New Directions in Identity Theory and Research

EDITED BY

JAN E. STETS
RICHARD T. SERPE

OXFORD
UNIVERSITY PRESS

6

Identity Theory in a Digital Age

JENNY L. DAVIS

INTRODUCTION

As of January 2014, 87% of American adults were connected to the Internet and almost 60% owned Internet-connected mobile devices (i.e., smartphones). These numbers increase to 97% and 83% respectively for those between the ages of 18 and 29, projecting an even more heavily connected future (Pew Internet and American Life Project 2014). Of those online, 74% report using social media, as do almost 90% of 18- to 29-year-olds. Social media are interactive, nonanonymous, network-based Internet technologies that allow for the sharing of user-generated content (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Google+) (Davis and Jurgenson 2014). Social media technologies have significant social implications in contemporary life through their tie to identifiable referents and their network connection capabilities. Because of the pervasiveness of social media, this historical moment is a *networked era* (boyd 2010), occupied by *networked individuals* (Rainie and Wellman 2012).

Social media permeate work, education, politics, family life, and in turn, processes of self and identity. This chapter examines how identity

theory (Burke and Stets 2009) applies to new material realities and how new material realities inform theoretical formulations. Indeed, social actors do not just use digital social technologies but also develop with and through them (Deuze 2011). Theorists of digital media can, therefore, benefit from the rich theoretical work of social psychologists in general, and identity theorists in particular, while theories of the self in society must account for a quickly changing empirical landscape.

In theorizing digitally mediated identity, I employ research from computer-mediated-communication scholars to address how the key components of identity theory—the situation, identity negotiation processes, and identity verification outcomes—are affected by existing and emergent digital social technologies. I then examine the growing identity theory literature on multiple identities and identity change and explore how advances in identity theory converge with advances in computer-mediated-communication scholarship. I begin with a brief summary of identity theory.

IDENTITY THEORY

Identity theory delineates a structure of the self, details the process of identity verification, and predicts the outcomes of identity verification processes (Burke and Stets 2009; Stets and Burke 2014; Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000). Rooted in structural symbolic interactionism, identity theory assumes that persons construct identities through social interaction and that these interactions are always structurally embedded. That is, drawing on Mead (1934), society shapes the self, which drives behavior.

Identity theory originally focused on role identities, but has since expanded to include social or group identities as well as person identities (Stets and Burke 2014a). Role identities are the social positions that persons claim in society, such as student, mother, employee, or friend. Social identities are those that demarcate membership within a larger category or group, sharing similar characteristics. Person identities are

those characteristics through which a person defines the self as a unique individual: nice, stubborn, moral, selfish, and so forth. Unlike social or role identities, person identities are thought to be "master identities," operating within and across the role and social/group identities people claim, and the situations in which these role and social/group identities are embedded (Burke and Stets, 2009; Stets, 1995; Stets & Biga, 2003; Stets & Burke, 1994; Stets & Carter, 2011, 2012).

Early work from Stryker and Serpe discussed an internal structure of the self, made up of multiple identities organized into hierarchies of salience (Serpe and Stryker 1987, 1993; Stryker 1980; Stryker and Serpe 1994). Salient identities are those identities an actor is most likely to invoke across situations. Identity salience is a product of commitment, that is, the affective and interactional ties connected to a particular identity. Those identities to which a person is most committed maintain the highest salience, and persons will seek to play out these identities within situations (Owens, Robinson, and Smith-Lovin 2010; Serpe and Stryker 2011; Stryker 2008). Once an identity is salient, persons behave in manners consistent with the meanings attached to that identity.

Research from Burke, Stets, and colleagues focus on how persons negotiate identity meanings once they are activated. Here, identity processes operate as a cybernetic feedback loop in which actors work to verify identity meanings through interaction (Burke 1991). The theory is premised on the assumption that people hold an internalized set of meanings connected to each of their identities and that they work to have others view them in a way that is consistent with these meanings (Burke and Stets 2009).

