individuality. This has led to the belief that outward appearances, involuntarily expressed the inner person.

As we have already learned throughout our global education of advertising, irrational propaganda can make a man who always skipped breakfast learn to love cereal; similarly irrational propaganda can change our latent love for a certain segment of the populace to active hate. The difference is merely one of degree. For example, as in the case of children, the powers of reasoning have not yet begun to mature, they are the best targets for commercial propaganda. Targeting the younger generations, particularly in the West where the family is child-oriented, works best for accomplishing marketing goals. Coupling the eating of cereal with images of baseball stars will force the already over consuming parents to buy still more. The bombardment of mass advertising and the vying of children among themselves to acquire gadgets and «giveaways» as symbols of status will easily instill in the youthful plastic mind a fixation toward consumption.

Most people know there is not an iota of difference between products A and B, but bombard them with enough symbolizations for a sufficient length of time and they'll swear by one or the other [as in the case of Coca-Cola and Pepsi]. Before the era of mass communication, the citizen was spared all this ballyhoo. He lived simply and he consumed simply, buying only what he was convinced he needed – without being «persuaded». To create a demand for a product in the first place, you must play upon people's hopes and fears. The girl who is told she's missing happiness because of her «bad» skin will easily buy every beauty preparation, good or worthless, that one can expose her to. As Huxley says, we do not buy the product; we buy the symbols that represent it (Paul, 1966: 57-58).

Lately, highly-manipulated outward appearances are selected and constructed by the individual in the form of a brand identity to express what the inner person feels like displaying to its audiences: A social media campaign of the identity.

5.1 Communication Evacuated

We get to know ourselves better in the company of others. Even when we are involuntary to do so, we cannot help but communicate ourselves only with our physical presences. Thus when it comes to dissecting how the construction of identity has changed, one cannot proceed without knowing how the communication has changed. The classical formula of communication, a sender > a message > an intended recipient, had long been configured into McLuhan's medium *as* the message, however today we face the situation of a multiplicity of simultaneous senders, a medium overloaded with messages, with no clean-cut, intentional recipient. We are all broadcasters, ever since Youtube gave us the ultimatum: «Broadcast Yourself!». We pour our inner selves out minute-by-minute, with Facebook status updates, Twitter messages and everybody is a columnist in her/his blog, however, we are not sure where and to whom these messages reach. How, then, do we know, *the meaning* of what we are communicating? How and when did we come to believe that we *express ourselves better* through the digital medium where none of the nonverbal communication aids such as body language, eye contact or haptic communication is absent, and that our expressions are limited to visual media in the form of pictures, graphics, sound and writing? Are our online selves only communicating the void left behind after the escape of identity? Is this how one image communicates to another?

Baudrillard comments, as early as 1987, while meditating over the presence of the television in our lives; that the screen and the network took over «the reflexive transcendence of mirror and scene, there is a non-reflecting surface, an immanent surface where operations unfold – the smooth operational surface of communication»:



Figure 5.2 - Youtube's registered slogan.

Something has changed, and the Faustian, Promethean (perhaps Oedipal) period of production and consumption gives way to the «proteic» era of networks, to the narcissistic and protean era of connections, contact, contiguity, feedback and generalized interface that goes with the universe of communication. With the television image – the television being the ultimate and perfect object for this new era – our own body and the whole surrounding universe become a control screen (1987a: 146).

This was only the beginning of our lives and our journeys into the depths of science-fiction without moving from the sofa in our living room. The new forms of communication altered the concept of reality irreversibly, which had prepared the basis for our later readily embrace of life as digital nodes in the online social network. Once the reality has no real references, we are abducted into the «hyperreality» (Baudrillard, 1994).

When Baudrillard turned his attention to Marshall McLuhan's theory, he progressed beyond Saussure's and Barthes' formal semiology to consider the implications of a historically-understood version of structural semiology, developing ideas about how the nature of social relations is determined by the forms of communication that a society employs. His elaboration of the Simulacra concept involved a negation of the concept of reality as we commonly understand it. Simulation, Baudrillard claimed, is the current stage of the simulacrum: All is composed of references with no referents, a hyperreality. Progressing historically from the Renaissance, in which the dominant simulacrum was in the form of the counterfeit – mostly people or objects appearing to stand for a real referent (for instance, royalty, nobility, holiness, etc.) that does not exist, in other words, in the spirit of pretense, in dissimulating others that a person or a thing does not really «have it» – to the industrial revolution, in which the dominant simulacrum is the product, the series, which can be propagated on an endless production



Figure 5.3 - No time to stop and take a photo, we are mobile.

line; and finally to current times, in which the dominant simulacrum is the model, which by its nature already stands for endless reproducibility, and is itself already reproduced (Baudrillard, 1994).

In the urban setting of the Renaissance Florence, Italy, there was a competition among the middle-class merchants of the city, with regard to who was to build the highest tower house «as a symbol and visible sign of their wealth and power» (About Florence, 2011). What we observe in today's Facebook world of personal advertising is nothing new, nothing different than this very old comparison and competition. Social status today is determined by images – digital images that have even lost the status and power of being a *proper* image (Baudrillard, 2009) – of a life of «well-being», instead of an ethical «life well-lived» as we have discussed in the previous sections. Hence several layers of simulation separate us from our «true selves» in a cyber-hyper-reality of the online social network. We communicate who we «really» are through «twofold-manipulated» images – firstly, in terms of the «non-event» – that results from *Facebook tourism* for instance: «stand over there, this shot is gonna make a great Facebook profile photo!» – and secondly, in terms of Photoshop manipulation of the digital image. In the age of hyperreality, picture-perfect online profiles reflect us better than an involuntary gesture of the hand or a perishing eye-contact in expressing who we are. As we move towards being our images, the social experience of communication converts itself to a «non-experience» (Baudrillard & Morin, 2004).

Our identities become Baudrillard's objects in the «satellization of the real» or the «hyper-realism of simulation».

The era of hyperreality now begins. What I mean is this: what was projected psychologically and mentally, what used to be lived out on earth as metaphor, as mental or metaphorical scene, is henceforth projected into reality, without any metaphor at all, into an absolute space which is also that of simulation (1987a: 147).

As such the physical space stops being a stage, where the interiority of the subject is expressed, reflected and shared. Instead, according to Baudrillard earlier with the television, and lately with the online social network, digitalized human movements are reflected from the screen in the form of film stills. Indeed as the perception of the image is shifted with the digital image that is «selected and edited» to reflect us on the network, what we understand from photography seems to fade away as well. Blurred, unfocused images on-the-go assume the responsibility of representing how *fast* we live, how adapted we are to the contemporaneity – there is no time to stop and «die» in the instance of taking a photograph, the images that adorn our Facebook albums do not have that much time, they are already late. As Baudrillard articulates it, «nothing dies there» (2009: 49). Or on the contrary, the image dies twice. And remembering Sontag, in a photograph, there is no «real» to stencil off, only the copy in a glimpse.

A photograph is not only an image... it is also a trace, something directly stencilled off the real, like a footprint or a death mask (Sontag as cited in Fletcher, 2001: 488).

There is worse: What distinguishes the analogue image is that it is the place where a form of disappearance, of distance, of «freezing» of the world plays itself out. That nothingness at the heart of the image which Warhol spoke of. Whereas, in the digital image, or, more generally the [computer-generated image], there is no negative any longer, no «time lapse». Nothing dies or disappears there. The image is merely the product of an instruction and a programme, aggravated by automatic dissemination from one medium to the other: computer, mobile phone, TV screen, etc. – the automatic nature of the network – responding to the automatic nature of the construction of the image (Baudrillard, 2009: 49).

It is not only the double death of the image, but also the expansion of another concept that we were familiarized with the television – the telematic power, the capability of regulating everything from a distance, including work in the home and, of course, consumption, play, social relations and leisure (Baudrillard, 1987a: 147). «There is no longer any ideal principle for these things at a higher level, on a human scale» (Baudrillard: 149). Indeed we lose the human scale, also on the metaphorical and social levels – as it was already lost in the architecture of the industrial city. The blink of an eye, is lost to the digital, in a blink of an eye. It is «;»)» in our digital semiology and it no longer comes with a heart-warming smile. It blinks from the screen, and yet, strangely, it is able to satisfy the human need – or so it seems. Human beings that have long accepted «the concentrated effects, miniaturized and immediately available» of modernity, have accepted the small interval of sociality provided by the online social network. We also assume this acceptance from the responses of the *Digital Life Scale* participants, where the majority feels that «Facebook connects them to their friends that are far away from where they live, so they feel as if they were there».

... this body, our body, often appears simply superfluous, basically useless in its extension, in the multiplicity and complexity of its organs, its tissues and functions, since today everything is concentrated in the brain and in genetic codes, which alone sum up the operational definition of being. ... And time: what can be said about this immense free time we are left with, a dimension henceforth useless in its unfolding, as soon as the instantaneity of communication has miniaturized our exchanges into a succession of instants? (Baudrillard, 1987a: 149).

When the digital life becomes *natural* to us, when we are more used to our online persona, real or virtual, than to our actual bodies, when they are no longer needed, then «the body, landscape, time all progressively disappear as scenes» (Baudrillard, 1987a: 152). When everything is defined by and for the subject, when everything, even *social* communication is ego-centric, when it becomes a monologue, then the need for the other disappears with everything as well.

This void is explored in another sense by Baudrillard in *In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities or The End of the Social* (2007) as this time, after the loss of the real for the hyperreal, and the flesh for the pixel, writing in the shadow of Marshall McLuhan, Baudrillard insists that the content of communication is completely without *meaning*: «the only thing that is communicated is communication itself» and hence «we are in a universe where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning» (2007: 99).

Let us take Facebook and how we communicate on the most popular of all online social networks. The concept of using the internet for social networking is anything but new as an idea, as it had been around for about forty years. Nevertheless, Zuckerberg himself was sued several times for having stolen the idea of Facebook (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 66).

The first use of the phrase *virtual community* appeared in a 1987 article written by Howard Rheingold, one of the pioneers of internet, for *The Whole Earth Review*. Rheingold greeted us in *The Virtual Community* (1993), «Welcome to the wild side of cyberspace culture, where magic is real and identity is fluid,» as we stepped into the fantasy world. By that time, more and more people were involved every day with the online experience of a play of identities and magic of life, while many others wondered what was so appealing about it. «What is the matter with these people?» was a question that many people asked when they first learned about MUDding: «Don't they have lives?» (Rheingold, 1993: 146). He went on to share his perspective on the online virtual communities as they emerged and gained substance:

People in virtual communities use words on screens to exchange pleasantries and argue, engage in intellectual discourse, conduct, commerce, exchange knowledge, share emotional support, make plans, brainstorm, gossip, feud, fall in love, find friends and lose them, play games, flirt, create a little high art and a lot of idle talk. People in virtual communities do just about everything people do in real life, but we leave our real bodies behind. You can't kiss anybody and nobody can punch you in the nose, but a lot can happen within those boundaries (Rheingold, 1993: xvii).

One of his insights was that people's earlier flock over to cyberspace stemmed from unsatisfied desires in the actual urban space:

I suspect that one of the explanations for this phenomenon is the hunger for community that grows in the breasts of people around the world as more and more informal public spaces disappear from our real lives. I also suspect that these new media attract colonies of enthusiasts because CMC [computer-mediated communications] enable people to do things with each other in new ways, and to do altogether new kinds of things – just as telegraphs, telephones, and televisions did (Rheingold, 1993: xx-xxi).

Yet Rheingold was also informing us of the possible flaws, but claiming that these too will pass, as our relationship with this new medium matured and we learned to leave behind our pseudonyms:

You can be fooled about people in cyberspace, behind the cloak of words. But that can be said about telephones or face-to-face communication as well; computer-mediated communications provide new ways to fool people and the most obvious identity swindles will die out only when people learn to use the medium critically. In some ways, the medium will, by its nature, be forever biased toward certain kinds of obfuscation. It will also be a place that people often end up revealing themselves far more intimately than they would be inclined to do without the intermediation of screens and pseudonyms (Rheingold, 1993: 14).

The arrival of the more recent phenomenon, of Facebook and other similar networks that created the tendency to publicly identify oneself with one's actual name, actual friends and colleagues from the actual life, indeed created effects that are similar to what Rheingold foresaw. Suddenly, creating «alternative» identities was senseless, and could have caused you to receive less of the «gifts» of Facebook, as Mark Zuckerberg calls them. Kirkpatrick introduces us to the basics of Facebook:

Several other factors make Facebook unlike any internet business that preceded it. First, it is both in principle and in practice based on real identity. On Facebook it is as important today to be your real self as it was when the service launched at Harvard in February 2004. Anonymity, role-playing, pseudonyms, and handles have always been routine on the web ... but they have little role here. If you invent a persona or too greatly enhance the way you present yourself, you will get little benefit from Facebook. Unless you interact with others as yourself, your friends will either not recognize you or will not befriend you. A critical way other people on Facebook know you are who you say you are is by examining your list of friends. These friends, in effect, validate your identity. To get this circular validation process started you have to use your real name (2010: 12-13).

But what exactly were the benefits of Facebook? If you were present in Facebook with your actual identity, your actual social network, didn't you already have these benefits in your actual life? Why were you to need Facebook to make you get the best out of social life? At this point Zuckerberg essentially argues that any individual's public expression on Facebook is a sort of a «gift» to others. Kirkpatrick in *The Facebook Effect*, is hardly able to distinguish the difference:

That has different manifestations depending on what kind of expression it is. In the most humdrum of exchanges, when one high school student writes on another's wall, «LOL that was a funny comment» it is merely the gift of being ourselves in front of others, of including our friends in our lives. That's hardly anything new. It's just happening in a new electronic neighborhood (2010: 288).

However, for Zuckerberg, it is definitely much more than that. On his own Facebook profile he lists his interests as: «openness, breaking things, revolutions, information flow, minimalism, making things, eliminating desire for all that really doesn't matter». Though its founder seems to be interested in minimalism, there is a lot about Facebook that inclines toward excess (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 11). Facebook is too-much information, much more information than you could have asked for all the time. Each month about 20 billion pieces of content are posted there by members – including web links, news stories, photos and the like. In terms of online photo-sharing tools, it is the largest on the internet, as approximately three billion photos are added each month (Mashable, 2011). Kirkpatrick expands these examples to the «innumerable trivial announcements, weighty pronouncements, political provocations, birthday greetings, flirtations, invitations, insults, wisecracks, bad jokes, deep thoughts, and of course, «pokes» and comments that «there's still a lot of stuff on Facebook that probably really doesn't matter» (2010: 12). Probably after having read the book, Zuckerberg modifies the interests section on his profile. As of April, 2011 his interests read: «openness, making things that help people connect and share what's important to them, revolutions, information flow and minimalism» and Facebook stays intact, with all its paraphernalia that makes it function as it does.

Facebook was never intended as a substitute for face-to-face communication. Even though people use it in any way that they choose to use it, originally, Zuckerberg and his colleagues explicitly conceived and engineered it as a tool to «enhance your relationships with the people you know in the flesh» – your real-world friends, acquaintances, classmates, or co-workers. This intentional design, according to Kirkpatrick, is what creates «the Facebook effect»:

The Facebook Effect most often is felt in the quotidian realm, at an intimate level among a small group. It can make communication more efficient, cultivate familiarity, and enhance intimacy. Several of your friends learn from your status update, for example, that you'll be at the mall later. You don't send that information to them. Facebook's software does. They say they'll meet you there, and they show up. ... When Facebook is used as it was originally designed – to build better pathways for sharing between people who already know each other in the real world – it can have a potent emotional power. It is a new sort of communications tool based on real relationships between individuals, and it enables fundamentally new sorts of interactions. This can lead to pleasure or pain, but it undeniably affects the tenor of the lives of Facebook's users (2010: 11-13).

Going back to the *gifts* of Facebook, when Zuckerberg is asked to talk about Facebook's effects on society, he responds by giving the «potlatch» as an example (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 287). According to the entry by historian Douglas Harper on the Online Etymology Dictionary, potlatch is a Chinook jargon that dates back to 1845, meaning «a gift», a deviant of patshatl from Wakashan (Nootka) that signifies

«giving, gift» (2010). *Dictionary.com*, drawing from anthropology defines it as a competitive ceremonial activity, a party or celebration among certain North American Indians, especially the Kwakiutl, involving a lavish distribution of gifts and the destruction of property to emphasize the wealth and status of the chief or clan; a ceremonial festival at which gifts are bestowed on the guests and property is destroyed by its owner in a show of wealth that the guests later attempt to surpass. The term is also informally used to refer to a wild party or revel (Random House, 2011). The potlatch tradition tells us that, each participant contributes what food and goods they can, and anyone takes what they want and the highest status goes to the one who gives the most away at the celebration.

For Zuckerberg, there is an analogy between the concept of gift economy and what Facebook is doing with our daily communications. «Gift economy is», he tells David Kirkpatrick, «an interesting alternative to the market economy in a lot of less developed cultures. I'll contribute something and give it to someone, and then out of obligation or generosity that person will give something back to me. The whole culture works on this framework of mutual giving. The thing that binds those communities together and makes the potlatch work is the fact that the community is small enough that people can see each other's contributions. But once one of those societies gets past a certain point in size the system breaks down. People can no longer see everything that's going on and you get freeloaders» (2010: 287).

Zuckerberg says Facebook and other forces on the internet now create sufficient transparency for gift economies to operate at a large scale. «When there's more openness, with everyone being able to express their opinion very quickly, more of the economy starts to operate like a gift economy. It puts the onus on companies and organizations to be better and more trustworthy». All this transparency, sharing and giving has implications, in his opinion, that go deep into society (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 290).



Figure 5.4 - This is what Zuckerberg's own Facebook profile looks like.

Earlier, Baudrillard argued in *The System of Objects* (1996) that «to become an object of consumption, an object must first become a sign». Thus, to understand consumption, we need to be able to read consumer goods as a series of signs – similar to a language – that requires interpretation (1968/1996: 200); and that the excess of signs and meaning in late twentieth century «global» society had caused, (quite paradoxically) an effacement of reality (1993a). Hence, though we admire the optimism of its founder, it is difficult not to think of Facebook like an *accelerator of particles* that converts each and every one of us into signs of ourselves, thereby erasing our *real* identities in favor of our images. And curiously, in Baudrillard's work, the symbolic realm, developed through the anthropological work of Marcel Mauss and Georges Bataille, is seen as quite distinct from that of signs and signification. Signs can be exchanged like commodities, whereas, symbols, operate quite differently: they are exchanged, «like gifts, sometimes violently as a form of potlatch». Baudrillard defines symbolic exchange as an incessant cycle of giving and receiving at odds with accumulation, scarcity, production, necessity, surplus and even survival. Accordingly, commodities and signs are produced and consumed under the illusion of «symbolic participation» (Genosko, 1994: xv).

Thus, anthropologically the potlatch is a little different than what Zuckerberg refers to it seems, or even worse, if he already assumes the destructive powers of Facebook right at the beginning by using the analogy:

All forms of North-West American and North-East Asian potlatch contain this element of destruction. It is not simply to show power and wealth and unselfishness that a man puts his slaves to death, burns his precious oil, throws coppers into the sea, and sets his house on fire. In doing this he is also sacrificing to the gods and spirits, who appear incarnate in the men who are at once their namesakes and ritual allies (Mauss, 1966: 14).

One could still maintain her/his optimism and think that this act of «giving» is an anti-capitalist act of destroying the idea of basing our identities on what we consume, that through giving we dispose of our materialism and burn ourselves like the mythical phoenix, only to reborn from our ashes, until we learn from Mauss's investigation that potlatch is given to «maintain face» maybe almost in a Goffmanian way; it is given by the ruling social classes to maintain social rank and status, as well as preserving one's spirit.

The obligation to give ... is the essence of potlatch. A chief must give a potlatch for himself, his son, his son-in-law or daughter and for the dead. He can keep his authority in his tribe, village and family, and maintain his position with the chiefs inside and outside his nation, only if he can prove that he is favorably regarded by the spirits, that he possesses fortune and that he is possessed by it. The only way to demonstrate his fortune is by expending it to the humiliation of others, by putting them «in the shadow of his name», Kwakiutl and Haida noblemen have the same notion of «face» as the Chinese mandarin or officer. It is said of one of the great

mythical chiefs who gave no feast that he had a «rotten face». The expression is more apt than it is even in China; for to lose one's face is to lose one's spirit, which is truly the «face», the dancing mask, the right to incarnate a spirit and wear an emblem or totem. It is the veritable persona which is at stake, and it can be lost in the potlatch just as it can be lost in the game of gift-giving, in war, or through some error in ritual. In all these societies one is anxious to give; there is no occasion of importance (even outside the solemn winter gatherings) when one is not obliged to invite friends to share the produce of the chase or the forest which the gods or totems have sent; to redistribute everything received at a potlatch; or to recognize services from chiefs, vassals or relatives by means of gifts. Failing these obligations – at least for the nobles – etiquette is violated and rank is lost. (Mauss, 1966: 38-39).

So the question of potlatch, regarding Facebook could be oversimplified. Do we lose «face» (spirit) when we give, or when we don't give? To give or not to give?

To clarify one more point raised by Rheingold, we should take a step back and investigate the «nanonymous» (Blackman&Choquelle, 2011: 3) structure of the online social network. In Rheingold's earlier predictions, the intermediary role of the screen and pseudonyms helped the computer-mediated communication to be «a place where people end up revealing themselves far more intimately» (1993: 14). Nonetheless, we have observed that Facebook and other Web 2.0 social networks encourage the users – or even impose on them – that they should use their real life names. Though there is still margin for playing with the identity, the «liberated» nature of the early cyberspace interactions is lost, once the names are revealed and tables are turned. Once the «safety» of anonymity is lost, so is the intimate self-disclosure due to Zick Rubin's «passing stranger» effect (1975).

«It is perhaps not surprising that Omegle has arrived in the age of Facebook, where etiquette and accountability threaten to squeeze some of the fun out of web surfing. But that could also be its downfall» says Jason Tanz, a senior editor at *Wired*. Almost a tribute to the *good old days* of cyberspace, Omegle.com connects its users with random, anonymous strangers for a private, real-time chat. Leif K-Brooks, an 18-year-old amateur web programmer and the site's founder says his motive for building the site was his worry that «people's web interactions had become stagnant». His goal was to create «a new kind of association: anonymous interactions with a stranger that complements existing social sites and helps people broaden their horizons». Less than a month after its debut, Omegle was drawing about 150,000 page views a day (Quenqua, 2009). When I connected to the chat of omegle.com, to have hands-on experience, the first question from my random chat partner that flashes on my screen did indeed remind of the experience of old anonymous chat days in ICQ: «Male or female?». After only a decade has passed, anonymous communication does feel strange.

Too much communication and too *little communicated*. Like Bauman identifies in *Liquid Modernity*, our problem is with a new type of uncertainty unlike the earlier: «not knowing the ends instead of the traditional uncertainty of not knowing the means» (2000: 60). Our case of communication is like the query attributed to the heads of the present-day scientific and technological institutes and laboratories: «We have found the solution. Now let us find a problem» (Bauman: 61). We have all the means of communicating, now what is it that we communicate?

Writing in the shadow of Marshall McLuhan, Baudrillard insists that the content of communication is completely without meaning: the only thing that is communicated is communication itself. When he called it the «ecstasy» or the «delirium» of communication, Baudrillard had said «Speech is free perhaps, but I am less free than before: I no longer succeed in knowing what I want, the space is so saturated, the pressure so great from all who want to make themselves heard» (1987a: 152). We have to note that he was still referring to television and its impacts at this point, and not even to the current communication based on minute-to-minute mass communication wave of broadcasting our lives, or «lifecasting», on Facebook, Youtube or Twitter, cluttering our desktop, laptop and smartphone screens every time that we let it reach us (Blackman & Choquelle, 2011: 15).

After assuming the presence of internet in our daily lives, Baudrillard shifts toward an «implosion of meaning». He claims that information, and I will add, «information on steroids» borrowing the metaphor from one of the participants of this research, devours its own contents; it devours communication and the social, it becomes directly destructive of meaning and signification, or neutralizes it. While we think that information is producing meaning, it is doing the exact opposite:

Everywhere information is reputed to produce an accelerated circulation of meaning, a plus-value of meaning homologous to the economic plus-value which results from the accelerated rotation of capital. Information is given as creative of communication, and even if the wastage is enormous a general consensus would have it that there is in the total nonetheless a surplus of meaning, which is redistributed in all the interstices of the social fabric – just as a consensus would have it that material production, despite its dysfunctions and irrationalities, nevertheless leads to an excess of wealth and social finality (2007: 99).

And yet, this is the case with the reactions you may receive to admitting that you are not present on any online social network, «everywhere socialization is measured according to the exposure through media messages. Those who are underexposed to the media are virtually asocial or desocialized» (Baudrillard, 2007: 99).

But then something strange happens. In the middle of too-much-communication, too-much-visualization of the identity, the end of alienation strikes back – this time due to the excess of information. To Baudrillard, with the television and mass communication what marked the end of alienation was a new level of obscenity:

It is no longer then, the traditional obscenity of what is hidden, repressed, forbidden or obscure; on the contrary, it is the obscenity of the visible, of the all-too-visible, of the more-visible-than-the-visible. It is the obscenity of what no longer has any secret, of what dissolves completely in information and communication (1987a: 151).

Once the separation was swept away, so were the symbolic benefits of alienation, which were «that the Other exists, and that otherness can fool you for the better or for worse» (Baudrillard, 1987a: 150). This was what made the society of the spectacle possible, which on one hand was what kept the human being from going schizophrenic all together, until the obscene «[did] away with every mirror» and it «[put] an end to every representation»:

... one can perhaps make use of the old metaphors of pathology. If hysteria was the pathology of the exacerbated staging of the subject, a pathology of expression, of the body's theatrical and operatic conversion; and if paranoia was the pathology of organization, of the structuration of a rigid and jealous world; then with communication and information, with the immanent promiscuity of all these networks, with their continual connections, we are now in a new form of schizophrenia. ... this state of terror proper to the schizophrenic: too great a proximity of everything, the unclean promiscuity of everything which touches, invests and penetrates without resistance, with no halo of private protection, not even his own body, to protect him anymore. The schizo ... can no longer produce the limits of his own being, can no longer play nor stage himself and can no longer produce himself as mirror. He is now only a pure screen, a switching centre for all the networks of influence (Baudrillard, 1987a: 152).

What happens to the identity when all the meaning has gone ashtray? *Who* is communicating in this network stripped of meaning? What is it that we communicate with our meticulously edited online identities hidden behind the digital images that represent us? Zuckerberg believes we are on our way towards a gift economy, that we are giving to «maintain face» when the identity is evacuated, what do we *have* that we could *give*?

So should we save absence? Should we save the void and this nothingness at the heart of the image? At any rate removing meaning brings out the essential point: namely, that the image is more important than what it speaks about – just as language is more important than what it signifies (Baudrillard, 2009: 49).

It is at this point that social communication becomes advertising, and the human identity, just like any other commercial entity needs a cleverly-designed brand identity to make the best out of its marketplace. As we become objects as signs, our social values are minimized to what we *choose* to signify. Taken to an extreme, consumer goods are seen entirely as signifiers that are completely divorced from any stable signified (Ritzer, Goodman & Wiedenhof, 2001: 418). If these goods are minimized to nothing more than signifiers, than these objects are liberated from their paired signified, hence emancipated from their obligation to designate (Baudrillard, 1981). When human beings complete their progress of objectification and commodification, they too, are liberated from their obligations to signify definitively. One consequence of this emancipation is the reign of the spectacle, or what Debord (1967: 15) describes as the «monopolization of the realm of appearances». Yet once this point is reached, the surface appearances of consumer objects matter much more than any deeper use value or exchange value that they may have hidden.

... Advertising in its new version – which is no longer a more or less baroque, utopian or ecstatic scenario of objects and consumption, but the effect of an omnipresent visibility of enterprises, brands, social interlocutors and the social virtues of communication – advertising in its new dimension invades everything, as public space (the street, monument, market, scene) disappears (Baudrillard, 2009: 49).

And then, the only thing that remains is the image, though when, even the image is stripped off any meaning at all.

Primitive society had its masks, bourgeois society its mirrors, and we have our images. We believe that we bend the world to our will by means of technology. In fact it is the world that imposes its will upon us with the aid of technology, and the surprise occasioned by this turning of the tables is considerable. You think you are photographing a scene for the pleasure of it, but in fact it is the scene that demands to be photographed, and you are merely part of the decor in the pictorial order it dictates. The subject is no more than the funnel through which things in their irony make their appearance. The image is the ideal medium for the vast self-promotion campaign undertaken by the world and by objects – forcing our imagination into self-effacement, our passions into extraversion, and shattering the mirror which we hold out (hypocritically, moreover) in order to capture them (Baudrillard, 1993a: 153).

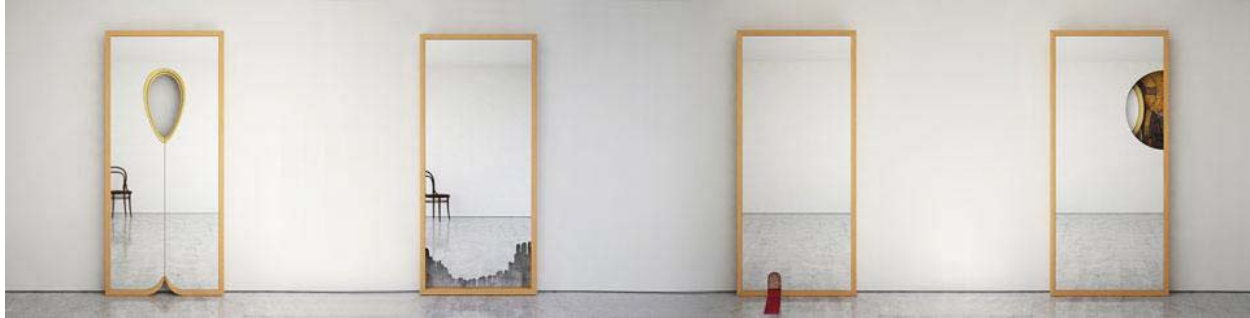


Figure 5.5 - Nine Mirrors by Ron Gilad. At the Milan Furniture Fair Dilmos presented a series of mirrors that contain historical references combining the present with the past and that, like the nine lives of a cat, representing the possibility of inner lives. In the series, Gilad suggests that the mirrored image contains a hypocrisy which reflects only our exterior selves. He is asking us to contemplate a more complex and poetic possibility of reality. The title, like the nine lives of a cat, represents the possibility of inner lives or the soul of the mirror. Gilad's mirrors are simple rectangular wooden frames that have been injected with stories. The reflection of the spectator is no longer only objective but contains more than the present. The functional aspect becomes secondary; the cords over the glass, the voided gilded frames and the bronze sconce in front of the user's face are not here to decorate the mirrors. Some of the mirrors contain historical references combining the present with the past; a reference to other lives besides our own. Others play with structure, distorting our perception of the mirror as an object. Available at <http://bit.ly/h9kujN>. Retrieved 12.04.2011.



5.2 Self < Self-Image < Image

Appear as you are, or be as you appear. (Jalāl ad-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī, 1258-1273: Book 5)

As we have investigated through various chapters, identity reflects a person's location within social context. This location is a combined outcome of how one is, how one is perceived by one's own self and how the others perceive her/him. Though Michel de Montaigne declares «I do not care so much what I am to others as I care what I am to myself» (1580/1993: 289), today the majority of the people *do* care about how they are perceived by others.

Self-consciousness is the mental activity through which the subject feels a sense of being or existing as a unique and total individual. This sense of identity, this initial subjective stance, is established gradually, being linked with the general development of the human mind in its relationship to itself and the outside world (Mijolla, 2005: 1568).

Identity formation is the process of the development of the distinct personality of an individual which we have earlier identified and discussed as personal continuity, in which a person is also recognized by the individual characteristics that are possessed that differentiate her/him from others. The establishment of identity/reputation defines individuals to themselves and to others. A sense of continuity, a sense of uniqueness and a sense of affiliation are constituent elements of one's identity and today these elements are triggered in digital social encounters as well as physical ones.

Though identity formation leads to the sort of comprehension of one's self as a discrete, separate identity, through the process differentiated facets of a person's life tend to become a more indivisible whole. Today as the disclosure of one's real name in online digital communication is the norm, rather than the exception, the online identity ceases to be a play of identities and rather indicates us a merge of online and offline to create «better possibilities».



Figure 5.6 - A schema of the relationship and the interactions between image, self-image and self. Zeynep Arda (2009).

Psychological identity relates to a person's mental model of her/himself, combining her/his image in the perception of others, with self-esteem and individuality. In this section we will observe how Facebook and the other online social networks have modified our daily perceptions, thereby creating a new approach to identity formation of individuals. In the new digital light, the capacity for self-reflection and the awareness of the self tend to differ significantly. Components of the self-concept include physical, psychological and social attributes which can be influenced by the individual's attitudes, habits, beliefs and ideas, all of which can be publicized today on online social networks.

The digital life, besides other transformations, brings about an increased level of self-consciousness which may affect the identity formation positively or negatively depending on the self-esteem of the subject. In the nineteenth century, following Hegel's work, self-consciousness was posited as being secondary to consciousness or intentionality toward the object. Husserl's work inverted that order, positing a reflective unit that is the mental locus of the relationship between subject and world, a pronominal form in which the subject, through discourse, identifies with what s/he believes s/he is or would like to be. This internal perception is also linked to the specular image of the body. Drawing from the work of Taine and Ribot, Ludovic Dugas approached the idea of self-consciousness from a negative perspective by looking at its dysfunction: «state[s] in which the subject feels estranged from his being and from things; and begins to doubt that all that he is feeling is real» (Mijolla, 2005: 1568). Such states entail alienation and the ego's inner loss of meaning – a loss of the immediate grasp of the ego's own inner states and the sense of existing. This sense of self-estrangement could be felt by younger individuals communicating online, as constant *visual* self-consciousness online results in social comparison of selves constructed through digital images.

Esteem for the self consolidates the sense of one's own value or, more mundanely, one's pride. Hence Freud's interest in it, in «On Narcissism»: «One part of self-regard is primary – the residue of infantile narcissism; another part arises out of the omnipotence which is corroborated by experience (the fulfillment of the ego ideal), whilst a third part proceeds from the satisfaction of object-libido» [100]. As the effect of ego demands on the «narcissistic» ego ideal and «moral conscience», the feeling of self-esteem is at the origin of repression: «In paraphrenics self-regard is increased, while in the transference neuroses it is diminished» [98]. It is nevertheless the narcissistic part that proves to be determinant: when self-esteem is threatened, the result is shame rather than guilt. It therefore depends, in each individual life and in the different psychopathological cases, on the quality of the subject's narcissism and thus on the modalities of the subject's cathexis by and of the object, as it depends for its regulation on its relations with the ego ideal (Mijolla, 2005: 1570).

Within this context defined by psychoanalysis and psychology, the self-image brings together the notions of body image, self-consciousness, the concept of the self, self-identity and ego-identity. As such, self-image is constructed through imitations of, or identifications with, people around the subject,

real or heroic imaginary figures; throughout the development of narcissism and the setting up of the ideal ego, the ego ideal, and the superego. It is important to clarify that the self-image also depends on how others see and assess us. Complementing the notion of self-image, are the feeling of competence – which is the cognitive construction corresponding to the image construction of the Other, that each of us is subject to on the cognitive, social and physical levels – and the highly related feeling of self-esteem.

Lasch, in *Culture of Narcissism*, talks about the «banality of self-awareness» triggered by advertising. He quotes Calvin Coolidge on advertising, who defines it to be «the method by which the desire is created for better things». Advertising appears at the point in the cycle of the economy where its technology is capable of satisfying basic material needs, and it relies on the creation of new consumer demands. These demands are created almost by «force», by «convincing people to buy goods for which they are unaware of any need, until the 'need' is forcibly brought to their attention by the mass media» (Lasch, 1979: 72). What Lasch once defined to be true of the propaganda of commodities, starts to become true of the commodified human beings, as the online social network starts to provide the means for mass communication of identities and thus the medium for the spread of the newly-formed human brands.

The attempt to «civilize» the masses has now given rise to a society dominated by appearances – the society of the spectacle. In the period of primitive accumulation, capitalism subordinated *being to having*, the use value of commodities to their exchange value. Now it subordinates possession itself to appearance and measures exchange value as a commodity's capacity to confer prestige – the illusion of prosperity and well-being. «When economic necessity yields to the necessity for limitless economic development», writes Guy Debord, «the satisfaction of basic and generally recognized human needs gives way to an uninterrupted fabrication of pseudo-needs» (Lasch, 1979: 72).

According to Lasch, a number of historical currents lie at the heart of an escalating cycle of self-consciousness, that have converted ordinary men and women into «artists» with «a sense of the self as a performer under the constant scrutiny of friends and strangers». In this sense, the society of the spectacle triggers the type of self-consciousness that mocks all attempts at spontaneous action or enjoyment. In this context, what was once true of face-to-face communication is either solidified (or photographed and represented) in Facebook-presentation of the self, or Facebook has triggered the already existing tendency to its new extreme. As Lasch defines it in a pre-Facebook, pre-online-social-network-world, the waning belief in the reality of the external world, has made communication lost its immediacy in a society pervaded by «symbolically mediated information»:

The more man objectifies himself in his work, the more reality takes on the appearance of illusion. As the workings of the modern economy and the modern social order become increasingly inaccessible to everyday intelligence, art and philosophy abdicate the task of

explaining them to the allegedly objective sciences of society, which themselves have retreated from the effort to master reality into the classification of trivia. Reality thus presents itself, to laymen and «scientists» alike, as an impenetrable network of social relations – as «role-playing» the «presentation of self in everyday life». To the performing self, the only reality is the identity he can construct out of materials furnished by advertising and mass culture, themes of popular film and fiction, and fragments torn from a vast range of cultural traditions, all of them equally contemporaneous to the contemporary mind. In order to polish and perfect the part he has devised for himself, the new Narcissus gazes at his own reflection, not so much in admiration as in unremitting search of flaws, signs of fatigue, decay. Life becomes a work of art, while «the first art work in an artist» in Norman Mailer's pronouncement, «is the shaping of his own personality» (Lasch, 1979: 90).

Thus the performing self, as was elaborated by Goffman and Lasch previously, has overcome its limitations of audience and feedback through the new technologies of communication, giving the identity/image its current fluidity today. Today Facebook, Twitter and all platforms of Web 2.0 that allow for the feedback of the Other serve as the mirrors to all of us, actors and spectators alike. «In them, we seek reassurance of our capacity to captivate or impress others, anxiously searching out blemishes that might detract from the appearance we intend to project. The advertising industry deliberately encourages this preoccupation with appearances» (Lasch, 1979: 92).

In this sense, advertising, is a discipline that slowly but surely educated and encouraged men as well as women to see the creation of the self as the highest form of creativity. In the already-settled society of the spectacle, men and women alike have to project an attractive image and to become simultaneously role players and connoisseurs of their own performance. As we have seen previously, where the eighteenth-century concept of character stressed the elements common to human nature, the nineteenth century began to see personality as the unique and idiosyncratic expression of individual traits. Outward appearances, in this view, involuntarily expressed the inner person. People soon became obsessed, according to Sennett, with the fear of inadvertently giving themselves away through their actions, facial expressions, and details of dress.

