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## **Accepted abstracts for the preconference on ‘The presentation of self in everyday digital life’ 2 September 2009, U of Westminster, London**

*Commentator:* Nick Couldry, Goldsmiths College, U of London

### ***Participants in the Mediatized Stories Project***

#### **SONIA LIVINGSTONE:**

##### **Goffman’s ‘participation framework’ rethought for the age of Facebook**

As media and communications theory negotiates the possible convergence of mediated and face to face models of communication, a range of metaphors and images are in play. The traditional one-to-one dyad, along with the mass mediated model of one-to-many, are now complemented by notions of many-to-many and some-to-some communication, together with metaphors (some of them even new media products) of the network, the public forum, the chat room, the message board, the diary (blog) and so forth. Many of these are spatial, focusing on the ‘where’ of newly mediated communication. In this paper, I wish to explore the ‘who’, so as to examine critically the communicative roles open to people in mediated communication. This is not the social ‘who’ (which people are included or excluded, depending on their offline positions) but the textual ‘who’ – what kinds of implied or actual roles are afforded by online forms, and what interrelationships do they permit. To explore this, I wish to resurrect Goffman’s notion of the participation framework. In this, he breaks down the ‘speaker’ and hearer’ of the face-to-face dyad into multiple roles, each subtly distinguished in terms of communicative power and position. The value of his analysis for contemporary new media analysis will then be demonstrated through its application to Facebook and similar social networking sites.

*Bio note:* Sonia Livingstone is Professor in the Department of Media and Communications at the London School of Economics and Political Science. She is author or editor of twelve books and 100+ academic articles and chapters on media audiences, children and the internet, domestic contexts of media use and media literacy. Recent books include *Audiences and Publics* (2005), *The Handbook of New Media* (edited, with Leah Lievrouw, Sage, 2006), *Media Consumption and Public Engagement* (with Nick Couldry and Tim Markham, Palgrave, 2007) and *The International Handbook of Children, Media and Culture* (edited, with Kirsten Drotner, Sage, 2008). She was President of the International Communication Association 2007-8. E-mail [s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk](mailto:s.livingstone@lse.ac.uk)

**NANCY THUMIM & GUNN SARA ENLI**

**Socializing and representing yourself online: exploring Facebook**

Blurring boundaries between producers and audiences are widely acknowledged (Bruns, 2005; Jenkins, 2007). The role of the audience now includes producing, spectating and socializing. The social network site Facebook has fast become a popular arena for socializing, and reached a 'critical mass' in Europe. But in the process of socializing participants must construct self-representations. The paper will analyze how the social network institution and textual features shape the possibilities for socializing and self-representation. Social network sites such as Facebook have institutionalized and mediatized personal processes of socializing and display of identity, which traditionally have belonged to the private and non-mediated spheres. These online communities combine features from mass media (e.g. 'News Feeds') with features from personal media. The paper will explore the concept of digital friendship, and discuss the 'strength of weak ties' (Granovetter, 1973). How do the users negotiate the hybrid position between being private and being public, with what implications?

In the process of socializing online in Facebook, people must construct textual representations. Representations are always mediated by what they consist of; texts, photographs, moving image, pencil drawing, for example, and how they are framed; in a gallery, on a website, on a cinema screen, for example. Of course mediation begins before, and continues well beyond the production and display of 'texts' (Silverstone, 1999; Couldry, 2006; Martin-Barbero, 1993). This paper will address one dimension of the mediation process: the 'processes of textual mediation' (Thumim, 2007) in order to explore self-representations in Facebook.

Boyd (2007) argues that the cost of the social convergence occurring in social networking sites is a sense of exposure and invasion. The combination of exploring socializing and self-representation allows us to speculate as to possibilities and limitations for self-representation in the infrastructure in Facebook, and how these intersect with users' negotiation of their hybrid position between being in private and being in public.