The identity-verification process contains four components: an identity standard, perceptual inputs, a comparator, and outputs (behavior). The identity standard is the internalized set of meanings attached to a particular identity. Perceptual inputs are the cues actors use to develop reflected appraisals, or perceptions of how others see them in the situation. Through the comparator, actors compare their identity standard to perceptual inputs and determine how closely reflected appraisals approximate self-views. When the distance is substantial, actors will experience

negative emotions and behave in ways to achieve a better match between perceptual inputs and identity standard meanings. These outputs may also include changes in perception, or in some cases, changes in the identity standard (Burke 2006). For example, if I think of myself as an intellectually stimulating professor (identity standard), but see my students looking bored during a lecture and thus think that they see me as a boring professor (reflected appraisals), I might switch to class discussion to elicit engagement, reinterpret their facial expressions, or, if cues of boredom persist, reevaluate myself as informative, rather than stimulating.

In summary, persons enter situations, activate identities, and work to perform these identities in ways that elicit identity-confirming feedback, resulting in positive affect; identity-disconfirming feedback results in negative affect (Stets and Burke 2014b). These processes have been well theorized, and researchers continue to test them empirically. I turn now to the theory's component parts: situations (which serve as the basis of perceptual inputs), identity processes, and identity outcomes, focusing on the implications of digital connectivity. I conclude each of the following sections with theoretically driven research questions.

SITUATIONS

Actors enter a situation. The definition of that situation activates a relevant identity or set of identities that are consistent with the meanings in that situation. Social actors enact the relevant identities and work toward verification (Burke and Stets 2009; Stets and Burke 2014a; Stryker 1980). For instance, when a doctor walks into the hospital, she activates her doctor identity and implores patients and staff to view her as knowledgeable and competent. When she comes home, she may invoke a wife and mother identity, expecting her family to regard her as warm and loving.

The availability of identity-relevant situations is a product of the social structure (Merolla, Serpe, Stryker, and Shultz 2012). Social structures comprise large, intermediate, and proximate structures (Stryker, Serpe, and Hunt 2005). Large social structures are macroconditions such as race,

class, gender, and nationality. These affect persons' opportunities to enter into intermediate structures. Intermediate structures are the organizations, institutions, and social arrangements that bring people into contact with one another (e.g., schools, professional associations, neighborhoods). Intermediate social structures affect persons' opportunities to engage in interpersonal interaction with specific networks of others. These small, close networks make up proximate social structures. Proximate social structures consist, for example, of majors within a college, work teams within a company, family members, and roommates. It is within proximate social structures that persons enact specific roles (Serpe and Stryker 2011; Stryker et al. 2005).

Some structures are more "open" than others, making either a narrow or wide range of identities available. Open structures give persons the opportunity to pursue the networks related to particular identities and avoid those related to other identities. Closed structures limit people's opportunities to call forth the identities of their choosing (Serpe 1987; Serpe and Stryker 1987, 1993).

Persons' social media accounts are proximate social structures, embedded within the intermediate social structure of all those who use the particular social media service, embedded within the large social structure of a digitally connected society. For example, persons' Facebook accounts are the proximate social structure, embedded within the intermediate structure of all Facebook users, embedded within the large social structure of pervasive connectivity. As a proximate social structure, social media connects users with extensive and fragmented networks, while fostering simultaneous interaction with these multiple networks.

Generally, proximate social structures call forth specific role, group, and person identities. When an identity is made relevant, that identity guides behavior (Merolla et al. 2012; Stets and Carter 2012). However, the proximate social structure of social media can call forth multiple identities simultaneously (Davis and Jurgenson 2014). Mead (1934) contends that each identity a person holds contains its own generalized other—or networks with normative expectations about who the actor is in the world and how that actor should behave. For example, one's employee identity standard holds

different meanings than their friend identity standard, and each elicits different behavioral expectations. Maintaining both identity meanings presumes that the networks associated with each remain (relatively) separate, such that competing expectations do not fall on the actor. This is why, for instance, many professors do not frequent the bars popular among students.