The advertising imagery of the 1920s that Lasch examines in detail in *Culture of Narcissism*, can easily be connected to the narcissistic imperative underlying the Facebook imagery and the online protagonism. As one of the participants of the Preliminary Facebook Survey indicated «Being on Facebook, one accepts being an object of voyeurism and displays a certain level of auto-eroticism (to be specific; self-portraits taken at an arm's length)».

[Ads of the 1920s] unabashedly used pictures of veiled nudes, and women in auto-erotic stances to encourage self-comparison and to remind women of the primacy of their sexuality. A booklet advertising beauty aids depicted on its cover a nude with the caption: «Your Masterpiece – Yourself» (Lasch, 1979: 92).

Similar to the kind of ego-centric perspective encouraged by the Time Magazine cover of 2006, «Person of the Year: YOU», mass media tells us through any medium that it could deploy that we should focus on ourselves, that we deserve it and that we are worth it. But as we focus on ourselves and yet we master these new social skills, we observe an undeniable increase in esthetic satisfaction, however we also feel that it has created new forms of uneasiness and anxiety. Imprisoned in her/his self-awareness, modern individual longs for the lost innocence of spontaneous feeling. Unable to express emotion without calculating its effects on others, s/he doubts the authenticity of its expression in others and therefore derives little comfort from audience reactions to her/his own performance, even when the audience claims to be deeply moved.

Yet, in terms of impression management, there are two main motives that govern self-presentation. The first one is instrumental: we want to influence others and gain rewards (Schlenker, 1980: 92). There are three instrumental goals. The first is ingratiation, when we try to be happy and display our good qualities so that others will like us (Schlenker: 169). The second motive is intimidation, which is aggressively showing anger to get others to hear and obey us (Felson, 1984: 187). The third motive is supplication, when we try to be vulnerable and sad so people will help us and feel bad for us (Tedeschi, 1984: 11).

The second motive of self-presentation is expressive. We construct an image of ourselves to claim personal identity, and present ourselves in a manner that is consistent with that image (Schlenker, 1980: 37). If we feel like this is restricted, we exhibit reactance. We try to assert our freedom against those who would seek to curtail our self-presentation expressiveness.

While we *feel* that we are more than the sum of our on-stage and backstage performances online and offline, we easily tend to minimize the Other to the superficiality of Facebook representations. As the average man becomes a connoisseur of his own performance and that of others in everyday life, bringing the skills of a novelist to the task of «decoding isolated details of appearance», Sennett writes of Balzac, «magnifying the detail into an emblem of the whole man». We become the authors of the Other, we fill in the blanks in the story the way that it pleases us and produce the Other in a Baudrillardian manner. It would be adequate here to remember the complaints of the Pop-Art icon Andy Warhol at this point, to realize the two-dimensionality that we are trapped in:

Day after day I look in the mirror and I still see something – a new pimple... I dunk a Johnson and Johnson cotton ball into Johnson and Johnson rubbing alcohol and rub the cotton ball against the pimple... And while the alcohol is drying I think about nothing. How it's always in style. Always in good taste... When the alcohol is dry, I'm ready to apply the flesh-colored acne-pimple medication... So now the pimple's covered. But am I covered? I have to look into the mirror for some more clues. Nothing is missing. It's all there. The affectless gaze... The bored

languor, the wasted pallor... The graying lips. The shaggy silver-white hair, soft and metallic... Nothing is missing. I'm everything my scrapbook says I am (Warhol, 1975: 7-10).

The analysis of interpersonal relations in the online theater of everyday life, an analysis which deliberately adheres to the surface of social intercourse and makes no attempt to uncover its psychological depths, is combined easily with the narcissistic gaze that might be the underlying current. The psychoanalytic description of the pathological narcissist, whose sense of selfhood depends on the validation of others whom he nevertheless degrades, coincides in many particulars with the description of the performing self in literary criticism and in the sociology of everyday life. The pathological narcissist reveals, at a deeper level, the same anxieties which in milder form have become so common in everyday intercourse. The prevailing forms of social life, as we have seen, encourage many forms of narcissistic behavior. Moreover, the participatory architecture of Web 2.0 and the way that the actual physical interaction has finally moved to the web have altered the process of socialization in ways that give further encouragement to narcissistic patterns by rooting them in the individual's earliest experience.

When art, religion, and finally even sex lose their power to provide an imaginative release from everyday reality, the banality of pseudo-self-awareness becomes so overwhelming that men finally lose the capacity to envision any release at all except in total nothingness, blankness (Lasch, 1979: 98).

Warhol once again provides a good description of the resulting state of mind:

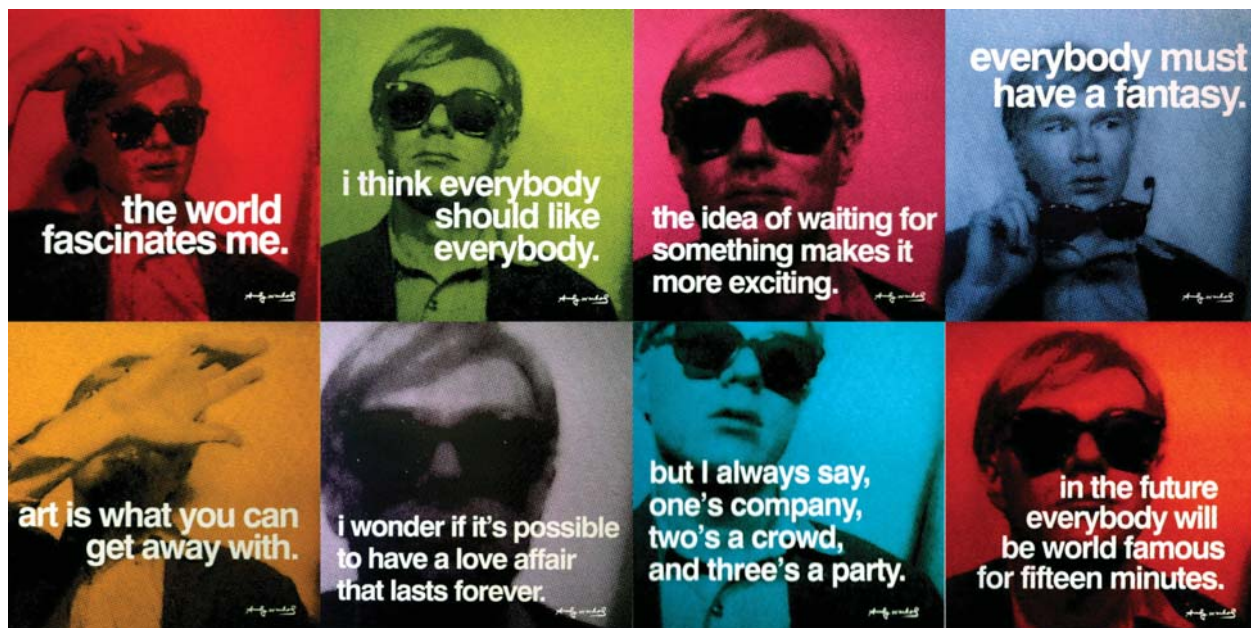


Figure 5.7 - Andy Warhol self portrait.

The best love is not-to-think-about-it love. Some people can have sex and really let their minds go blank and fill up with the sex; other people can never let their minds go blank and fill up with the sex, so while they're having the sex they're thinking, «Can this really be me? Am I really doing this? This is very strange. Five minutes ago I wasn't doing this. In a little while I won't be doing it. What would Mom say? How did people ever think of doing this?» So the first type of person... is better off. The other type has to find something else to relax with and get lost in (1975: 92).

Imprisoned in his pseudo-awareness of himself, the new Narcissus would gladly take refuge in an *idée fixe*, a neurotic compulsion, a «magnified obsession» – anything to get his mind off his own mind. As such, the prison life of the past looks in our own time like liberation itself.

Jerry Wilson and Ira Blumenthal in *Managing Brand YOU: Seven Steps to Creating Your Most Successful Self* (2008), suggest that, to be able to lead a more fulfilled and successful life in our contemporaneity, one should carefully assess one's own brand qualities and rely on the «discipline of building strong brands» to achieve one's better self. They underline the *fact* that today brands and human beings have defined similar goals to attain and hence the strategy to get there could be benchmarked:

Successful brands convey a consistent message and create an emotional bond with consumers. Don't we all want to convey a consistent message and create a similar emotional bond with those important people around us? Absolutely! The process of building such brands is widely used in the commercial world, and now you, too, can use these techniques to build a brand-new you – a Brand YOU! (Wilson & Blumenthal, 2008: 1).

The method that they suggest for assessing one's brand shows us that there are several differences between one's self, self-image and image that have to be understood and be compensated to be able to build a strong and successful brand. Through the illustration of Roger's view of his own life, or his self-image, and how it compares to his actual self and his image, we could have an understanding of the gap between this *holy trinity* of our age:

My name is Roger. I'm a married father of two young boys, am active in my church, volunteer at the local shelter, and am employed by the local office of a national real estate company as its human resources director. I spend a lot of time counseling employees and building employee esprit de corp. I am very proud of my family and thankful of how blessed I am to have a wonderful wife and partner, as well as two great sons. I pride myself on being a good listener; believe that although I don't say much and appear to be quiet, when I do talk, it's received as important. I am a highly committed team player. I enjoy going to movies, reading science fiction, playing golf once or twice a week, and gardening. I really enjoy the career I've chosen and am happy in my position and contented with my life.

Roger's Brand Assessment (Through His Family's Eyes)

Roger is very driven by his job and his pastimes. He is a good father and husband, yet we wish he spent more time at home. He is really into his work and has a good reputation at the real estate company, but he rarely talks about his job. He is an avid golfer and is prone to spend Saturday morning with the guys at the golf course, but we don't really mind this if it makes him happy. The two boys are growing up so fast, and he frequently misses things that are going on around the house, but we manage OK. With all of his work responsibilities, his golf and community involvement, sometimes we feel our family gets the lowest priority. Yet, Roger is a good father and husband.

Roger's Brand Assessment (Through His Friends' Eyes)

Roger is a pretty nice guy who seems to spend more time volunteering at his church and at the local shelter than he does with his young children and wife. He is quiet, doesn't typically have a lot to say in conversations, seems insecure, loves bizarre science fiction novels, and spends more time on the golf course and in his garden than he does watching his kids play Little League baseball. His wife is the glue of their family. She, typically, is the primary caregiver to their children and runs the household while Roger is out in the garden, volunteering, or putting on the golf course. He works in personnel at the local real estate office and is in charge of hiring and firing. I don't think he really enjoys his job.

Roger's Brand Assessment (Through His Coworkers' Eyes)

Roger is a quiet guy who runs our company's human resources department. Although I know he is married and has children, because I've seen their photos in his office, he never talks about his family. Any outside conversation is typically centered on his golf game or his rose garden. He is a 9-to-5 kind of person and seems to view his position more as a job than as a career. He puts up posters and notices that are supposed to motivate us, but he doesn't seem very motivated himself. I'm not sure how loyal he is to the company, and he seems to keep to himself a lot more than actively participate in company meetings and activities. He has an even disposition and never seems to get too excited about anything that happens, good or bad (Wilson & Blumenthal, 2008: 26-28).

Wilson and Blumenthal comment that an honest brand assessment of Roger's own brand would show him how differently others viewed his brand (brand image), he would most likely be surprised and maybe even disappointed by the significant differences between his self-image and image. They indicate that we can all identify with Roger and through his example see how the way we think we are perceived is dramatically better than we truly are or how we see ourselves to be.

The third-person perspective allows you to gain insights that can convert into great ideas for improvement, and then move those great ideas into sound implementation. Consider how deep-rooted are your viewpoints, beliefs, mannerisms, feelings, and actions; they typically have been with you for as many years as you are old. When you are convinced it is time to recreate, reinvent, reposition, and reinvigorate your personal brand, make the commitment to

change, to meet the challenge. It won't be easy, especially since old habits don't change easily. The health and fitness world knows the adage, «No pain, no gain»; it comes from the wisdom of Benjamin Franklin, in his book, *Poor Richard's Almanack*. It works for body building, and it is just as true for reinvigorating your personal brand (Wilson & Blumenthal, 2008: 29).

To succeed, we *should* attend the brand of ourselves and according to the basics of marketing this implies defining the problems and dealing with them in the most efficient manner. As different as it may sound from the methods of identity formation and ways of resolving identity crises that we have examined in detail in the previous chapters, this is how the advertising and brand-conscious human being of our day handles the «cult of the self» in a way even Foucault himself would have approved, had he lived to see the Facebook era.

Going back to Roger's case, if he wants his brand intent to be in syncro with his brand image, he will have to make some adjustments to change the perceptions of those around him. For example, here might be his prescription for rebuilding his personal brand:

«I am concerned that the way my friends and coworkers saw me was inconsistent with how I thought I was perceived. My direct action includes making sure that I spend more quality time with my wife and children, even at the expense of cutting back the time I formerly spent volunteering at the church and our local homeless shelter. I will also start playing golf once a week, as opposed to twice a week, and rarely will I play on Saturday when the boys have their Little League baseball games. I will revisit my position and activities at the real estate firm and commit to doing more proactively with the employees, ensuring that they feel good about their careers and are getting the kind of education and training programs necessary for their growth. I will also come into work a little earlier and stay a little later and will volunteer to be on a few company task forces and committees to demonstrate my support of our team. In my mind, I have always supported our company and, quite frankly, I was surprised to learn my co-workers thought otherwise. I will also try to be a lot more open and friendly to my co-workers. After all, I am in human resources. I also will start making my garden a family garden, and although they will squawk about it at first, I hope the boys will start to enjoy working together in the back yard. I will also post a bulletin board at the office to encourage associates to put family photos on display, emphasizing the importance of family at our firm – and my family photo will be the first to be put on the board. These changes aren't difficult and I'm sure they will contribute to others' looking at me differently – and in a way I'd like to be looked at» (Wilson & Blumenthal, 2008: 28-29).

Welcome to the Facebook way of identity construction.



5.3 Social Networks, Social Media and Self-Marketing



Through the path of the «designed self», «work of art», «cult of the self» and finally the «brand self», we have observed that the rules of marketing apply much more than human psychology does today in the identity construction process of an individual, that is, to successfully *adapt* to the contemporary society. Similar to the way that the conception of identity has changed, the rules of the game have also changed in the worlds of marketing and business. The traditional McCarthy rule of marketing mix defined the «4P» to be «Product, Price, Place and Promotion». With the rise of the design society, the 4P became «People, Place, Plan and Project» (Morace, 1996). Yet, defined once again under the Web 2.0 influence by Idris Mootee, the new 4P turns out to be: «Personalization, Participation, Peer-to-Peer and Predictive Modeling» (2002: 64). We should carefully note that the «product» is no longer listed – neither in the second update, nor in the third.

The original 4Ps concept was developed to help marketers manage the four most important aspect of marketing. With the advent of internet and the Web 2.0, marketers have needed to adapt a broader perspective on these elements. In Mootee's new conception the new focuses for marketing professionals are listed as:

- Personalization: This item refers to customization of products and services through the use of the internet. This concept is further extended with emerging social media and advanced algorithms.
- Participation: This is to allow customer to participate in what the brand should stand for; what should be the product directions and even which ads to run. This concept is laying the foundation for disruptive change through democratization of information.
- Peer-to-Peer: This refers to customer networks and communities where advocacy happens. The historical problem with marketing is that it is «interruptive» in nature, trying to impose a brand on the customer. This is most apparent in TV advertising. The «passive customer bases» will ultimately be replaced by the «active customer communities». Brand engagement happens within these conversations. [Peer-to-Peer] is now being referred as Social Computing and will likely to be the most disruptive force in the future of marketing.
- Predictive modeling: This refers to neural network algorithms that are being successfully applied in marketing problems based on data obtained through social media resources (Mootee, 2002).

We have previously discussed that human being is understood as that agent which constructs itself as a self through giving its life the coherence of a *narrative*. Nonetheless, at the turn of the century, or even a little earlier, the rise of design as a social phenomenon has changed the way human beings tackled the

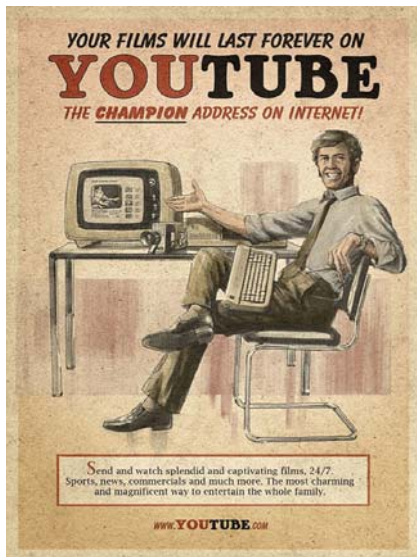
issue of self-narrative as a form of identity construction and experience. The discourse slowly left its place to «the design process» of the self – both to be experienced on the personal level and hence to be presented and shared on the social level almost in the form of a marketing practice. Moreover, one does not even need to be rich, to enjoy being the «designed subject» as Hal Foster emphasizes in *Design and Crime*(2002), together with the idea of «the package [becoming] almost as important as the product». In this section we will investigate how online social networks and Facebook in particular modified our social behaviour and transformed our identities to *packages* of our selves.

It comes as no surprise that Facebook was conceived in Harvard University, where even as students the young people could be evaluated as being very conscious of their social statuses as they are of their own selves. Beginning with almost a prank joke that Mark Zuckerberg was trying out as part of his ideas, in October of 2003, he gave Harvard community its first look as his rebellious irreverent side with *Facemash*, an attempt to figure out who was the hottest person on the campus: Using the kind of computer code otherwise used to rank chess players, he invited users to compare two different faces of the same sex and say which one was hotter. As your rating got higher, your picture would be compared to hotter and hotter people.

He started running the Facemash website on his internet-connected laptop in mid-afternoon of Sunday, November 2nd. «Were we let in [to Harvard] for our looks?» the site asked on its home page. «No. Will we be judged by them? Yes». Zuckerberg emailed links to a few friends, later claiming he had only intended them to test it out and make suggestions. But once people started using it, they apparently couldn't stop. His «testers» alerted their own friends and Facemash became an instant underground hit (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 23).

Harvard's daily student newspaper *The Crimson* eloquently opined on the appeal of Facemash on the students, commenting: «We Harvard students could indulge our fondness for judging those around us on superficial criteria without ever having to face any of the judged in person». On the same day of its launch, when Zuckerberg returned to his room at 10 p.m. from a meeting, his laptop was so bogged down with Facemash users that it was freezing up. Complaints of sexism and racism quickly started circulating among members of two women's groups – Fuerza Latina and the Association of Harvard Black Women. Quickly the computer services department got involved and turned off Zuckerberg's web access. By the time that happened, around 10:30 p.m., the site had been visited by 450 students, who had voted on 22,000 pairs of photos. The episode of Facemash was a clear sign: «Zuckerberg had a knack for making software people couldn't stop using» (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 25).

Social networking as a concept, certainly, is not new and several of the components of early Facebook were originally pioneered by others. Though Zuckerberg has been accused several times of stealing ideas to formulate his Facebook, he was actually combining and refining ideas that have been evolving in online communication and in the society for forty years.



As we have investigated earlier in the third chapter, people became familiar with electronic communication, initially by commenting in online groups and chat rooms. The French postal service was the first to bring these concepts to a mass consumer audience when it launched a national online service there, called Minitel, in 1982. Then America Online started in 1985, being rebranded AOL shortly after and it came to dominate the business in the United States. On these services people typically invented or were assigned a quasi-anonymous username for themselves, which they used for interacting with others. By the early 1990s, ordinary people began using electronic mail, again typically using addresses that did not correspond to their names. Though they maintained email address books inside these services, members did not intend to identify their real-life friends or establish regular communication pathways with them. Later in the decade, instant-messaging services took hold the same way – people used pseudonymous labels for themselves instead of their names.

The era of modern online social networking finally began in early 1997. That's when a New York-based start-up called *sixdegrees.com* inaugurated a breakthrough service based on real names. Two internet sociologists articulated in 2007 the salient features of a true social network: a service where users can «construct a public or semi-public profile», «formulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection» and «view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system» (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). You establish your position in a complex network of relationships, and your profile positions you in the context of these relationships, usually in order to uncover otherwise hidden points of common interest or connection. Another element must be added to explain the trends that led to

Figure 5.8 - MaxiMídia is one of the largest in Brazil focused on modernization and developing the industry of marketing communications in the country. Agency Moma São Paulo presented a series of prints for advertising company seminars, aimed at to familiarize professionals with new opportunities of using social networking and other tools of communication through the internet. Prints are made in the futuristic style of the 50-ies to attract the attention of the older generation that remembers this kind of posters.

Facebook – an online profile based upon a user's genuine identity. The sixdegrees service was the first online business that attempted to identify and map a set of real relationships between real people using their real names, and it was visionary for its time. Its name evoked the speculative concept that everyone on earth can be connected through an extended chain of relationships which begins with their immediate friends, proceeds to the next «degree», the friends of their friends, and on until it reaches the sixth «degree».

Jonathan Abrams, a local programmer, *Ryze* member, and partner, saw an opportunity to focus on the non-work part of people's lives and he launched a very social network for consumers called *Friendster* in 2002. Though it wasn't exactly a dating site, it offered many tools to help members find dates. Abrams gambled that he could take customers away from *match.com*, as the idea was that you would meet more interesting people if you got to know the friends of your friends. Members were expected to use their real names, and Friendster gave you a novel tool to keep track of people. Their pictures appeared next to their names right on their profile. This was a breakthrough. You could search to learn which people lived near you, who were already friends of a friend. If you liked their picture, you could try to

connect (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 70-71). As Sean Parker puts it, «Jonathan cracked the code. He defined the basic structure of what we now call a social network» (Parker as cited in Kirkpatrick, 2010: 72).

Friendster, like most social networks up to that time, was primarily intended to help you connect with people for dating. The idea was that you might find romantic material by scrutinizing the friends of your friends. Friendster had taken Harvard by storm the previous year but had fallen from favor after its almost overnight nationwide success led to millions of users: Its rapid rise created technical strains that made it slow and difficult to use.

In the meantime, in Los Angeles, *MySpace* began as a Friendster clone. Tom Anderson, the founder got the idea to start MySpace in part out of frustration as Friendster slowed and crashed, but Anderson also thought he could deliberately appeal to the so-called fakesters, who created accounts with fake identities,

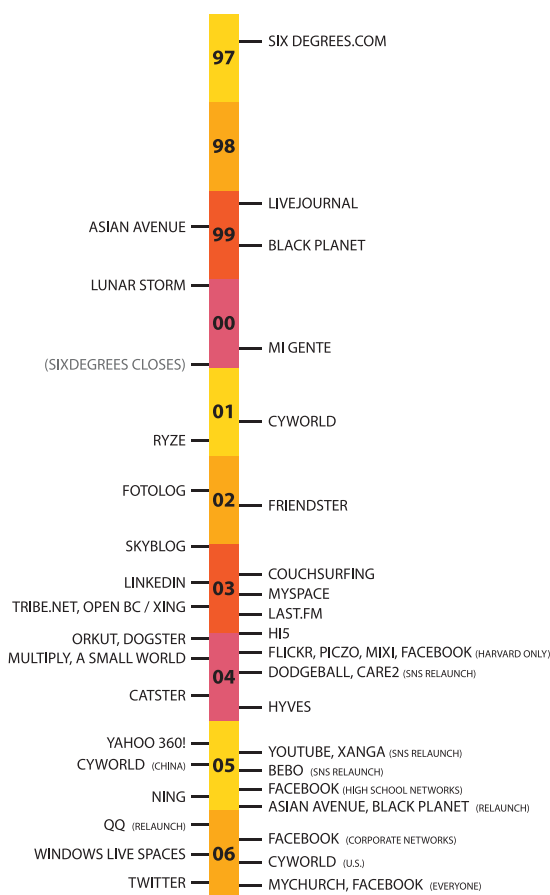


Figure 5.9 - Timeline of online social networks compiled by Boyd and Ellison (2007).

«to create a site where users could create any identity they liked» (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 74). Myspace had very few restrictions.

While Friendster's Abrams was a bit of a control freak, fighting a lengthy losing battle to protect his particular vision of a real-identity-based service, MySpace took a generally lax approach to just about everything. That suited members just fine. For one thing, it was less rigid about who could join than other social networks. You didn't need an invitation from an existing member. You could use either a real name or a pseudonym. And one of the features members liked best was not even intentional. An initial programming error allowed members to download web software code onto their profiles. People quickly began using it to tart up their sites. Ever adaptive, the MySpace founders noted members' enthusiasm for this freedom and embraced the error as an asset. Member-created designs were how MySpace got its distinctive Times Square look: all flashing graphics and ribald images. But while this look might have been unintentional, it was in keeping with the MySpace ethos: if you could pretend to be anybody, you also had the freedom to make your profile look like anything. And you didn't even always know who a MySpace member was. That made it difficult to limit your connections to genuine friends. People began adding friends willy-nilly, the more the better. It became a competition – how many could you have? As for behavior on the site, along with plenty of conventional conversation there was a definite tilt toward the sexual. On Friendster the look of a profile was fixed for consistency and Abrams wanted you to use your real name for connecting to other real people (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 75).

MySpace was hip and a great site to find out about bands, but it also leaned toward the sexual. Holding MySpace parties in nightclubs around the country became another of the site's promotional tools. The implicit message: MySpace was a digital club where wild behavior was welcome. Though the site's minimum age was supposed to be sixteen, plenty of younger kids created profiles claiming to be older. It wasn't unusual for thirteen-year-old eighth-grade girls to post photos of themselves wearing only a bra. Parents groups at junior highs and high schools all over the country convened alarmed meetings about the dangers of social networking.

The first social network explicitly intended for college students had begun at Stanford University in November 2001 (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 77). This little-known service, called *Club Nexus*, was designed by a Turkish doctoral student in computer sciences, called Orkut Buyukkokten, as a way for Stanford students to improve their social life. Club Nexus was revolutionary and had a raft of features – probably too many. It allowed members to create a profile using their real names, and then list their best on-campus friends, who were known as «buddies» in Club Nexus lingo. Buddies who were not already members then automatically received an email inviting them to join the service. Only students with a Stanford-issued email address could join, and that email authentication ensured that each person was who they said they were. You could chat, invite friends to events, post items including personal ads in a

classifieds section, write blog-like columns, and use a sophisticated search function to find people with similar interests. Students used it to find study partners, running buddies, and dates. A couple of years later Buyukkotken joined Google and created *Orkut*, a social network open to anyone, launched in January 2004, just two weeks before *Thefacebook.com*. It initially thrived in the United States and was holding its own against a surging MySpace. But by the end of 2004 it had, somewhat oddly, been tightly embraced by Brazilians. A grassroots campaign there to win more members than Orkut had in the United States captured the imagination of young Brazilians. After they succeeded, the service acquired a distinctly Brazilian and Portuguese-speaking cast. Americans began to drop away. Today Orkut, still owned by Google, remains one of the world's largest and most sophisticated social networks, yet more than half its members are Brazilian. Another 20% live in India. Google's diminished expectations for it can perhaps be gleaned from the fact that in 2008 it moved Orkut's headquarters to Brazil.

On January 11th, 2004, Zuckerberg went online and paid register.com thirty-five dollars to register the domain thefacebook.com for one year. The site borrowed ideas from Facemash as well as from Friendster and other similar sites at the time. In fact, Zuckerberg later said that it was *The Crimson* editorials about Facemash that gave him the initial idea on how to build Thefacebook. «Much of the trouble surrounding the Facemash could have been eliminated» wrote the Harvard newspaper, «if only the site had limited itself to students who voluntarily uploaded their own photos» (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 28).

Hence legitimately based on the participants' free will, Zuckerberg's new service for Harvard students was not a dating site like Friendster. It was a very basic communications tool, aimed at solving the simple problem of keeping track of your schoolmates and what was going on with them. Thefacebook also drew inspiration from another important source, the so-called away messages that users of instant messengers posted when they weren't at their computers. These short, pithy phrases were often used by AIM users to show off their creativity. Though the space allowed only a few words, users included political statements and humor as well as practical information about the account holder's whereabouts. Thus Facebook status updates mirrored the away messages, making it a *place* where you could host more information about yourself so friends could keep track of you.

Much activity on Thefacebook from the beginning was definitely driven by the hormones of young adults. Thefacebook asked you whether you were «interested in» men or women. In addition to giving you the option to list whether you were in a relationship, you were asked to fill in a section labeled «looking for». One frequently chosen option was «random play». When you poked someone, an indication of that simply showed up on their profile. That person could poke you back. For at least some, the interaction had a distinctly sexual meaning. Many people, on the other hand, found practical and wholesome uses for Thefacebook: creating study groups for classes, arranging meetings for clubs, and

posting notices about parties. Thefacebook was a tool for self-expression, and even at this primordial stage of its development people were starting to recognize that there were many facets of the self that could be projected on its screen.

Though Thefacebook may have appeared as the digital version of the facebook printed by Harvard administration to create acquaintances among the new-comers, from the beginning there was one very obvious difference. The photos taken by college photographers the first week of school were often awkwardly posed, poorly lit, and unflattering, while the ones people posted of themselves on Thefacebook tended to cast them in a very positive light. These were the young superstars of tomorrow, as envisioned by them.

Amelia Lester, a columnist for the Harvard paper *The Crimson*, wrote in the second article ever written about Thefacebook that «while Thefacebook.com isn't explicitly about bringing people together in romantic unions, there are plenty of other primal instincts evident at work here: an element of wanting to belong, a dash of vanity and more than a little voyeurism» (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 34). These characteristics pinpointed by Lester would from then onwards form a central part of Facebook's appeal for anyone who joined in. Another important early dynamic had to do with the allure of Thefacebook, for having begun in Harvard, the most exclusive halls of all academia. As a Harvard connection makes any product less suspect, to join a social network that began at Harvard might have seemed perfectly natural to anyone with a high opinion of himself. As Kirkpatrick tells us in detail in *The Facebook Effect*, curiosity and a high desire to belong to several social circles were the triggering forces in the extremely rapid spread of the seemingly innocent service.

«Friending» on Thefacebook, had an element of competitiveness from the very beginning, as it also had on Friendster and MySpace. If your roommate had 300 friends and you only had 100, you resolved to do better. ... Perfecting the details of your own profile in order to make yourself a more attractive potential friend occupied a considerable amount of time for many of these newly networked Ivy Leaguers. Find exactly the right picture. Change it regularly. Consider carefully how you describe your interests. Since everyone's classes were listed, some students even began selecting what they studied in order to project a certain image of themselves. And many definitely selected classes based on who Thefacebook indicated would be joining them there. A subtle form of stalking became almost a routine – if someone looked interesting, you set out to get to know them. The more friends you already shared the easier that process would usually turn out to be. Your «facebook» as profiles on the service began to be called, increasingly became your public face. It defined your identity. People spent hours and hours visiting the profiles of other students, initially just at their own school but soon across There wasn't that much you could do there except maintain your own profile, add friends, poke people, and view the profiles of others. Nonetheless, students spent thousands

of hours examining every nook and cranny of others' profiles. You could ask Thefacebook to display ten random students from your school for you to peruse, or you could search for people based on various parameters. The latent nosiness and prurience of an entire generation had been engaged (2010: 92-93).

A while later, Zuckerberg, Moskovitz, and Parker had coined a term for how students seemed to use the site: «the trance»: Once you started combing through Thefacebook it was very easy to just keep going. «It was hypnotic» says Parker, «You'd just keep clicking and clicking and clicking from profile to profile, viewing the data» (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 93). Shortly after they got used to the service, many students began to abandon their address books because they could use Thefacebook to contact anyone by simply entering their name. You did not need to remember or store anyone's email address. And if you wanted to reach someone immediately, almost everyone listed both their mobile number and their instant-message address in their profile. The anonymous identities of the chat rooms were history now. The internet had entered a different era. It was becoming *personal*.

The following years witnessed the importance of creating an online identity on Facebook in particular and on the social networking sites in general. As was the case with narcissurfing, whatever you did on Facebook also contributed to your digital life online, made it somehow even more significant than your actual life and even reflected upon it. As the social status within the society moved from the physical to the digital presences, building our brand identities became more and more significant gradually.

To illustrate the weight Facebook has gained in our lives, we can observe the case of a new course that attracts a lot of student attention at Stanford University syllabus, as of 2008: Psychology of Facebook. Professor Fogg, a pioneering persuasion psychologist that is teaching the course says, «When Facebook came along ... what struck me was how there was this new form of persuasion. This is mass interpersonal persuasion». He stresses that, Facebook's unbridled success lies in getting users to do the work for them with friends persuading friends to post pictures, comments, or upload applications. Each week the class dissects an aspect of Facebook and looks at the way it works, the psychology behind it and what impression users are trying to convey. The activities that they undertake range from examining status updates to news feeds and from poking to writing comments. Over a random sample of replies to the question «How do you want to be regarded based only on your profile picture», Professor Fogg says that behind even the innocent act of posting a profile picture, the psychology of persuasion in managing your image or the impression you give off is at play (Shiels, 2008).

Indeed, one important feature of Facebook had a very significant role for blurring the last boundary between image and identity, as well as the frontier that separated our concepts of private and public: The photos application that was integrated to the Facebook experience in the fall of 2005.

A few weeks after it hit 5 million users, Facebook still allowed only one profile photo. The users were changing that photo very frequently, sometimes more than once a day. They clearly wanted to be able to post more photos. In the meantime, photo hosting was exploding on the internet. Earlier that year Yahoo had acquired *Flickr*, a pioneering service that allowed users to upload photos for free, and was very creative with something called «tagging». A tag was inserted by the photographer when s/he uploaded the photo, to label it based upon its content. The user was able to tag a single photo as «landscape», «Venice» and «gondola». The tagged photos could later be searched for based on their tags.

Hence Facebook created its own photos application which like many other similar services on the internet, allowed users to upload their photos and include them in online albums, and enabled others to comment on them. One feature of the service distinguished it from its predecessors: Facebook photos would be tagged in just one way – with the names of the people in them. Though it sounds elementary, it had never been done before. On Facebook, you would only be able to tag people who had confirmed they were your friends. People who were tagged received a message alerting them about it, and an icon appeared next to their name on the lists of friends that appeared on each user's page.

Photos application was built in a way to encourage the «Facebook trance» that kept people clicking through pages on the service. It made looking at photos simple and addictive. The photos were compressed into much smaller digital files, so that when they appeared on Facebook they were significantly lower in resolution than the originals. That meant they would upload faster, so users could select a number of photos on their PC and see them online within minutes.

Would people accept low-resolution photos? Would they use the tags? On the day in late October when the team turned the Photos application on, they nervously watched a big monitor that displayed every picture as it was uploaded. The first image was a cartoon of a cat. They looked at each other worriedly. Then in a minute or so they started seeing photos of girls – girls in groups, girls at parties, girls shooting photos of other girls. And these photos were being tagged! The girls just kept coming. For every screenful of shots of girls there were only a few photos of guys. Girls were celebrating their friendships. There was no limit to how many photos people could upload, and girls were putting up tons of them (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 155-156).

As Facebook made its way to being the world's favorite album, ordinary photos had become, in effect, more articulate. They conveyed a casual message. When it was tagged, a photo on Facebook expressed and elaborated on your friend relationships. Pretty quickly the Facebook team, as well as the users learned people were sharing these photos to basically say «I consider these people part of my life and I

want to show everyone I'm close to them». Now there were two ways on Facebook to demonstrate how popular you were: how many friends you had, and how many times you had been tagged in photos.

The Facebook team had also stumbled onto a perfect new use for photographs in the age of digital photography. More and more people were starting to carry cell phones with built-in cameras, using the cameras for quick snaps of daily activities. If you always had a camera with you, you could take a picture simply to record something that happened and then put it on Facebook to tell friends about it right away. The tags on a photo automatically linked it to people throughout the site. This was very different from the way photos were generally used on MySpace. MySpace was a world of carefully posed glamour shots, uploaded by subjects to make them look attractive. In Facebook, photos were no longer little amateur works of art, but rather a basic form of communication.

In short order the photos feature became the most popular photo site on the internet and the most popular feature of Facebook. A month after it launched, **85%** of the service's users had been tagged in at least one photo. According to the Digital Life Scale results, only **8.1%** of the participants have indicated not having uploaded any photos or videos that show who they are. **24.7%** of the users have 0-10 photos, **18.8%** have 11-50 photos, **11.3%** have 51-100 photos and **17.5%** have more than 100 photos that indicate their identity.

The photos application was very intelligently set, so that everyone was being pulled in whether or not they wanted to be. Most users had their profile set up so that if someone tagged them in a photo they received an alert by email. Who wouldn't go look at each new picture of themselves once they got that email? After the photos feature launched people began to come back to Facebook more often, since there was something new to see more often. This thrilled Zuckerberg, whose primary measure of the service's success was how often users returned. A full 70% of students were now coming back every day, and 85% at least once a week. This was astonishing customer loyalty for any internet service, or any business of any kind, for that matter.

Facebook's rise continued with the integration of News Feed which was ordinary everyday information about what your friends were doing and what they were interested in. Now your every move on Facebook might become news for your friends. On campuses, the near-total penetration of Facebook at U.S. high schools and colleges has rendered traditional campus print media – the newspaper and the yearbook – far less urgent. People find out what's going on and who's doing what on Facebook. It's possible that focusing on this diurnal news may make people care less about serious events more distant from them – those people dying in Africa, for instance. It is one of Facebook's media-altering features and one of the many important Facebook-related social questions that deserve further study.

Sean Parker, who helped Zuckerberg develop his basic views about the service, is passionate about Facebook's importance in altering the landscape of media. In his view, individuals now determine what their friends see as much as the editor at the local newspaper did in simpler times. Facebook permits your friends to construct for you a personalized news portal that functions somewhat like the portals of Yahoo or Microsoft. If we see a friend post a link to something in a field that they are known to be expert in or passionate about, we are more likely to click it than to click something that shows up on our MyYahoo home page. And in the inadvertent spirit of a gift economy, in return we frequently post links to things we find interesting, useful, or amusing. The ever-intellectual self-educated Parker calls it «networks of people acting as a decentralized relevancy filter» (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 295).

Largely because of the efficiency of this process, Facebook has become one of the top drivers of traffic to major media websites, often behind only Google. Facebook is almost already challenging conventional media financially, by, along with other websites, drawing away the lucrative brand advertising that has been a mainstay of TV, magazines, and newspapers. But Facebook's social transforming powers are not only limited to the media, if not to all businesses and the way people relate to them.

A world, in which each individual has a clear window into the contributions of everyone else, potlatch-style, does not dovetail well with how most companies are run. While employees of just about every company in America are on Facebook in force, its intersection with the classically structured corporation has been awkward and clumsy so far. Gary Hamel, one of the great theorists of modern management, considers that inevitable. «The social transformation now happening on the web» he explains, «will totally transform how we think about organizations large and small». Hamel says historically there have been only two basic ways to, as he puts it, «aggregate and amplify human capabilities». They were bureaucracy and markets. «Then in the last ten years we have added a third – networks. That helps us work together on complex tasks, but it also destroys the power of the elite to determine who gets heard» (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 298-299) Once the *exclusive brands* are not selected by the ruling classes of the society, everybody has the democratic right to promote her/his brand on the online network and do their best to be *selected*.