*Bio note Thumim:* Currently LSE Fellow in the Department of Media and Communications at LSE and a member of the Oslo-based Mediatized Stories Network. Nancy completed her PhD on Mediated self-representation at the LSE in 2007. Among other publications, Nancy's doctoral research is being extended in a forthcoming monograph provisionally titled 'Mediation, Self-Representation and Digital Technology' (London: Palgrave Macmillan). E-mail [n.thumim@lse.ac.uk](mailto:n.thumim@lse.ac.uk)

*Bio note Enli:* Gunn Sara Enli is Associate Professor in Media Studies at Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo. She completed her PhD in 2007 with the thesis: "The Participatory Turn in Broadcast Television". Her research interests include media policy, public service broadcasting, convergence, and media participation. She has edited two Norwegian anthologies, and published articles and book chapters in international journals and anthologies, including *Media, Culture & Society*, *Television and New Media & Society* and *Convergence*. E-mail [gunn.enli@media.uio.no](mailto:gunn.enli@media.uio.no)

**KNUT-ARNE FUTSÆTER & IVAR FRØNES:  
The social dynamic of the social media**

Social media like Facebook are understood to be an extension of social life, embedded in social interaction as well as in the wider media structure. The increased frequency of use that has evolved the last years, as well as the multidimensional functions of social media, represent more than an expansion of use the number of users and the heterogeneity of use changes the function and position of the social media.

Participants at networking sites communicate with text, but also with photo profiles, videos, various self-presentations, and with meta-presentations, like the number of “friends” which are underlined as a meta-message in sites like Facebook. Some of these messages are directed towards various networks, some are directed towards a general public. The structure of the sites and of Internet makes it possible to communicate on many levels. The social ads illustrate the intertextuality of modern networking sites; the genres of communication are shaped in an interaction with a variety of other media and the social world of the various participants.

The presentation focuses the expansion of Facebook in Norway from 2007 to 2009, the development among different age groups and social groups, and the different functions of networking sites like Facebook for the various users. Facebook seems in 2009 to expand from younger groups to older groups, while keeping the young users. Groups that are innovatively related to media technology seem to be among the first adaptors among older age groups in 2009, while social innovative groups and girls are the dominating users among the younger groups. The frequency of use, and the various forms of use, is interpreted as an opening up for “social convergence”; the users may increasingly construe new media structures.

*Bio note:* Knut-Arne Futsæter is research director in the media department of TNS Gallup, and has been working with media surveys since 1991. He has together with Knut Lundby has published a book describing the development of mass media in Norway: *Flerkanalsamfunnet* (i.e. The Multi Media Society).

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*Bio note co-author:* Ivar Frønes is professor in Sociology at the University of Oslo, and senior researcher at the Norwegian Centre for Child Behavioral Development. He has published a series of books on childhood in the Scandinavian languages; among the six books after the millennium are *Moderne barndom* (Modern Childhood) and *De likeverdige* (Among Peers, also available in English) and *Digitale skiller* (Digital Divides). He is a member of the board of the International Society for Child Indicators, in 2008 he edited, with Asher Ben-Arieh, *Indicators of Children's Well-Being: Theory and Practice in a Multi-Cultural Perspective*. He was the founding editor of the Journal *Childhood*. E-mail [ivar.frones@sosgeo.uio.no](mailto:ivar.frones@sosgeo.uio.no)

## MIA LÖVHEIM

### **Blogs as Self-Representation: a gendered perspective on agency, authenticity and negotiations of public and private in digital media.**

As Goffman writes in *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, "the general notion that we make a presentation of ourselves to others is hardly novel..." (1959:251). The focus, he continues, should rather be on how the ways in which we arrange for such performances in a certain context reveals "the very structure of the self". Research on the use of new digital media for making personal stories, or presentations of self in new forms of "social software", has shown some key aspects of the ways performances of self are shaped by the specific affordances of these mediated contexts. Three salient themes are individual *agency* or control over the performance in digital presentations of self; the issue of *authenticity* in relation to new possibilities to perform, in the sense of strategically plan, display and edit, presentations of self through digital media, and finally how boundaries of private and public spaces for the performance of self are becoming blurred and transformed in digital and/or "networked" social interactions. Gender has always been a fundamental aspect of presentations of self in social interactions of everyday life, and thus also of "digital" life. However, an explicit discussion of agency, authenticity and negotiations of public and private in networked, digital presentations of self *as gendered practices* has so far not been undertaken in the project *Mediatized Stories*. The aim of this paper is to initiate such a discussion through presenting an analysis of presentations of self and issues of agency, authenticity and negotiations of public/private among young female top bloggers in Sweden.