Troubling this identity segmentation, networks obtained and maintained through social media extend far beyond geographic locale and include a broad cross-section of people the user knows, used to know, and may wish to know (Rainie and Wellman 2012). That is, networks have expanded and frequently overlap, causing *context collapse* (boyd 2010). Context collapse is the blurring of network walls and, in particular, the intermingling of identities such that a situation calls forth multiple identities at the same time, eliciting a range of behavioral expectations (Davis and Jurgenson 2014: 477). Through the context collapse afforded on social media, users may be in a position to interact at once with bosses, fraternity mates, and dating prospects, activating identities of employee, fraternity brother, and romantic, respectively. Certainly, some of the meanings associated with these identities can overlap, but often they conflict. For instance, the role identity of "employee" could elicit expectations of political correctness, professional distance, and hard work, while the group identity of "fraternity brother" references an intimate relationship of ritualized masculinity and the person identity of "romantic" entails vulnerability and tenderness. Moreover, users navigate collapsed contexts without full knowledge of who *actually* views their profiled data, how those others interpret it, or what those others will do with the information. Therefore, audiences on social media are largely "imagined" (Marwick and boyd 2011:115).

Social media researchers have given significant attention to how users manage context collapse. One strategy is the "lowest common denominator" approach, in which users only post content they deem acceptable to the most sensitive members of the network (Hogan 2010: 383). One might reflect on how parents, employers, or children would receive the performance and use this as a metric to decide whether or not to post some piece of content. Other research shows how users navigate privacy settings, create multiple accounts, switch between platforms, and edit network connections in efforts to reinstate

identity boundaries (Marwick and Ellison 2012; Raynes-Goldie 2010; Stutzman, Capra, and Thompson 2011; Vitak 2012). At the same time, context collapse gives users access to an expansive audience. This affords an opportunity to receive affirming feedback on identity claims in an efficient manner, thereby actively pursuing identity verification (Davis and Jurgenson 2014). For instance, one might announce her pregnancy and entrance into the motherhood identity or, alternatively, announce (and frame) the news of a divorce, publicly exiting the spousal identity (see Gathman 2015 for the role of social media in delivering difficult personal news).

Existing identity theory models show that structure shapes commitment, which shapes salience, which shapes performance (Merolla et al. 2012). Open structures give persons the opportunity to pursue the networks related to particular identities and avoid those related to other identities, while closed structures limit such choices (Stryker et al. 2005). Social media profiles resist clean categorization as either open or closed. Like open structures, social media offers an opportunity to actively pursue a range of networks. Through the proximate structure of a social media account, a person therefore has access to an array of identities. Because of this, salience can guide the selection of networks users elect to engage. On the other hand, users have to manage multiple networks simultaneously, navigating conflicting demands on the self, without the option to disengage from a range of identity labels. In this way, social media is a closed proximate structure and identity salience may have little bearing on which identities users enact.

In all, networks on a social media account are multiple, but not zero-sum. Engagement with one network does not preclude or excuse one from interaction with other networks. Questions therefore remain about the effects of social media's broad and overlapping proximate social structure on commitment, identity salience, and future identity performance. I therefore propose the Research Question 1(a–c):

1. Within the proximate structure of a social media account:
   a. Under what conditions does identity salience predict network makeup?

b. Under what conditions does network makeup predict identity salience?
c. Within a given social media platform which (identity salience or network makeup) is a more powerful predictor of the other?

IDENTITY PROCESSES

Once an identity is activated within a situation, the identity verification process begins. This entails an identity performance as well as reflexive interpretation of feedback from others (i.e., reflected appraisals), as the actor works to verify identity meanings (Burke and Stets 2009; Stryker 1980; Stryker and Burke 2000). Identity theory is premised on the assumption that people hold an internalized set of meanings connected to their person, role, and group identities and that they work to have others view them in ways that are consistent with these meanings.

Social media profiles and the content that comes out of them become both performative stages and reflective mirrors. They are platforms through which we project ourselves to others and back again to ourselves (Davis 2012, 2014). The conditions of digital connectivity complicate both identity performance and in turn, identity verification. In particular, identity performance within social media is heavily documented, collaborative, and maintains an archived presence. These conditions pose questions about persons' control over their own identity meanings and, ultimately, the effects of this on identity verification.

Performance

Existing work from computer-mediated-communication scholarship focuses heavily on performance, with a strong theoretical grounding in the writings of Erving Goffman (e.g., Gottschalk 2010; Hogan 2010; Jurgenson and Rey 2012; Miller 1995; Murthy 2012; Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008). Goffman famously envisions social life as a stage, with

actors preparing identity performances in the backstage, displaying their performances in the front stage, and interacting with cooperative audiences who tactfully help the actor "pull off" identity claims. In its simplest rendering, we can divide self-presentation on social media into process and product. The process of content preparation represents the backstage, as users craft tweets and status updates, select which images to post, decide what biographical information is relevant, and determine how to frame it all. Finalized posted content—the product—makes up the front stage. It is through the finalized product that users present themselves and make claims on identity (Hogan 2010).