Several stories about how the private and public lives merge indicate us the power of this contradiction. Elites, such as the managers of the typical corporation, seldom willingly surrender power and authority. John Hagel, author and strategy consultant says: «Companies are facing the same issues that individuals are facing, which is the degree of transparency and openness that's appropriate. ... But in general individuals are moving more rapidly and developing more appropriate social practices than institutions are». This is one of several reasons why many companies now restrict the use of Facebook in the office.

The spread of Facebook as a medium of communication so far has been too rapid for most management levels to have understood what it means. Few companies and few executives, however, have embraced Facebook in the enterprise. When they do they almost universally encounter social dynamics that unsettle the corporate power equilibrium. At Serena Software, a Silicon Valley company that was running out of gas as a provider of software for mainframe computers, new CEO Jeremy Burton turned to Facebook in late 2007 as a tool to shake up a hidebound, old-school corporate culture. Serena even set aside a couple of hours weekly on what it called «Facebook Fridays» for employees to establish Facebook connections with co-workers, suppliers, customers, and anyone else.

Burton became Facebook friends with hundreds of Serena's nine hundred employees. As a result, Burton gained useful insights into how Serena functioned day to day. Employees casually posted details about their jobs and sent him surprisingly candid Facebook messages. «People feel more comfortable telling the CEO things on Facebook than they ever would in person or with email» he says. «They feel it's more informal». But informality comes with other costs. Burton's much younger brother in England sometimes bluntly disagreed with what Burton said on Facebook, in full view of employees and other friends (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 299).

With the elites and the professionals of the media sector out of the way or at least moved to the side, though the content is created in a more democratic manner, one cannot help but notice a deterioration of style. Yet, it is not only a decline in the quality of daily communication content, but also the material that identities are made of.

Here is another question: Given that the significant percentage of user-generated content either follows the templates and conventions set up by professional entertainment industry, or directly re-uses professionally produced content (for instance, anime music videos), does this mean that people's identities and imagination are now even more firmly colonized by commercial media than in the twentieth century? In other words: Is the replacement of *mass consumption of commercial culture* in the twentieth century by mass production of cultural objects by users in the early twenty-first century is a progressive development? Or does it constitute a further stage in the development of «culture industry» as analyzed by Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer in their 1944 book *The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception*? Indeed, if the twentieth century subjects were simply consuming the products of culture industry, twenty-first century prosumers and «pro-ams» [professional-amateurs] are passionately imitating it. That is, they now make their own cultural products that follow the templates established by the professionals and/or rely on professional content (Manovich, 2008: 36).

Yet, though the tools differ, the deterioration of culture was already a process started long ago and cannot be attributed to the presence of the participatory web only.

The increase in material culture and the lag in individual culture I will now contrast this discussion of the general concept of culture with a specific relationship within contemporary culture. If one compares our culture with that of a hundred years ago, then one may surely say – subject to many individual exceptions – that the things that determine and surround our lives, such as tools, means of transport, the products of science, technology and art, are extremely refined. Yet individual culture, at least in the higher strata, has not progressed at all to the same extent; indeed, it has even frequently declined. This does not need to be shown in detail. I only wish, therefore, to emphasize some aspects of it. Linguistic possibilities for expression, in German as well as in French, have become much more refined and subtle in the last hundred years. Not only do we now have Goethe's language, but in addition we have a large number of refinements, subtleties and individual modes of expression. Yet, if one looks at the speech and writing of individuals, they are on the whole increasingly less correct, less dignified and more trivial. In terms of content, the scope of objects of conversation has been widened during that time through advances in theory and practice, yet, nonetheless, it seems that conversation, both social as well as intimate and in the exchange of letters, is now more superficial, less interesting and less serious than at the end of the eighteenth century (Simmel, 2004: 453).

Nevertheless, in its new, informal and immediate form of communication, Facebook as a medium did change several things on the web and created a form of spreading things as never seen before.

As a fundamentally new form of communication, Facebook leads to fundamentally new interpersonal and social effects. The Facebook Effect happens when the service puts people in touch with each other, often unexpectedly, about a common experience, interest, problem, or cause. This can happen at a small or large scale – from a group of two or three friends or a family, to millions, as in Colombia. Facebook's software makes information viral. Ideas on Facebook have the ability to rush through groups and make many people aware of something almost simultaneously, spreading from one person to another and on to many with unique ease – like a virus, or meme. You can send messages to other people even if you're not explicitly trying to (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 7-8).

This was a power that was never before given to the ordinary individual. The power of media, the possibility of reaching masses was now down to the individual, though the percentage of the users that really use this power effectively is more praised than practised.

Large-scale broadcast of information was formerly the province of electronic media – radio and television. But the Facebook Effect – in cases like Colombia or Iran – means ordinary individuals are initiating the broadcast. You don't have to know anything special or have any particular skills. Twitter is another service with a more limited range of functions that can also enable powerful broadcasting over the internet by any individual. It too has had significant political impact. ... The Facebook Effect can be no less powerful as a tool for marketers,

provided they can figure out how to invoke it, a topic we will explore in greater depth later. Similarly, the Facebook Effect has potentially profound implications for media. On Facebook, everyone can be an editor, a content creator, a producer, and a distributor. All the classic old-media hats are being worn by everyone. The Facebook Effect can create a sudden convergence of interest among people in a news story, a song, or a YouTube video (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 8-9).

From its dorm-room days, Facebook has looked simple, clean, and uncluttered. Zuckerberg has long had an interest in elegant interface design. On his own Facebook profile he lists his interests: «openness, breaking things, revolutions, information flow, minimalism, making things, eliminating desire for all that really doesn't matter».

Despite the founder's interest in minimalism, however, there is much about Facebook that inclines toward excess. Facebook is all information all the time. Each month about 20 billion pieces of content are posted there by members – a including web links, news stories, photos, etc. It's by far the largest photo-sharing site on the internet, for instance, with about 3 billion photos added each month. Not to mention the innumerable trivial announcements, weighty pronouncements, political provocations, birthday greetings, flirtations, invitations, insults, wisecracks, bad jokes, deep thoughts, and of course, pokes. There's still a lot of stuff on Facebook that probably really doesn't matter (Kirkpatrick, 2010: 11-12).

On Facebook, enhancements to the actual self are very frequent and less subtle than we all imagine. As an image can say more than a thousand words, putting up a picture of mine riding a beautiful horse within a wonderful landscape of greens, when I have tried horse-riding only once in my life, could easily be connected my narcissistic wish to connect my identity to this aristocratic snapshot. And as what is placed on Facebook, stays on Facebook *forever* or until removed, checking out my identity by clicking through my photos, it is quite easy for another user for this smart media-trick for enhancing my brand image. Facebook, after all, has converted itself to the biggest medium of advertising, did it not?

When popularity sells, *friendship* could easily become the valid currency. As indicated by various researchers, interestingly, one's Facebook friends rapidly turn into one's social capital, and then friend count starts to be important, while the concept of *friend* is evacuated with the same ease. Nicole Ellison, Charles Steinfeld and Cliff Lampe (2007) discuss the relationship between Facebook and the formation and maintenance of social capital in «The Benefits of Facebook 'Friends'». Their research provides insights onto how Facebook usage reflects back upon actual life, while in addition it also highlights that Facebook usage was found to interact with measures of psychological well-being, suggesting that it might provide greater benefits for users experiencing low self-esteem and low life satisfaction (2007: 11). Further insight into Facebook usage patterns can be gleaned from the Figures 5.10 & 5.11 below, which show what elements respondents report including in their Facebook profile and who they

believe has seen their profiles, respectively. The fact that nearly all Facebook users, 96%, include their high school name in their profile suggests that maintaining connections to former high school classmates is a strong motivation for using Facebook. Not surprisingly, 97% of the participants report that high school friends had seen their profile. Ninety percent or more also reported that other friends as well as people in their classes had seen their profile, further suggesting an offline component to Facebook use.

As the figures below suggest, students view the primary audience for their profile to be people with whom they share an offline connection. This is suggested as well by the responses to items about how they use Facebook. This evidence suggests that students use Facebook primarily to maintain existing offline relationships or to solidify what would otherwise be ephemeral, temporary acquaintanceships. The survey conducted among college students to verify the hypothesis indicated that across all four years in school, respondents reported greater use of Facebook for connecting with existing offline contacts.

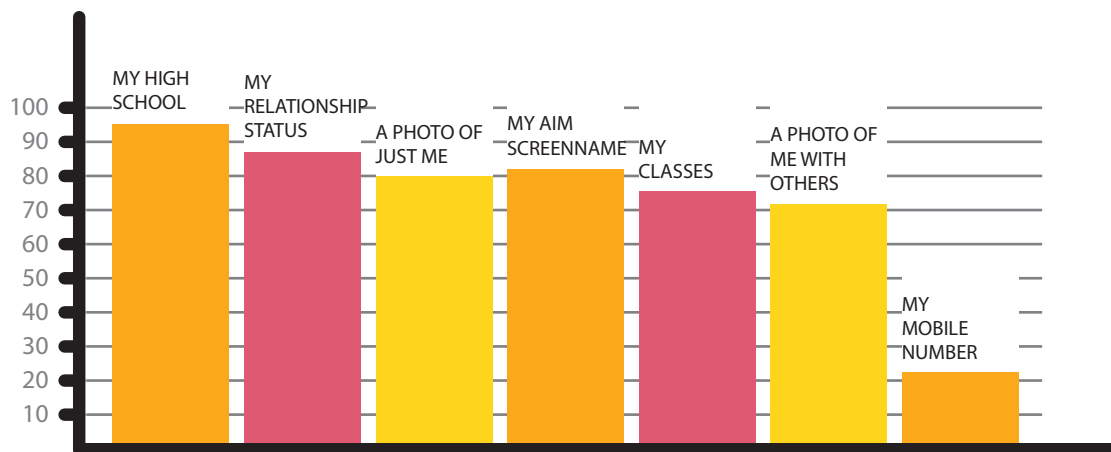


Figure 5.10 - Self-reported elements in respondents' Facebook profiles. Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe, 2007.

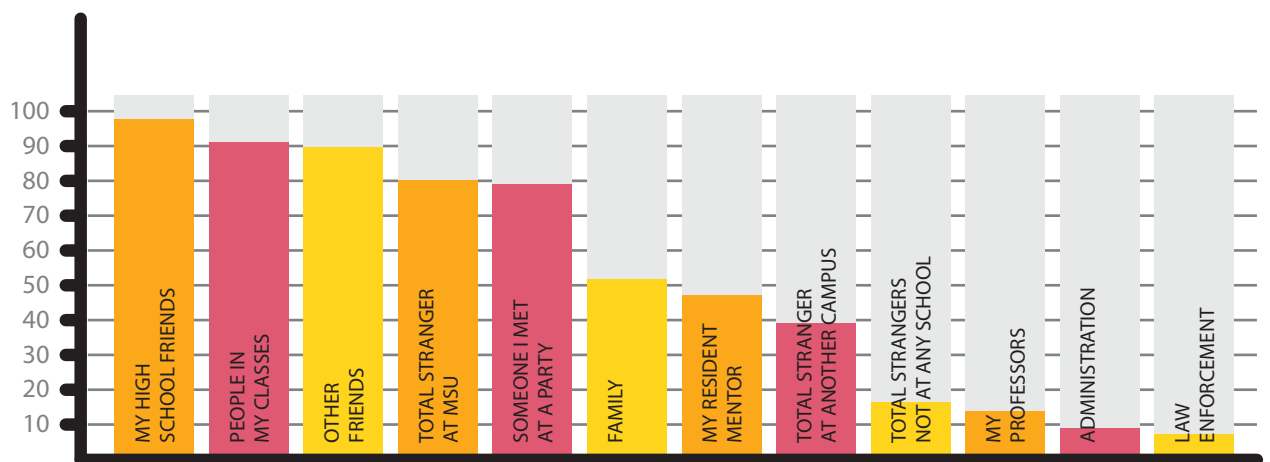


Figure 5.11 - Perceived audience for respondents' Facebook profiles. Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe, 2007.

Our first dimension of social capital – bridging – assessed the extent to which participants were integrated into the MSU community, their willingness to support the community, and the extent to which these experiences broadened their social horizons or worldview. Our findings suggest that certain kinds of Facebook use (articulated by our Facebook intensity items) can help students accumulate and maintain bridging social capital. This form of social capital – which is closely linked to the notion of «weak ties» – seems well-suited to social software applications, as suggested by Donath and boyd (2004), because it enables users to maintain such ties cheaply and easily. Although more research is needed to understand the nature of this trend, we suspect that Facebook serves to lower the barriers to participation so that students who might otherwise shy away from initiating communication with or responding to others are encouraged to do so through Facebook's affordances (Ellison, Steinfeld & Lampe, 2007: 20).

When Facebook becomes a tool for managing one's social capital and to show it off to the world, a significant variable to fulfill this objective becomes the number of Facebook friends one has. In this perspective, as the number rises the tendency to interpret it as mass communication, as a type of broadcast to acquaintances strengthens. British anthropologist Robin Dunbar theorized a cognitive limit to the number of people with whom one can maintain stable social relationships, commonly known as «Dunbar's number». Dunbar has conducted a research revealing that while social networking sites allow us to maintain more relationships, the number of meaningful friendships is the same as it has been throughout history. These are relationships in which an individual knows who each person is, and how each person relates to every other person. Proponents assert that numbers larger than this generally require more restrictive rules, laws, and enforced norms to maintain a stable, cohesive group. No precise value has been proposed for Dunbar's number, but a commonly cited approximation is 150 (Gladwell, 2000: 179). On the periphery, the number also includes past colleagues such as high school friends with whom a person would want to reacquaint themselves if they met again (Bialik, 2007). Goffman had quoted Radcliffe-Brown on a similar perspective in 1959, once again, suggesting that the idea is not new to the contemporary online communications but to the social functioning of the human being in general.

Radcliffe-Brown has suggested this in his claim that a «descriptive» kinship system which gives each person a unique place may work for very small communities, but, as the number of persons become large, clan segmentation becomes necessary as a means of providing a less complicated system of identifications and treatments (Goffman, 1959: 26).

Dunbar has argued that 150 would be the mean group size only for communities with a very high incentive to remain together. For a group of this size to remain cohesive, Dunbar speculated that as much as 42% of the group's time would have to be devoted to social grooming. Moreover, Dunbar noted that such groups are almost always physically close: «... we might expect the upper limit on

group size to depend on the degree of social dispersal. In dispersed societies, individuals will meet less often and will thus be less familiar with each, so group sizes should be smaller in consequence» (Dunbar, 2010: 44-45).

Dunbar, in *Grooming, Gossip, and the Evolution of Language* (1996), proposes furthermore that language may have arisen as a «cheap» means of social grooming, allowing early humans to efficiently maintain social cohesion. Without language, Dunbar speculates, humans would have to expend nearly half their time on social grooming, which would have made productive, cooperative effort nearly impossible. Language may have allowed societies to remain cohesive, while reducing the need for physical and social intimacy.

Hence our audience for advertising ourselves on Facebook ranges from «sort of friends» to acquaintances, nonetheless as to the concept of friendship, something just is not right in this type of communication. As a twenty-year-old participant of the Preliminary Facebook Survey from Spain indicated, the use of Facebook is not for knowing how your close friends are doing: «Well, besides the quantity of the time wasted on Facebook, it is OK for seeing what the acquaintances are upto, because if they are really your friends, you would already know what they are doing (or you should know at least). It also helps you to get to know these people that you didn't know very well before befriending them on Facebook». Hence our public self-expression on Facebook is for an audience that we barely know and that barely knows us, which once again brings us back to Goffman point that we undertake our social roles in this type of social interaction.

In every social interaction, individuals have two tracks to choose from (and usually choose both). On the one hand, because they are obliged to show self-respect, this leads them to take on a «defensive orientation» in which they carefully monitor their actions to avoid potentially embarrassing and discrediting encounters; on the other hand, individuals are morally required to show respect, ritual honor and care, toward others, and this leads them to adopt a «protective orientation» in which they endeavor to save other's face through tactful and courteous behavior. Thus, the goal of facework is to maintain the «ritual equilibrium» of everyday social life through ceremonial rules and expressions: little salutations, compliments, and apologies. These common courtesies, these «gestures which we sometimes call empty,» Goffman writes, «are perhaps in fact the fullest things of all» (Goffman as cited in Treviño, 2003: 37).

In the past year, social scientists have begun looking more broadly at the aggregate value of social media. According to a number of recent studies, it now seems possible that the networks' millions of posts and status updates are adding up to something culturally and financially priceless. All the lifecasting on online social networks is adding upto very valuable data for the brands to know their

clients. While the brands use social media as social index, in the meantime the clients learn from their brands how to promote their brand selves better.

This past April, for instance, Sitaram Asur and Bernardo Huberman at HP Labs demonstrated that by analyzing the positive or negative sentiments expressed in 2.8 million Twitter messages about 24 movies, they could predict how the films would perform at the box office. Their methodology – an algorithm, actually, that their company is now in the process of patenting – worked significantly better than the Hollywood Stock Exchange, another popular tool for predicting box-office success. In October, a team led by Johan Bollen at Indiana University reported that by classifying 9.7 million Twitter posts as falling into one of six mood categories (happiness, kindness, alertness, sureness, vitality and calmness) they could predict changes in the Dow Jones Industrial Average. As Bollen explains, when he began his study, he expected that the mood on Twitter would be a reflection of up and down movements in the stock market. He never imagined it would be a precursor (Gertner, 2010).

Fredric Jameson's work on «the cultural logic of late capitalism» is of relevance at this point. The idea of «late capitalism» involves the view that we have witnessed «a prodigious expansion of capital into hitherto uncommodified areas» (Jameson, 1984: 78). Clearly, the expansion of the consumer society has commodified many things not heretofore commodified and it has brought commodification into more and more areas of the world as well as into more realms of everyday life. Today, with the mass communication possibilities provided by Web 2.0 and the social media YOU are the product that you put on the market, be it for pursuing a better job or for better personal relationships.

The website *celineislookingforafashionjob.com* provides a perfect illustration of the brand self and the website speaks for itself without the need for further explanation. On this site, a 23-year-old Celine Cavalliero provides her curriculum and everything that she ever realized related to fashion in order to pursue a nice fashion job. Even the site is designed in a fashion magazine format, and the package is completed with Facebook and Twitter links to Celine's social media links as well as with a link to her fashion blog.

Modern man has transformed himself into a commodity; he experiences his life energy as an investment with which he should make the highest profit, considering his position and the situation on the personality market. He is alienated from himself, from his fellow men and from nature. His main aim is profitable exchange of his skills, knowledge and of himself, his 'personality package' with others who are equally intent on a fair and profitable exchange. Life has no goal except the one to move, no principle except the one of fair exchange, no satisfaction except the one to consume (Fromm, 1957: 82).

Certainly, our brand identity/images are constructed and presented in the most favorable light possible. Nonetheless, what we have earlier discussed for Facebook performances do not light up a completely

new chapter on human social behaviour. Once again, we observe the social presentation rules that govern face-to-face encounters moving onto the digital performances, to be performed to a bigger, digital crowd that is not present.

The notion that a performance presents an idealized view of the situation is, of course, quite common. Cooley's view may be taken as an illustration: If we never tried to seem a little better than we are, how could we ever improve or «train ourselves from the outside inward?» And the same impulse to show the world a better or idealized aspect of ourselves finds an organized expression in the various professions and classes, each of which has to some extent a cant or pose, which its members assume unconsciously, for the most part, but which has the effect of a conspiracy to work upon the credulity of the rest of the world. There is a cant not only of theology and of philanthropy, but also of law, medicine, teaching, even of science – perhaps especially of science, just now, since the more a particular kind of merit is recognized and admired, the more it is likely to be assumed by the unworthy (Goffman, 1959: 35).

But why do we perform the roles that we perform? A subtle example comes from Goffman once again. In *The Presentation of the Self* (1959), Goffman also discusses the process of idealization whereby individuals or teams act to project an idealized image of self or definition of a situation, attempting to conceal realities that might discredit the idealized image. The nature of these projected idealizations, however, seems to vary widely according to the relative social rank of the person making them. While we typically think of idealization as involving a concealment of negative attributes or discrediting



Figure 5.12 - Céline is looking for a fashion job and she promotes her own brand online (2011).

behaviors so as to enhance one's image in the eyes of others, Goffman gives a number of examples of classes of persons who have had to «idealize» themselves downward. In particular, he refers to blacks in southern states playing up their «ignorant, shiftless, happy-go-lucky manner,» American college girls playing down their «intelligence, skills, and determinativeness when in the presence of datable boys,» or poor families playing up their poverty for a visiting welfare agent (Goffman, 1959: 38-40). In some cases, an instrumental purpose may motivate such performances. More often, perhaps, these downward idealizations of self may occur as a response to the expectations of others' in social situations and can best be understood as an effort to «maintain face» or, in other words, to avoid presenting oneself as more worthy than others are prepared to admit. In some instances, downward idealization may be called for on the part of one individual to bolster the image of another, as when a wife plays up her subordination to her husband in the presence of others or when a subordinate withholds open expression of disagreement with a superordinate (Treviño, 2003: 106-107).

American college girls did, and no doubt do, play down their intelligence, skills, and determinativeness when in the presence of datable boys, thereby manifesting a profound psychic discipline in spite of their international reputation for flightiness. These performers are reported to allow their boyfriends to explain things to them tediously that they already know; they conceal proficiency in mathematics from their less able consorts, they lose ping-pong games just before the ending: «One of the nicest techniques is to spell long words incorrectly once in a while. My boyfriend seems to get a great kick out of it and writes back, 'Honey, you certainly don't know how to spell'» (Goffman, 1959: 39).

A status, a position, a social place is not a material thing, to be possessed and then displayed; it is a pattern of appropriate conduct, coherent, embellished, and well articulated. According to Goffman, whether it is performed with ease or clumsiness, awareness or not, guile or good faith, it is none the less something that must be enacted and portrayed, something that must be realized.

Performers may be sincere – or be insincere but sincerely convinced of their own sincerity – but this kind of affection for one's part is not necessary for its convincing performance. This suggests that while persons usually are what they appear to be, such appearances could still have been managed. ... In short, we all act better than we know how (Goffman, 1959: 71-74).

Even when we consider our social performances as roles and not our real selves, be it for the sake of impression management or a higher objective, the socialization process not only transfigures momentarily, it also fixes:

But whether the visage we assume be a joyful or a sad one, in adopting and emphasizing it we define our sovereign temper. Henceforth, so long as we continue under the spell of this self-knowledge, we do not merely live but act; we compose and play our chosen character, we wear the buskin of deliberation, we defend and idealize our passions, we encourage ourselves

eloquently to be what we are, devoted or scornful or careless or austere; we soliloquize (before an imaginary audience) and we wrap ourselves gracefully in the mantle of our inalienable part. So draped, we solicit applause and expect to die amid a universal hush. We profess to live up to the fine sentiments we have uttered, as we try to believe in the religion we profess. The greater our difficulties, the greater our zeal. Under our published principles and plighted language we must assiduously hide all the inequalities of our moods and conduct, and this without hypocrisy, since our deliberate character is more truly ourself than is the flux of our involuntary dreams. The portrait we paint in this way and exhibit as our true person may well be in the grand manner, with column and curtain and distant landscape and finger pointing to the terrestrial globe or to the Yorick-skull of philosophy; but if this style is native to us and our art is vital, the more it transmutes its model the deeper and truer art it will be. The severe bust of an archaic sculpture, scarcely humanizing the block, will express a spirit far more justly than the man's dull morning looks or casual grimaces. Everyone who is sure of his mind, or proud of his office, or anxious about his duty assumes a tragic mask. He deposes it to be himself and transfers to it almost all his vanity. While still alive and subject, like all existing things, to the undermining flux of his own substance, he has crystallized his soul into an idea, and more in pride than in sorrow he has offered up his life on the altar of the Muses. Self-knowledge, like any art or science, renders its subject-matter in a new medium, the medium of ideas, in which it loses its old dimensions and its old place. Our animal habits are transmuted by conscience into loyalties and duties, and we become «persons» or masks (Santayana as cited in Goffman, 1959: 36).

Image already became identity.

5.4 Chapter Conclusions



After the loss of the real for the hyperreal, and the flesh for the pixel, writing in the shadow of Marshall McLuhan, Baudrillard insists that the content of communication is completely without *meaning*, where the only thing that is *communicated* is *communication itself*. Hence we find ourselves in a universe where there is more and more information, and less and less meaning.

Today online social networking has extended all over the planet and Facebook is the world's largest social networking site. It is quite unusual to meet a high school or college student who does not routinely use Facebook or MySpace, as social networking has become a familiar and ubiquitous part of mainstream internet use. Nonetheless, the features and characteristics that made Facebook very appealing to over 750 million users across the planet today also triggered the social transformations that followed.

Traditionally self-image is constructed through imitations of, or identifications with, people around the subject, real or heroic imaginary figures; throughout the development of narcissism and the setting up of the ideal ego, the ego ideal, and the superego. It is important to clarify that the self-image also depends on how others see and assess us. Complementing the notion of self-image, are the feeling of competence – which is the cognitive construction corresponding to the image construction of the Other, that each of us is subject to on the cognitive, social and physical levels – and the highly related feeling of self-esteem.

On any online social network, socialization is measured according to the exposure through media messages. But what happens to the identity when all the meaning has gone astray? Who is communicating in this network stripped of meaning? What is it that we communicate with our meticulously edited online identities hidden behind the digital images that represent us? In the absence of meaning, in the evacuation of identities, what do we have to *give*? Removing meaning tells us that the image is more important than what it speaks about, and hence our identities are left behind when we choose to communicate through our images.

It is at this point that social communication becomes advertising, and the human identity, just like any other commercial entity needs a cleverly-designed brand identity to make the best out of its marketplace. As we become objects as signs, our social values are minimized to what we choose to signify.

As Facebook has also been a platform of comparison, capitalist competitiveness highly influences over the processes of identity construction on this network. Marketing professionals, who used to think that personal branding was just for celebrities such as Paris Hilton or Britney Spears, accept and consider

each and every one of us today as a brand. Personal branding, by definition, is the process by which we market ourselves to others. As a brand, we too, can leverage the same strategies that make celebrities or corporate brands appealing to their audiences. We can build brand equity just like them. A brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol (such as a logo, trademark, or package design) intended to identify the goods or services of either one seller or a group of sellers, and to differentiate those goods or services from those of competitors. A brand thus signals to the customer the source of the product, and protects both the customer and the producer from competitors who would attempt to provide products that appear to be identical. And this is exactly what we intend to do with our brand identities – to differentiate ourselves from the others, from the crowd.

Around 1900, James Walter Thompson published a house ad explaining trademark advertising. This was an early commercial explanation of what we now know as branding. Companies soon adopted slogans, mascots, and jingles that began to appear on radio and early television. By the 1940s, manufacturers began to recognize the way in which consumers were developing relationships with their brands in a social/psychological/anthropological sense. From there, manufacturers quickly learned to build their brand's identity and personality, such as youthfulness, fun or luxury. This began the practice we now know as «branding» today, where the consumers buy «the brand» instead of the product.

In the advanced *culture of narcissism* what Lasch once defined to be true of the propaganda of commodities, starts to become true of the commoditized human beings, as the online social network starts to provide the means for mass communication of identities and thus the medium for the spread of the newly-formed human brands. Earlier attempts to *civilize* human beings have already given rise to a society dominated by appearances – a recreation of the society of the spectacle, where capitalism subordinated *being* to *having*. Today, what matters is not even *having*, but playing the game by its rules and *showing what you have*. Now the illusion of prosperity and well-being is completely subordinated to appearance, and our values are measured by our exchange values as commodities – or by our capacity to confer prestige through our recently constructed brand images.

The subject is no more than the funnel through which things in their irony make their appearance. The image is the ideal medium for the vast self-promotion campaign undertaken by the world and by objects – forcing our imagination into self-effacement, our passions into extraversion, and shattering the mirror which we hold out (hypocritically, moreover) in order to capture them (Baudrillard, 1993a: 153).

CHAPTER 06 | THE DIGITAL LIFE SCALE FINDINGS



CHAPTER 06

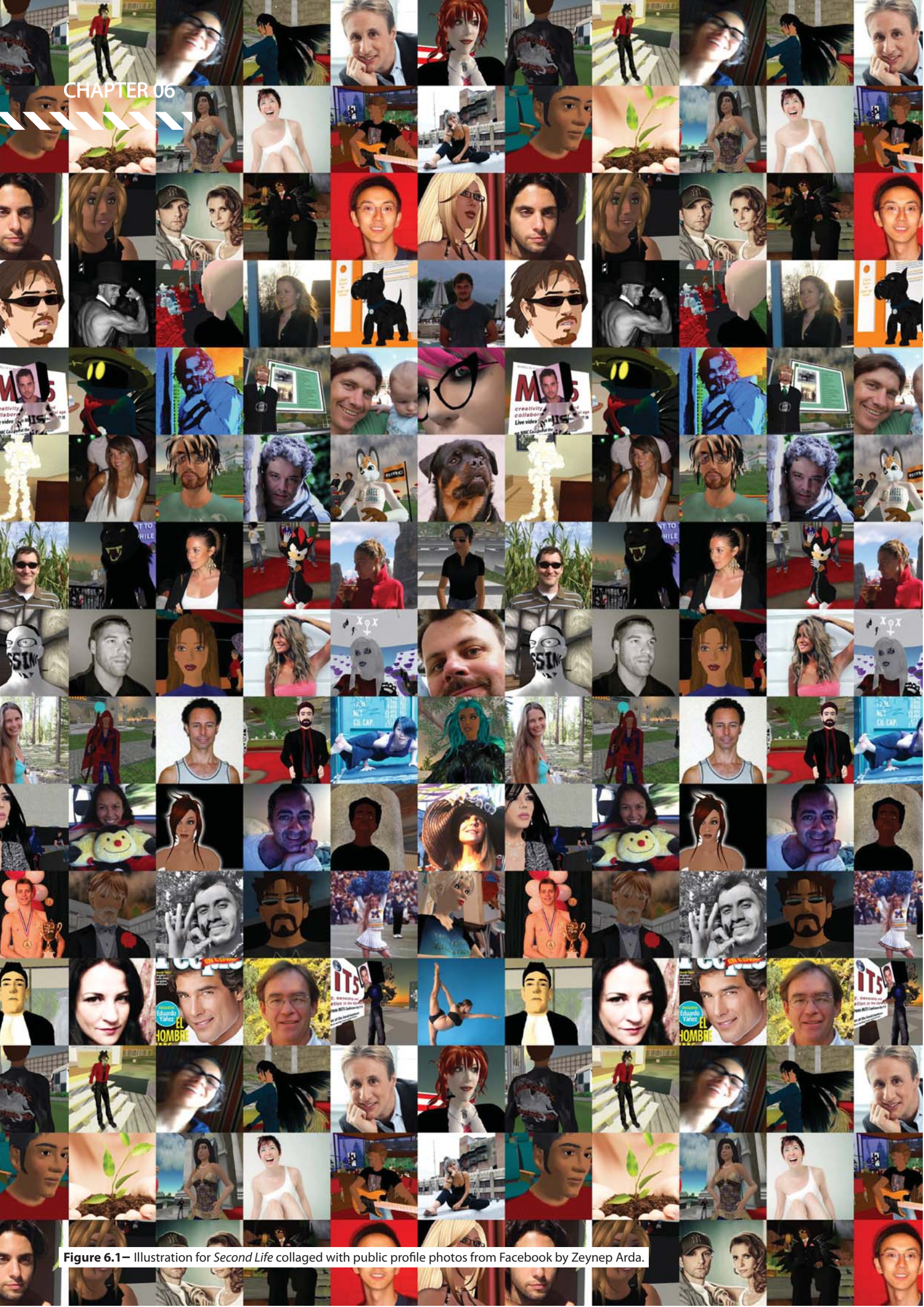


Figure 6.1— Illustration for *Second Life* collaged with public profile photos from Facebook by Zeynep Arda.

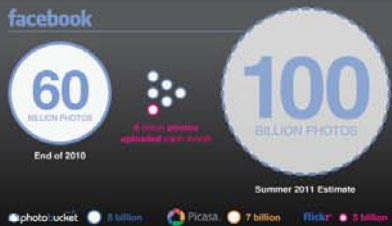
According to the data provided by *Socialbakers.com*, as of September 2011, 748,794,000 people are registered on Facebook. A Mashable article dated February 14th, 2011 confirms that Facebook has a larger photo collection than any other site on the web. According to an extrapolation of photo upload data reported by Facebook, the site now houses about 60 billion photos compared to Photobucket's 8 billion, Picasa's 7 billion and Flickr's 5 billion.

One curiosity of Facebook is that it includes so much personal information about all of us that we could even extract statistics on dog ownership worldwide, if we were interested, and were given the necessary permissions by the users of the social network. As part of this research, to be able to reach modest conclusions on how the communication configured by Facebook is affecting our identities, a specific survey was designed and conducted to reach modest conclusions on the predictions made. The *Digital Life Scale* was the name given to the online survey carried out by the author to capture field data relevant to the purposes of this dissertation. The survey was realized online during January-March 2011 and the participants were invited randomly to take the survey using the social online networks and online multi-player games where applicable. A total of **946** users participated in the survey, however for assuring the soundness of results, the incomplete responses were removed and the replies of **635** participants were considered in the phase of statistical analysis.


The participants were given five different sets of questions where the sections of Introduction, Your Social Life Online, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and NPI-16 were common sections for all of them and yet for the self-presentation sections they were asked to choose between *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *World of Warcraft* or *Second Life* questions. This choice was a forced one, as in the item INT_08, they were asked the online social network/multi-player game where they spent most of their time online and their replies divided the participants into four distinct groups. Their replies activated the relevant section regarding their choice and they were asked to reply only this section without seeing the other options that were made available to them previously.

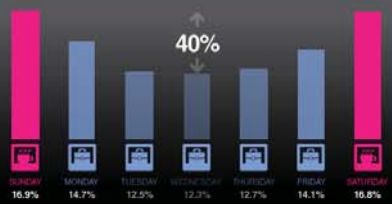
HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW ABOUT FACEBOOK PHOTOS?

Number of Photos on Facebook is exploding  and will reach 100 billion by summer 2011.

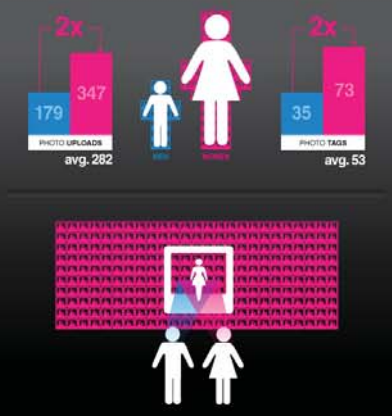


FUN FACT:
Over 750 MILLION PHOTOS WERE POSTED ON FACEBOOK DURING NEW YEAR'S EVE WEEKEND.


Photo uploads peak on weekends  42% more than mid-week.

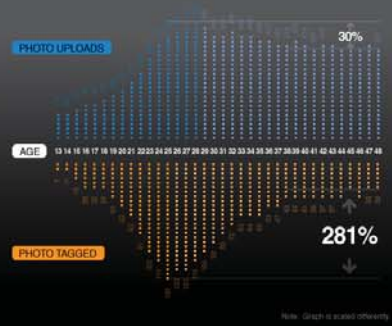


Women surpass men  with twice as many looks, uploads, and tags.

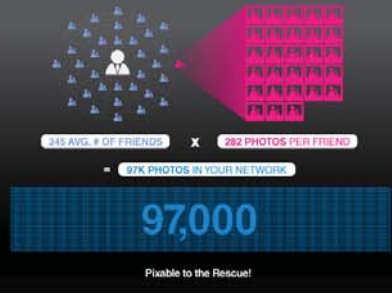


Guys prefer photos with girls.
Girls prefer photos with girls.
Pretty much everyone prefers photos with girls.
- according to research on social networks from Harvard professor Mikolaj Jan Piskorski

Older users upload as much as young users  but they're tagged less.



Number of Photos in your network is blowing up 



This categorization was made based on the wish to know the users' main focus of involvement with the social life online as well as trying to keep the survey as concise as possible to lower the percentage of incomplete survey responses. As discussed throughout the previous chapters, the initial anonymity-based computer-mediated communication that cyberspace suggested, is today taken over by the intentionally *nonanonymous*, popularity-driven communication that was brought about by Facebook. Not surprisingly, the results have indicated an undeniable dominance of Facebook within the participants of the survey, as **83.1%** of **635** participants selected to complete the Facebook section of the *Digital Life Scale*.

This highly-Facebook inclined sample posed some difficulties at the hour of making comparison between different groups of users, nonetheless supported the primary hypothesis of this dissertation that we have become highly-visible, or too-visible, regarding our online social interactions and that our online self-presentation is highly inclined towards the image that we would like to create and project upon others. Nonetheless, not having similar sample sizes for each of the four sections rendered it less significant to compare cases of anonymous self-presentation in online multi-player games with nonanonymous self-presentation in Facebook and Twitter, though some basic comparisons were nevertheless performed. In the final instance, the focus of the data analysis and the following discussion was placed on the participants that replied the Facebook section. The data collected from these participants was subjected to a detailed statistical analysis to test the major and minor hypotheses of this dissertation, while at the same time it made it possible to generate an overview of internet usage through the general analysis of the complete participant data.

Figure 6.2 – Facebook numbers in infographics. Number of photos shared on Facebook is significantly higher than any other online social network. Mashable (2011).

6.1 Method



6.1.1 Participants

A total of **946** users participated in the Digital Life Scale nevertheless, for the reliability of the results, incomplete responses were eliminated. Hence, the sample of the present study consisted of **635** internet users (385 female, 250 male) from 33 different countries. The majority of the participants (**42.4%**) were aged between 25-35 years, while the participants between 18-24 years of age also constructed a significant percentage of the overall sample with **33.2%**. Participation in the survey was deliberately not limited to a specific age group to be able to observe different approaches of the younger and elder generations in utilizing online social networks.

The survey was prepared and carried out in three languages, namely Turkish, English and Spanish. One of the reasons for choosing to conduct it in Turkish, as well as in English and Spanish, besides the origins of the author was because Facebook has a very high number of Turkish users, as indicated by the Social Bakers website that is dedicated to worldwide Facebook statistics.

Table 6.1.1a: TOP 5 Countries on Facebook

Rank	Country	Number of Users	Rank	Country	Number of Users
1.	United States	155,699,540	1.	United States	155,094,860
2.	Indonesia	36,358,100	2.	Indonesia	40,144,320
3.	United Kingdom	29,894,820	3.	India	35,623,220
4.	Turkey	28,209,920	4.	Turkey	30,534,780
5.	India	24,853,220	5.	United Kingdom	30,168,540

From socialbakers.com, retrieved on 30.04.2011 on the left and retrieved on 11.09.2011 on the right respectively.

Overall the participants of the survey were from 33 different countries. The majority of the participants were from Spain, with **62.5%**. They were followed by the Turkish and the American participants, with shares of **21.9%** and **3.6%** respectively. Germany and Mexico also had **1.7%** shares in the overall sample, while the remaining **8.6%** was from several different countries ranging from Switzerland to Zimbabwe. Participants were asked whether they were living in their country of origin or not, to be able

to observe and compare different tendencies of significance given to online social networks for the participants that were physically-separated from their native social lives.