*Bio note:* Mia Lövheim is a post doc scholar (2008-2010) at Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo, Norway, studying young women's blogging in Sweden. The study is part of the international project *Mediatized stories: Mediation perspectives on digital storytelling among youth*. She is assistant professor in Sociology of Religion at Faculty of Theology, Uppsala University. She is also coordinator of the *Nordic Research Network for the Mediatization of Religion and Culture* (<http://www.media.uio.no/mrc/network>). E-mail [mia.lovheim@media.uio.no](mailto:mia.lovheim@media.uio.no)

## SHUBO LI

### **Contextualizing the "publicness" in self-made media: Young persons digital self- presentation in Norway and China**

Defining "publicness" in today's media environment is not an easy task. For one thing, the line between what is public and what is private is both blurred and shifting. The Internet introduces a networked society in which people connect with each other in a more individualized, symbolic and perhaps imagined mode. Secondly, the fact that more and more households have access to the Internet makes the revision of the idea of "private sphere" necessary. What the Internet brings forth is perhaps a rebound of the so-called "privatization of leisure": family and home could be the physical site of online public life. Furthermore, via the online publishing system, most notably blog, people can turn their private lives into an object of public consumption. Thus new media technologies are deemed democratic and empowering. The knowledge about how Internet users make sense of their online publicizing experience could help us to clarify to what extent the spheres of "public" and "private" has transformed.

The research seeks to examine how youth from China and Norway, two significantly different societies, create their blogs. It is a small-scaled project, using data from interviews with thirty bloggers within the age group 17-24, to understand the youths' concerns and strategies in developing their online self-representation. It intends to provide a context for the conception of what is public in today's world, by examining how cultural peculiarities and social developments influence the formation of digital narratives.

*Bio note:* Shubo Li is a Chinese citizen. She is currently a visiting scholar at the Department of Media and Communication, University of Oslo. Her research interests include new media usages, Chinese media, online journalism, political culture and the Chinese cyberspace. She was a journalist in China and holds a PhD in communication from University of Westminster, London. E-mail [shubo.li@media.uio.no](mailto:shubo.li@media.uio.no)

### **MARK EVAN NELSON**

#### **'Space2Cre8': Negotiating Roles and (Re)presentations of Self in Online and Offline Contexts**

Online social networking necessitates an overt and highly mediated form of 'self-staging', to borrow a term from Erving Goffman (1959). Within the network, the digitally supported nexus of social interaction, processes of self-(re)presentation are enabled and constrained largely on the basis of the changeable assemblages of texts and artifacts that the network, by design, allows users to contribute. Blog entries, 'wall' posts, images, videos and other 'utterances' received by other network members, and often others, suggest a complex of "predictive devices," by which factual and even moral assessments are made (cf. Goffman, 1959: 249). More, these significations of selves become currency in the ongoing negotiation of communicational roles both within and without the uniquely elaborate "participation framework" (Goffman, 1981) of the social network.

This paper trains this Goffmanian lens on the particular intricacies of communication in and around 'Space2Cre8', an expanding social networking site established for use by groups of youth in in- and out-of-school settings in the United States, India, South Africa and elsewhere. Affording young people the opportunity to design their own online community and to co-construct meaning across semiotic modalities, languages, and cultural boundaries has been the principal aim of Space2Cre8; and the analysis to be presented derives from an ongoing multi-site qualitative and quantitative study of these processes. The author will highlight the cases of several users and their experiences to begin to demonstrate the multiform, multilevel, and multimodal means by which identity may be 'done' in youth social networks. Broader implications for so-called 21<sup>st</sup>-century literacies will also be discussed.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York: Anchor Books.  
Goffman, E. (1981). *Forms of talk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