Participants who have selected Facebook as the online social network where they spend most of their online time need to be distinguished as well, as in the following sections only this population will be evaluated. The Facebook user participants constituted **83.1%** of the overall sample. 528 out of 635 survey participants indicated Facebook to be the online social network where they spend most of their online time. In Table 6.1.1c, the categorical data for only this section of the sample, the demographic characteristics of Facebook-user participants are given.

Table 6.1.1b: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender		
Male	250	39.4
Female	385	60.6
Age Group		
[15-17]	4	0.6
[18-24]	211	33.2
[25-35]	269	42.4
[36-45]	94	14.8
[45+]	57	9.0
Country of Origin		
Spain	397	62.5
Turkey	139	21.9
U.S.A.	23	3.6
Germany	11	1.7
Mexico	11	1.7
Argentina	7	1.1
Poland	4	0.6
Ukraine	4	0.6
Rumania	4	0.6
Others	35	5.7
(U.K., Portugal, Colombia, Albania, Australia, Netherlands, Venezuela, Canada, Iran, Switzerland, Israel, Japan, Cayman Islands, Zimbabwe, Ecuador, Morocco, Honduras, Chile, Italy, Malaysia, Bulgaria, France, Croatia and Bolivia)		
I live in my country of origin		
Yes	560	88.2
No	75	11.8
Total	635	100.0

Table 6.1.1c: Demographic Characteristics of Facebook-Section Participants

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent
Gender		
Male	184	34.8
Female	344	65.2
Age Group		
[15-17]	2	0.4
[18-24]	191	36.2
[25-35]	232	43.9
[36-45]	69	13.1
[45+]	34	6.4
Country of Origin		
Spain	308	58.3
Turkey	135	25.6
U.S.A.	20	3.8
Germany	11	2.1
Mexico	8	1.5
Argentina	6	1.1
Poland	4	0.8
Ukraine	4	0.8
Others (Rumania, Portugal, U.K., Colombia, Albania, Australia, Netherlands, Venezuela, Canada, Switzerland, Japan, Cayman Islands, Zimbabwe, Equador, Morocco, Honduras, Italy, Malaysia, Bulgaria, France, Croatia, Iran and Bolivia)	32	6.0
I live in my country of origin		
Yes	462	87.5
No	66	12.5
Total	528	100.0

6.1.2 Procedure

6.1.2.1 Preliminary Facebook Survey

Prior to conducting the Digital Life Scale on the internet, to be able to control the range and content of the survey questions a generic, preliminary mini survey was carried out on Facebook during August-September, 2010. In this preliminary research, the question «What do you think of Facebook? » was sent out one by one to 670 users of this social network. In this process, instead of making a random sampling, to assure the sincerity of replies, the participants were selected from the first and second degree social networks of the author, in Facebook terminology, «Friends» and «Friends of Friends» were selected as the target audience.

The participants were sent a personal Facebook message, an email utilizing the Facebook platform, together with a personal note, using a very personal tone. The potential participants were addressed the way that they would be addressed by the author in the actual daily life. Similar to the *Digital Life Scale*, this preliminary research was carried out in three languages, Turkish, English and Spanish.

A total of **391** replies were received from several countries all around the world. The replies of the participants were evaluated one by one, and in several cases, the initial question was used as the starting point of an short personal interview.

As with many of the language-based research approaches, this preliminary survey was limited in eliciting different kinds of responses from its participants. Many people are inexperienced in transferring their thoughts about personal or social matters into the kind of opinion that would be shared with a researcher. It is also difficult to express our opinion instantly about tools that we use on a daily basis, which we use most of the time without giving it a second thought, unconsciously and with practical purposes, and obviously not with an academic curiosity. Nonetheless, this research had fully served its purpose by providing the author a check-list of points to assess, as well as some very sharp and creatively-expressed opinions from several participants.

The content of the Digital Life Scale, which was prepared prior to the preliminary Facebook survey was edited and refined according to the findings of this study. Given below is a relatively short sample from the interesting contributions made by 391 participants. To protect the anonymity of the participants who have contributed with their personal perspectives, only their gender, age and country of origin are indicated.

Table 6.1.2a: Preliminary Facebook Survey Contributions*

Male, 33 years old, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 2:56pm – [Facebook] is the best tool on internet to satisfy curiosity and once you are in, you are addicted, it is difficult to quit. Its popularity indicates that we definitely needed something like this.

Male, 20 years old, Spain / August 28, 2010 at 3:18pm – Well, besides the quantity of the time wasted on Facebook, it is OK for seeing what the acquaintances are upto, because if they are really your friends, you would already know what they are doing (or you should know at least). It also helps you to get to know these people that you didn't know very well before befriending them on Facebook.

Female, 35 years old, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 5:13pm – It's a lot of fun and it's perfect to investigate like a detective :)

Male, 48 years old, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 6:25pm – Previously we had neighbors, friends from the places that we frequented, from the streets we passed through, the coffee shops, classmates, playmates. Now we only have Facebook friends to cover all of that. Facebook is more likely to be an asocializing virtual prison, than a social platform. I'm planning to quit it. [This participant's FB account is still active]

* The pre-survey contributions in their original language can be found in Appendix 1.

Female, 26, Poland / August 28, 2010 at 6:44pm – I believe Facebook is a good idea. In Poland there is also «Nasza Klasa», which is traduced as «Our Class» and functions like Facebook. But Facebook is more popular among people. I like it because it's international, you are in contact with the people from your school, from work, from journeys etc. Thanks to Facebook, you can be up-to-date with your friends and that way, you can find out about new things, for example learn about the cities that your friends have visited. In Poland Facebook is very popular, between people, companies and politics.

Male, 35, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 12:13am – The platform which has become a part of our lives, that the Turkish people predominantly use to show off, while the foreigners use to share their good/bad news.

Male, 37, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 12:01am – Antisociality.....

Male, 58, U.S.A. / August 29, 2010 at 2:27am – I look at it to catch up with what some people are doing. Media is ok. Not sure why people post everything on it? Maybe your research can tell me?

Male, 37, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 1:56pm – Probably I am a little traditional. I think you should dedicate actual time for the friends that you want to meet and to communicate with, and that using the virtual world to catch up with friends too easy a solution. Right now I am considering whether I should quit Facebook or not. Considering the pros and cons, I couldn't quit it until now. [This participant's FB account is still active]

Female, 35, Taiwan / August 31 at 9:06am – A tool helps me connect to my network / and with possibility to keep and enrich friendship (Connecting people). - A platform where you can share and build what you like and who you are (Blog functions).

Female, 27, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 11:35pm – It definitely makes the distances shorter. I believe I express myself better with the photos that I upload, with my wall posts and the links I share. I share my feelings with others by commenting on their posts or «liking» their photos. I befriend the new people I meet on Facebook, hence get more intimate with them and get to know them better through their Facebook profiles.

Female, 30, Turkey / August 30, 2010 at 2:49pm – If we don't make it publish it that «we cooked beans today» on our Facebook profile, it is almost as if we didn't actually cook it =))) Jokes aside, in my opinion, these virtual worlds became a platform, a tool for people to feel that they «really, actually exist» =) On the other hand, I do find them very useful in terms of social networking. Especially they contribute very positively to keep in touch with loved ones that are faraway and to be up-to-date with their lives and to sustain real long distance relationships. If the use of Facebook could be maintained at this level and be limited to this motivation, it would have been wonderful for everyone and wonderful for Facebook!! But that's not how it goes =)) First of all it encourages people to carry out a continuous upward social comparison. Makes you think everybody is very happy, except for you, everybody is constantly on vacation, travelling, partying, makes you question «why the hell I can't have a life like that too?» and eventually causes you to have a false perception of yourself as well as of others. Hence I believe that it has a serious negative impact on human psychology. I don't actually believe that anyone is having a really good time checking the profiles of others on Facebook. But as everyone wants to be «in the game» somehow, everybody's there. Other than that, if you really use it as a medium, as social media, it is really helpful in terms of creating an image and/or creating a brand. I'll finish by saying: Don't let Facebook rule you, rule Facebook.

Female, 32, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 6:14pm – I actually postponed having a Facebook account for a long time. These online social networks are actually not my type of thing. However, after a while rejecting it becomes isolating yourself, because the world (and eventually my world) starts to communicate this way. And you, as you try to utilize other mediums of communication you start to obstacle the communication from the first instance. [With FB] as a person living abroad, I get closer to lives that I would have stayed very far away along many years. It makes me have a general idea about what they are doing, who they become, what they think. ... A friend of mine cancelled his FB account saying «I found myself checking out photo albums of people that I don't even know at all, I don't like my life getting so out of control». Another one did the same thing, saying «I got bored of seeing people that are not my actual friends as if they were so, and showing interest in what they are doing». It is obvious that FB is not realistic at all when it tells us we have hundreds of friends, but I still think that we should mentalize it as a network, that it shouldn't be evaluated within the concept of «friendship», and that nonetheless it is useful within certain frameworks. It's a little like the TV, you take the parts that you like, sometimes you enjoy it, sometimes you learn things and you turn it off when it displays the parts that you do not want. I don't think any one of us throws their TV to the trash claiming that we don't watch it. But we can always decide not to be its slave and make use of it appropriately.

Male, 41, Italy / August 28, 2010 at 8:36pm – Briefly: it's a useful tool for keeping in touch with present friends (80%), looking for old friends (18%) and finding new ones (2%). It's a good way to stimulate conversations, share ideas among small groups and to find help if you need it. The main risk is to become a FBaddicted, losing too much time on it, and losing contact with the «real» world. The main fault of FB is to have ruined the meaning of the word «friend».

Male, 35, Turkey / August 30, 2010 at 1:30am – For me it is not satisfying at all, sharing some virtual things with people without even hearing their voice, without not even the minimum exchange of emotions.. What I'm saying is that, wouldn't it be better if people would call one another and at least hear their voices? I think FB has an expiry date, people will start getting bored of it and will begin to see the damage it does. We will remember that it is our nature to communicate using our audiovisual senses, and we will go back to remember its joy. To sum it up, maybe it's not that important for our generation, but the virtual sharing sites like FB are dangerous for the younger ones, they grow up as a lost generation that is fed only with virtual relationships..

Female, 30, Turkey / August 29 at 11:16pm – I think it is nice as it connects me to my friends that are far away, however, on the other side, I think its useless because I don't need to inform myself about the detailed lives of sooo many people... It's like a celebrity news program on TV, you know it's useless, but you find yourself watching it fixedly, you can't change the channel etc, exactly like that :))

Female, 39, Turkey / August 29 at 10:23pm – In the electronic medium, we are expressing ourselves from a certain perspective; which is quite fictional. For example, with the way that we pose in the profile photo we chose, the activities or hobbies that we indicate, the acts, ideas and people that we support, our online

affiliations, we create an identity, whether we want to do so consciously or not, an identity that doesn't have any actual reference anywhere, that is not real. In this sense we edit and re-edit ourselves several times in Facebook. There are people that stretch this editing to the extremes. It is possible to enter FB with a fake name and formulate a new identity from scratch. There are people to setup the FB profile for a celebrity that passed away, or their relatives. People who use nicknames, very mysterious photos, caricatures or the photo of a celebrity as their profile picture. People that are there for a while and then they come back as somebody else, with new photos and everything. This is pure simulation. We create a new reality.

Female, 27, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 8:31pm – It disturbs me that Facebook is a part of our daily life, that people take photos only to upload to FB, that everyone is a politician or a philosopher within his own perception.

Male, 39, Italy / August 28, 2010 at 7:27pm – I'm using FB to keep in touch with people i don't hear so often... like you. The thing I don't like so much is that almost everybody can read about you... but at the end it's so that it works... games are cool.

Female, 35, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 6:11pm – [It's nice] because it creates a medium where you can still socialize, as the fast pace of contemporary life does not let us dedicate a lot of time to do that. Through its communication utilities like chatroom-forums-email etc, it allows the social encounters to be very controllable. You have the time to think about what you're writing. Or maybe, as you are not face-to-face with the person, you are sometimes able to say the things which you would probably not say otherwise. You can stay in touch with whom you chose to be and exclude the rest, you can express yourself with newsfeed etc. This controllable aspect it has blocks any embarrassing situation that could suddenly develop. Probably this aspect also has a negative side to it (as it eradicates spontaneity and anything unexpected), but then probably, this is a necessity of our era.

Male, 28, Turkey / August 29 at 5:52pm – In the beginning its basis was finding your old friends and communicating with your friends, but now its basicly advertising yourself and of course, showing off. And lately one of the biggest damages it does is its impact on intimate relationships and romances. A lot of people that I know broke up just because of Facebook. Taking it to its extreme, there are people who even ask the other to quit Facebook before being in a relationship with them.

Male, 42, Italy / August 29 at 4:00pm – Hi Zeynep. For me Facebook is useful to know some events, to receive some nice advices and suggestions (about things to do, where to go, nice videos). I think that it is like a private channel for everyone, in which he broadcast what he likes.

Male, 56, Turkey / August 28 at 6:11pm – Facebook is a book that gives one a *face*.

(Zeynep Arda August 28 at 9:39pm – one didn't have a face before Facebook?)

Male, 56, Turkey / August 29 at 12:07pm – This is the point, that one doesn't count in this age! I accept it that my reply is somehow to short and I'm elaborating it now: People by means of having a Facebook profile, are giving themselves a public identity, a face. There is a new liberty: You can talk even if nobody is there to hear and respond you. Even if nobody responds you, you can go ahead and say something. And if they do reply –

and there is always someone that would – then you tend to think that what you said does actually have an impact, hence you believe that you really exist. If somebody replies – and there is usually someone that would – then you tend to think that what you have said did actually had its impact, hence you believe that you really exist. Similar to the phenomenon of a blog – nonetheless, the feeling of belonging, becoming part of a bigger whole is much stronger in FB. It is a sort of a mechanism that convinces you that you do have an identity that you can express your ideas and you do have an attentive audience that is listening to you – and hence makes you believe that you that you *do* exist.

Male, 34, Turkey / August 31, 2010 at 9:51am – I think FB is a useful and wonderful medium and tool. When I first heard about it I was delighted, I have a very bad memory to remember names, I have hundreds of friends and acquaintances and though I like/love these people I didn't know or remember their names, so it thrilled me cause it was exactly what I wanted. In the end you can't take photos of all that people and note their names on the back, so it is great that they do it by themselves :) Briefly, in the inevitable postmodern consumer society of our day, it is a fantastic tool and a joy, as well as an efficient instrument for sharing. Finally, it has an edge that causes people to extremely decipher themselves, they are forced to share personal information that scratches the limits of exhibitionism and then they receive criticism that is pointless, harsh and not good-willed. This gets me angry, but also makes me laugh underneath and I should say that I also find it quite sad.

Female, 38, Turkey / August 31 at 9:06am – And then, Facebook is like that too. I don't use it very often because I don't take it very seriously. I think it strongly fulfills the voyeuristic tendencies of people. Whatever its initial objective was, we supposed it was finding your old friends, it was what excited us in the beginning. But then we found our old friends and it brought about its disappointments, we didn't find the people where we left them, there was a lot of insincerity involved in these reunions. I actually don't like it very much how I use Facebook. On one side I look down on it, and then I also like checking it out too.

Male, 27, Turkey / August 29 at 11:50am – In my opinion FB has modified the concept of internet for everyone. Previously, there were people who got an internet connection to chat on MSN with people that they know or that they don't know... Now there are people who consider internet to be just Facebook. In fact, it's nice that everybody has a Facebook account, but then there are people that advertise everything from what they had for breakfast to the brand of wine they had for dinner. It could be better if it is used as a communication tool instead of a tool to gossip and criticize. As long as you are keeping a simple profile, not deciphering yourself completely and not dedicating 28 hours of the day to stupid ends like «what did he do? Whose profile did she check out? What did he comment in her profile? Who is she with? Did they break up already? Which bars did he go to in Bodrum? Aaaa I should also upload this photo and let people know where I've been... », I enjoy spending time on Facebook.

Male, 35, Turkey / August 31 at 9:49pm – As I am not using its real-time chat option, for me it's not very different from an email account... email on steroids.

Male, 40, Turkey / September 1 at 5:46pm – It is a «shop window for human beings». Where people hope to (and sometimes even manage to) gain prestige and popularity, or even hope to be loved by revealing the things

that they do or make. Where we get to the intimate depths of friends and acquaintances without actually touching them, where we inform ourselves as we secretly watch them. Facebook is a tool to arrange intimacies, even those of «love» and sex, without knowing too much about the person behind the profile picture. A tool to compare lives. Most of the time the only witness to our existence, the only witness that sees that we are actually living. I actually like Facebook very much, in terms of its design and application, but in terms of content it is where the common and banal are appraised, and where the authentic and creative is hard to find. So I try to watch it rarely, and contribute even less, as I know what is being produced there is just parasite, just a flash in the pan...

Female, 30, Turkey / September 14 at 11:23am – A friend of mine wrote this in his status; «20 of my friends changed their profile pics, today is the birthday of 3 of my acquaintances, I am invited to 17 events, 4 friends of mine used the 'friend finder' and found their friends, 4 friends liked Madonna, and two of them like Jimi Hendrix. Thank God for Facebook, my personal assistant that feeds me necessary/unnecessary information every day, what would I do without you? :)»

Female, 30, Turkey / September 14 at 9:07am – I do think that Facebook is an important social network. We know who/where/what without actually meeting up. On the other hand I think that this is a new, contemporary type of socializing... Instead of communicating face-to-face, or even talking on the phone, we communicate through Facebook. This sort of a communication is on one hand totally unreal, but on the other hand maybe this is the best that a busy person of the contemporary metropolis could do in her/his busy schedule. Maybe this is the only way to keep in touch with friends, and it relatively keeps you from absolute alienation of yourself – your complete isolation in your loneliness...) On the other hand the people who write down a status update with every little thing that they do, that upload a photo wherever they go seem very exaggerated to me... It seems that they have very little to do during the day, or that all they actually do is to update their FB, and to upload new things... At this extreme, I see it as an addiction... Or even a type of exhibitionism... It's just like peeping into the celebrity lives through tabloids and magazines, just that here we voyeur the lives of common people. There is a constant voyeurism going on, no matter what... I guess it fulfills the need to be special, to be important, to stand out from the crowd, to be seen... I also think, as real values, actually producing ideas, efficiency, creativity fade away, people spend more time on Facebook and waste their time of evacuated activities :)

Male, 28, Turkey / August 28 at 6:01pm – I think FB is a social tool that has exceeded its initial objectives. It helps us share and spread our banality. The world in FB is not very different than the actual world. The majority of the people that you befriend on FB are usually connected to you with physical proximity, language or socio-economic equivalency bonds. Therefore it doesn't bring us a new surplus, with the whole planet being wired and connected. Does not contribute very much to human progress, does not open new horizons, does not eliminate boundaries. Being on Facebook, is agreeing on being an object of voyeurism and displaying a certain level of autoeroticism (to be specific; self-portraits taken at an arms' length). Facebook, to put it bluntly, is a social toy.

6.1.2.2 The Digital Life Scale Procedure

The *Digital Life Scale* was activated on December 27th, 2010 in the domain <http://digitallife.uji.es>. In the introduction of the survey the participants were briefly informed about the scope of the study and the approximate duration of taking the survey, and were asked to reply sincerely since there were no right or wrong answers to the questions that they were about to answer. The anonymity of the participants was also assured in the introduction and they were not asked any personal information that would reveal their identities in the sections to follow. Nonetheless they were invited to follow the DLScale on Twitter and join the *Digital Life Scale* group created on Facebook, for later follow-up of the results. The Facebook group of the *Digital Life Scale* has **331** members.

After answering the questions on their demographic characteristics and general use of internet, online social networks and multi-player games in the first section of the survey, in the question INT_08 the participants were discretely forced to select only one of the sections on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life* behaviours. Each of these sections consisted of a wide range of questions to estimate time dedicated to online social activities, anonymity, the correlation of online identity and actual identity, as well as the significance of online social life, image and identity for the participants.

The *Facebook* section consisted of 33 items focusing on the anonymity, extroversion, proximity of online/offline identities and other aspects of self-presentation, time-dedicated to online socialization as well as the significance attributed to it. Similarly the *Twitter* section entailed 19 items measuring the level of commitment to online social life, proximity of online/offline identities and self-presentation, besides the time and energy dedicated to the medium. The *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life* sections, consisting of 20 and 22 items respectively, focused on anonymity of communication in the online role-playing environments, the outstanding aspects of communicating through an avatar, besides the factors and variables tackled in the *Facebook* and *Twitter* sections.

Upon completion of the section selected, all the participants were asked to complete the 10-item *Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale*, in its original version with a 4-point Likert scale and the shortened version of the *Narcissistic Personality Inventory* which consisted of 16-items in the form of statement pairs. At this point it was not expressly communicated to the participants that they were answering questions on self-esteem and narcissistic tendencies to avoid biased replies as much as possible. To do so, The *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale* was introduced under the title «Rosenberg» and similarly the *Narcissistic Personality Inventory* was abbreviated as «NPI-16».

In this study, the data was collected and classified using the *Lime Survey* online questionnaire structure, which was customized by the author to fit the research necessities and in the following stages *IBM SPSS Statistics Package 19* was used to carry out all the in-depth statistical analyses.

6.2 Overview of Internet Use

As indicated previously, within the overall data collected there was a significant inclination of the participants towards Facebook. With a vast majority, **528** out of **635** survey participants (**83.1%**) have indicated Facebook to be the online social network where they spend most of their online time.

Table 6.2a: Participant Distribution According to Survey Sections

Section	Frequency	Valid Percent
Facebook	528	83.1
Twitter	89	14.0
World of Warcraft	14	2.2
Second Life	4	0.6
Total	635	100.0

Hence proved also through its dominance in the sample, Facebook is the outstanding phenomenon that deserved our detailed focus, with its established protagonism of Identity 2.0 issues within the theoretical framework elaborated and discussed throughout this dissertation. Detailed analysis for each one of the *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life* items were carried out within their relative sample sizes, so as not to damage the reliability of the results. The detailed comparison among the four sections, or basically between the different behavioural patterns on online social networks and online multi-player games was abandoned for the moment to be considered later for further research in the field. Instead the analysis was focused on the Facebook-section participants, thus creating two basic data sets, with sample sizes of **635** and **528** respectively.

In this section, the descriptive statistics for both groups of data are presented, the overall data (N=635) and the Facebook-section data (N=528), to allow for comparisons between the two sets.

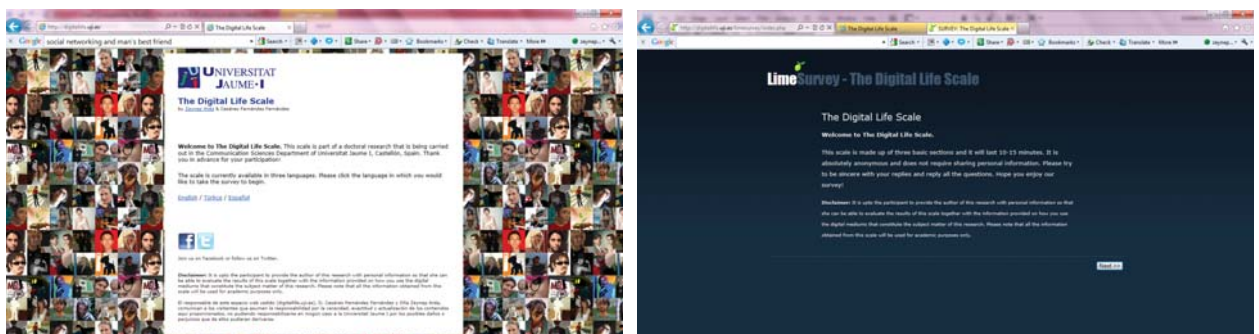


Figure 6.3 – Screenshots from the *Digital Life Scale* website and the survey. Zeynep Arda (2011).

In the Introduction section of the *Digital Life Scale*, to have an overall idea of their current use of internet, participants were asked to rank the frequent uses of the medium listed below. The highest ranked item was «Finding information using the search engines, wikis, forums», with **33.5%**, very closely followed by «Online social networking», with **32.6%**. In a similar manner, these two items were rated very low in the last place of the ranking. However, when the data was limited to Facebook-section participants, «Online social networking» was the highest ranked item with a slight difference, with **34.3%**, followed by the items «Finding information using the search engines, wikis, forums» (**33.7%**) and «Business-related correspondence» (**24.4%**).

Table 6.2b: Ranking of frequent internet uses (n=635)

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent
Frequency of Use: First Rank		
Finding information on search engines, wikis etc.	213	33.5
Online social networking	207	32.6
Business-related correspondence	164	25.8
Socialising, chatting	21	3.3
Playing online games	14	2.2
Reading / publishing blogs	12	1.9
Online shopping	4	0.6
Frequency of Use: Second Rank		
Finding information on search engines, wikis etc.	226	35.6
Business-related correspondence	150	23.6
Online social networking	129	20.3
Socialising, chatting	54	8.5
Reading / publishing blogs	44	6.9
Playing online games	23	3.6
Online shopping	9	1.4
Frequency of Use: Third Rank		
Online social networking	143	22.5
Reading / publishing blogs	108	17.0
Business-related correspondence	107	16.9
Finding information on search engines, wikis etc.	102	16.1
Socialising, chatting	99	15.6
Online shopping	51	8.0
Playing online games	25	3.9
Frequency of Use: Seventh (Last) Rank		
Playing online games	260	40.9
Online shopping	150	23.6
No Reply	97	15.3
Reading / publishing blogs	46	7.2
Business-related correspondence	35	5.5
Socialising, chatting	29	4.6
Online social networking	16	2.5
Finding information on search engines, wikis etc.	2	0.3
Total	635	100.0

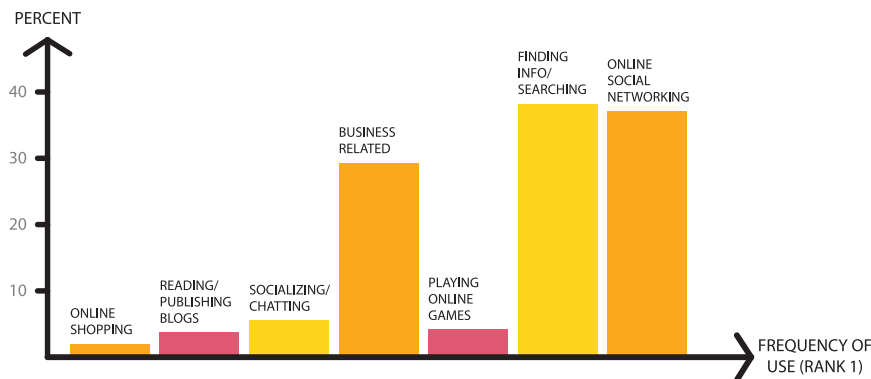


Figure 6.4 – Ranking of frequent internet uses: First rank. DLS (2011).

Table 6.2c: Ranking of frequent internet uses (Facebook-section participants [n=528])

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent
Frequency of Use: First Rank		
Online social networking	181	34.3
Finding information on search engines, wikis etc.	178	33.7
Business-related correspondence	129	24.4
Socialising, chatting	21	4.0
Playing online games	8	1.5
Reading / publishing blogs	8	1.5
Online shopping	3	0.6
Frequency of Use: Second Rank		
Finding information on search engines, wikis etc.	185	35.0
Business-related correspondence	121	22.9
Online social networking	118	22.3
Socialising, chatting	47	8.9
Reading / publishing blogs	32	6.1
Playing online games	18	3.4
Online shopping	7	1.3
Frequency of Use: Third Rank		
Online social networking	118	22.3
Business-related correspondence	96	18.2
Socialising, chatting	86	16.3
Finding information on search engines, wikis etc.	85	16.1
Reading / publishing blogs	74	14.0
Online shopping	46	8.7
Playing online games	23	4.4
Frequency of Use: Seventh (Last) Rank		
Playing online games	204	38.6
Online shopping	139	26.3
No Reply	77	14.6
Reading / publishing blogs	42	8.0
Business-related correspondence	30	5.7
Socialising, chatting	25	4.7
Online social networking	10	1.9
Finding information on search engines, wikis etc.	1	0.2
Total	528	100.0

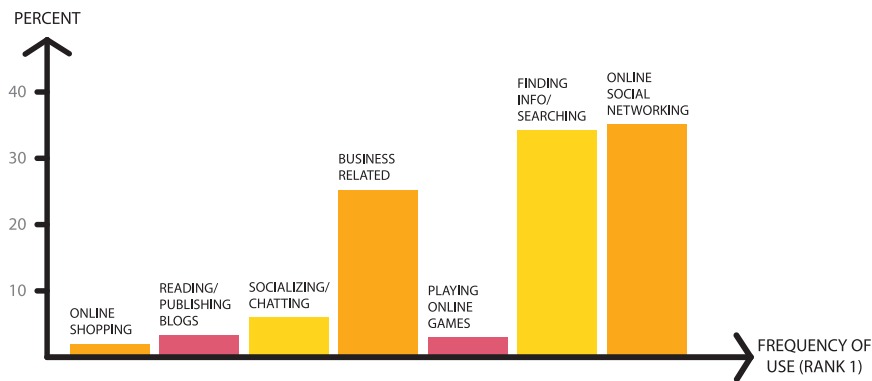


Figure 6.5 – Ranking of frequent internet uses: First rank (Facebook-user Participants). DLS (2011).

Another question answered by the participants in the introduction section was about the active accounts they have on online social networks and online multi-player games. Given a certain list of popular networks and games, the participants were also given the option to indicate others where they frequently socialize or play. A vast majority (**95%**) of the participants confirmed having a Facebook account, which equals 603 out of the total of 635, while only 32 indicated not having an active Facebook account. Another interesting data obtained was the total number of online accounts owned by users, which reached a maximum score of 15 in cases where the participant had replied the «other accounts» question as well. The mean of this variable is 3.48, which confirms that our lives online are very seriously part of our daily lives and do consume a significant amount of our time.

Table 6.2d: Total Number of Online Accounts (n=635)

Variable	
Total number of online accounts owned («other» included)	
Mean	3.48
Standard Deviation	2.036
Range	15
Variance	4.146
Median	3.00

Table 6.2e: Total Number of Online Accounts (Facebook-section participants [n=528])

Variable	
Total number of online accounts owned («other» included)	
Mean	3.22
Standard Deviation	1.897
Range	15
Variance	3.599
Median	3.00

The participants who filled in the «other accounts» that they have on networks and games that were not listed in the survey constituted a **15.9%** of all participants. These other accounts not only included networking sites like Quora, Pearltrees, Foursquare, Friendfeed, Hyves, Formspring, Diigo, Yammer, Wer-kennt-wen, Slideshare, identi.ca, Ning, DeviantArt, Odnoklassniki.ru, Patatabrava, Ekşi sözlük, Stumbleupon, Ameba.jp, Mylife, Netlog, Badoo, Studivz, Erepublik and games like Call of Duty, League of Legends, Guild Wars, Caballow, Minijuegos, Gamyun, Dofus, Counter Strike, Ogame, Bite Fight, Diablo, Battleknight, Lineage, Zylom, Lord of the Rings Online, 20Q.net, Pokerstars, Ikariam, Travian, Medal of Honor: Allied Assault, Quake, Ragnarok Online, Warhammer, Tantra Online, Shogun kingdoms, Native Kingdoms, Steam, Reinos Renacientes, Abbatia, Molehill Empire, FarmVille, CityVille, Farmerama, Popmundo, IMVU, StarCraft, but also other Web 2.0 websites ranging from photo and video sharing services like Hulu, Picasa, Fotolog, Daily Motion to professional networks like Jobandtalent. The instant messaging and voip tools like Messenger, Skype; online efficiency tools like Evernote, Plaxo free blog hosting/management systems like Blogger, Tumblr, Blogspot; and the game networks like Playstation Network, Xbox Live were also included by the participants.



Figure 6.6 – The abundance of online social networks and multi-player games that make part of our daily lives.
Collage by Zeynep Arda (2011).

Table 6.2f: Active Accounts on Online Social Networks and Online Multi-Player Games (n=635)

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent
Has Facebook account		
Yes	603	95.0
No	32	5.0
Has Twitter account		
Yes	249	39.2
No	386	60.8
Has World of Warcraft account		
Yes	30	4.7
No	605	95.3
Has Second Life account		
Yes	39	6.1
No	596	93.9
Has Youtube account		
Yes	390	61.4
No	245	38.6
Has Myspace account		
Yes	107	16.9
No	528	83.1
Has Flickr account		
Yes	135	21.3
No	500	78.7
Has Orkut account		
Yes	11	1.7
No	624	98.3
Has Hi5 account		
Yes	70	11.0
No	565	89.0
Has LinkedIn account		
Yes	156	24.6
No	479	75.4
Has Xing account		
Yes	52	8.2
No	583	91.8
Has Tuenti account		
Yes	198	31.2
No	437	68.8
Has Asian Avenue account		
Yes	0	0.0
No	635	100.0
Has Habbo Hotel account		
Yes	32	5.0
No	603	95.0

Table 6.2g: Active Accounts on Online Social Networks and Online Multi-Player Games (Facebook-section participants [n=528])

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent
Has Facebook account		
Yes	514	97.3
No	14*	2.7
Has Twitter account		
Yes	157	29.7
No	371	70.3
Has World of Warcraft account		
Yes	17	3.2
No	511	96.8
Has Second Life account		
Yes	23	4.4
No	505	95.6
Has Youtube account		
Yes	306	58.0
No	222	42.0
Has Myspace account		
Yes	84	15.9
No	444	84.1
Has Flickr account		
Yes	79	15.0
No	449	85.0
Has Orkut account		
Yes	5	0.9
No	523	99.1
Has Hi5 account		
Yes	58	11.0
No	470	89.0
Has LinkedIn account		
Yes	121	22.9
No	407	77.1
Has Xing account		
Yes	40	7.6
No	488	92.4
Has Tuenti account		
Yes	162	30.7
No	366	69.3
Has Asian Avenue account		
Yes	0	0.0
No	528	100.0
Has Habbo Hotel account		
Yes	26	4.9
No	502	95.1

*dormant profiles, due to participants who set up and abandoned their Facebook profiles.

Another item that was included in the survey was based on the mobile applications used by the participants on their mobile phones and smartphones. This item is considered to show the significance of being ubiquitously connected for the contemporary human being. Given below are the percentages of using mobile phone applications of the online networks and games. The right column, more interestingly includes the percentage of mobile app usage among the participants that have indicated to have an account on the relevant networks and games. Another interesting data is that among 635 participants only 3 indicated not having/using a cellphone, while only 2 specified using a non-web-enabled phone.

Table 6.2h: Mobile Applications Use (n=635)

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent	Percentage within the participants that have the relevant account*
Has Facebook mobile app			
Yes	252	39.7	41.8
No	383	60.3	
Has Twitter mobile app			
Yes	122	19.2	48.9
No	513	80.8	
Has Youtube mobile app			
Yes	144	22.7	36.9
No	491	77.3	
Has Linkedin mobile app			
Yes	24	3.8	15.3
No	611	96.2	
Has World of Warcraft mobile app			
Yes	5	0.8	16.6
No	630	99.2	
Has Second Life mobile app			
Yes	1	0.2	2.5
No	635	99.8	

*For example, the percentages of participants that have Facebook mobile application on their phone, within those that have confirmed having a Facebook account.



Figure 6.7 – Wow application for smartphones to be connected to your avatar wherever you are. Blizzard Entertainment (2010).

Table 6.2i: Mobile Applications Use (Facebook section participants [n=528])

Variable	Frequency	Valid Percent	Percentage within the participants that have the relevant account
Has Facebook mobile app			
Yes	203	38.4	39.5
No	325	61.6	
Has Twitter mobile app			
Yes	66	12.5	42.0
No	462	87.5	
Has Youtube mobile app			
Yes	108	20.5	35.3
No	420	79.5	
Has Linkedin mobile app			
Yes	19	3.5	15.7
No	509	96.4	
Has World of Warcraft mobile app			
Yes	1	0.2	5.9
No	527	99.8	
Has Second Life mobile app			
Yes	0	0	0
No	528	100	

6.3 Overview of Internet Use

6.3.1 Self-Esteem

The study of self-esteem is essential in psychological research because it has been associated with, among other aspects, psychological well-being, self-handicapping strategies and defensive pessimism, the influence of the environment and the family educational style, learning strategies and academic achievement (Martín-Albo, Núñez, Navarro & Grijalvo, 2007). In this sense, it is crucial to have instruments to assess self-esteem adapted to our environment and with adequate psychometric properties.

In the present study, participants' self-esteem level was measured using the classical 10-item *Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale*. The original scale was developed by Dr. Morris Rosenberg (1965) as an attempt to achieve a unidimensional measure of global self-esteem. Rosenberg considers self-esteem as a component of self-concept and defines it as an individual's set of thoughts and feelings about his or her own worth and importance, that is, a global positive or negative attitude toward oneself (Rosenberg, 1965). Measuring this positive or negative attitude was significant for the purposes of the present dissertation, as a correlation between low or high self-esteem with dedication to online social life and the construction of online identity and image were deemed possible.

The RSES is a unidimensional instrument elaborated from a phenomenological conception of self-esteem that captures subjects' global perception of their own worth by means of a 10-item scale, 5 positively worded items and 5 negatively worded items. The participants are asked to rate the items on a four point scale – ranging from «strongly agree» to «strongly disagree». The original sample for which the scale was developed consisted of 5,024 high school juniors and seniors from ten randomly selected schools in New York State. Based on this sample, the reproducibility of the scale was calculated as .92 and the scalability was calculated to be .72.

As the *Digital Life Scale* was carried out in three languages simultaneously, previous studies on the translation, adaptation and standardization of the items were revised carefully. Both the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and the Narcissistic Personality Inventory were developed in English and were later adapted to Spanish and Turkish-speaking populations.

The translation of the RSES items into Spanish was carried out following the cross-cultural translation procedures (Martín-Albo, Núñez, Navarro & Grijalvo, 2007). Confirmatory factor analysis was performed

with the AMOS 6.0 program to evaluate the factor structure of the scale. The SPSS 14.0 statistical package was used for the following analyses: Pearson's correlations among self-esteem and the five self-concept dimensions, Student's t-test for gender differences in self-esteem, Cronbach's alpha for internal consistency, and test-retest correlation to assess temporal stability (Martín-Albo, Núñez, Navarro & Grijalvo, 2007: 460). The translated items were tested in a study carried out with 420 participants from the Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The internal consistency of the scale was assessed with Cronbach's alpha. The values obtained in the first and the second administration were .85 and .88, respectively. The value of the test-retest correlation was .84. These values were good, supporting the reliability of the scale.

Standardization into Turkish was done by Çuhadaroğlu (1986) acceptable reliability and validity coefficients. Çuhadaroğlu reported test-retest reliability coefficients of .71 over a four-week period (Balat & Akman, 2004).

6.3.2 Narcissistic Personality

Narcissism is increasingly recognized as an important complex of personality traits and processes that involve a grandiose yet fragile sense of self and entitlement as well as a preoccupation with success and demands for admiration. Due to these aspects, narcissism is usually pronounced in the academical literature as well as in the popular media, often with reference to Facebook communication. However, even before Facebook was present in our daily lives, sub-clinical variance in narcissism had received growing attention as a personality dimension, showing an impressive ability to predict a wide range of dependent variables, ranging from emotional reactivity to self-appraisals of performance in the past few decades (Ames, Rose & Anderson, 2006: 440).

In line with the objective of measuring inclination towards an evacuated brand identity replacing the actual identity of the human beings, inclination to narcissism was selected as an indicator of detachment from self. The Narcissistic Personality Inventory, originally developed by Raskin & Terry (1988) as a forty-item forced choice inventory is the one most commonly employed in social psychological research. The NPI was formulated based on the clinical criteria for Narcissistic Personality Disorder, as described in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-III, nonetheless it was designed by Raskin & Terry to measure similar features in the overall population. We should stress the fact that the Narcissistic Personality Inventory is not a diagnostic instrument for a personality disorder, and the people who score high on the Narcissistic Personality Inventory do not necessarily meet the criteria to be diagnosed with NPD. However, as it is the case in this dissertation, it could be used to observe behavioral tendencies towards narcissism – if there are any.

Despite the overall acceptable reliability exhibited by the full scale, research on its factor structure has shown to roughly map NPD. Hence, according to the objectives of this dissertation, the inventory was used to measure the tendency of «superficiality» of identity as well as a discrepancy between demonstrated self-esteem and the narcissistic lack of it.

The original inventory regards seven factors of narcissism: superiority, exhibitionism, entitlement, vanity, authority, exploitativeness and self-sufficiency. Nonetheless, evaluating results of recent research where NPI has been utilized, Young claims it is important to consider which of the highly-scored traits are dominant in the person. According to Young, an overall score that reflects more points on vanity, entitlement, exhibitionism and exploitiveness is more cause for concern than someone who scores high on authority, self-sufficiency and superiority (Pinsky & Young: 256-7).

Hence in using the NPI as part of this research, the only objective is to have a basis to build on. Narcissism is a very pervasive subject in our contemporaneity and there is possibility that it could be identified as an overall partial responsible for feelings of emptiness, difficulty with interpersonal functioning or inability to see any perspective other than our own that seems to prevail in our societies today. Certainly, this research at no point is indicating any of its participants to be narcissistic individuals for uploading their photographs on online social networks and at no point is intending to do so. The diagnostic of NPD could only be done on an individual basis and by its authorized professionals. As already explained, the only objective of involving the NPI-16 section in the investigation is to find out whether we could consider any narcissistic tendencies at all based on this large sample of Facebook-users.

In this research, instead of the original inventory, NPI-40, the 16-item version, shortened and validated by Ames, Rose and Anderson (2006). A set of items from the original 40-item inventory to create and validate a shorter, unidimensional measure, as NPI-40's length may limit its use in settings where time pressure and respondent fatigue are major concerns. Through five studies carried out by Ames, Rose and Anderson, NPI-16 was concluded to have an internal and predictive validity and that it could serve as an alternative measure of narcissism, when situations do not allow the use of the larger inventory (Ames et al: 441). In our case, as NPI was to be used as a section of a larger field study that could range upto a total of 100 items to be responded, NPI-400 was considered impractical and NPI-16 was chosen to eliminate any possible shortcomings of respondent fatigue in the overall results.

In the second study carried out by Ames, Rose and Anderson, the NPI-16 had an α of .68 and a mean of .40 (SD= .19) and narcissism was positively correlated with openness, extraversion, self-esteem, and self-monitoring. In the third study, the test-retest reliability for the NPI-16 over a 5-week interval. In the

fifth and final study, The NPI-16 had an α of .65 and a mean of .39 (SD= .18). Narcissism was not significantly linked with actual performance, but was significantly correlated with participants' estimates of their relative accuracy. Once again, narcissism was also positively correlated with self-esteem, though self-esteem was not significantly correlated with either actual or estimated relative accuracy. In a multiple regression predicting self-estimates of accuracy with narcissism, self-esteem, and actual percentile, only narcissism emerged as significantly predictive.

The scale was translated into Spanish by bilingual psychologists in the Universidad Iberoamericana of Mexico D.F. and the following studies for validation were carried out and published by García Garduño and Cortés Sotres (1998). In this study, where the complete 40-item inventory was employed, an α of .72 was calculated, which was slightly lower than the reliability of the original 40-item scale, yet higher than the 16-item version. The Turkish adaptation was carried out by Gencoz and Coskan (2008), where the studies have shown the inventory's internal consistency to be good with Cronbach α coefficient of .77.

6.3.3 Self-Presentation 2.0

Several attributes of self-presentation using Web 2.0 tools in general, and Facebook in particular, provide us with interesting perspectives on how these novelties are altering the way we relate to ourselves. Even though the general tendency of Facebook users is to communicate using their real names and hence creating the bond between their Facebook profile and their actual lives, we have also seen that this online identity is created and edited almost to the point of *fiction*. **89.4%** of 528 participants have indicated using their real name on their Facebook profiles, nevertheless, only **41.5%** confirmed (agreed or strongly agreed with) the statement «My Facebook profile is an accurate reflection of who I am». Therefore using the factor analysis, several variables were formulated to find out which correlations exist between the communication attributes defined by Facebook and various aspects of the self, narcissism and psychological well-being.

The *Digital Life Scale* originally consisted of several sections based on *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *World of Warcraft* and *Second Life* distinctions. As the sample was reduced to the participants that have selected Facebook and provided their opinions on this online social network, the relevant sections of the Digital Life Scale were combined into a three distinct scales with three different perspectives on analyzing the data available. One of these scales was the «Self-Presentation 2.0 Scale» which consisted of 20 items about how the self is presented on Facebook. As these items were subjected to a factor analysis, 5 subscales representing each of the outstanding factors were formulated.

Once one's online identity is connected to one's actual identity, and the screen becomes just another social setting where to perform, all of the online social activity becomes subject to the Goffmanian attention to «maintaining face». Items including «It is important for me to have a cool photo as my profile picture» and «I don't like it that my friends upload and tag my photos where I don't look my best» were designed to indicate the significance attributed to careful maintenance and editing of the online image, while items like «Checking out photos of people that I don't know very well on Facebook, makes me get to know them better» intends to determine how much significance we attribute to Facebook profiles in terms of reflecting one's identity.

6.3.4 Significances Attributed to Online Social Life

Facebook has earned itself significance as a medium, on one hand re-defining what internet meant to us, and on the other hand by becoming an indispensable component of our daily lives. As we find it natural to reach everyone through their mobile phones no matter where they are, it is equally natural to dedicate *some* time to Facebook on a daily basis. Several items used in the Digital Life Scale measure different dimensions of the significance of Facebook in our everyday communication and socialization, such as «I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook» and «I'm on Facebook therefore I am» – in a more humorous way.

The definition of a *successful* social life could be very relative, however, psychological research tells us that an individual that is affiliated with others, that receives affection and positive feedback from her/his friends and family tends to have a healthier psychology (Maslow, 1962, Marcia, 1973, Kohut, 1978). By examining the possibility of improving social life through Facebook, with the following items suggested, we are trying to understand whether they *do* contribute positively to the self-esteem or self-love of the individual in any way. Remembering our earlier definitions once again at this point, with self-esteem we refer to a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth, while we use self-love to indicate «the instinct or desire to promote one's well-being».

Within this framework, the items included in the variable «possibility of improving social life» are, besides the number of Facebook friends, «Facebook gave me the opportunity to find my long-lost old friends and now I have a livelier social life because I meet them regularly»; «Facebook connects me to my friends that are far away from where I live, so I feel as if they were here»; «I've met / found my current partner (girlfriend / boyfriend / wife / husband) through Facebook» and reversed items such as «I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook»; «I feel obliged to accept everyone that adds me as a friend on Facebook»; «A person cannot maintain stable social relationships with more than 150 people» and «Facebook has devalued the concept of 'friendship'».

6.3.5 Intended Recipient of Communication

One of the significant points about Facebook communication is that it lets us communicate with our «friends», but the definition of Facebook friends could be as ample as to cover the office boy at your previous job and a friend of a friend of a friend with whom you just chatted for half an hour in a bar last week. Hence one cannot talk about actual personal communication unless the Facebook tool used is the built-in private message utility. Even writing on the Facebook wall of your sister or your best friend signifies more than just giving a personal message to them and extends to have secondary significations like «Look who is my best friend» and «This is how I am when I am sincere with someone». Besides the confusion on the intended recipient of communication and the tendency to mass communicate our personal feelings, moods and philosophies, another aspect of the issue is the focus of our communication. Are we communicating in an extroverted manner, because we are interested in other people? Or are we experiencing a level of inversion where the others only serve for approval and admiration of our own virtues? Who are we communicating with/for?

This variable has been set up to have a clearer perspective of the narcissistic tendencies of Facebook communication through one of the most apparent aspects of narcissistic behaviour. Based on Goldberg's Five Factor Model (1993), narcissism is associated with high extroversion and low agreeableness. Generally all factors of NPI and especially exhibitionism are found to be positively correlated with extroversion (Coskan & Gencoz, 2008: 6).

6.3.6 Other Significant Variables

Items of Nonanonymity

The nonanonymous character of Facebook communication is assumed to be one of the basic reasons why self-presentation in this way eventually leads to self-promotion and advertisement, and as suggested in this dissertation to the construction of a human/brand identity. Given that, the nonanonymity of the Facebook profile was measured with the item «On my Facebook account I use my real name so that my friends can easily find me» and **89.4%** of the participants have confirmed using their real names on their Facebook profiles.

«I have uploaded [a number of]photo(s) / video(s) that shows who I am in my Facebook account» was also used as a marker item as it indicates publishing one's face, together with one's real name, almost in the form of a national identity card or a passport. The responses to this items were grouped into the categories ranging from [0 photos/videos] = physical identity not revealed – [100+ photos/videos] = a

large number of photos/videos revealing identity were published in the form of a lifecast. According to the data collected from the current sample, only **9.8%** of the participants have indicated not having uploaded any photo that identifies them. The remaining **91.2%** indicated having uploaded their photos, while **22.7%** confirmed having uploaded more than 100 photos.

These two items that determine the nonanonymous character of the individual were classified as control variables, same as age and gender and were hierarchically entered into the equation in the regression analyses, named «Nonanonymity» and «FacelD».

Nonanonymous control variable was categorized as follows:

Table 6.3.6a: Categorization of the Nonanonymity Item

Responses to Item	Categorization
On my Facebook account I use my real name so that my friends can easily find me.	
[Yes]	Nonanonymous
[No]	Anonymous

FacelD categorization was done in the following manner:

Table 6.3.6b: Categorization of the FacelD Item

Responses to Item	Categorization
I have uploaded ... photo(s) / video(s) that shows who I am in my Facebook account.	
[0 photos]	Face Not Identified
[1-10] [11-50] [51-100]	Face Identified
[100+]	Overexposed

Upward Social Comparison Item

Does Facebook contribute to psychological well-being? Or is it just the opposite? Maslow, in his infamous «Psychology of Health» defines the basic needs for belongingness and affection, for respect and self-respect and for self-actualization, among others, to be basic human emotions or capacities that are on their face either neutral, pre-moral or positively «good». Destructiveness, sadism, cruelty and malice, according to Maslow seem so far to be «not intrinsic but rather ... violent reactions *against* frustration of our intrinsic needs, emotions or capacities» (1968/1999: 5).

Considering the time and energy dedicated to Facebook by its users, it rings natural to assume that Facebook contributes positively to the psychological well-being, to think that Facebook fulfils a basic

social (or economical?) need to deserve the level of commitment that it has achieved worldwide. After all over 500 million people on earth have a Facebook account. The control variable defined in this section was designed to examine at least one aspect of the extremely ample concept.

Facebook is a perfect tool for, what Burkeman wittily calls «comparing [our] insides with other people's outsides» (2010). One of the participants of the preliminary survey sincerely expressed this point as well:

[!]It encourages people to carry out a continuous upward social comparison. Makes you think everybody is very happy, except for you, everybody is constantly on vacation, travelling, partying, makes you question «why the hell I can't have a life like that too?» and eventually causes you to have a false perception of yourself as well as of others. Hence I believe that it has a serious negative impact on human psychology. I don't actually believe that anyone is having a really good time checking the profiles of others on Facebook. But as everyone wants to be «in the game» somehow, everybody's there.

Considering this perspective, a negatively worded item, «When I see what others have accomplished with their lives on Facebook, it makes me feel like a failure» was formulated.

Table 6.3.6c: Distribution of the Data for the Item «When I see what others have accomplished with their lives on Facebook, it makes me feel like a failure»

Responses to Item	Frequency	Valid Percent
When I see what others have accomplished with their lives on Facebook, it makes me feel like a failure		
Strongly Agree	12	2.3
Agree	24	4.7
Neither Nor	58	11.3
Disagree	98	19.1
Strongly Disagree	320	62.5
Total	512	100.0

Though the statement of the cited participant rings true, as can be observed in the table above, the extreme version of the statement used in the survey item was almost completely rejected by the sample population. Though detailed quantitative analysis is necessary to understand the underlying factors, within the scope of this inquiry, this item was set aside as a key variable and tests were run with the rest of the variables in an attempt to find out the factors that positively correlate to this perspective.

To be able to introduce the variable into the regression analysis, the responses to the item were categorized and classified as «FBComparison»:

Table 6.3.6d: Categorization of the FBComparison Item

Responses to Item	Categorization
When I see what others have accomplished with their lives on Facebook, it makes me feel like a failure.	
Strongly Agree & Agree	Negative Impact Confirmed
Neither Nor	Neutral
Disagree & Strongly Disagree	Impact Denied

Live in Country of Origin Classification

Another significant issue that was brought up in the preliminary survey was that Facebook gave to opportunity for satisfactory interaction between the physically-separated, especially concerning long-distance separation. Several participants' replies included statements like «Facebook definitely makes distances shorter», «it makes you feel as if you were there» and «even if I am away, I'm not disconnected from the lives over there – which otherwise I would be for long years».

Hence the replies were formulated into the categorical variable that we call «LiveCO», which was classified as:

Table 6.3.6e: Categorization of the LiveCO Item

Responses to Item	Categorization
I live in my country of origin.	
[Yes]	Native
[No]	Ex-pat



The Spanish and Turkish translations of all the items used and explained in section 6.3.6 can be found in Appendix 02.

Figure 6.8 – People are always happy on Facebook photos. How does it effect us the over-exposure to the snapshots of happiness of the *Other*? Garance Doré (2011).

6.4 Results Obtained



6.4.1 Data Screening and Analysis

Before the analysis, all data were examined using various programs of *Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS)* in terms of accuracy of data and missing values. As all of the survey questions were marked to be obligatory in the *Lime Survey* structure, the participants that have completed the survey were not given the possibility to skip a question and the incomplete responses were eliminated from the data analysis. Hence, for the **635** complete data set, there were no missing values for any of the items.

The data set was reduced to **528** cases, due to the participants' selection of Facebook as the most frequently used online social network. In the primary analysis of descriptive values, 16 participants that scored extremely high and extremely low on the NPI-16 were removed to increase data reliability, thereby leaving a total of **512** cases in the final data set.

In order to reduce the extreme kurtosis and skewness, z scores for all values were computed and no case was found to be with extremely low or high z values. Prior to the main analysis, factor analysis was performed for the *Digital Life Scale* and its factor structure was examined. All the subscales formulated based on the factor analysis were checked for reliability.

6.4.2 Factor Analyses

6.4.2.1 Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale & NPI-16

Being scales that are used exhaustively in social sciences for decades now, *Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale* and *Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16*, were not subjected to factor analysis. The cases were controlled for internal consistency and then total scores were calculated to be used in further analysis.

In this application of the scale, the data was collected in three adapted versions of the scale as explained and the data obtained was evaluated all together. The data was controlled for internal consistency and reliability using Cronbach's alpha. The α value obtained was .836.

The results obtained from the use of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale were used to compare and contrast the data obtained from the other sections of the Digital Life Scale. Correlation and regression analysis were executed to see the relation between self-esteem and the significance given to online self-presentation, online image and identity by the participants.

Table 6.4.2.1a: Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale Item Percentages

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least the equal of others.	0.4%	3.8%	38.0%	57.8%
2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities.	0.4%	1.6%	43.4%	54.6%
3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. (R)	51.4%	39.4%	8.0%	1.2%
4. I am able to do things as well as most other people.	1.2%	3.4%	49.4%	46.0%
5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (R)	48.0%	35.5%	12.7%	3.8%
6. I take a positive attitude toward myself.	1.2%	11.4%	51.2%	36.3%
7. On the whole I am satisfied with myself.	1.2%	9.2%	56.4%	33.3%
8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. (R)	31.9%	37.5%	23.3%	7.4%
9. I certainly feel useless at times. (R)	41.2%	35.7%	19.7%	3.4%
10. At times I think that I am no good at all. (R)	46.6%	32.5%	17.1%	3.8%

Table 6.4.2.1b: Item Analysis for Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale

	N	Mean	Variance	SD		
Statistics for Scale	10	22.84	3.756	4.664		
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
Summary Item Statistics						
Item Means	2.284	1.932	2.528	.597	1.309	.034
Item Variances	.538	.307	.834	.527	2.717	.036
Inter-Item Correlations	.342	.096	.702	.606	7.281	.018
	Alpha	Standardized Item Alpha				
Reliability Coefficients	.836	.839				

In accordance with the research objectives of this dissertation, both self-esteem and narcissistic tendencies were measured meticulously, together with the other significant factors regarding self-presentation 2.0. As self-esteem is one of the most researched construct due to its predictable relation to narcissism, it was given outmost importance. In the following section we will examine which qualities of online communication with Web 2.0 tools could be evaluated with regard to narcissism and self-esteem.¹

Table 6.4.2.1c: Item Analysis for NPI-16

	N	Mean	Variance	SD		
Statistics for Scale	16	4.80	7.988	2.826		
	Mean	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Max/Min	Variance
Summary Item Statistics						
Item Means	.300	.134	.492	.358	3.662	.013
Item Variances	.198	.117	.250	.134	2.148	.002
Inter-Item Correlations	.102	.116	.674	.790	-5.786	.014
	Alpha	Standardized Item Alpha				
Reliability Coefficients	.643	.645				

6.4.2.2 Self-Presentation 2.0 Scale

The newly-formed scale named as *Self-Presentation 2.0 Scale (SPS)* was factor analyzed and interpretable factors were determined within the framework defined in the previous section. The scale was controlled for internal consistency and it was found to be reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .818$). The responses to the 20 items of SPS were subjected to factor analysis using principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation. The preliminary examination of initial eigenvalues, percentages of explained variance, and the scree plot suggested a five-factor solution. These five factors explained **58.6%** of the total variance and the item loadings ranged from **.409** to **.836**. Six items loaded on Factor 1, four items on Factor 2, three items each on Factor 3 and 4 and five items on Factor 5.

Besides being relevant to the research objectives, these five factors were found to be internally consistent and reliable, and hence were considered as factors to be used for further analysis. The factor loadings of these variables are given in **Table 6.4.2.2a** below and they were developed into the subscales detailed in the following section.

The outstanding factors coincided with some of the attributes of Facebook communication that distinguish it from other mediums of daily communication, and earlier forms of online communication. Items such as «I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums & my videos»; «I'm on Facebook therefore I am» or «I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook» loaded on Factor 1 and this factor was called «Lifecasting». The Lifecasting on Facebook factor had an eigenvalue of **5.403** and it explained **27.1%** of the total variance. It was found to be internally consistent with an alpha reliability of **.766**.

Items like «Facebook is nothing more than rumours, problems and a lot of gossip» and «Facebook has devalued the concept of 'friendship'» loaded on Factor 2 and this factor was named as «Negative Attitude». The Negative Attitude factor had an eigenvalue of **2.302** and it explained **11.5%** of the total variance, its internal consistency was controlled with Cronbach's alpha and found to be reliable with $\alpha = .719$.

Items loaded on Factor 3 were «My digital identity is a reflection of who I am»; «Facebook reflects my social life as it is» and «My Facebook profile is an accurate reflection of who I am». Hence this factor was called «Proximity of Online/Offline Identities». The Proximity factor had an eigenvalue of **1.635** and it explained **8.2%** of the total variance and its Cronbach's α was calculated to be **.732**.

Items such as «I login to my online social network accounts ... times every day» or «While I'm working with a computer, I sneak off once in a while to check out my Facebook / Twitter / WOW etc. account» loaded on Factor 4 and this factor was called «Time Dedicated». This factor had an eigenvalue of **1.332** and it explained **6.7%** of the total variance, while its alpha value was **.748**.

A very important factor for this research, «Superficiality» came up as the fifth factor. Items like «Checking out photos of people that I don't know very well on Facebook, makes me get to know them better» or «I find myself checking out photos of people that I don't know on Facebook and I can't stop myself. It is a total waste of my time» loaded on this factor. Factor 5 had an eigenvalue of **1.052** and it explained **5.3%** of the total variance. Its internally consistency was found to be high, with $\alpha = .702$.

Table 6.4.2.2a: Self-Presentation 2.0 Factor Loadings (Rotated Component Matrix)

Factors and Items	F1	F2	F	F4	F5
Factor 1 - «Lifecasting»					
$\alpha = .766$					
(fcb06) I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums & my videos.	.581	-.047	.314	.301	.019
(fcb17) I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages.	.542	-.002	.379	.125	.132
(fcb24) Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself.	.645	-.158	.278	-.026	-.018
(fcb25) I'm on Facebook therefore I am.	.719	-.080	-.076	.028	.104
(fcb26) I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook.	.632	-.047	-.079	.080	.263
(fcb09) Facebook reflects my social life as it is.	.525	-.017	.536	.177	.039
Factor 2 - «Negative Attitude»					
$\alpha = .719$					
(fcb11) (R) Facebook is nothing more than rumours, problems and a lot of gossip. *	-.186	.717	-.104	-.077	-.124
(fcb19) (R) Facebook has devalued the concept of «friendship».*	-.145	.735	.109	-.023	.001
(fcb21) (R) Facebook is nothing but exhibitionism and voyeurism. *	-.005	.774	-.212	-.103	-.078
(fcb31) Facebook makes us all more narcissistic.	.122	.643	-.144	.007	.167
Factor 3 - «Proximity of Online/Offline Identities»					
$\alpha = .732$					
(yslo01) My digital identity is a reflection of who I am.	.001	-.160	.753	.185	.133
(fcb09) Facebook reflects my social life as it is.	.525	-.017	.536	.177	.039
(fcb16) My Facebook profile is an accurate reflection of who I am.	.201	-.124	.817	.085	.043
Factor 4 - «Time Dedicated»					
$\alpha = .748$					
(yslo02) While I'm working with a computer, I sneak off once in a while to check out my Facebook / Twitter / WOW etc. account.	.016	-.132	.209	.650	.349
(yslo03) I login to my online social network accounts ... times every day.	.127	-.077	.041	.836	.042
(fcb01) I spend ... hour(s) every day on my Facebook account.	.137	.004	.162	.827	.024
Factor 5 - «Superficiality»					
$\alpha = .702$					
(fcb10) I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook.	.330	-.268	.325	.232	.533
(fcb12) Checking out photos of people that I don't know very well on Facebook, makes me get to know them better.	.183	-.116	.221	-.048	.736
(fcb28) (R) I find myself checking out photos of people that I don't know on Facebook and I can't stop myself. It is a total waste of my time.*	.060	.233	-.180	.237	.683
(fcb30) Facebook changes the way that I relate to myself.	.518	.234	.049	.020	.409
(fcb32) I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile.	.418	-.134	.263	.216	.419
$\alpha = .776$ Total Explained Variance = 58.6%					

*Reverse items.

FACTOR 1 - Lifecasting Subscale

Though we have already stated that the nonanonymous nature of Facebook communication did not necessarily indicate that the actual self was communicated, the range within which the actual self is expressed and/or made public is one of the outstanding alterations caused by our submission to the presence of Facebook in our lives. Similarly a concept which was unknown in our pre-Facebook era, «lifecasting», a short form of life-broadcasting is considered significant both in terms of self-expression and in terms of personal information exposed to actual friends and family, as well as acquaintances and sometimes complete strangers. This type of information published and eternalized on Facebook profiles was not available in any other form previously, except momentarily for our very close circles.

Lifecasting is significant for self-presentation on Facebook, as it involves both elements of accuracy as discussed above and of the level of information exposed. Without giving it a second thought, and usually with a sincere joy of sharing them with friends and family, our honeymoon photos find their way on to our Facebook albums and this lifts the distinction between the actual intimate friend and any regular acquaintance – who a decade ago never would have found out our honeymoon destination, let alone be impressed by it.

Table 6.4.2.2b: Item Analysis for Lifecasting Subscale

	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cornbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted
Summary Item Statistics		
(fcb06) I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums & my videos.	.559	.718
(fcb17) I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages.	.520	.728
(fcb24) Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself.	.495	.735
(fcb25) I'm on Facebook therefore I am.	.475	.740
(fcb26) I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook.	.444	.748
(fcb09) Facebook reflects my social life as it is.	.559	.718
	Cornbach’s Alpha	Number of Items
Reliability Coefficients	.766	6

FACTOR 2 – Negative Attitudes Subscale

Despite its popularity, Facebook is not a rose without thorns. Several of the participants of the preliminary Facebook survey have indicated negative attitudes towards the use of the medium, a substantial number of them claimed that they would close their account. Though their accounts still survive, so does the negative standpoint on Facebook communication. With this subscale we will be comparing how the anti-Facebook attitude correlates with the other factors.

Table 6.4.2.2c: Item Analysis for Negative Attitudes Subscale

	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cornbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Summary Item Statistics		
(fcb11) (R) Facebook is nothing more than rumours, problems and a lot of gossip.	.514	.652
(fcb19) (R) Facebook has devalued the concept of «friendship».	.489	.667
(fcb21) (R) Facebook is nothing but exhibitionism and voyeurism.	.610	.593
(fcb31) Facebook makes us all more narcissistic.	.419	.708
	Cornbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Reliability Coefficients	.719	4

FACTOR 3 - Proximity of Online/Offline Identities Subscale

The Facebook section of the *Digital Life Scale* included items and reverse items ranging from «On my Facebook account I use my real name so that my friends can easily find me» to «Facebook reflects my social life as it is» to determine how close this online presentation is to real life identity.

The *presence* of friends and family in Facebook communication, adds a specific level of accuracy and a certain control mechanism to the information communicated. Items like «My Facebook profile is an accurate reflection of who I am» were designed in such a context, as the possibility of receiving positive or negative feedback from immediate family or very close friends would limit one from publishing *imaginary* information or from «making things up».

Table 6.4.2.2d: Item Analysis for Proximity of Online/Offline Identities Subscale

	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cornbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Summary Item Statistics		
(yslo01) My digital identity is a reflection of who I am.	.529	.675
(fcb09) Facebook reflects my social life as it is.	.481	.730
(fcb16) My Facebook profile is an accurate reflection of who I am.	.661	.512
	Cornbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Reliability Coefficients	.732	3

FACTOR 4 - Time Dedicated Subscale

The time dedicated to checking it out, updating our profile, commenting on Facebook profiles of others, looking for and adding new friends is the time what we usually call as «dedicated to *socializing*», though we were alone with a computer screen all along. Items concerning how we *make* time for Facebook activities during our busy day such as «While I'm working with a computer, I sneak off once in a while to check out my Facebook / Twitter / WOW etc. account» or «I login to my online social network accounts

... times every day» were placed in the common sections of the Digital Life Scale, as well as in the more specific item «I spend [a number of] hour(s) every day on my Facebook account» in the Facebook section of the survey. This factor together with Lifecasting, will give us a perspective on how high we value Facebook interactions.

Table 6.4.2.2e: Item Analysis for Time Dedicated Subscale

	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cornbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Summary Item Statistics		
(yslo02) While I'm working with a computer, I sneak off once in a while to check out my Facebook / Twitter / WOW etc. account.	.625	.607
(yslo03) I login to my online social network accounts ... times every day.	.607	.627
(fcb01) I spend ... hour(s) every day on my Facebook account.	.499	.751
	Cornbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Reliability Coefficients	.748	3

FACTOR 5 - Superficiality Subscale

When we talk about «image becoming identity», we actually refer to a shallowness of one's presence in her/his social relationships. As one's online profile becomes a social product of feedback mechanisms, gradually «less» of the person is there to communicate and to *be*. Superficial communication renders it easier to «maintain face» and be in control of the situations, nevertheless «fulfilling human interaction» tends to lie also in the vulnerability exposed to the other.

Table 6.4.2.2f: Item Analysis for Superficiality Subscale

	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cornbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Summary Item Statistics		
(fcb10) I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook.	.537	.620
(fcb12) Checking out photos of people that I don't know very well on Facebook, makes me get to know them better.	.516	.629
(fcb28) (R) I find myself checking out photos of people that I don't know on Facebook and I can't stop myself. It is a total waste of my time.	.349	.698
(fcb30) Facebook changes the way that I relate to myself.	.409	.674
(fcb32) I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile.	.487	.641
	Cornbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Reliability Coefficients	.702	5

The Spanish and Turkish translations of all the items used and explained in section 6.4.2.2 can be found in Appendix 03.

6.4.2.3 Significance Attributed to Online Social Life Scale

Another newly-formed scale that we called *Significances Attributed to Online Social Life Scale (SAOSLS)* was factor analyzed and interpretable factors were determined. The internal consistency of the scale was found to be reliable with a Cronbach's α of **.826**. Consisting of 10 items, SAOSLS rendered two components when subjected to factor analysis using principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation. Based on the initial eigenvalues, percentages of explained variance, and the scree plot, a two-factor solution was found appropriate. Seven items loaded on Factor 1 and three items loaded on Factor 2. These two factors explained **50.1%** of the total variance and the item loadings ranged from **.443** to **.764**.

Slightly different than the interpretable factors provided by the *Self-Presentation 2.0 Scale* examined earlier, these two factors gave us insight on significances of being up-to-date with friends and perceived role of Facebook in improving social life and were named accordingly.

Items such as « Facebook connects me to my friends that are far away from where I live, so I feel as if they were here» or « I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook» loaded on Factor 1 and this factor was called «Being Up-to-Date with friends». This factor had an eigenvalue of **3.913** and it explained **39.1%** of the total variance. It was found to be internally consistent with an alpha reliability of **.799**.

Table 6.4.2.3a: Significances Attributed to Online Social Life Factor Loadings (RCM)

Factors and Items	F1	F2
Factor 1 - «Being Up-to-Date with friends» $\alpha = .799$		
(fcb06) I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums & my videos.	.524	.389
(fcb10) I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook.	.749	.177
(fcb17) I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages.	.565	.371
(fcb22) Facebook connects me to my friends that are far away from where I live, so I feel as if they were here.	.764	-.002
(fcb24) Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself.	.476	.420
(fcb27) Facebook gave me the opportunity to find my long-lost old friends and now I have a livelier social life because I meet them regularly.	.443	.393
(fcb32) I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile.	.740	.175
Factor 2 - «Perceived Social Role of Facebook» $\alpha = .634$		
(fcb18) I use Facebook to improve my social life. (To find a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, to make more friends, to go out more etc.	.086	.729
(fcb25) I'm on Facebook therefore I am.	.141	.736
(fcb26) I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook.	.239	.679
$\alpha = .826$	Total Explained Variance = 50.1%	

Items like «I'm on Facebook therefore I am» and « I use Facebook to improve my social life» loaded on Factor 2 and this factor was named as «Perceived Social Role of Facebook». This second factor had an eigenvalue of **1.097** and it explained **10.9%** of the total variance. Its internal consistency was controlled with Cronbach's alpha and found to be reliable with $\alpha = .634$.

FACTOR 1 – Being Up-to-date Subscale

Table 6.4.2.3b: Item Analysis for Being Up-to-date Subscale

	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cornbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Summary Item Statistics		
(fcb06) I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums & my videos.	.516	.776
(fcb10) I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook.	.597	.761
(fcb17) I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages.	.555	.768
(fcb22) Facebook connects me to my friends that are far away from where I live, so I feel as if they were here.	.511	.776
(fcb24) Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself.	.501	.778
(fcb27) Facebook gave me the opportunity to find my long-lost old friends and now I have a livelier social life because I meet them regularly.	.446	.788
(fcb32) I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile.	.583	.763
	Cornbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Reliability Coefficients	.799	7

FACTOR 2 – Perceived Social Role of Facebook

Table 6.4.2.3c: Item Analysis Perceived Social Role of Facebook Subscale

	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cornbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Summary Item Statistics		
(fcb18) I use Facebook to improve my social life. (To find a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, to make more friends, to go out more etc.	.385	.616
(fcb25) I'm on Facebook therefore I am.	.456	.519
(fcb26) I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook.	.492	.466
	Cornbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Reliability Coefficients	.634	3

6.4.2.4 Intended Recipient of Communication Scale

Intended Recipient of Communication Scale (IRCS) was factor analyzed and interpretable factors were determined within the criteria previously defined. Internal consistency of the scale was controlled by alpha and it was found to be reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .841$) The responses to the 12 items of IRCS were subjected to factor analysis using principal components analysis (PCA) with varimax rotation. The preliminary examination of initial eigenvalues, percentages of explained variance, and the scree plot suggested an apparent two-factor solution. These two factors explained **46.1%** of the total variance and the item loadings ranged from **.407** to **.785**. Seven items loaded on Factor 1 and five items loaded on Factor 2.

These two factors were identified as «Extroversion» and «Introversion» respectively based on the item details. «Facebook connects me to my friends that are far away from where I live, so I feel as if they were here» or « I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook» loaded on Factor 1 and indicated an extroverted use of the medium. Extroversion factor had an eigenvalue of **4.411** and it explained **36.7%** of the total variance. It was found to be internally consistent with an alpha reliability of $\alpha = .792$.

Table 6.4.2.4a: Intended Recipient of Communication Factor Loadings (Rotated Component Matrix)

Factors and Items	F1	F2
Factor 1 - «Extroversion»		
$\alpha = .792$		
(fcb05) It is important for me to have a cool photo as my profile picture.	.659	.089
(fcb06) I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums and my videos.	.536	.370
(fcb10) I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook.	.734	.222
(fcb12) Checking out photos of people that I don't know very well on Facebook, makes me get to know them better.	.426	.390
(fcb16) My Facebook profile is an accurate reflection of who I am.	.565	.170
(fcb22) Facebook connects me to my friends that are far away from where I live, so I feel as if they were here.	.717	.033
(fcb32) I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile.	.687	.234
Factor 2 - «Introversion»		
$\alpha = .692$		
(fcb17) I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages.	.465	.495
(fcb18) I use Facebook to improve my social life. (To find a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, to make more friends, to go out more etc.)	.033	.785
(fcb24) Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself.	.404	.495
(fcb27) Facebook gave me the opportunity to find my long-lost old friends and now I have a livelier social life because I meet them regularly.	.405	.407
(fcb30) Facebook changes the way that I relate to myself.	.088	.737

Items like «I use Facebook to improve my social life» and «Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself» loaded on Factor 2 and indicated a more introverted Facebook use, with the users' focus more on her/himself than others. This factor was named as «Introversion» and had an eigenvalue of **1.133** and it explained **9.4%** of the total variance, its internal consistency was controlled with Cronbach's alpha and found to be reliable with $\alpha = .692$.

FACTOR 1 - Extroversion Subscale

This variable intends to compare and calculate the correlation between the exhibitionism items of the NPI-16 section with the Facebook section items such as «I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook» or reverse items like «I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages».

In terms of how we use Facebook, the tendency to be extroverted or introverted is one of the key factors. Though narcissism is correlated with higher extroversion, the way one keeps oneself as the focus of her/his gaze is yet interesting to investigate. The extroversion and introversion subscales will be subjected to several correlation and regression analyses in the upcoming sections.

Table 6.4.2.4b: Item Analysis for Extroversion Subscale

	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cornbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
Summary Item Statistics		
(fcb05) It is important for me to have a cool photo as my profile picture.	.526	.764
(fcb06) I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums and my videos.	.500	.769
(fcb10) I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook.	.657	.738
(fcb12) Checking out photos of people that I don't know very well on Facebook, makes me get to know them better.	.449	.778
(fcb16) My Facebook profile is an accurate reflection of who I am.	.425	.783
(fcb22) Facebook connects me to my friends that are far away from where I live, so I feel as if they were here.	.504	.768
(fcb32) I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile.	.580	.753
	Cornbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Reliability Coefficients	.792	7

FACTOR 2 - Introversion Subscale

Certain items that could be considered in relation to introverted behaviour were also included in the survey to identify negative correlations between NPI-16, self-esteem and the online behaviour – if any do exist. These items include «I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile» or «Facebook changes the way that I relate to myself».

Table 6.4.2.4c: Item Analysis for Introversion Subscale

	Corrected Item – Total Correlation	Cornbach’s Alpha if Item Deleted
Summary Item Statistics		
(fcb17) I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages.	.485	.626
(fcb18) I use Facebook to improve my social life. (To find a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, to make more friends, to go out more etc.)	.450	.642
(fcb24) Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself.	.481	.628
(fcb27) Facebook gave me the opportunity to find my long-lost old friends and now I have a livelier social life because I meet them regularly.	.407	.660
(fcb30) Facebook changes the way that I relate to myself.	.414	.657
	Cornbach’s Alpha	Number of Items
Reliability Coefficients	.692	5

6.4.3 Spearman Correlations

6.4.3.1 Self-Presentation 2.0 Scale Factors

Based on the nature of the variables, Spearman correlations were used to investigate relationships among the factors defined in the previous section with other characteristics of Facebook use and the sample as appropriate. Significant relationships were noted among the factors. In all of these analyses, the variables were entered in two blocks. Variables such as age group, gender and comparison were introduced as one block of data to be compared to the second block that consisted of the factors of the Self-Presentation 2.0 scale, namely, «Lifecasting», «Negative Attitude», «Proximity of Online/Offline Identities», «Time Dedicated to Online Social Life» and «Superficiality».

As a second block of criteria, «FBComparison», «FaceID», «Nonanonymity», «LiveCO», «NPI», «Self-Esteem», «Age» and «Gender» were entered. 8 participants were excluded from the sample for being outliers in some of the criteria defined, and hence the analysis was performed on **502** cases. The Spearman correlations among the factors and the categorical criteria are presented in **Table 6.4.3.1a**. A significant negative correlation was found between «Self-Esteem» and «FBComparison» factors ($r = -.392 / p < .05$); and a positive correlation between «FaceID» and «Time Dedicated to Online Social Life» ($r = .349 / p < .05$). Lower but notable correlations were also observed between «FaceID» and «Lifecasting» ($r = .299 / p < .05$); «Nonanonymity» and «FaceID» ($r = .254 / p < .05$); «Comparison» and «Superficiality» ($r = .199 / p < .05$); «Nonanonymity» and «Proximity of Online/Offline Identities» ($r = .193 / p < .05$); «Gender» and «FaceID» ($r = .190 / p < .05$); «Comparison» and «Lifecasting» ($r = .183 / p < .05$). Finally, «Age Group» was negatively correlated to «Time Dedicated to Online Social Life» ($r = -.291 / p < .05$) and also a slight negative correlation between «Age Group» and «Negative Attitude» was noted ($r = -.193 / p < .05$). These correlations will be interpreted in detail in the Discussion section.