*Bio note:* Mark Evan Nelson is Assistant Professor of English Language and Literature at the National Institute of Education in Singapore. His research is chiefly concerned with understanding the semiotic, sociocultural and pedagogical implications of multimodal textual communication. Notable publications on the

subject include *Locating the Semiotic Power of Multimodality* (with Dr Glynda Hull, *Written Communication*) and *Mode, Meaning and Synaesthesia in Multimedia L2 Writing (Language Learning & Technology)*. E-mail [mark.nelson@nie.edu.sg](mailto:mark.nelson@nie.edu.sg)

## **LARRY FRIEDLANDER**

### **Signalling the Self: Portraits from Durer to Facebook**

Portraits are consciously contrived ways of signalling how others should see us. They encode status, physical attractiveness, occupation, class and host of other qualities. In many respects the strategies employed to represent the self on Social Networking sites such as Facebook are radically different from those employed in traditional oil portraits or even studio photographs. The changes flow not only from changes in media---from oil and canvas to the virtual interconnected spaces of the web---but from profound alterations in the concepts of identity.

In this paper I sketch out the basic strategies we find in a wide range of traditions of portraiture, and explore both the continuities and breaks between traditional and cotemporary forms. Both traditional and contemporary self-portraits face common problems: 1) what does it mean to construct a suitable version of the self? 2) how do we construct the audience?, and 3) how do we ensure that its audience perceives the portrait to be authentic and reliable? As the traditional portrait relies on one image to convey a multitude of personal qualities, the form conveys an essentialized self that can be isolated from a living context and still remain stable and reliable. In contrast, Social Networking Sites situate the representation in a dynamic and constantly changing environment, where the self is constituted by a flood of often contradictory visual and textual information, as well as by a shifting and heterogeneous community of participants (friends) who contribute to the self representation in unpredictable and often incoherent ways. Identity seems multivalent, plural and unstable. This de-centered presentation can add to viewers' fears of unreliability and inauthenticity. Moreover, in contrast to the relatively homogeneous audience of traditional portraits, the viewers of SSN are a globalized and often highly diverse community. The Facebook member has to forge an identity that will speak simultaneously to wildly differing viewers---family colleagues, sexual partners, and fellow hobbyists. I will refer to some aspects of signalling theory to work out how new representations meet these and other challenges.

*Bio note:* Larry Friedlander has been a professor of English Literature and Theater at Stanford University since 1965, with a specialty in Shakespeare and performance. Larry is an internationally known contributor to interactive arts and technology projects. His work during the past two decades has included collaboration with Apple Computer, Mitsubishi Electric, MIT, Oxford, Georgia Tech, and the Exploratorium. His "interactive Shakespeare" projects set the tone for much of the experimentation with digital narrative forms. His work with Apple involved development of innovative designs for the Globe Theater Museum in London. Larry is also a former Founder and Co-director of the Stanford Learning Lab. Funded by industry consortia, the lab's research addressed technologies for teaching and learning. E-mail [larryf@stanford.edu](mailto:larryf@stanford.edu)

## *From outside the Mediatized Stories Project*

**RANJANA DAS:**

**A Network, The *Model Reader* and I. *Imaginative excursions. Playful reconstructions.***

Re-telling of narratives or episode reconstructions have long been used by television audience researchers as a way in which to explore how audiences negotiate and weave themselves into media texts, and more, how people's everyday referential associations always locate one programme/medium/genre/platform in the context of innumerable others. In the midst of content generation and self-representation in DIY culture, users continue to interpret their media worlds, such interpretive work being central to their literacies and creative competencies. More importantly, it is in interpretation that they produce metaphors and pathways, all of which are *tertiary texts* (Fiske, 1981) in which they represent their own sense-making, knitting together bits and pieces of what the media mean to them.