Table 6.4.3.1a: Correlations among the Factors and Criterion Variables

	Lifestaging	Negative Attitude	Proximity of Online/Offline IDs	Time Dedicated to Online Social Life	Superficiality	FBComparison	Nonanonymity	FaceID	LiveCO	NPI-16 (Total Score)	Self-Esteem (Total Score)	Age group	Gender
Lifestaging		-.017	.048	.013	.040	.183**	.137**	.315**	-.026	.148**	-.097*	.028	.053
Negative Attitude			-.001	-.015	.026	.095*	-.110*	-.152**	.082	-.131**	-.122**	-.193**	-.028
Proximity of Online/Offline IDs				-.018	-.025	-.033	.193**	.201**	-.038	.079	.071	.038	.039
Time Dedicated to Online Social Life					.034	.004	.131**	.349**	-.068	.078	-.050	-.291**	.162**
Superficiality						.199**	.096*	.110*	-.069	.113*	-.120**	-.087	.016
Comparison							.043	.103*	-.046	.007	-.392**	.013	.040
Nonanonymity								.254**	-.054	.129**	-.008	-.034	.085
FaceID									-.019	.098*	-.041	-.129**	.190**
LiveCO										-.098*	-.034	-.112*	-.074
NPI-16 (Total Score)											.110	.093*	-.074
Self-Esteem (Total Score)												.171**	-.127**
Age group													-.111*
Gender													

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

---- Noteworthy correlations

6.4.3.2 Significances Attributed to Online Social Life Scale Factors

Similarly, with this combination of the survey items, to compare some of the significances attributed to Facebook-way of communication, Spearman correlations were used to carry out the analyses. In the factor analysis explained earlier, two factors were found to be significant, namely «Being Up-to-date with Friends» and the «Perceived Social Role of Facebook». Besides these two factors variables such as age group, gender and comparison were introduced as a second block of data to be compared. Once again, 8 cases were excluded and the analysis was performed on **502** cases. The correlation details are presented in **Table 6.4.3.2a**.

The relatively significant correlations found between «Being Up-to-date with Friends» and «Perceived Social Role of Facebook» were with the nonanonymous nature of the communication on Facebook and its function as a tool of «comparing lives». A strong positive correlation was observed between «Face Revealed» and «Being Up-to-date with Friends» ($r = .410 / p < .05$). Lower but noteworthy positive correlations were found also between «Comparison» and «Perceived Social Role of Facebook in Improving Social Life» ($r = .241 / p < .05$) as well as «Name Revealed» and «Being Up-to-date with Friends» ($r = .186 / p < .05$).

These correlations confirmed our hypothesis on the role of Facebook as changing the nature of online communication, and the use of nonanonymous communication serving as a tool to express ourselves to the people that we know – even if superficially. The details of the evaluation of these results are given in the Conclusion chapter.

6.4.3.3 Extroversion and Introversion

The other perspective in evaluating the survey data was through the factors defining the extroverted or introverted attitudes of the Facebook users. As the correlations found in this analysis suggest, there indeed seems to significant correlations between several criteria introduced in this dissertation and «Extroversion / Introversion» factors.

In the Spearman correlations calculated between these two factors and the other block of variables such as age group, gender and comparison, these two blocks of data were introduced to the equation. The second block included «FBComparison», «FaceID», «Nonanonymity», «LiveCO», «NPI-16», «Self-Esteem», «Age», and «Gender». With the exclusion of 8 cases for being outliers, the analysis was performed on **502** cases. The correlations found are given below in **Table 6.4.3.3a**.

Table 6.4.3.2a: Correlations among the Factors and Criterion Variables

	Being Up-to-Date with Friends	Perceived Social Role of Facebook	FBComparison	Nonanonymity	Face ID	LiveCO	NPI-16 (Total Score)	Self-Esteem (Total Score)	Age group	Gender
Being Up-to-date with Friends		.063	.010	.186**	.410**	-.127**	-.156**	-.046	-.000	-.152**
Perceived Social Role of Facebook			.241**	.122**	.178**	-.011	.121**	-.141**	.012	-.003
Comparison				.043	.103*	-.046	.007	-.392**	.013	.040
Nonanonymity					.254**	-.054	.129**	-.008	-.034	.085
FaceID						-.019	.098*	-.041	-.129**	.190**
LiveCO							-.098*	-.034	-.112*	-.074
NPI-16 (Total Score)								.110*	.093*	-.074
Self-Esteem (Total Score)									.171**	-.127**
Age group										-.111*
Gender										

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

 Noteworthy correlations Already discussed in the previous section

A significant positive correlation was observed between «Extroversion» and «FacelD» ($r = .455 / p < .05$); as well as between «Introversion» and «FBComparison» ($r = .324 / p < .05$). Lower but noteworthy positive correlations were found also between «Extroversion» and «Noanonymity» ($r = .252 / p < .05$); «Extroversion» and «NPI-16» ($r = .193 / p < .05$); and «Extroversion» and «Gender» ($r = .180 / p < .05$). And finally, as was expected, «Introversion» and «Self-Esteem» were found to be negatively correlated ($r = -.217 / p < .05$).

Table 6.4.3.3a: Correlations among the Factors and Criterion Variables

	Extroversion	Introversion	FBComparison	Nonanonymity	FaceID	LiveCO	NPI-16 (Total Score)	Self-Esteem (Total Score)	Age group	Gender
Extroversion		.043	-.021	.252**	.455**	-.123**	.193**	.090*	.004	.180**
Introversion			.324**	.061	.126**	-.010	.102*	-.217**	.029	-.087
FBComparison				.043	.103*	-.046	.007	-.392**	.013	.040
Nonanonymity					.254**	-.054	.129**	-.008	-.034	.085
FaceID						-.019	.098*	-.041	-.129**	.190**
LiveCO							-.098*	-.034	-.112*	-.074
NPI-16 (Total Score)								.110*	.093*	-.074
Self-Esteem (Total Score)									.171**	-.127**
Age group										-.111*
Gender										

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level

 Noteworthy correlations Already discussed in the previous section

6.5 Chapter Conclusions



As it was elaborated through out this dissertation, presentation of the self online has concerned scholars who study how people manipulate, reinvent, or reveal aspects of their identity in the context of online communities. Nonetheless, our basic concepts of self-presentation came from Goffman's seminal *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). In his conceptualization, self-presentation in everyday life is an ongoing process, where a person stages an «information game» whereby the impressions formed of him/her become a result of expertise in controlling the information given and given *off*. In daily face-to-face communication, the expressions one gives off are more theatrical and contextual, usually nonverbal and unintentional. The internet provides an ideal setting for this information game, which Goffman calls a «performance». Earlier versions of personal web pages were quite restricted in communicating the identity of the person due to the absence of nonverbal or other social cues, as they lacked in media richness.

Earlier in the presence of internet in our daily lives, the anonymous and textual nature of cyberspace also allowed one to overcome identity fixes, such as gender, looks, and disabilities. As Turkle elaborated in *Life in the Screen* (1995), people chose to explore certain sides of their personalities more extensively online, or even invent virtual life personae different from their real life personalities.

With the dominance of nonanonymous self-presentation online, the invention of the self changed in nature, due to the changed reflective properties of the medium. In today's zeitgeist, it is no longer a play of identities, as it was the case with avatars, but instead a meticulous editing of the self to «maintain face» in the most beneficial way. Self-presentation offline is governed, as Goffman stated, by the need to control both expressions given and given *off*. If these two types of signals conflict, then self presentation is questioned by others and the individual is exposed. In Facebook, however, it is easier to bridge the potential disparity between the expressions given and those given *off*. There is a much greater control of expressions given off, hence less risk that identity manipulation may be exposed.

In the present study, several aspects of identity construction and online self-presentation have been examined and the *Digital Life Scale* was formulated based on this research. In the analysis of the data collected from **635** participants, several subscales with multiple perspectives on the subject were constructed to be able to cross-analyze multiple dimensions. These dimensions included «Self-Presentation 2.0», «Significances Attributed to Online Social Life» and the «Intended Recipient of Communication». The factors that were identified through the Self-Presentation 2.0 Scale were named as «Lifecasting», «Negative Attitude», «Proximity of Online / Offline Identities», «Time Dedicated to Online Social Life» and «Superficiality».

The structure and the survey techniques utilized in the *Digital Life Scale* have been formulated based on the intensive review of literature on identity and communication, as well as the psychology and philosophy of the construction and the presentation of the self. Several interesting points have been identified with the detailed statistical analysis of the survey results.

The detailed findings of the *Digital Life Scale* will be discussed in the Conclusions chapter to follow, together with the overall review and evaluation of the research objectives and the hypothesis.

Endnotes

¹ Because narcissists are found to have a fragile self-esteem, it is not easy for researchers to find narcissism relation to self-esteem [Wink, 1991]. Although another measure of narcissism [NPDS; Ashby, Lee, & Duke, 1979, cited in Wink, 1991] which aims to assess narcissistic personality disorder correlates with low self-esteem, NPI is found to correlate with high self-esteem [Campbell, Reeder, Sedikides, & Elliot, 2000; Raskin, Novacek, Hogan, 1991]. This contradiction seems to stem from two reasons: NPI is a measure of narcissism as a personality trait and it is suggested that NPI assesses overt narcissism rather than covert narcissism. Moreover, several other studies reported unstable self-esteem for narcissists [Rhodewalt, Tragakis, & Finnerty, 2005; Rhodewalt, Madrian, Cheney, 1998] (Coskan & Gencoz: 7).

CONCLUSIONS



ENGLISH

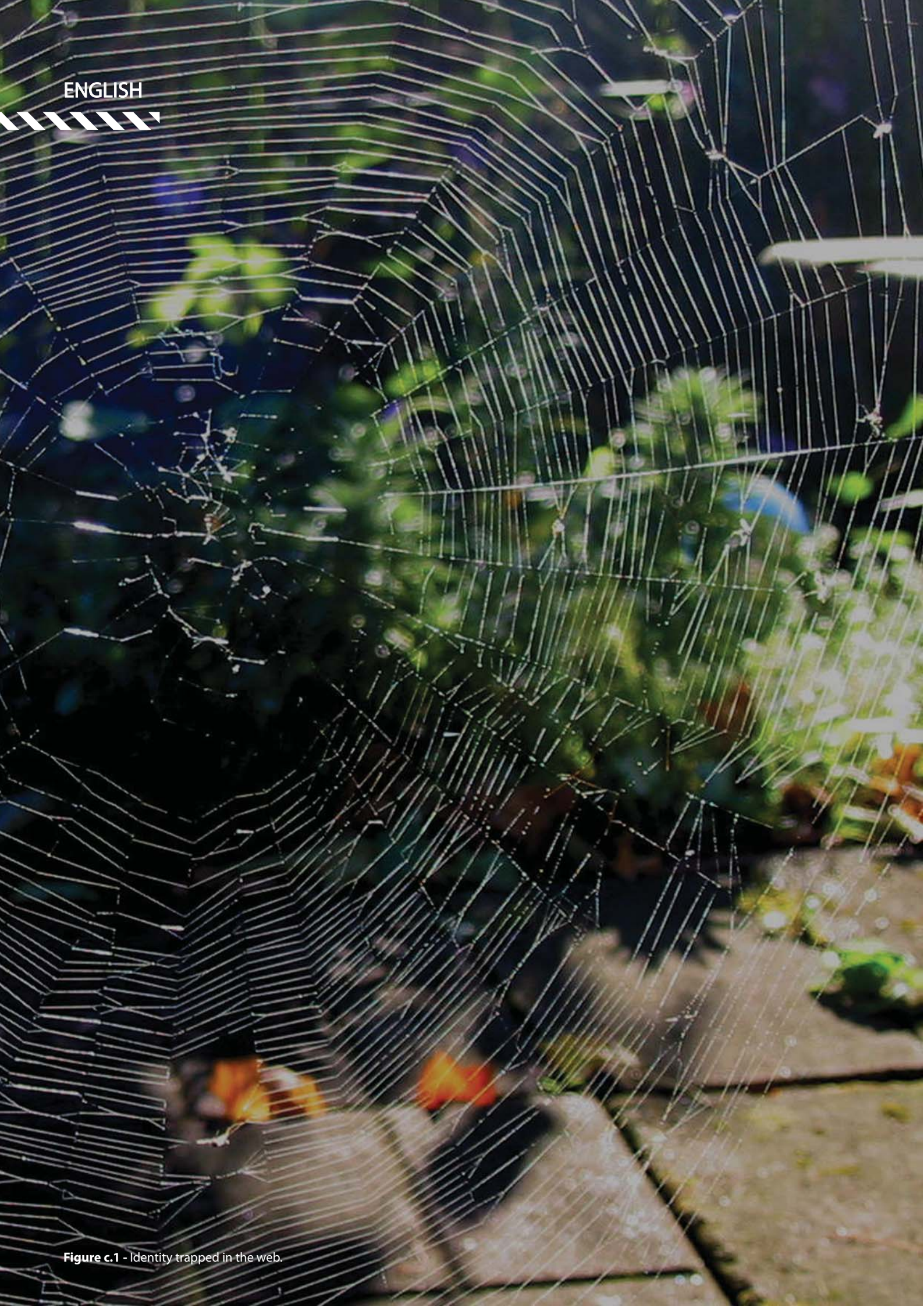


Figure c.1 - Identity trapped in the web.



Being human also means being visual, having a physical presence and a socially-constructed image that one cannot leave behind. Thus the self-conscious individual of our contemporaneity is excessively conscious of her/his appearance or manner, as it is constantly reflected in the digital mirrors of Web 2.0. We tend to build our images in the way that we want others to see us and slowly we lose the boundary between our images and our identities.

The history of fine arts, literature and music is filled with the consequences of this human urge, and this urge of self-expression has long been at the core of the art theory. Nonetheless, none of the ages in the human history has lived such an explosion of self-expression, as is the case today: Now *we are all artists* and *we are all celebrities*. The effects of the developments in mass communication are even more profuse than what McLuhan had predicted. Communication always had its tools to facilitate it ends; however, its reach has always been much more limited than in our day. With the introduction of Web 2.0, the new *participatory architecture*, the interactivity of the web is made accessible to the average user, expressing her/himself by writing, discussing, uploading photos, videos or any other sort of document has revolutionised the way we treat this digital medium, the way we treat ourselves and the others.

The initial hypothesis of this research was that in our contemporaneity, constructing our identities has turned out to be more complicated than it used to be. As such, the dissertation posited a multi-faceted question that concerned whether the technological and sociological changes that we go through are reflected significantly in the way that we construct our identities. More specifically, are we slowly becoming the *void images* that we have created of ourselves as our real and digital identities converge? Is the *brand image* that we are carefully constructing and manipulating to represent us online becoming our *identity 2.0*? What is happening to our identities within our changed conception of cyberspace, with our new Web 2.0 tools that allow us to express ourselves freely and play with our identities in our newly-gained digital visibility?

It would be impertinently bold and presumptuous to say that we have verified this multidimensional and multidisciplinary hypothesis entirely as an absolute, universal truth of our contemporaneity, of our age. Nevertheless, as we will shortly detail through the achievement of research objectives and the *Digital Life Scale* findings, this research has identified and verified the existence of the aforementioned phenomenon as a mainstream tendency of identity construction through or in the milieu of contemporary communication technologies.

In this conclusive and final phase of the thesis, we will discuss how the hypothesis is verified, and assess the achievement of the initial research objectives, as well as delineating possible pathways for future research. This final chapter is followed by the list of figures used in this thesis, the appendices and the complete bibliography of the references cited.

Verification of the Hypothesis

This research parts from the premise that today part of our lives is lived in *digital places*, be it a mobile application, an online multi-player computer game or a social networking site. The fact that the way the *digital side* of our lives became a seamless part of our daily existence caused a new way of digital online presentation of the self to arise as a mainstream tendency. As the advance of technology transformed the position of the user in front of the screen from invisible, passive spectator to active participant with a real name and a *face* attached, the way the online identity is constructed changed substantially. The brilliant yellow glow of the screen turned into the spotlight on the now inevitable visibility as we advanced from «stepping through the looking glass» to «dissolving into our digital reflections». The screen became the ultimate mirror to confirm our existences due to the narcissistic urge of being approved and admired by the others.

Let us reiterate our initial hypothesis:

In our contemporaneity, today, the process of constructing an identity became even more complicated than it used to be, before the explosion and the overall implantation of Web 2.0. Besides the traditional bases which still persist in the construction process of identity – such as the family, friends, the religious and national aspects of one's self – today we have new tools which allow us to *play* with our identities. Web 2.0, our ultimate tool of *self-expression*, is changing our first conception of cyberspace which was dominated by the idea of invisibility, and instead it is giving us a *super-visibility* together with our digitally-mastered identity.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, when Turkle had defined the *de-centralized identity*, she was talking about a parallel multiplicity of identities. But today we are immersed

in a process where our *identity on the screen* is more and more part/reflection of our *true selves*, of our *real selves*. And yet, our *identity on the screen* is (1) our reflection of the narcissistic society, (2) a reflection of the narcissistic society on us, (3) a reflection of the narcissistic society that we have inside, (4) a reflection of the narcissistic society in which we live, almost as an image manipulated for self-marketing.

Hence the hypothesis of this dissertation is to be able to reply the multi-faceted question whether we are slowly becoming the *void images* that we have created of ourselves as our *real* and *digital* identities converge: [The brand] image [that we have carefully constructed and manipulated] becomes [our] identity 2.0.

This dissertation has taken various paths, or positions, to verify the hypothesis. As discussed above, one of the basic axes that affected the construction of our digital identities was the shift in the online communication from *invisible* to the *all-too-visible*, as well as from anonymous to the nonanonymous. As we meticulously analyzed in the third chapter, the earlier *joy* of *former* cyberspace was the margin it provided for the fantasy, as the people communicating online were *minimized* to the names of their avatars, *nicknames* and screen names. This indicated a certain *space* in the *non-place* where one could «get rid of the flesh», where it was possible to overcome the physical and audiovisual identity *fixes*, and where the bodily experience could be delegated to the digital avatar. The possibility of *leaving the body behind* created an invulnerability which was never possible before in the face-to-face communications that took place in the urban scene. With all the Goffmanian expressions given and given *off*; and nonverbal clues of one's performance reduced to text, the possibility of discrediting the performance by others was nulled.

The visibility achieved on the computer screen with the advent of Web 2.0 posited the identity back into its bodily envelope, this time converting the non-place into a digital *urban scene* that was wide open to the performances of the self – *out in the public* once again. The advance of audiovisual technologies and the increased speed of connection to internet allowed for messages, images, photographs, videos to be delivered at a sensible speed and prepared the end of fantasy – thus started the age of the *digitally visible*, and shortly after, the age of Facebook.

Facebook, is a social networking site of the Web 2.0 genre that introduced a form of online communication that encouraged masses to present themselves online together with their actual names and their physical attributes. Earlier in the presence of internet in our daily lives, personal web pages provided similar identity expression opportunities. And as Dominick pointed out, «prior to [these] web pages only the privileged – celebrities, politicians, media magnates, advertisers – had access to the mass audience» (1999). The personal web pages were considered as presentations of the self that either were to contribute positively to our lives, or to alienate us from our offline social circles while expanding our cyber-circles (Papacharissi, 2002a).

The personal web pages were substantially different from Facebook self-presentation in two significant ways. First of all, personal web pages were *personal* also in the sense of their positioning in the web. Even when they were created using the same tools from the same provider or hosted on the same server, their interconnections were relatively weak: The best you could do was to give a link that hyperlinked your personal web page to that of your bestfriend. In the majority of the cases the interaction was limited. Nonetheless, Facebook brought about a sense of *network*, a sense of «being connected» highly different than its precedents. On Facebook, you have the chance of displaying a list of your friends and other acquaintances that you have «befriended» on Facebook, as well the tools to actively participate in the self-presentation of one another through comments, «Like»s and tags, among many other tools.

Secondly, personal web pages required advanced or at least intermediate mastery of software for constructing a decent or impressive online self-presentation. However Facebook, provided a much more user-friendly and democratic interface, where one could build her/his online profile within a design that allowed for little differentiation, while the content that could be uploaded through the user-friendly interface was unlimited. With a basic knowledge of internet, you were able to combine your favorite videos from Youtube, your Flickr albums or the latest newspaper column that you liked within your Facebook profile to express yourself and to be evaluated by your Facebook *friends*.

As cyberspace was gradually replaced by the participatory architecture of Web 2.0 and the widespread use of digital image production and sharing, we started to feel the presence of Web 2.0 in our lives, our communications and our identities. Soon we were to communicate online without being able to hide our «faces» and usually with some witnesses around to credit or discredit our *performances*.

On several dimensions, this communication setting was not new, as it brought the physical back into the digital – yet still behind the protective, separating surface of the screen. Nonetheless, it was different as the new audience of our digital performances was one that was physically impossible to bring together in the city streets where we strolled. Web 2.0, or Facebook in particular, brought our actual social circles together *under one roof*. Our friends from that summer camp in Italy ten years ago, childhood friends that we used to skateboard with, came together with our ex-colleagues, high-school teachers, parents, siblings and cousins, all becoming our Facebook *friends*. Even our earlier cyber-friends from online role-playing games and chat groups joined the parade, thereby attaining faces.

Neither this new crowd was the crowd of the industrial city that was the cause of our earlier urban paranoia, nor were we our earlier cyber-selves hidden behind the monitor. The way Web 2.0 turned its panoptical spotlight on to our digital identities, a self-conscious brand self stepped up to perform what was required of it: Compete in the digital reality of the ultimate consumer society. The game was on for the capitalist competition in its new platform.

The methodology deployed to investigate these highlighted issues was to identify the ever-present questions on the formulation of the human identity and to test these classical theories under the recent phenomena brought about by Web 2.0. Thus instead of a review of recent literature a profound investigation of ever-existing identity theories was undertaken – only to identify the similar concerns in our contemporary human condition. This approach was very satisfactory, as the latest developments in our digital lives had brought back the inevitable visualness of the human body into the realm of communications.

This is, by no means, saying that there were no new theories to be formulated with the newly proliferating modalities of communication. Certainly, the new digital ecstasy of communication generated the necessity to construct the identity with new priorities. Let us briefly quote Sherry Turkle, one last time to evaluate what was the distinction that made it necessary to construct ourselves as brands:

... a vexed relationship [developed] between what is true and what is «true here», true in simulation. In games where we expect to play an avatar, we end up being ourselves in the most revealing ways; on social-networking sites such as Facebook, we think we will be presenting ourselves, but our profile ends up as somebody else – often the fantasy of who we want to be. Distinctions blur (Turkle, 2011: 91-92).

The visibility of the urban space, projected onto the digital space, brought us back into our bodies and it also brought back our old concerns with our bodies – this time even more intensely. The fantasy of role-playing in the earlier invisible cyberspace was substituted with the motives to project the «fantasy of who we aspire to be» on the high visibility of Facebook communications. As our actual image obsession contaminated the screen as well, we had to take care of our digital appearances the way we take care of our physical bodies. Impression management became a priority, as there were more eyes watching our daily performances – or so we thought – than there would be if we were to step out onto the street.

Highly self-conscious and image-obsessed, in this new perspective our objective became self-marketing in the best possible light. As branding was the best tool that marketing executives came up with for the companies to sell images instead of products, it had to be the best strategy to be applied to the human-commodities as well. Under the high level capitalist competition that pushed human beings to stand out from the crowd, with the perceptions already educated through intensive advertising classes during the past decades and with the online Web 2.0 tools making audio-visual communication easier than ever, everybody became their own publicist to make the best of the new communication possibilities: [The brand] image [that we have carefully constructed and manipulated] became [our] identity 2.0.

Digital Life Scale Discussion and Findings

Formulated as a result of the intensive humanities research carried out within the framework delineated above and executed on an international random sample of 635 participants, the Digital Life Scale resulted to be a very resourceful quantitative component to support the theoretical basis constructed to verify the research hypothesis. In this section we will evaluate some of the significant findings of this comprehensive survey.

In obtaining the findings detailed below, based on the nature of the variables entered, Spearman correlations were used to investigate relationships among the factors defined in detail in the sixth chapter of this dissertation. In all of these analyses, the variables were entered in two blocks. Variables such as age group, gender and comparison were introduced as one block of data to be compared to the second block that consisted of the factors of the Self-Presentation 2.0 scale, namely, «Lifecasting», «Negative Attitude», «Proximity of Online/Offline Identities», «Time Dedicated to Online Social Life» and «Superficiality».

Finding #1 – Revealing real-life identity on social networking sites could lead to more time dedicated to social life online than offline

The concept of «keeping in touch with family members and friends online» is not new to the spread of Facebook and to the advent of Web 2.0. Considered much earlier, personal web pages, beyond providing an avenue for identity expression, were thought to be a virtual meeting point through which family members and friends could stay in touch. An earlier possible pitfall debated amongst researchers, which still remains a concern today, was whether social interaction online persisted «at the expense of» or «as a complement to» offline interaction (Papacharissi, 2002a: 643-644).

The outcomes of these significant distinctions were at the core of the Self-Presentation 2.0 Scale used in this study. One of the significant correlations found in the analysis of this section was between the factors «FaceID», which indicated revealing one's physical ID on Facebook by uploading photos or videos and «Time Dedicated to Online Social Life» with a Spearman correlation coefficient of .349 ($p < .05$). This was a natural correlation which indicates that those who have uploaded photos or videos of themselves on their Facebook profiles, tend to spend more time on this network. Even though the level of correlation found is not very high, uploading more photos and videos would apparently require more time dedicated to these activities. The question that remains however, is whether this would count as time spent socializing. Though we cannot confirm such a conclusion through this correlation that we have identified, it is a significant point that should be considered in further research.

Finding #2 – Once we display our actual identities on social networking sites, we are more inclined to be «ourselves» online

The vague correlation between «Nonanonymity» and «Proximity of Online/Offline Identities» ($r = .193 / p < .05$) indicated an association between the nonanonymous nature of communication in Facebook and the higher tendency to present aspects of the actual identity.

Finding #3 – Once we reveal our name and face on social network sites, our story follows shortly after

Another similar correlation was found between «FacelD» and «Lifecasting» ($r = .299 / p < .05$). The «Lifecasting» factor was constructed through items like «I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums & my videos», «I'm on Facebook therefore I am» or «I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook». Though we cannot interpret this correlation as a causal relationship between these two behaviours, we could vaguely associate the act of revealing one's face on Facebook as the first step in the tendency to communicate more of one's life, one's narrative, one's existence online. Similarly, a correlation between the nonanonymous nature of Facebook communication («Nonanonymity») and the «FacelD» factor was observed ($r = .254 / p < .05$). Once again, though not a very sharp correlation, this point gives us a basic insight on the behaviour that people who are likely to reveal their name on this social networking site are more inclined to reveal their faces as well.

Finding #4 – Female users reveal more, observe more, compare more

Other correlations between «Gender» and «FacelD» ($r = .190 / p < .05$); and «FBComparison» dimensions and «Lifecasting» factor ($.183 / p < .05$) were observed which indicate a slightly higher tendency of the females to identify themselves visually by uploading more photos and videos on Facebook, and that the act of watching other lives on Facebook is associated with publishing more information of your own.

Finding #5 – Living online: The younger, the merrier

The Spearman correlation values also indicated a negative correlation between «Age» dimension and «Time Dedicated to Online Social Life» ($r = -.291 / p < .05$), which we could read as higher age groups tending to dedicate less time to socializing on Facebook. Younger participants were also found to agree less with the negative items on Facebook, as was indicated by the negative correlation between the factors «Age Group» and «Negative Attitude» ($-.193 / p < .05$). This could be evaluated as a slightly more positive perception of Facebook by younger generations. It could also be predicted that a more specific analysis on these two factors would yield stronger correlations.

Finding #6 – Lifecasting comes with a name and face attached

When the sample was analysed from the perspective of the Significances Attributed to Online Social Life Scale, the control variable of «FacelD» was found to be strongly correlated with the «Being Up-to-date with Friends» factor ($r = .410 / p < .05$). This outcome can be interpreted as the online revelation of one's

life and one's lifecast on Facebook is related to the fact that one reveals his face on this network. This result was also consistent with the correlations between the nonanonymous nature of the Facebook communication with higher tendencies to lifecast, and with the tendency of using Facebook to be in touch with offline friends instead of using it to make new friends. On this basis another vague correlation was found between «Nonanonymity» and «Being Up-to-date with Friends» ($r = .186 / p < .05$).

Finding #7 – Comparing illustrated stories and lifestyles on Facebook is not necessarily a boost for our self-esteem

Yet another correlation that we observed in the survey results was that «Self-Esteem» and «FBComparison» dimensions are negatively correlated. ($r = -.392 / p < .05$). «FBComparison» criteria was constructed based on the confirmation or negation of the negatively worded item «When I see what others have accomplished with their lives on Facebook, it makes me feel like a failure». In this case, we cannot talk about a very strong correlation between self-esteem and upward social comparison, mostly because self-esteem is a very complicated subject and we have barely scratched the surface. Nonetheless, this correlation highlights a very useful path for further investigation. By reducing human identities to the famous computing acronym, WYSIWYG (What You See Is What You Get) and then by «comparing [our] insides with other people's outsides» (Burkeman, 2010), Facebook could actually be changing our perceptions of reality. Maslow's definition of a healthy psychology describes the characteristics of self-actualizing people as having «more efficient perception of reality and more comfortable relations with it» (1954) – not the opposite.

Finding #8 – Comparing our insides with the outsides of others: Facebook and Superficiality

Finding #7 also coincides with the correlation between «FBComparison» and «Superficiality» ($r = .199 / p < .05$). The «Superficiality» factor gives us a glimpse of Facebook representing the outside of our identities. According to Goffman, less intimacy indicates more superficial interactions:

Whatever it is that generates the human want for social contact and for companionship, the effect seems to take two forms: a need for an audience before which to try out one's vaunted selves, and a need for teammates with whom to enter into collusive intimacies and backstage relaxation (1959: 206).

Facebook is our new stage for testing our «vaunted selves».

Finding #9 – Social Life: Compare and Improve

The role of Facebook as a comparison tool, to compare lives, as compacted to the «FBComparison» dimension, was found to be correlated to the role attributed to Facebook as a tool for improving one's social life. The Spearman correlation between the «FBComparison» dimension and the «Perceived Social Role of Facebook» factor was $r = .241 / p < .05$.

Finding #10 – Conditional reciprocity: «If you show me yours, I'll show you mine»

A strong correlation between «Extroversion» and «FaceID» ($r = .455 / p < .05$) indicated that revealing our physical identities was pointing towards higher interest in the lives of others'. In a sense, we are posting or broadcasting ourselves, so as to encourage others to do the same. On the other hand, a more introverted behaviour was found to be correlated with the «FBComparison» dimension. When the intention of communicating ourselves with an expectation of receiving feedback for our projects of ourselves was higher, so was our vulnerability to the possible negative impacts of life comparison on Facebook ($r = .324 / p < .05$).

Extroverted Facebook behaviour, focusing on the information provided by the other, was also found to be slightly correlated with the nonanonymity dimension of self-presentation («Extroversion» and «Nonanonymity» [$r = .252 / p < .05$]) and female participants showed a slightly higher tendency for such extroverted behaviour than males («Extroversion» and «Gender» [$r = .180 / p < .05$]).

Finding #11 – From living in cyberspace to living on FacebookTV

The zeitgeist of our day requires and almost insists on one's presence on Facebook. All our friends are there, a lot of events are planned and you receive the invitations only through Facebook. Several people don't even make the effort of sending an SMS, as Facebook has gone mobile and most of the people access it through their smartphones, when someone sends you a Facebook message they assume that you would receive it instantly and they prefer it as it is free-of-charge. So life shifts to Facebook, parts of our lives are lived on Facebook, other parts are displayed and shared on Facebook and hence all of these aspects make Facebook a place much more popular than several urban spaces where we used to meet. Several aspects of self-presentation and how they are correlated with the demographic and categorical dimensions were examined through the sample of the Digital Life Scale.

Finding #12 – Are we communicating with the others or the mirror?

The third point of view, through which the data was analysed was the Extroversion/Introversion factors defined by the Intended Recipient of Communication Scale. The sort of self-communication that stems from Youtube's «Broadcast Yourself» or Tumblr's «Start Posting» does not necessarily indicate an extroverted social behaviour. Interpersonal communication is based on the interest in the other, trying to know more about the others that surround us, but not in trying to express all that we are in a nutshell.

Thus as mentioned before, besides the confusion on the intended recipient of communication implied on Facebook and the tendency to mass communicate our personal feelings, moods and philosophies, the objective of our self-presentation and self-expression is one of the basic factors that is altering the «type» of communication that is at stake today.

In an attempt to reply the questions that we have previously raised such as «Are we communicating in an extroverted manner, because we are interested in other people? »; or «Are we experiencing a level of inversion where the others only serve for approval and admiration of our own virtues? », several correlations were found between the «Extroversion/Introversion» factor and the other significant dimensions introduced.

Finding #13 – The narcissistic game is on: Are you in or are you out?

In Goldberg's Five Factor Model (1993), high extroversion was considered to be one of the factors associated with narcissism. By the same token, a slight correlation of ($r = .193 / p < .05$) was observed between «Extroversion» and the total score for Narcissistic Personality Inventory-16. As a sub-factor of narcissism, exhibitionism is found to be highly correlated with extroversion a more specific research on this relation would reveal results that further support the initial hypothesis of this dissertation.

Finally, a more introverted Facebook behaviour was found to be negatively correlated with the total score of the participant on Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale («Introversion» and «Self-Esteem» [$r = -.217 / p < .05$]). The lower the self-esteem, the more dangerous Facebook becomes for one's psychological health.

Achieving the Research Objectives

In this comprehensive research, all of the initial research objectives have been treated in the manner to verify the several dimensions of the hypothesis.

The primary objective of this research was to investigate the phenomena that effect the construction of human identity from two specific points of view: Our changing relationships with our actual selves and how we re-construct who we are with the digital identities/images which we choose to express and communicate ourselves. This objective was fulfilled combining the survey data and the intensive review of the literature on identity theories in the first chapter, on the evolution of digital communications and the presentation of the self in the third chapter as well as the motives and the strategies investigated in the fifth chapter. Through this intensive dissection, several factors that could be the agents of change were identified.

The second objective was understanding how our reflection on the screen started to change with the advent of the online social networks and how the definitions of the imaginary and the real, in this sense, were getting blurred. Within this framework, this thesis hoped to analyze some of the social ingredients that have lead the digital life assume the importance it has today, keeping its focus on the

consequences of these transformations on how the contemporary human being relates to himself and to his social environment in the third chapter, as well as in the evaluation of the Digital Life Scale results in the sixth chapter.

In order to fulfil the third research objective, that of understanding the processes of actual and digital self-construction and their consequences on the individual's final objective of self-realization, the human psychology was investigated on its both extremes in terms of what constitutes positive mental health and a healthy process of self-construction, as well as the causes and effects of identity crises and their possible outcomes in the first and the fourth chapters respectively. Similarly the fourth objective defined as tracing the phenomenon of identity crisis / dis-ease throughout the transformation of interpersonal communication in the physical and digital spaces was treated through the profound elaboration of the subject in these two chapters.

The fifth research objective intended to elaborate an understanding of the so-called narcissistic society and its role in the evacuation and two-dimensionalization of identity. Based on the author's earlier research on the subject, *From Space to Cyberspace*(2000), the traces of this dis-ease in the social life of human beings, starting from the urban paranoia of the industrial city moving onto the schizophrenia at the turn of the millenium with the Information Age was investigated. Finally, the current uneasiness with the identity was investigated under the ages old/new neurosis of extreme self-love: Narcissism. Yet this was not the only disease to come up as the current pathologies regarding the human identity. The obsession with image, body and beauty, the tendencies of voyeurism and exhibitionism and compulsive act of comparing self with others were treated under the heading of identity crisis in the fourth chapter.

The final objectives of understanding how the online presence and nonanonymity on popular social networks like Facebook, Twitter and Tuenti are effecting the way we relate to our own identity and how the significance given to online image and identity is causing us to construct ourselves as brands that sell were treated exhaustively in the fifth and sixth chapters.

Further Research Pathways

Having undertaken such a wide and complex theme, that of human identity, this thesis does not mark the end of this investigation but instead a starting point for future research.

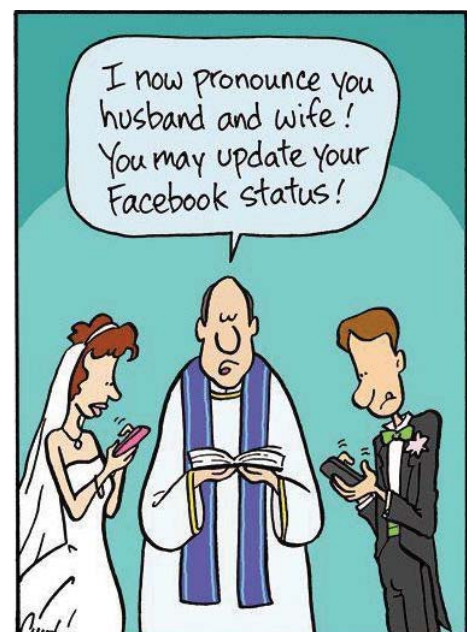


Figure c.2 - Facebook for registering our lives.
Cuyler Black (2011).

There are several new and interesting lines of research that can be pursued from this point onward. These possible elaborations, instead of amplifying the subject, will intend to be more focused and precisely defined pathways.

One of these possible elaborations is taking identity solely as a timeline and evaluating how it was treated in earlier cyberspace and today. Such research should be based on the similarities and contrasts of the simultaneous hyperlinked identities of cyberspace versus the continuous and chronologically recorded timeline on Facebook and Twitter.

On another note, this research, though it was one of the preliminary aims, could not focus on the distinction between Facebook and Twitter, in terms of their different user profiles and the distinct type of communication implied by each one them. Hence another possible elaboration of this research is to conduct a new survey with items focusing on this distinction.

CONCLUSIONES



ESPAÑOL

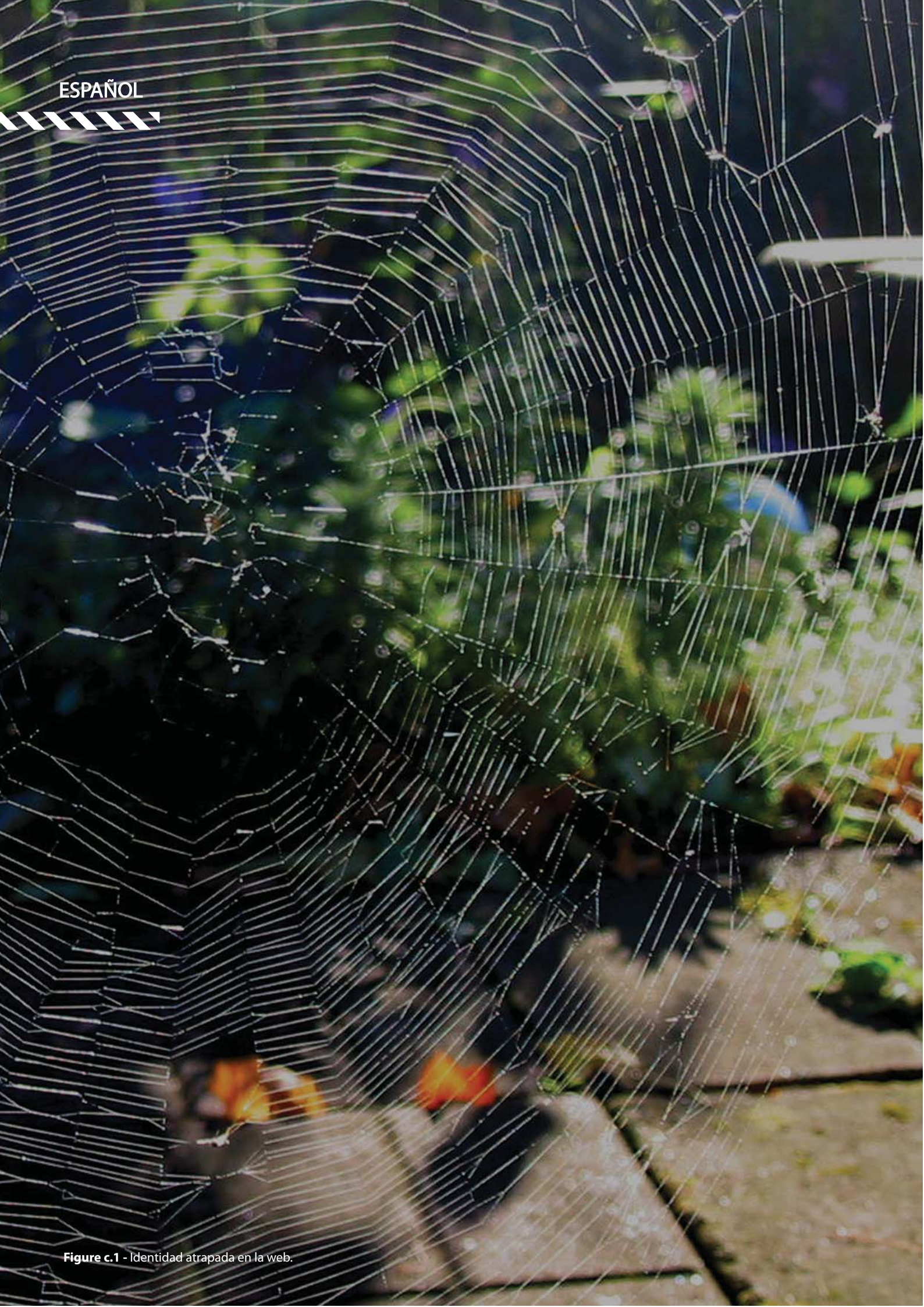


Figure c.1 - Identidad atrapada en la web.



Ser humano significa también *ser visual*, poseer una presencia física y una imagen socialmente construida que no se puede dejar de lado. El individuo de hoy en día acaba siendo en exceso consciente de su apariencia o forma, ya que están constantemente reflejadas en los *espejos digitales de la Web 2.0*. Tenemos tendencia a construir nuestras imágenes según la forma en que queremos que otros nos vean y poco a poco el límite entre nuestra imagen y nuestra identidad se pierde.

La historia de las bellas artes, la literatura y la música refleja las consecuencias de esta tendencia humana, y esta tendencia de auto-expresión ha sido el núcleo de la teoría del arte durante mucho tiempo. Sin embargo, en ninguna de las etapas de la historia de la humanidad se ha vivido una explosión de *auto-expresión* como la que se vive hoy en día: ahora *todos somos artistas y todos somos famosos*. Mucho más de lo que pudo vaticinar McLuhan respecto del efecto del desarrollo de los medios de comunicación de masas. La comunicación siempre ha empleado diversas herramientas para cumplir sus objetivos, sin embargo, su alcance ha sido siempre mucho más limitado que en nuestro tiempo. Con la introducción de la Web 2.0, la nueva *arquitectura de participación*, la interactividad ampliada de la web, es accesible a cualquier usuario, expresándose a sí mismo a través de la escritura de alcance instantáneamente remoto, de la discusión en red, subiendo fotos, videos o cualquier otro tipo de documento, lo cual ha revolucionado la forma en que tratamos a este medio digital, y la forma en que nos tratamos a nosotros mismos y a los demás.

La hipótesis inicial de esta investigación era que, en nuestra contemporaneidad, la construcción de la identidad nos resulta aún más complicada de lo que solía ser. Así, esta tesis planteaba una pregunta de facetas múltiples sobre si los cambios tecnológicos y sociológicos que se están dando se reflejan de manera significativa en la forma en que construimos nuestras identidades. Más específicamente, ¿nos estamos convirtiendo, poco a poco, en las *imágenes vacías* que hemos creado de nosotros mismos, a medida que van convergiendo nuestra identidad real y nuestra identidad digital? La imagen de marca que cuidadosamente construimos y manipulamos para representarnos on-line ¿se está convirtiendo en nuestra identidad 2.0? ¿Qué está ocurriendo con nuestras identidades en relación con nuestra nueva

concepción del ciberespacio, donde las nuevas herramientas Web 2.0 nos permiten expresarnos libremente y jugar con nuestra identidad mediante nuestra recién adquirida visibilidad digital?

Sería impertinentemente atrevido y presuntuoso decir que hemos verificado esta multidimensional y multidisciplinar hipótesis de manera completa cual una verdad absoluta y universal de nuestros tiempos, de nuestra era, de nuestra contemporaneidad. Sin embargo -como detallamos a continuación a través de la exposición de lo que consideramos la consecución de los objetivos que nos planteamos y de los resultados obtenidos en nuestra *Encuesta sobre la vida digital* - esta investigación ha identificado y verificado la manifestación de tales fenómenos referidos, como una tendencia dominante en la construcción de la identidad mediante, o en el seno de, las tecnologías contemporáneas de la comunicación.

En esta fase conclusiva y final de la tesis, vamos a exponer cómo se verifica la hipótesis, y evaluar la consecución de los objetivos iniciales de la investigación, así como delinear posibles vías para futuras investigaciones al respecto. A este último capítulo le sigue la bibliografía completa de las referencias citadas, la lista de las imágenes utilizadas en la tesis y los apéndices.

Verificación de la hipótesis

Esta investigación parte de la premisa de que, hoy en día, parte de nuestras vidas se vive en *espacios digitales*, ya sea una aplicación móvil, un juego online multi-jugador, un sitio web de las redes sociales, etc. El hecho de que el *lado digital* de nuestra vida se haya convertido en una parte integrante de nuestra existencia cotidiana, ha dado lugar a que una nueva forma de presentarse de manera on-line a sí mismo se haya convertido en una tendencia generalizada. A medida que el avance de la tecnología ha ido transformando la actitud del usuario frente a la pantalla – de espectador invisible y pasivo a participante activo con un nombre real y un *rostro* adjunto – la forma en que se construye la identidad on-line también ha cambiado sustancialmente. El brillo ambrino de la pantalla se convirtió en foco de luz de la actual inevitable visibilidad, a medida que pasábamos de «atravesar el espejo» a «disolvemos en nuestras reflexiones digitales». La pantalla se ha transformado en el espejo absoluto y último para confirmar nuestras existencias, debido a la necesidad narcisista de ser aprobados y admirados por los demás.

Permítasenos reiterar nuestra hipótesis inicial:

En nuestra contemporaneidad, en la actualidad, el proceso de construirse de una identidad se ha hecho aún más complicado de lo que venía siendo antes de la irrupción e implantación generalizada de la web 2.0. Además de las bases tradicionales que aún persisten en el proceso de construcción de la identidad -tales como la familia, los amigos, los aspectos religiosos y

nacionales propios a cada uno- hoy tenemos nuevas herramientas que nos permiten *jugar* con nuestra identidad. La Web 2.0, nuestra última herramienta de *auto-expresión*, está cambiando nuestra primera concepción del ciberespacio -en la que predominaba la idea de invisibilidad- sustituyéndola por la *super*-visibilidad de nuestra identidad digitalmente editada.

A principios del siglo XXI, cuando Turkle definió la *identidad descentralizada*, se refería a una multiplicidad paralela (de la/s identidad/es). Pero hoy en día estamos inmersos en un proceso en que nuestra *identidad en la pantalla* es cada vez más parte/reflejo de nuestro *yo verdadero*, de nuestro *yo real*. A la vez que, nuestra *identidad en la pantalla* es (1) nuestro reflejo de la sociedad narcisista, (2) un reflejo de la sociedad narcisista sobre nosotros, (3) un reflejo de la sociedad narcisista que hay en nosotros y (4) un reflejo de la sociedad narcisista en que vivimos, casi una imagen manipulada para el auto-marketing.

De ahí que la corroboración de la hipótesis de esta tesis vendría a responder la multifacética pregunta de si nos estamos convirtiendo poco a poco en las *imágenes vacías* que hemos creado de nosotros mismos a medida que nuestras identidades *real* y *digital* convergen: **Yo soy mi imagen 2.0 [de la marca que he manipulado y construido cuidadosamente]**.

Esta tesis ha adoptado diferentes vías, o posiciones, para la verificación de la hipótesis. Como ya hemos señalado, uno de los factores básicos que afectó a la construcción de nuestras *identidades digitales*, fue el cambio que experimentó la comunicación on-line del *modo invisible* al *modo super-visible* (o *modo todo visible en exceso*), así como el paso del anonimato al no-anonimato. Como se ha analizado en detalle en el tercer capítulo, el anterior gozo del *antiguo* ciberespacio se basaba en el margen que suministraba a la fantasía mediante la *simplificación* de las personas que se comunicaban on-line a través de los nombres de sus avatares, sus nicknames y sus nombres de usuario. Esto generaba un cierto *espacio* en el *no-lugar* donde uno se podía «deshacerse de la carne», donde era posible ir más allá los *rigores* de la identidad física y audiovisual, y donde la experiencia corporal podía ser delegada en el avatar digital. La posibilidad de *dejar de lado* el cuerpo creaba una invulnerabilidad que nunca había sido posible experimentar anteriormente en la comunicación cara a cara característica del espacio urbano. Con todas las expresiones Goffmanianas del individuo y sus *emanaciones*, y con las claves no verbales reducidas a texto, quedaba anulada la posibilidad de que la participación en el ciberespacio de cualquier persona fuera desacreditada por los demás.

La visibilidad alcanzada en la pantalla del ordenador con la llegada de la Web 2.0 postula la identidad de nuevo en su envoltura corporal, en esta ocasión convirtiendo el no-espacio en una *escena urbana* digitalizada que está abierta a las representaciones del yo – *en el público* de nuevo. El avance de las tecnologías audiovisuales y la velocidad aumentada de la conexión a internet permitió la entrega de los mensajes, las imágenes, las fotografías y videos a una velocidad razonable y así mismo, preparó el final de la fantasía – de este modo, comenzó la edad de la *digitalmente visible*, y poco después, la era de Facebook.

Facebook es una red social online del género Web 2.0, que introdujo una forma de comunicación online que anima a las masas para que se presenten online junto con sus nombres reales y sus atributos físicos. A principios de la presencia de internet en nuestra vida diaria, páginas web personales proporcionaron oportunidades similares de expresión de identidad. Y como Dominick señaló, «antes de [estas] páginas web sólo los privilegiados – famosos, políticos, magnates de media, los publicistas – tuvo acceso a la audiencia de masas» (1999). Las páginas web personales fueron consideradas como presentaciones de uno mismo que, o bien contribuyendo positivamente a nuestras vidas, o alejándonos de nuestros círculos sociales actuales favoreciendo nuestros ciber-círculos en su lugar (Papacharissi, 2002a).

Las páginas web personales eran sustancialmente diferentes que Facebook en términos de auto-presentación de dos maneras significativas. En primer lugar, páginas web personales eran *personales* también en el sentido de su posicionamiento en la web. Incluso cuando se crearon utilizando las mismas herramientas del mismo proveedor o alojados en el mismo servidor, los enlaces entre sí eran relativamente débiles: Lo mejor que podía hacer era dar un enlace que daba un hipervínculo de tu página web personal a la de tu mejor amigo. En la mayoría de los casos, la interacción era limitada. Sin embargo, Facebook provocó una sensación de *red*, una sensación de «estar conectado» muy diferente a sus precedentes. En Facebook, tenemos la oportunidad de mostrar una lista de amigos y otros conocidos que has añadido como «amigos» en Facebook, así como las herramientas para participar activamente en la auto-presentación de uno a otro a través de comentarios, «me gusta»s y etiquetas, entre muchas otras herramientas.

En segundo lugar, páginas web personales necesitaban un conocimiento avanzado o por lo menos intermedio de software para construir una decente u impresionante auto-presentación online. Sin embargo, Facebook proporcionó una interfaz mucho más fácil para el usuario y mucho más democrático, donde uno podía construir su perfil online dentro de un diseño que permite poca diferenciación, mientras el contenido que se puede vincular a través de esta interfaz era ilimitado. Con un conocimiento básico de internet, los usuarios fueron capaces de combinar sus videos favoritos de Youtube, con sus álbumes de Flickr o la columna que le gustó en el periódico del día en su perfil de Facebook para expresarse y para ser evaluado por sus *amigos* de Facebook.

Medida que el ciberespacio fue gradualmente reemplazado por la arquitectura de participación de la Web 2.0 y el uso amplio de la producción y reparto de la imagen digital, empezamos a sentir la presencia de la Web 2.0 en nuestras vidas, en nuestras comunicaciones y en nuestras identidades. Pronto nos encontramos comunicándonos online sin poder ocultar nuestras «caras» y normalmente rodeados por algunos testigos que pueden validar o desacreditar nuestras *actuaciones*.

En varias dimensiones, esta configuración de la comunicación no era nueva, ya que reincorporó el físico en el digital – aún que estaba detrás de la protección y superficie de la separación de la pantalla. Sin

embargo, era diferente, en términos de la nueva audiencia de nuestras actuaciones digitales, ya que esta era una físicamente imposible de reunir anteriormente en las calles de la ciudad donde estábamos paseando. Web 2.0, o Facebook en particular, llevó nuestros círculos sociales actuales *bajo un mismo techo*. Nuestros amigos de aquel campamento de verano en Italia hace diez años, amigos de la infancia con quienes patinábamos, se reunieron con nuestros ex-compañeros de trabajo, profesores de secundaria, padres, hermanos y primos – todos convirtiéndose en nuestros *amigos* de Facebook. Incluso nuestros ciber-amigos antiguos de los juegos de rol online y grupos de conversación se unieron al desfile, consiguiendo una *cara* de ese modo.

Ni este nuevo público es la multitud de la ciudad industrial que fue la causa de nuestra anterior paranoia urbana, ni nosotros somos nuestro anterior ciber-yo escondido detrás de la pantalla. La forma en que la Web 2.0 ha dirigido su atención panóptica hacia nuestra identidad digital genera una marca auto-consciente de sí misma preparada para realizar lo que se espera de ella: competir en la realidad digital de la sociedad del consumidor finalista. El juego está en marcha para la competitividad capitalista en su nueva plataforma.

La metodología desplegada para investigar estos aspectos que hemos destacado fue identificar las cuestiones que aparecían como siempre presentes en las diversas formulaciones teóricas de la identidad humana y poner a prueba estas teorías clásicas respecto de los recientes fenómenos producidos por la Web 2.0. Así, en lugar de una revisión de la literatura reciente al respecto, se ha acometido una investigación en profundidad de las teorías de la identidad ya existentes para identificar las pertinentes variables similares respecto de nuestra condición humana contemporánea. Modestamente, consideramos que este enfoque supone un aporte original, ya que, los últimos desarrollos en nuestras formas de vida digital, habían producido que se volviera a dejar de lado, salvo en encomiables poco casos, la cuestión del estudio de la visualidad del cuerpo en el ámbito de la comunicación.

Esto no quiere decir, en absoluto, que no existan o se deban desarrollar nuevas teorías al respecto, relativas a la reciente proliferación de nuevas modalidades de comunicación. Ciertamente, el *nuevo éxtasis digital de la comunicación* genera la necesidad de abordar la identidad con nuevas prioridades. Permítasenos citar brevemente a Sherry Turkle, una última vez, para considerar cuál fue la cuestión diferencial que nos obligó a la construcción de nosotros mismos como marcas:

... una relación controvertida [desarrollada] entre lo verdadero y lo que es «verdadero aquí», verdadero en la simulación. En los juegos en que esperamos jugar como un avatar, terminamos siendo nosotros mismos de las formas más reveladoras; en los espacios de redes sociales como Facebook, creemos que nos presentamos a nosotros mismos, pero nuestro perfil termina siendo otra persona –a menudo la fantasía quién queremos ser. Las distinciones se distorsionan (Turkle, 2011: 91-92).

La visibilidad del espacio urbano, proyectado en el espacio digital, nos trajo de vuelta a nuestro cuerpo y trajo también nuestras viejas preocupaciones respecto de nuestros cuerpos - esta vez con mayor intensidad. La fantasía de los juegos de rol en el anteriormente invisible ciberespacio fue sustituida por los elementos a proyectar en la «fantasía de quién aspiramos a ser» en la alta visibilidad de las comunicaciones de Facebook. A medida que nuestra obsesión por la *actualidad* de nuestra imagen ha ido contaminado también la pantalla, hemos tenido que ir cuidando de nuestro aspecto digital de misma forma en que cuidamos de nuestro cuerpo físico. La gestión de la impresión que damos se ha convertido en una prioridad, ya que hay más ojos viendo nuestras actuaciones diarias –o eso pensamos- que los que habría si estuviéramos en la calle.

Altamente conscientes y obsesionados por la imagen de sí mismo, nuestro objetivo prioritario ante esta nueva perspectiva es el de llevar a cabo de la mejor manera nuestro propio auto-marketing. Como la marca ha sido la mejor herramienta que los ejecutivos de marketing desarrollaron para que las empresas vendan imágenes en lugar de productos, ésta tenía que ser también la mejor estrategia a aplicar al humano-producto. En virtud del alto nivel de competitividad capitalista que empuja a los seres humanos a destacarse de la multitud, con los modos de percepción ya educados mediante una intensiva publicidad en las últimas décadas y con las herramientas online de la Web 2.0 haciendo la comunicación audiovisual más fácil que nunca, todo el mundo se convirtió en su propio publicista para sacar el mejor partido de las posibilidades de la comunicación: [La marca] la imagen [que hemos cuidadosamente construido y manipulado] se convirtió en [nuestra] identidad 2.0.

Comentario de los resultados obtenidos en la Encuesta sobre la Vida Digital

Formulada como resultado de una intensa investigación, en el campo de las humanidades y ciencias sociales, llevada a cabo en el marco descrito en su momento y aplicada sobre una muestra internacional aleatoria de 635 participantes, la Escala de la Vida Digital ha resultado ser un componente cuantitativo que ha aportado muchos elementos para apoyar la base teórica construida para verificar la hipótesis de esta investigación. Pasamos a comentar y valorar sintéticamente algunos de los resultados significativos de este estudio global.

En la obtención de los resultados que se detallan a continuación, en base a la naturaleza de las variables introducidas, se utilizaron las correlaciones de Spearman para investigar las relaciones entre los factores que se definen en detalle en el capítulo sexto de esta tesis. En todos estos análisis, las variables se introdujeron en dos bloques. Variables tales como grupo de edad, sexo y tendencia a comparar se introdujeron como un bloque de datos a ser relacionados con el segundo bloque, que consistía en los factores de la escala de auto-presentación 2.0, es decir, «Lifecasting», «Actitud Negativa», «Proximidad a las Identidades Online/Offline», «Tiempo dedicado a la vida social Online » y «Superficialidad».

Conclusión #1 – El hecho de exponer la identidad real en las redes sociales puede conllevar que se dedique más tiempo a la vida social on-line que a la offline

El concepto de «mantener el contacto online con familiares y amigos » no es nuevo respecto de la implantación de Facebook y el advenimiento de la Web 2.0. Aparecido mucho antes, las páginas web personales, lejos de proporcionar una vía para la expresión de la identidad, se consideraban como un punto de encuentro virtual a través del cual los miembros de la familia y los amigos podían estar en contacto. Existía un posible aspecto de controversia al respecto –que todavía se debate hoy entre los investigadores- como es si la interacción social online se daba «a expensas de» o bien «como complemento de» la interacción social offline (Papacharissi, 2002a: 643-644).

Los resultados de estas distinciones significativas se encuentran en el núcleo de la Escala de auto-presentación 2.0 utilizada en este estudio. Una de las correlaciones significativas encontradas en el análisis de esta sección fue entre los factores «FacelD» (identidad facial) –que indica que revelar en Facebook la identidad física de uno/a mismo/a subiendo fotos o videos- y «tiempo dedicado a la vida social en línea», con un coeficiente de correlación de Spearman de 0,349 (p. <0,05). Esta fue una correlación natural que indica que los que han subido fotos o videos de ellos mismos a sus perfiles de Facebook, tienden a pasar más tiempo en esta red. A pesar de que el nivel de correlación encontrado no es muy alto, subir más fotos y videos requiere más tiempo para efectuar estas actividades. La pregunta que nos podemos hacer es si esto se puede computar como tiempo dedicado a la socialización. Aunque no podemos confirmar esa conclusión a través de esta relación que hemos identificado, es un punto importante que debe tenerse en cuenta en futuras investigaciones.

Conclusión #2 - Una vez expuestas nuestras identidades reales en las reded sociales online, somos más proclives a ser «nosotros mismos» online

La vaga correlación entre «Nonanonymity» (no-anonimato) y «proximidad de las identidades online/offline» ($r = 0,193$ / p. <0,05) indican una asociación entre la naturaleza no anónima de la comunicación en Facebook y la mayor tendencia a presentar aspectos de la identidad real.

Conclusión #3 - Una vez que desvelamos nuestro nombre y cara en las redes sociales online, no tardamos mucho en revelar nuestra historia

Otra correlación similar se encontró entre «FacelD» y «Lifecasting» ($r = 0,299$ / p <0,05). El factor «Lifecasting» fue construido a través de items como «trato de informar a mis amigos tanto como sea posible acerca de lo que pasa en mi vida mediante actualizaciones de mi estado, mis discos y mis videos», «Estoy en Facebook, luego existo» o «voy a perder el contacto con mis amigos, si no estoy en Facebook». A pesar de que no puede interpretarse esta correlación como una relación causal entre estos dos comportamientos, podríamos vagamente asociar el acto de revelar la cara de uno/a en Facebook

como el primer paso en la tendencia a comunicar más de la propia vida, a auto-narrativizarse, a transmitir la existencia de sí mismo/a online. Igualmente, se ha observado una correlación entre la naturaleza no anónima de la comunicación en Facebook («Nonanonymity») y el factor «FacelD» ($r = 0,254 / p. <0,05$). Una vez más, aunque no sea una correlación muy fuerte, este punto nos da una idea básica sobre cómo el comportamiento de las personas que tienden a revelar su nombre en este sitio de redes sociales son más proclives a mostrar también sus caras.

Conclusión # 4 - Las usuarias femeninas tienden a revelar más, observar más, comparar más

Se observaron otras correlaciones, entre «género» y «FacelD» ($r = 0,190 / p. <0,05$) y entre las dimensiones «FBComparison» y el factor «Lifecasting» ($r = 0,183 / p. <0,05$), que indican una proporción ligeramente superior en la tendencia de las mujeres a auto-identificarse visualmente subiendo más fotos y vídeos a Facebook, así como que el acto de observar otras vidas en Facebook se asocia con la publicación de más información en la cuenta propia.

Conclusión # 5 - Vivir online: Cuanto más joven, más se disfruta

Los valores de correlación de Spearman también indican una correlación negativa entre la «Edad» y la dimensión «tiempo dedicado a la vida social en línea» ($r = -0,291 / p. <0,05$), que se puede leer como que los grupos de mayor edad tienden a dedicar menos tiempo a la vida social en Facebook. Igualmente, los participantes más jóvenes están menos de acuerdo con los aspectos negativos de Facebook, como indica la correlación negativa entre los factores de «grupo de edad» y «actitud negativa» ($r = -0,193 / p. <0,05$). Esto se puede evaluar como una percepción ligeramente más positiva de Facebook por parte de las generaciones más jóvenes. También permite predecir que un análisis más específico de estos dos factores produciría seguramente fuertes correlaciones.

Conclusión # 6 - La historia de tu vida en la Web 2.0 siempre va unida a un nombre y a un rostro

Cuando la muestra se analizó desde la perspectiva de los significados atribuidos a la Escala Online de Vida Social, se encontró una fuerte correlación de la variable de control de «FacelD» con el factor «estar al día con los amigos» ($r = 0,410 / p <0,05$). Este resultado puede interpretarse como que la revelación online de la propia vida y de la historia de uno/a en Facebook se relaciona con el hecho de que uno/a revela su rostro en esta red. Este resultado también fue consistente con las correlaciones entre la naturaleza no anónima de la comunicación en Facebook y la una mayor tendencia a constar la propia historia (lifecast) en esta red, así como con la tendencia a utilizar Facebook para estar en contacto con sus amigos offline en vez de usarla para hacer nuevos amigos. Sobre esta base, se encontró otra vaga correlación entre «Nonanonymity» y «estar al día con los amigos» ($r = 0,186 / p <0,05$).

Conclusión # 7 - Comparar historias ilustradas y estilos de vida en Facebook no produce necesariamente un aumento de nuestra autoestima

Otra correlación que se observa en los resultados del estudio es que las dimensiones «autoestima» y «FBComparison» presentan una correlación negativa ($r = -0,392 / p. <0,05$). El criterio «FBComparison» se construyó sobre la base de la confirmación o la negación del elemento peyorativo «Cuando veo lo que otros han logrado con sus vidas en Facebook, me siento como un fracasado». En este caso, no podemos hablar de una correlación muy fuerte entre la autoestima y la favorable comparación social, sobre todo porque la autoestima es un tema muy complicado, del que apenas hemos arañado la superficie. Sin embargo, esta correlación abre una vía muy interesante para próximas investigaciones. Reduciendo las identidades humanas al famoso acrónimo de la computación, WYSIWYG (Lo que ves es lo que obtienes) y luego haciendo la «comparación de [nuestro] interior con los exteriores de otras personas» (Burkeman, 2010), Facebook podría estar cambiando actualmente nuestra percepción de la realidad. La definición de Maslow de una psicología sana describe las características de las personas autorrealizadas por tener «una más eficiente percepción de la realidad y unas relaciones más confortables con ella» (1954) -y no al contrario.

Conclusión # 8 - Tendemos a comparar nuestro ser interior con lo exterior de los demás: Facebook y la superficialidad

La conclusión # 7 también implica la correlación entre «FBComparison» y «superficialidad» ($r = 0,199 / p. <0,05$). El factor de «superficialidad» nos da una idea de cómo Facebook representa lo exterior de nuestras identidades. Según Goffman, menos intimidad indica una interacción más superficial:

Sea lo que sea lo que genere el deseo humano de contacto social y de compañía, el efecto parece ser de dos tipos: la necesidad de una audiencia ante la que probar el propio alarde, y la necesidad de compañeros con los que entrar en intimidades de colusión y relajaciones privadas (1959: 206).

Facebook es nuestro nuevo escenario para poner a prueba nuestro «propio alarde».

Conclusión # 9 - Vida Social: compara y mejora

Hemos encontrado que, el papel de Facebook como herramienta de comparación -para comparar vidas, como recoge la dimensión «FBComparison»- se correlaciona con el papel atribuido a Facebook como herramienta para mejorar la vida social de uno/a mismo/a. La correlación de Spearman entre la dimensión «FBComparison» y el factor «percepción del papel social de Facebook» fue de $r = 0,241 / p <0,05$.

Conclusión # 10 - Reciprocidad condicionada: «Si me enseñas lo tuyo, te enseño lo mío»

Una fuerte correlación entre la «extroversión» y «FacelD» ($r = 0,455 / p < 0,05$) indicó que la revelación de nuestra propia identidad física apuntaba hacia un mayor interés por la vida de los demás. En cierto sentido, nos publicamos o nos difundimos a nosotros mismos con el fin de animar a los otros a hacer lo mismo. Por otro lado, se encontró que un comportamiento más introvertido se correlaciona con la dimensión «FBComparison». Cuanto mayor es la intención de comunicarnos a nosotros mismos con la esperanza de recibir retroalimentación respecto de nuestros proyectos de uno/a mismo/a, mayor es nuestra vulnerabilidad a los posibles impactos negativos de la comparación de vidas en Facebook ($r = 0,324 / p < 0,05$).

También se ha encontrado que el comportamiento extrovertido en Facebook focalizado sobre la información proporcionada por el otro, presenta una correlación más débil con la dimensión de no-anonimia en la auto-presentación («extroversión» y «Nonanonymity») [$r = 0,252 / p < 0,05$] y que las mujeres participantes mostraron una tendencia levemente mayor que los hombres respecto de tal comportamiento extrovertido («extroversión» y «género») [$r = 0,180 / p < 0,05$].

Conclusión # 11 - Hemos pasado de la vida en el ciberespacio a la vida en FacebookTV

El espíritu de nuestro tiempo requiere, y casi insiste en, la presencia de uno/a mismo/a en Facebook. Todos nuestros amigos están ahí, la invitación para gran número de los eventos que se planifican se recibe sólo a través de Facebook. Mucha gente ni siquiera hace el esfuerzo de enviar un SMS, ya que Facebook está también en los móviles y la mayoría de las personas accede a él a través de sus teléfonos inteligentes; cuando alguien envía un mensaje a Facebook se supone que será recibido de inmediato y además libre de cargo, lo que hace que sea el medio preferido. Así, la vida pasa a Facebook, algunas partes de nuestra vida se viven en Facebook, otras partes se muestran y comparten en Facebook y, por lo tanto, todos estos aspectos hacen que Facebook se convierta en un lugar mucho más popular que varios de los espacios urbanos en que nos reuníamos. La muestra de la Escala de Vida Digital examina varios aspectos de la auto-presentación y de la forma en que se correlacionan con las dimensiones demográficas y de otras categorías.

Conclusión # 12 - ¿Comunicamos con los demás o con el espejo?

El tercer punto de vista a través del cual se analizaron los datos estaba constituido por los factores de extroversión/introversión definidos por el destinatario de la Escala de Comunicación. El tipo de auto-comunicación que se deriva del «Broadcast Yourself» («difúndete a ti mismo») en Youtube o del «Start Posting» («empieza a publicar») en Tumblr no indica necesariamente un comportamiento social extrovertido. La comunicación interpersonal se basa en el interés por el otro, tratando de saber más sobre los que nos rodean, pero no tratando de expresar en pocas palabras todo lo que somos.

Así, como antes se ha mencionado, además de la confusión, o indefinición, del destinatario de la comunicación que Facebook implica y además de la tendencia a comunicar masivamente nuestro estado de ánimo, nuestros sentimientos personales y nuestra propia filosofía, el objetivo de nuestra auto-presentación y auto-expresión es uno de los factores básicos que está alterando el «tipo» de comunicación puesta en juego en nuestros días.

En un intento para responder a las preguntas que hemos planteado anteriormente, tales como «¿Comunicamos de manera extrovertida, porque estamos interesados en las otras personas?», o «¿Estamos experimentando un nivel de inversión, donde los demás sólo sirven para la aprobación y admiración de nuestras propias virtudes?», Se encontraron varias correlaciones entre el factor de «extroversión/introversión» y las otras dimensiones significativas introducidas.

Conclusión # 13 - El juego narcisista está en marcha: ¿Estás «in» o estás «out»?

En el Modelo de Cinco Factores de Goldberg (1993), la extroversión alta se considera como uno de los factores asociados con el narcisismo. En consonancia con esto, se observó una tenue correlación ($r = 0,193 / p < 0,05$) entre «extraversión» y la puntuación total para la NPI-16. Como un sub-factor del narcisismo, se encuentra una alta correlación entre el exhibicionismo y la extroversión. Una investigación más específica sobre esta relación podría revelar que los resultados apoyan aún más la hipótesis de partida de esta tesis.

Por último, se ha encontrado una correlación negativa entre un comportamiento más introvertido en Facebook y la puntuación total de los participantes en la Escala de Autoestima de Rosenberg («introversión» y «autoestima» [$r = -0,217 / p < 0,05$]). Cuanto menor es la autoestima, mayor es el peligro que Facebook representa para la propia salud psicológica.

Consecución de los objetivos planteados

En este estudio exhaustivo, todos los objetivos iniciales de investigación han sido tratados en aras a verificar las diversas dimensiones de la hipótesis.

El objetivo principal de este trabajo es investigar los fenómenos que afectan a la construcción de la identidad humana desde dos puntos de vista específicos: nuestro



Figure c.2 - Facebook for registering our lives. Cuyler Black (2011).

cambio de relaciones con nuestro ser real y cómo re-construimos quién somos con las identidades/imágenes digitales que elegimos para expresarnos y comunicarnos a nosotros mismos. Este objetivo se cumplió combinando los datos del estudio y la intensiva revisión de la literatura sobre teorías de la identidad, en el primer capítulo, sobre la evolución de las comunicaciones digitales y la presentación del yo, en el tercer capítulo, así como mediante los motivos y las estrategias investigados en el quinto capítulo. A través de esta disección intensiva, se identificaron diversos factores como potenciales agentes del cambio (de paradigmas comunicativos/identitarios).

El segundo objetivo era la comprensión de cómo nuestra reflexión sobre la pantalla comenzó a cambiar con la llegada de las redes sociales online y cómo las definiciones de lo imaginario y lo real, en este sentido, se hacían borrosas. En este marco, esta tesis se planteó analizar algunos de los ingredientes sociales que han llevado a la vida digital a asumir la importancia que tiene hoy, manteniendo su enfoque en las consecuencias de estas transformaciones sobre la forma en que el ser humano contemporáneo se relaciona consigo mismo y con su entorno social, en el tercer capítulo, así como en la evaluación de los resultados de la Escala de Vida Digital, en el sexto capítulo.

Con el fin de cumplir con el tercer objetivo de la investigación -el de la comprensión de los procesos de autoconstrucción real y digital, así como de sus consecuencias sobre el objetivo último de auto-realización de los individuos- se investigó la psicología humana en los dos extremos que suponen los términos de lo que constituye una salud mental positiva y un saludable proceso de auto-construcción, así como las causas y los efectos de la crisis de identidad y sus posibles resultados, en el primer y el cuarto capítulos respectivamente. Asimismo, el cuarto objetivo -definido como el seguimiento del fenómeno de la crisis de identidad / mal-estar en la transformación de la comunicación interpersonal en los espacios físicos y digitales- fue tratado mediante la profunda elaboración de la materia en estos dos capítulos.

El quinto objetivo de la investigación -destinado a elaborar una comprensión de la así llamada como sociedad narcisista y su papel en la evacuación y bi-dimensionalización de la identidad- ha sido tratado basándose en una investigación anterior ya realizada por la autora sobre el tema, desde el espacio al ciberespacio (2000), e investigando las huellas de este mal-estar de los seres humanos en la vida social, desde la paranoia urbana de la ciudad industrial evolucionando hacia la esquizofrenia de la era de la información en el cambio de milenio. Finalmente, la inquietud actual por la identidad se ha investigado respecto de las etapas de vieja/nueva neurosis de extremo amor a sí mismo: el narcisismo. Sin embargo, esta no fue la única enfermedad que apareció como patología actual respecto de la identidad humana. Así, la obsesión por la imagen, el cuerpo y la belleza, las tendencias de voyeurismo y el exhibicionismo y el acto compulsivo de la comparación de uno mismo con los demás, han sido tratados bajo el título de crisis de identidad en el cuarto capítulo.

Los objetivos finales de la comprensión de cómo la presencia online y el no-anonimato en las redes sociales más populares como Facebook, Twitter y Tuenti están afectando a la forma en que nos relacionamos con nuestra propia identidad y cómo la importancia dada a la imagen y a la identidad online está provocando que nos construyamos a nosotros/as mismos/as como marcas que vender, se trataron exhaustivamente en los capítulos quinto y sexto.

Líneas de investigación abiertas

Después de haber abordado un tema tan amplio y complejo, el de la identidad humana, esta tesis no marca el final de esta investigación, sino más bien un punto de partida para futuras investigaciones. Hay varias nuevas e interesantes líneas de investigación que pueden llevarse a cabo a partir de este punto. Estas elaboraciones posibles, en lugar de amplificar el tema, tal vez deban precisar y definir de manera más ajustada las posibles nuevas vías de acometida.

Una de estas elaboraciones posibles es tomar únicamente la identidad desde la aparición del ciberespacio, de manera diacrónica, como una línea de tiempo, evaluando la forma en que los anteriores ciberespacios la trataron, hasta la actualidad. Esa investigación debería basarse en las similitudes y los contrastes de las identidades simultáneas de hipervínculo en el ciberespacio general frente a la continuidad temporal y cronológica del despliegue de la identidad en Facebook y Twitter.

Tal investigación, a pesar de que fue uno de los objetivos preliminares, no permitía, dentro de nuestros intereses investigadores, centrarse en la distinción entre Facebook y Twitter, en términos de sus diferentes perfiles de usuario y el distinto tipo de comunicación que implica cada uno de ellos. Por lo tanto, otra posible elaboración de esta investigación es llevar a cabo una nueva encuesta con items centrados en esa distinción.

Identity Offline

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- Pirates des Caraibes : capitaine - <http://on.fb.me/edp5pG>
- Porsche, thank you a million times - <http://bit.ly/dE44vq>
- Schweppes profile maker - <http://on.fb.me/i5E5FQ>
- Skoda, the more you like, the less you pay - <http://bit.ly/b6yEs9>
- Sony Vaio media monsters war - <http://bit.ly/biUHBV>
- Sour mirror interactive music video - <http://sour-mirror.jp>
- Top 10 Old Spice video responses - <http://on.mash.to/aafpwa>
- Uniqlooks - <http://bit.ly/eRx5qE>
- Youtube sensation Blair Fowler aka juicystar07 - <http://bit.ly/18PWWM>

SOCIAL MEDIA IMPACT MEASUREMENT TOOLS

- Epenis - <http://www.epenis.nl/>
- Klout - <http://klout.com>
- Mashable follow - <http://on.mash.to/dKbx3a>

SOCIAL MEDIA NEWS

- Mashable - <http://mashable.com>
- Social Bakers - <http://www.socialbakers.com>

TECHNOLOGY NEWS

- Slate - <http://www.slate.com>
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APPENDIX 01 – The Preliminary Facebook Survey Contributions

(in their original respective languages) (Appendix to Section 6.1.2.1 – Preliminary Facebook Survey)

Male, 33 years old, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 2:56pm – İnsanların merak duygularını tatmin etmede bir numaralı internet aracı ve bir tür uyuşturucu gibi bir kere alışanın bırakması zor. Kısaca kesinlikle lazımmış öyle anlaşıyor.

Male, 20 years old, Spain / August 28, 2010 at 3:18pm – Pues, que aparte de la cantidad de horas muertas que pasas, está bien para ver que hacen tus conocidos, porque realmente, tus amigos ya sabes lo que hacen. (o deberías al menos). Aunque también ayuda a conocer mejor a esas personas que no sabías como eran.