As part of a broader project with youthful literacies and Web 2.0 genres, 15 young people in London were invited to participate in creative interviews where they were asked to represent social networks using any mode, any medium and any metaphor of their choice. The methodology was hybrid and tried to converge the best of tried and tested and unorthodox social research methods. The multi-modal data and the interviews reveal a firm awareness of authorial constructions of what Umberto Eco (1979) had termed the *model reader*, and young users' spirited and creative attempts to both fit in with such an image, and yet transcend it. An awareness of norms and conventions of the interface is complemented by an equally strong attempt to rework it all and interpretive work is seen to be creative and collaborative, though often perplexed by illegible interfaces.

This paper draws out three themes from savvy teens' interpretive work and metaphorical reconstructions: *The network as the Greek Polis*, *the network as an endless mesh*, and *the network as a wall of postcards*, all of these themes noticeably pan-media in references and associations. Drawing from these representations, the paper concludes with a theoretical focus on the merits of revisiting what was always an interpretative contract between media and users, where resourceful readers (Livingstone, 1992) continue to weave themselves and their expectations/anticipations, into the texts they encounter in their everyday digital lives.

*Bio note:* Ranjana Das is POLIS Silverstone Scholar 2009-10 and doctoral student in the Department of Media and Communications, at the LSE, where she researches youthful interpretations of Web 2.0 genres, focusing particularly on digital literacies as interpretive work in young peoples' use of social networking sites. Her current interests include (new) media literacies, audiences and users, new media texts and conventional as well as unorthodox research methods. E-mail [R.Das1@lse.ac.uk](mailto:R.Das1@lse.ac.uk)

**HEATHER M. PLEASANTS**

**Digital Storytelling, Co-presence and Community: (Re)presenting Goffman in Everyday Digital Life**

Erving Goffman writes that co-presence is the “sense that (people) are close enough to be perceived in whatever they are doing, including their experiencing of others, and close enough to be perceived in this sensing of being perceived” (1963, p. 17). Co-presence is a fundamental aspect of social interaction, as recently demonstrated by Michael Wesch's exploration of YouTube as a medium of social connectivity (2008). In this presentation, I take inspiration from Wesch's ethnographic observations, and suggest that the idea of *digital co-presence* offers us a new perspective on Goffman's formulation of the performance of self (1959). Further, I argue that establishing digital co-presence is critical to actualizing the internet's potential for supporting community-oriented digital storytelling. In fact, researchers and practitioners of digital storytelling have already sought to create a sense of co-presence through combining the presentation/exhibition of digital stories with opportunities for people in specific geographic places and times to discuss these stories. Additionally, co-presence has been encouraged by interactive web spaces through which visitors to digital storytelling sites can “engage in meaningful conversations around the stories they watch,” (<http://storiesforchange.net>, access date 4/21/09). As evidenced by these strategies, the significance of digital co-presence in establishing connection and community among digital storytellers and their audiences remains a core issue in research and practice. In this presentation, I draw on existing digital stories available through a variety of websites in order to explore the ways in which digital co-presence is achieved when digital stories are performed and discussed on and through the internet. In doing so, I give particular attention to Goffman's articulation of the concepts of “dramatic realization” and “idealization” within digital stories as performances of self.

*Bio note:* Heather M. Pleasants is an Assistant Professor of Qualitative Research Methodology at The University of Alabama. Her research and writing focus on the intersections between identity, multimodal literacies and social justice. She is the past director of the Sankofa Stories Digital Storytelling Project, and is currently working to establish digital storytelling project spaces for youth and adults in the Deep South of the United States. E-mail [hpleasan@bamaed.ua.edu](mailto:hpleasan@bamaed.ua.edu)

**ANDREA PRESS**

**The Feminine/Feminist Presentation of Self in Currently Popular TV and Film**

This paper analyzes the appeal to young teens and college women of several popular television shows and films, including the reality television show AMERICA'S NEXT TOP MODEL, the show GOSSIP GIRLS, the show DESPERATE HOUSEWIVES, and the popular film JUNO. Current discussions about the neo-liberal feminine subject, and the role reality television makeover shows play in appealing to the endless transformability of this subject, and in inculcating a critical gaze in young women, form the theoretical background for this investigation. The paper analyzes the results of focus group discussions with young teens and college women (and men) fans of these shows and this film. The girls' consciousness about “feminism” is probed, as is their consciousness about the kind of appeal the shows make to the

endless work of bodily transformation that they are invited to perform on their own bodies. The paper compares the level of consciousness about these issues amongst girls of the different age groups and socioeconomic, educational, and racial backgrounds, and begins to make an argument about the way cultural critiques of feminism have blunted the ability of young women to receive television and film critically. I attempt to articulate a notion of the “feminist/feminine” self which is presented in these narratives, and to speak specifically to the way young women from different socioeconomic, educational, and racial backgrounds respond to this image.