Female, 35 years old, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 5:13pm – Çok eğlenceli ve hafiyelik yapmak için birebir :)

Male, 48 years old, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 6:25pm – Eskiden mahalle, sokak, kahvehane, ders, çalışma, oyun arkadaşlıkları vardı. Hepsinin yerini Facebook aldı. Facebook sosyal bir platformdan öte, asosyalleştiren bir sanal hücrevi gibi. Çıkıcam zaten.

Female, 26, Poland / August 28, 2010 at 6:44pm – Opino que Facebook es una buena idea. En Polonia hay «Nasza Klasa» En español esto se traduzca a «Nuestra Clase» y este portal funciona como Facebook. Pero Facebook está más popular. Me gusta porque es internacional, tienes contacto con otra gente de escuela, de estudios, de viajes etc. Gracias a Facebook se puede estar en contacto con todos tus amigos y por eso encontrar cosas nuevas, por ejemplo las ciudades que tus amigos visitan. En Polonia, como he dicho, Facebook está muy popular, entre la gente, entre las empresas y políticos.

Male, 35, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 12:13am – Türklerin ağırlıklı olarak hava atmak, yabancıların ise iyi / kötü haberlerini paylaşmak için kullandıkları ve hayatımızın bir parçası haline gelen platform.

Male, 37, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 12:01am – Antisosyallik...

Male, 58, U.S.A. / August 29, 2010 at 2:27am – I look at it to catch up with what some people are doing. Media is ok. Not sure why people post everything on it? Maybe your research can tell me?

Male, 37, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 1:56pm – Galiba ben biraz gelenekselciyim. Görmek iletişim kurmak istediğin arkadaşın için reel zaman ayrılması gerektiğini, sanal alemin biraz kolaycılık olduğunu düşünüyorum. Şu sıralar Facebook'u kapatıp kapatmama sorgulamasını yaptığım br dönem... Ama dediğim gibi iyi yönler kötü yönler düşünülduğünde şimdiye kadar kapatamadım hesabımı...

Female, 35, Taiwan / August 31, 2010 at 9:06am – A tool helps me connect to my network / and with possibility to keep and enrich friendship (Connecting people) - A platform where you can share and build what you like and who you are (Blog functions).

Female, 27, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 11:35pm – Kesinlikle uzaklık hissini azaltıyor. Yüklediğim resimler, duvarıma post ettiğim ve paylaştığım linklerle kendimi daha iyi ifade ettiğimi düşünüyorum. Yorum yazıp, resimleri beğenerek başkalarıyla duygularımı paylaşıyorum. Yeni tanıştığım insanlarla Facebook arkadaşı olarak samimiyeti iletirip, hakkında daha detaylı bilgi ediniyorum.

Female, 30, Turkey / August 30, 2010 at 2:49pm – Facebook iletimize «bugün kurufasulye pişirdim»i yazmazsak şayet, sanki o gün evde kurufasulye gerçekten pişmemiş olacak =))) Şaka bi tarafa hakikaten bu sanal alemler insanların gerçekten «var olduğunu» hissetme platformu oldu bence =) Social network anlamında çok faydalı buluyorum aslında. Özellikle uzaktaki yakınardan ve onların hayatlarından bir şekilde kopmamak anlamında ve real long distance relationship'leri sürdürebilmek adına bence katkısı büyük. Facebook kullanımı bu seviyede ve sadece bu motivasyonla kalsa bence ne mutlu herkese, ne mutlu Facebook'a!! Ama öyle olmuyor tabii =)) Bi kere insanları sürekli bir «upward social comparison»a itiyor. Kendinden başka herkes çok mutlu, sürekli tatilde, eğlente, partilime halinde gibi düşündürüp «ulan benim hayatım niye böyle diil yaa»yı sorgulatıp insanı kendiyile ve başkalarıyla ilgili aslında bir «false perception»a itiyor. Yani bence insan psikolojisi adına ciddi bir negatif etkisi var. Facebook başında kimsenin çok da mutlu dakikalar geçirdiğini düşünmüyorum aslında. Ama bir şekilde «in the game» olmak için herkesler Facebook'ta. Onun dışında sosyal bir medya olarak doğru kullanıldığında imaj yaratmak, markalaşmak vs. anlamında ciddi yardımcı. Facebook sizi değil, siz Facebook'u yönetin diyerek sözlerime son veriyorum =))

Female, 32, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 6:14pm – Uzun süre FB'a üye olmadım aslında. Bu tür sosyal iletişim ağları pek bana göre değil. Fakat bir süre sonra buna itiraz etmek kendini soyutlamaya giriyor, çünkü dünya (ve dolayısıyla benim dünyam) bu şekilde iletişim kurmaya başlıyor. Dolayısıyla sen başka iletişim araçları kullanmaya çalışırken aslında iletişime baştan engel koymuş oluyorsun. Yurtdışında yaşayan biri olarak yıllarca uzak kalacağım hayatlara yaklaşmış oluyorum. Onların neler yaptığı, kimler olduğu, neler düşündüğü hakkında genel olarak fikir sahibi oluyorum. ... Bir arkadaşım FB üyeliğini, «Kendimi hiç tanımadığım insanların resimlerine bakarken buldum, hayatımın bu kadar kontrolden çıkmasından

rahatsız oluyorum» diyerek kapattı. Bir başka arkadaşım da «Arkadaşım olmayan insanları arkadaşım gibi görmeye başlayıp, onların ne yaptığı ile ilgilenmekten sıkıldım» diyerek kapattı mesela. Tabii ki aşık yüzlerce arkadaşımızın olduğunu söyleyen FB'nin gerçekçi bir durum yaratmadığı, ama ben yine de bunun bi network olduğunu, «arkadaş» kavramı içerisinde değerlendirilmemesi gerektiği, ve fakat gerekli koşullarda kullanımının faydalı olduğunu düşünüyorum. Biraz televizyon gibi, istediğin kısmını alır, bazen eğlenir, bazen öğrenir, istemediğin kısımda da kapatırsın. Sanırım hiçbirimiz televizyon seyretmediğimiz gerekçesiyle televizyonu çöpe atmıyoruz. Ama onun esiri olup olmama (ve ondan ne kadar faydalanma) kararını verebiliriz.

Male, 41, Italy / August 28, 2010 at 8:36pm – Briefly: it's a useful tool for keeping in touch with present friends (80%), looking for old friends (18%) and finding new ones (2%). It's a good way to stimulate conversations, to share ideas among small groups and to find help if you need it. The main risk is to become Facebook-addicted, losing too much time on it, and losing contact with the «real» world. The main fault of Facebook is to have ruined the meaning of the word «friend».

Male, 35, Turkey / August 30, 2010 at 1:30am – Sesini duyup hiçbir duygu alışverişi yapmadığım insanlarla bir takım sanal şeyler paylaşmak çok tatminkar değil. Yani diyorum ki eskiden olduğu gibi insanlar birbirini arasa sesini duysa daha güzel olma mııııı. Bence Facebook'un da belli bir ömrü var. İnsanlar bundan da sıkılacak ve zararlarını görmeye başlayacak... Doğamız gereği görsel ve işitsel duyularımızla iletişim kurmanın daha keyifli olduğunu hatırlayacak... Toparlayacak olursak belki bizler için değil ama yeni kuşaklar için Facebook gibi sanal paylaşım siteleri tehlikeli, çünkü sanal ilişkiler kuran kayıp bir gençlik yetiştiriyor...

Female, 30, Turkey / August 29 at 11:16pm – Uzaktaki arkadaşlarımla bağlantı kurabilmek açısından güzel olduğunu düşünüyorum ama bir taraftan da gereksiz olduğunu düşünüyorum çünkü bu kadar fazla insanın hayatı hakkında bilgi sahibi olmama gerek yok... Magazin programı gibi bebişim, böyle kitlenirsin, kanalı da değiştiremezsin mal mal izlersin ya onun gibi :))

Female, 39, Turkey / August 29 at 10:23pm – Elektronik ortamda kendimizi bir bakış açısından anlatıyoruz; ee bu da kurmaca oluyor. Mesela seçtiğimiz fotoğraftaki pozumuzla, işaretlediğimiz etkinlikler ve/veya ilgi alanları vb., desteklediğimiz filller, şahıslar, görüşler, ait olduğumuz gruplar ile istesek de istemesek de yeni, tam olarak bir yere referansı olmayan, yani gerçek olmayan bir kimlik yaratıyoruz. Bu anlamda Facebook'ta bir çok defa kendimizi yeniden kurguluyoruz. Bunu ciddi uça yapanlar var. Sahte isimle girip sıfırdan bi portre yaratıp, yeni bir kimlik oluşturmak mümkün. Ya da ölü tanınmış birisi ya da yakınlarının Facebook'unu kuranlar var. Lakap, gizemli fotoğraf, karikatür, ya da ünlü birinin fotoğrafını kullanan çok insan var. Bir süre görünüp başka lakapla fotoğraflarla girenler. Yani simulasyon esasen bu. Yeni bir gerçek yaratıyoruz.

Female, 27, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 8:31pm – Facebook'un günlük hayatımızın bir parçası olması, burası için fotoğraflar çekilmesi, herkesin kendi çapında politikacı ya da felsefeci olması beni rahatsız ediyor.

Male, 39, Italy / August 28, 2010 at 7:27pm – I'm using FB to keep in touch with people i don't hear so often... like you. The thing I don't like so much is that almost everybody can read about you... but at the end it's so that it works... games are cool.

Female, 35, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 6:11pm – Çünkü hızlı yaşam temposunda eskisi gibi sosyalleşmeye çok zaman ayıramadığımızda, yine de insanlarla sosyalleşebilme ortamı sağlıyor. Bir de chatroom-forum-email, vb. iletişim araçları gibi sosyal ilişkilerin çok kontrol edilebilir olmasını sağlayan bir platform sağlıyor. Yani yazdığının üstüne düşünebiliyorsun. Ya da yüz yüze olmadığından, belki de gerçekte söyleyemeyeceklerini söyleyebiliyorsun. İstediginle iletişimde kalıp, istediğini dışlayabiliyorsun, newsfeed ile kendini ifade edebiliyorsun, vs. Bu kontrol edilebilir tarafı, aniden gelişecek pek çok durumu da engelliyor. Aslında bu yönüyle de belki negatif bir tarafı da var (yani spontaneity ve unexpected olaylar yok oluyor) ama bu da belki çağımızın bir gerekliliği.

Male, 28, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 5:52pm – Eski arkadaşlarını bulmak ve arkadaşlarıyla iletişim kurmayı ama artık reklam amaçlı kullanılıyor ve tabii ki de show amaçlı. Ve son olarak zararlarından en büyüğü ise aşk ilişkilerine inanılmaz negatif etkisi var tanıdığım ilişkisi olan çok insan sadece Facebook yüzünden ayrıldılar. Hatta daha da ileri gidersek ilişkilere başlamadan önce Facebook'u kapattıranlar bile var.

Male, 42, Italy / August 29, 2010 at 4:00pm – Hi Zeynep. For me Facebook is useful to know some events, to receive some nice advices and suggestions (about things to do, where to go, nice videos). I think that it is like a private channel for everyone, in which he broadcast what he likes.

Male, 56, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 6:11pm – Facebook is a book that gives one a *face*.

(Zeynep Arda August 28, 2010 at 9:39pm – one didn't have a face before Facebook?)

Male, 56, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 12:07pm – Tamam işte, that one doesn't count in this age! Çok özet olduğunu kabul ediyorum, ve şöyle açıyorum: İnsanlar Facebook'ta sayfa sahibi olmakla, öncelikle kendilerine kamusal bir kimlik, bir yüz vermiş oluyorlar. Üstelik şöyle bir özgürlük var: Kimse sana yanıt vermese bile konuşabiliyorsun. Yanıt verirse de - ki çoğu zaman mutlaka yanıt veren oluyor - o zaman gerçekten söylediğinin bir yankısı olduğunu düşünüyorsun, yani gerçekten varolduğuna inanıyorsun. Bence blog fenomeni de benzer, ama Facebook'ta birşeyin parçası olma duygusu daha yüksek. Kısacası bir kimliğin olduğuna, konuştuğuna ve dinlendiğine, varolduğuna inanmanı sağlayan bir mekanizma sanırım...

Male, 34, Turkey / August 31, 2010 at 9:51am – Facebook bence son derece faydalı ve harika bir ortam ve araç. İlk duyduğumda (son derece kötü isim hafızam ve kendilerini sevmeme karşın isimlerini bilmediğim ya da hatırlamakta zorluk çektiğim yüzlerce tanıdığım ve arkadaşımın varlığı sebebiyle) tam da yapılmasını istediğim şey olduğu için çok beğenmiştim. Sonuçta kendin başkalarının fotoğraflarını çekip isimlerini üzerine yazamayacağın için bunu kendilerinin yapması harika bir şey :) Özetle, günümüzün bir tür kaçınılmazı olan (postmodern) tüketim toplumunda harikulade bir araç ve hem keyif, hem de verimli bir paylaşım enstrümanı. Son olarak kişilerin kendilerini çok deşifre ettikleri, teşhirciliğe varan bir bilgi paylaşımına zorlandıkları vs mesnetsiz sert ve iyi düşünülmemiş eleştirilere çok kızıp (aslında gülüp) çok da üzücü bulduğumu da belirtmeliyim.

Female, 38, Turkey / August 31, 2010 at 9:06am – İşte Facebook aslında böyle de bişey. Çok sık kullanılmıyor çünkü çok da ciddiye alınmıyor tarafımda. Onun dışında kişilerin «voyeur»lük (kabaca röntgencilik) duygusunu fena halde tatmin ettiğini de düşünmüyorum değilim. Asıl amacı her ne idiye, ki ilk başlarda heyecan veren oydu. Eski arkadaşları bulmak... Ancak bulunca herkeste başka hezimetlere yol açtı (bıraktığını bulamamak, samimiyetsizlikler vs gibi). Aslında bunu kullanım şeklimi de çok sevmiyorum. Hem bir yandan burun kıvırıyorum, diğer taraftan da buraya göz gezdirmek hoşuma gidiyor.

Male, 27, Turkey / August 29, 2010 at 11:50am – Facebook herkesin internet anlayışını değiştirdi benim fikrime göre... Eskiden MSN'e girmek orada tanıdık tanımadık insanlarla sohbet etmek için internet sahibi olan insanlar vardı. Şimdi internet anlayışı sadece Facebook olan insanlar türedi her yerde. Aslında bakıldığında herkesin bir Facebook accountu olması çok güzel fakat sabah yediği kahvaltıdan akşam içtiği şarabın markasına kadar kendini reklam edip ve bunun yanında dedikodu ve insan eleştiri yapmak yerine sadece bir iletişim aracı olarak ve sade bir profil ile kendini çok fazla deşifre etmeden ve günün 28 saatini «o ne yapmış, o kime bakmış o kime ne yorum yapmış bu kiminle beraber onlar ayrıldılar mı, bodrumda nerelere gitmiş?, aaa dur şu resmimi de koyiim de nerde olduğumu herkes görsün» gibi aptal saptal amaçlar için kullanmadıkları sürece ben Facebook'ta vakit geçirmekten zevk alıyorum...

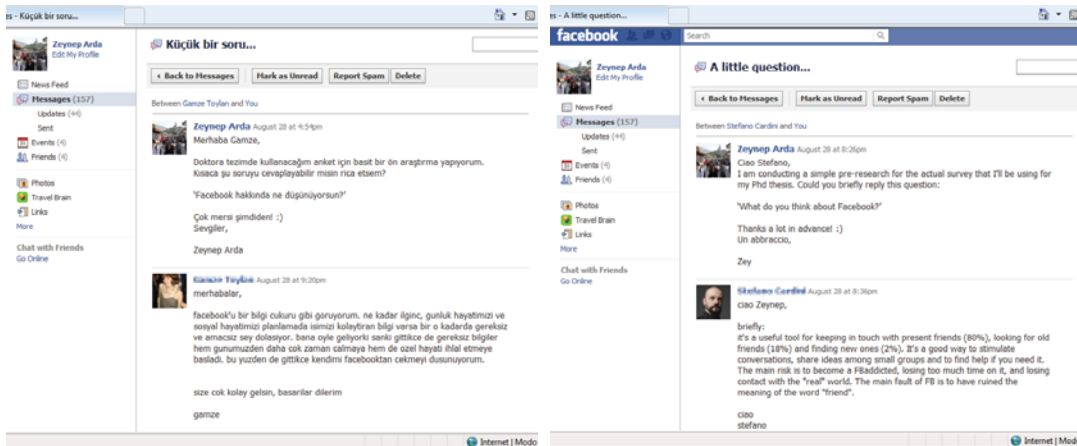
Male, 35, Turkey / August 31, 2010 at 9:49pm – Ben real time chat opsiyonunu kullanmadığım için, emailden çok farklı değil benim için... Email on steroids.

Male, 40, Turkey / September 1, 2010 at 5:46pm – Bir «insan vitrini». Kişinin yaptıklarını, ettiklerini ifşa ederek prestij kazanmayı, popüler olmayı, hatta sevmeyi umduğu/sağladığı bir pazar yeri. Arkadaş ve tanıdıklara dokunmadan mahremlerine girdiğimiz, onlardan haberdar olduğumuz dikiz aleti. Hatta kimi zaman pek tanımadan çok yakından sevmelerin, sevişmelerin ayarlandığı bir kanal. Hayatları kıyaslama aracı. Çoğu zaman yaşadığımızın tek kanıtı. Ben Facebook'u fikir ve uygulama açısından çok beğeniyorum ancak içerik açısından avam ve sıradan olanın yüceldiği, özgün ve yaratıcı olanın az bulunduğu bir yer olduğunu düşündüğüm için seyrek izliyor, çok daha seyrek de katkıda bulunuyorum. Çoğu zaman üretilenin parazitten / kuru gürültüden ibaret olduğunu bilerek...

Female, 30, Turkey / September 14, 2010 at 11:23am – Bir arkadaşım statüsüne bunu yazmış; «20 arkadaşım profil fotoğrafını değiştirmiş, bugün 3 tanıdığımın doğum günümüş, 17 etkinliğe davetliydim, 4 arkadaşım 'Facebook arkadaş bulucu'yla arkadaşlarını bulmuş, 4 arkadaşım Madonna'yı, 2 arkadaşım ise Jimi Hendrix'i beğenmiş. Bana gerekli-gereksiz bilgiler veren özel asistanım Facebook, ben sensiz ne yaparım :)»

Female, 30, Turkey / September 14, 2010 at 9:07am – Facebook'un önemli bir sosyal ağ olduğunu düşünüyorum... Görüşmeden bile kim kiminle ne yapıyor öğreniyoruz. Fakat bir yandan da bunun yeni çağın yeni bir sosyalleşme çeşidi olduğunu düşünüyorum. Yani buluşmak yüzyüze görüşmek ya da telefonla konuşmak yerine buradan iletişim kuruluyor, tamamen gerçek olmayan bir yanı da var ama büyükşehir insanı ancak bu kadarını yapabiliyor artık maalesef :(En azından insanlardan uzaklaşma ve izole olmayı nispeten engelliyor. Diğer bir yandan da durmadan durumu ile ilgili bir şeyler yazan, nerede ne yapıysa anında resmini ekleyen falan insanların tutumunu da abartılı buluyorum. Demek ki işleri az ya da düşünecek şeyleri az, yemeyip içmeyi bir şeyler ekliyorlar gibi geliyor. Bu kadarını da biraz bağımlılık olarak görüyorum. Bir nevi teşhir aslında... Aynı gazetelerde, magazin dergilerinde ünlülerin hayatlarını gözetlediğimiz gibi, burada da normal insanların hayatlarını gözetliyoruz. Devamlı birilerinin hayatlarını gözetleme hali söz konusu yani... Önemli olma, öne çıkma, görülme ihtiyacını doyuruyor herhalde. Asıl değerler, fikir üretme, verimlilik, yaratıcılık azaldıkça Facebook'ta zaman geçirmek ve daha içi boş aktivitelerle zaman geçirmek artıyor diye de düşünüyorum :)

Male, 28, Turkey / August 28, 2010 at 6:01pm – Facebook'un amacını aşmış bir sosyal araç olduğunu düşünüyorum. Sıradanlığımızı paylaşıp yaygınlaştırmamıza faydası var. Facebook'taki dünya, gerçektekenden çok farklı değil. Bağlantılı olduğun insanlarla aranda ekseriyetle coğrafi yakınlık, dil ortaklığı ve sosyo-ekonomik denklik bağları var. İnternetin gezegenin çoğunu kapsamıyla ilgili falan bir getirisi yok yani. Dolayısıyla önemli bir katkı sağlamıyor insanlığın gelişimine, ufuk açmıyor, sınırları kaldırmıyor. Facebook'ta olmak, gözetleme nesnesi olmayı ve oto-erotizmin bir düzeyini (kol mesafesinden çekilmiş fotoğraflar özelinde) kabul etmek demek. Facebook, basit bir yaklaşımla söylemek gerekirse, sosyal bir oyuncaktır.



Screenshots from the contributions of the Preliminary survey participants. Zeynep Arda (2010).

APPENDIX 02 – The Digital Life Scale Items in English, Spanish and Turkish

(Appendix to Section 6.3.6 – Other Significant Variables)

Table No 6.3.6a

(fcb02) On my Facebook account I use my real name so that my friends can easily find me.

[TR] Facebook hesabımda arkadaşlarımla beni kolayca bulabilmesi için gerçek adımlı kullanıyorum.

[ES] En mi cuenta de Facebook uso mi nombre real para que mis amigos me puedan encontrar fácilmente.

Table No 6.3.6b

(fcb04) I have uploaded ... photo(s) / video(s) that show who I am in my Facebook account.

[TR] Facebook hesabıma kim olduğumu gösteren ... tane fotoğraf / görüntü yükledim.

[ES] He subido ... foto(s) / vídeo(s) mío(s) en Facebook que muestra(n) quien soy.

Table No 6.3.6c-d

(fcb15) When I see what others have accomplished with their lives on Facebook, it makes me feel like a failure.

[TR] Facebook'ta başkalarının hayatta neler başardıklarını görmek, bana kendimi başarısız hissettiriyor.

[ES] Cuando veo en Facebook las vidas que los demás han conseguido, me siento como un/a fracasado/a.

Table No 6.3.6e

(int04) I live in my country of origin.

[TR] Doğduğum ülkede yaşıyorum.

[ES] Vivo en mi país de origen.

APPENDIX 03 – The Digital Life Scale Items in English, Spanish and Turkish

(Appendix to Section 6.4.2.2 – Self Presentation 2.0 Scale)

Table No 6.4.2.2a**Factor 1 - «Lifecasting»**

(fcb06) I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums & my videos.

[TR] Durumumu, albümlerimi ve videolarımı güncelleyerek arkadaşlarıma hayatımda neler olup bittiğine dair mümkün olduğu kadar çok bilgi vermeye çalışıyorum.

[ES] Intento informar a mis amigos todo lo posible de las cosas que están pasando en mi vida a través de mis actualizaciones de estatus, mis álbumes y mis vídeos.

(fcb17) I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages.

[TR] Arkadaşlarıma Facebook sayfalarında paylaştıkları haberler için mümkün olduğu kadar çok geribildirim yapmaya çalışıyorum.

[ES] Intento dar toda la reacción posible a mis amigos sobre la información que comparten en sus páginas de Facebook.

(fcb24) Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself.

[TR] Facebook bana kendimi gerçekten ifade edebilme olanağını sağlıyor.

[ES] Facebook me da la oportunidad de expresarme sinceramente.

(fcb25) I'm on Facebook therefore I am.

[TR] Facebook'tayım, öyleyse varım.

[ES] Estoy en Facebook, luego existo.

(fcb26) I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook.

[TR] Facebook'ta olmazsam arkadaşlarımla bağlantımı kaybederim.

[ES] Perderé contacto con mis amigos si no estoy en Facebook.

(fcb09) Facebook reflects my social life as it is.

[TR] Facebook sosyal hayatıma olduğu gibi yansıtıyor.

[ES] Facebook refleja mi vida social tal y como es.

Factor 2 - «Negative Attitude»

(fcb11) (R) Facebook is nothing more than rumours, problems and a lot of gossip.

[TR] Facebook söylentiler, problemler ve bol bol dedikodudan başka birşey değil.

[ES] Facebook sólo son rumores, problemas y mucho cotilleo.

(fcb19) (R) Facebook has devalued the concept of «friendship».

[TR] Facebook 'arkadaşlık' kavramının değerini düşürdü.

[ES] Facebook ha devaluado el concepto de 'amistad'.

(fcb21) (R) Facebook is nothing but exhibitionism and voyeurism.

[TR] Facebook teşhircilik ve röntgencilikten başka birşey değil.

[ES] Facebook es nada más que exhibicionismo y voyerismo.

(fcb31) Facebook makes us all more narcissistic.

[TR] Facebook bizi daha narsist insanlar haline getiriyor.

[ES] Facebook nos hace más narcisistas.

Factor 3 - «Proximity of Online/Offline Identities»

(yslo01) My digital identity is a reflection of who I am.

[TR] Online kimliğim kim olduğumun bir yansımasıdır.

[ES] Mi identidad digital es un reflejo de quien soy.

(fcb09) Facebook reflects my social life as it is.

[TR] Facebook sosyal hayatıma olduğu gibi yansıtıyor.

[ES] Facebook refleja mi vida social tal y como es.

(fcb16) My Facebook profile is an accurate reflection of who I am.

[TR] Facebook profilim gerçekte kim olduğumun doğru bir yansıması.

[ES] Mi perfil en Facebook es un reflejo preciso de quien soy en realidad.

Factor 4 - «Time Dedicated»

(yslo02) While I'm working with a computer, I sneak off once in a while to check out my Facebook / Twitter / WOW etc. account.

[TR] Bilgisayar başında çalışırken arada bir kaytarıp Facebook / Twitter / WOW vb. hesabımı kontrol ediyorum.

[ES] Mientras estoy trabajando en un ordenador, me escabullo de vez en cuando para chequear mi cuenta de Facebook / Twitter / WOW etc.

(yslo03) I login to my online social network accounts ... times every day.

[TR] Online sosyal ağlardaki hesabımı/hesaplarımı her gün ... kere kontrol ediyorum.

[ES] Entro en mi(s) cuenta(s) de las redes sociales ... veces cada día.

(fcb01) I spend ... hour(s) every day on my Facebook account.

[TR] Her gün Facebook hesabımda ... saat zaman geçiriyorum.

[ES] Paso ... hora(s) todos los días en mi cuenta de Facebook.

Factor 5 - «Superficiality»

(fcb10) I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook.

[TR] Facebook sayesinde arkadaşlarımın güncel hayatları hakkında daha fazla bilgi sahibi olmak hoşuma gidiyor.

[ES] Me gusta estar al tanto de las vidas de mis amigos a través de Facebook.

(fcb12) Checking out photos of people that I don't know very well on Facebook, makes me get to know them better.

[TR] Facebook'ta çok iyi tanımadığım insanların fotoğraflarına bakmak, onlar hakkında daha fazla fikir sahibi olmamı sağlıyor.

[ES] Echar un vistazo en Facebook a las fotos de la gente que no conozco mucho, me ayuda a conocerles mejor.

(fcb28) (R) I find myself checking out photos of people that I don't know on Facebook and I can't stop myself. It is a total waste of my time.*

[TR] Bazen kendimi Facebook'ta tanımadığım insanların resimlerine bakıyor buluyorum ve kendimi durduramıyorum. Bu tam bir vakit kaybı.

[ES] A veces me encuentro viendo fotos de la gente que no conozco en Facebook y no puedo parar de mirar. Es una pérdida total de mi tiempo.

(fcb30) Facebook changes the way that I relate to myself.

[TR] Facebook kendime olan bakış açımı değiştiriyor.

[ES] Facebook cambia la manera en la cual me relaciono conmigo mismo.

(fcb32) I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile.

[TR] Facebook profilime yüklediğim şeyler için arkadaşlarımdan geribildirim almaya bayılıyorum.

[ES] Me encanta recibir reacciones de mis amigos por las cosas que subo a mi página.

APPENDIX 04 – The Digital Life Scale Items in English, Spanish and Turkish

(Appendix to Section 6.4.2.3 – Significances Attributed to Online Social Life Scale)

Table No 6.4.2.3a**Factor 1 - «Being Up-to-Date with friends»**

(fcb06) I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums & my videos.

[TR] Durumumu, albümlerimi ve videolarımı güncelleyerek arkadaşlarıma hayatımda neler olup bittiğine dair mümkün olduğu kadar çok bilgi vermeye çalışıyorum.

[ES] Intento informar a mis amigos todo lo posible de las cosas que están pasando en mi vida a través de mis actualizaciones de estatus, mis álbumes y mis vídeos.

(fcb10) I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook.

[TR] Facebook sayesinde arkadaşlarımla güncel hayatları hakkında daha fazla bilgi sahibi olmak hoşuma gidiyor.

[ES] Me gusta estar al tanto de las vidas de mis amigos a través de Facebook.

(fcb17) I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages.

[TR] Arkadaşlarıma Facebook sayfalarında paylaştıkları haberler için mümkün olduğu kadar çok geribildirim yapmaya çalışıyorum.

[ES] Intento dar toda la reacción posible a mis amigos sobre la información que comparten en sus páginas de Facebook.

(fcb22) Facebook connects me to my friends that are far away from where I live, so I feel as if they were here.

[TR] Facebook uzakta yaşayan arkadaşlarımla bağlantıda kalmamı sağlıyor, sanki yanımdalarmış gibi hissediyorum.

[ES] Facebook me conecta a mis amigos que viven lejos de mí, tal que siento como si estuviesen aquí.

(fcb24) Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself.

[TR] Facebook bana kendimi gerçekten ifade edebilme olanağını sağlıyor.

[ES] Facebook me da la oportunidad de expresarme sinceramente.

(fcb27) Facebook gave me the opportunity to find my long-lost old friends and now I have a livelier social life because I meet them regularly.

[TR] Facebook bana uzun zamandır haber alamadığım eski dostlarımı bulma olanağını verdi ve şimdi çok daha keyifli bir sosyal hayatım var çünkü eski dostlarımla düzenli olarak görüşüyorum.

[ES] Facebook me dio la oportunidad de encontrar mis viejos amigos y ahora tengo una vida social más animada porque les veo con regularidad.

(fcb32) I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile.

[TR] Facebook profilime yüklediğim şeyler için arkadaşlarımdan geribildirim almaya bayılıyorum.

[ES] Me encanta recibir reacciones de mis amigos por las cosas que subo a mi página.

Factor 2 - «Perceived Social Role of Facebook»

(fcb18) I use Facebook to improve my social life. (To find a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, to make more friends, to go out more etc.

[TR] Facebook'u sosyal hayatımı geliştirmekte kullanıyorum. (Kız arkadaş/erkek arkadaş bulmak için, yeni arkadaşlar edinmek için, gece dışarı çıkmak için vb.)

[ES] Utilizo Facebook para mejorar mi vida social. (Para encontrar un novio/a/pareja, para hacer nuevos amigos, para salir más, etc...)

(fcb25) I'm on Facebook therefore I am.

[TR] Facebook'tayım, öyleyse varım.

[ES] Estoy en Facebook, luego existo.

(fcb26) I'd lose contact with my friends if I'm not on Facebook.

[TR] Facebook'ta olmazsam arkadaşlarımla bağlantımı kaybederim.

[ES] Perderé contacto con mis amigos si no estoy en Facebook.

APPENDIX 05 – The Digital Life Scale Items in English, Spanish and Turkish

(Appendix to Section 6.4.2.4 - Intended Recipient of Communication Scale)

Table No 6.4.2.4a

Factor 1 - «Extroversion»

(fcb05) It is important for me to have a cool photo as my profile picture.

[TR] Profil resmimin havalı ve hoş bir fotoğraf olması benim için önemli.

[ES] Para mi es importante tener una foto guay (o chula) como mi «foto de perfil».

(fcb06) I try to inform my friends as much as possible about what's up in my life through my status updates, my albums and my videos.

[TR] Durumumu, albümlerimi ve videolarımı güncelleyerek arkadaşlarıma hayatımda neler olup bittiğine dair mümkün olduğu kadar çok bilgi vermeye çalışıyorum.

[ES] Intento informar a mis amigos todo lo posible de las cosas que están pasando en mi vida a través de mis actualizaciones de estatus, mis álbumes y mis vídeos.

(fcb10) I like knowing more about the actual lives of my friends through Facebook.

[TR] Facebook sayesinde arkadaşlarımla güncel hayatları hakkında daha fazla bilgi sahibi olmak hoşuma gidiyor.

[ES] Me gusta estar al tanto de las vidas de mis amigos a través de Facebook.

(fcb12) Checking out photos of people that I don't know very well on Facebook, makes me get to know them better.

[TR] Facebook'ta çok iyi tanımadığım insanların fotoğraflarına bakmak, onlar hakkında daha fazla fikir sahibi olmamı sağlıyor.

[ES] Echar un vistazo en Facebook a las fotos de la gente que no conozco mucho, me ayuda a conocerles mejor.

(fcb16) My Facebook profile is an accurate reflection of who I am.

[TR] Facebook profilim gerçekte kim olduğumun doğru bir yansıması.

[ES] Mi perfil en Facebook es un reflejo preciso de quien soy en realidad.

(fcb22) Facebook connects me to my friends that are far away from where I live, so I feel as if they were here.

[TR] Facebook uzakta yaşayan arkadaşlarımla bağlantıda kalmamı sağlıyor, sanki yanımdalarmış gibi hissediyorum.

[ES] Facebook me conecta a mis amigos que viven lejos de mí, tal que siento como si estuviesen aquí.

(fcb32) I love receiving feedback from my friends for the things I post in my profile.

[TR] Facebook profilime yüklediğim şeyler için arkadaşlarımdan geribildirim almaya bayılıyorum.

[ES] Me encanta recibir reacciones de mis amigos por las cosas que subo a mi página.

Factor 2 - «Introversion»

(fcb17) I give my friends as much feedback as possible concerning what they share on their Facebook pages.

[TR] Arkadaşlarıma Facebook sayfalarında paylaştıkları haberler için mümkün olduğu kadar çok geribildirim yapmaya çalışıyorum.

[ES] Intento dar toda la reacción posible a mis amigos sobre la información que comparten en sus páginas de Facebook.

(fcb18) I use Facebook to improve my social life. (To find a girlfriend/boyfriend/partner, to make more friends, to go out more etc.)

[TR] Facebook'u sosyal hayatımı geliştirmekte kullanıyorum. (Kız arkadaş/erkek arkadaş bulmak için, yeni arkadaşlar edinmek için, gece dışarı çıkmak için vb.)

[ES] Utilizo Facebook para mejorar mi vida social. (Para encontrar un novio/a/pareja, para hacer nuevos amigos, para salir más, etc...)

(fcb24) Facebook gives me the opportunity to really express myself.

[TR] Facebook bana kendimi gerçekten ifade edebilme olanağını sağlıyor.

[ES] Facebook me da la oportunidad de expresarme sinceramente.

(fcb27) Facebook gave me the opportunity to find my long-lost old friends and now I have a livelier social life because I meet them regularly.

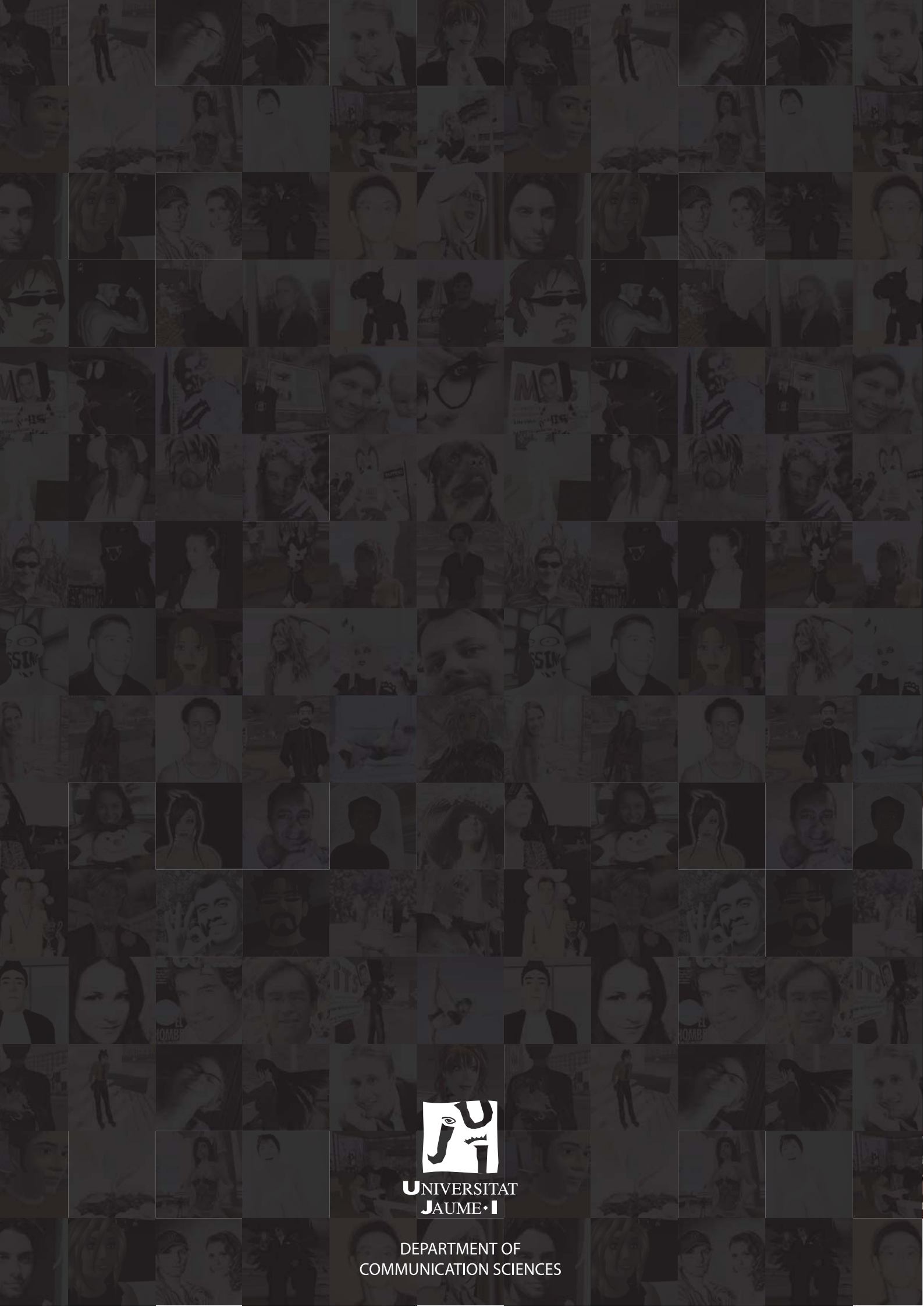
[TR] Facebook bana uzun zamandır haber alamadığım eski dostlarımı bulma olanağını verdi ve şimdi çok daha keyifli bir sosyal hayatım var çünkü eski dostlarımla düzenli olarak görüşüyorum.

[ES] Facebook me dio la oportunidad de encontrar mis viejos amigos y ahora tengo una vida social más animada porque les veo con regularidad.

(fcb30) Facebook changes the way that I relate to myself.

[TR] Facebook kendime olan bakış açımı değiştiriyor.

[ES] Facebook cambia la manera en la cual me relaciono conmigo mismo.



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