*Bio note:* Andrea Press is Chair of the Department of Media Studies and Professor of Sociology at the University of Virginia, and is the Executive Director of the Virginia Film Festival. She has a wide range of interdisciplinary interests spanning the social sciences and the humanities which comprise Media Studies. She is the author of *Women Watching Television: Gender, Class And Generation In The American Television Experience* (University of Pennsylvania Press), the co-author (with Elizabeth Cole) of *Speaking Of Abortion: Television And Authority In The Lives Of Women* (University of Chicago Press), and the co-author (with Bruce A. Williams) of the forthcoming *What’s Important About Media Studies?* (Blackwell). For the past ten years she has co-edited the journal *The Communication Review*. E-mail [apress@virginia.edu](mailto:apress@virginia.edu)

## **JOSÉ LUIS RODRÍGUEZ ILLERA**

### **Digital storytelling as an activity system**

This presentation explores the possibility to think the creation of digital storytelling as a special case of an activity system. By activity system we mean a process described in terms of activity-theory (Engström, 1987), an approach centered on the action and its goal as its unit of analysis, and derived from the work of Vygotsky and Leontiev.

We have conducted three different groups of young people (from 12 to 16) of low economic condition, with different mother tongue and culture. All of them came from the same school in Cornellà (Barcelona) district area. The results have been quite different for the three groups in terms of the stories produced and motivation during the process. These differences are hard to explain only in terms of individual variability, and we are exploring the weight of the institution itself, as well as of the teachers and their attitudes to the kind of storytelling they thought have to be created. It is in this context of analysis that an artifact as activity theory helps us to describe and understand the process. Including in the description not only the relationship with the technological tools, but also the interaction with the human mediators and with the school rules and roles, gives new light on the process of creating storytelling in institutional settings.

*Bio note:* José Luis Rodríguez Illera teaches at the Faculty of Pedagogy, University of Barcelona. At this moment he also serves as a Director of the Observatory of Digital Education. He is focused on the impact that the information society has on education and educational practices. Last publications include: *El Aprendizaje Virtual* (2004), *Comunidades Virtuales de práctica y de aprendizaje* (2008) and “Digital storytelling and its educational value” (co-authored article, 2009). E-mail [jlrodriguez@ub.edu](mailto:jlrodriguez@ub.edu)

**JUAN ANTONIO GAITÁN MOYA & CARLOS ARCILA CALDERON**  
**Communication, otherness and online environments:**  
**Identity production and presentation of self during a student chat interaction**

This research seeks to determine how many elements we communicate about our identity during an online interaction within a Chat and how long we dedicate to do so. We start with the premise that the communication of identity and the presentation of self in online environments is linked to previous knowledge that Ego has about his Alter. A quasi-experiment took place in three groups of ten students enrolled in the first course of Journalism Degree at Los Andes University (Venezuela), who did not know one another previously. These selected 'cyber users' were indicated to chat two and two to know each other in order to analyze and measure the effort made to "talk" about themselves (their identity) and the relationship that this effort had with the knowledge they have of their partners (null, previous or simultaneous). Our findings indicate that Ego tends to apply more communicative effort to talk about himself after receiving information about his partner.

*Bio notes:*

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Carlos Arcila Calderon is an assistant professor in the area of Communication Theory at Universidad de Los Andes (Venezuela). PhD candidate in the Ciencias de la Información Faculty at Universidad Complutense de Madrid (Spain). His research focuses on self-presentations and communication of identity in online environments. Email: [arcila@ula.ve](mailto:arcila@ula.ve)