Goffman (1959) tells us, of course, that front and back stage are not essential categories, but always relational. We must, therefore, ask *back/front stage for whom?* In this vein, social media users reveal profiled content to some, while concealing it from others (Jurgenson and Rey 2012). They typically do so through privacy settings or "groups," making their data selectively available (Madden 2010; Raynes-Goldie 2010; Vitak 2012). Some users employ "social stenography," that is, cloaking messages in texts with double meanings, such that outsiders garner one meaning, while insiders decipher the true intent (e.g., posting song lyrics that mean something specific to peers, while remaining innocuous to parents) (boyd and Marwick 2011).

In many ways, performativity on social media follows the intricacies of Goffman's dramaturgical perspective. We can liken processes of profile preparation to the backstage work of picking out an outfit or rehearsing an argument, and the posted profiled content to the front stage performance of a job interview, first date, or casual conversation. Moreover, like social stenography and privacy settings, performances are partially negotiated through secrets and inside jokes, as users navigate deftly between privacy and sharing (Goffman 1959). Yet, digitally mediated performance is not fully captured by Goffman's stage metaphor, with its assumptions rooted so heavily in synchronous face-to-face communication. Action and interaction through social media are heavily collaborative and archived for posterity. These conditions, coupled with the broad and overlapping networks discussed above, give rise to questions about actors' degree of

control over identity-relevant information. Identity theory is well poised to address these questions.

Identity Verification

Performances on social media produce identity-relevant data, which may or may not reflect a user's identity standard. Certainly, digitally mediated verification processes include explicit communications—verifying or not—between members of a social media network with regard to the performance (e.g., picture comments, wall postings, tags). However, because social media users perform for imagined audiences (Marwick and boyd 2011), the mere availability of data should be sufficient to evoke the identity feedback loop. If reflected appraisals are persons' *perceptions* about how others view them, it follows that social media profiles act as the basis for these perceptual inputs, independent of who *actually* engages the material or the meaning others ascribe to it.

The asynchronous nature of social media allows users to craft messages about themselves through both text and image, and project these images to broad and sometimes carefully selected audiences. At the same time, performances are subject to immediate and delayed review, and others can contribute to performances in unexpected ways. Given this tension, it is perhaps unsurprising that scholars disagree on the extent to which digital mediation in general, and social media in particular, aids or impedes actors' control over identity meanings. While some note the freedom of a priori, asynchronous, text-based performances (Huston 2009; Turkle 1995; Zhao et al. 2008), others focus on the pervasive documentation, deep audience participation, and relative permanence of identity artifacts, which together tie social actors to a narrow and grounded set of identity claims (Back et al. 2010; Goodings and Tucker 2014; Luery 2013).

Traditional in-person interaction occurs in real time, with actors always in danger of misspeaking, revealing unintended messages through body language, reacting emotionally, and otherwise performing in ways that do not elicit the desired response. Concretely, we often think of "just

the right thing to say" hours after an interaction concludes, or cringe at some statement that came out before we had time to think. The asynchronous nature of most social media interaction protects against these sorts of faux pas. Social media users have the opportunity to carefully select photographs, craft status updates, and brainstorm responses before producing content of their own. Social actors can, therefore, put forth a performance most closely in line with their identity standard and avoid self-sabotaging perceptual inputs. Indeed, research shows that social media users are thoughtful about what they do (and do not) post, who has access, and how this reflects on the self (Davis 2014; Gonzales and Hancock 2011). Yet, social media presents a host of performative challenges. Specifically, it fosters pervasive documentation and active audience participation, with performances preserved long after a particular interaction concludes.

Documentation is increasingly built into everyday social practices. This is fostered by the interrelationship between hardware capabilities, platform affordances, and normative social expectations. The prevalence of mobile phone cameras makes it easy to capture ephemeral moments, while the front facing option makes it easy to capture *the self* within these moments (Andén-Papadopoulos 2014). These captured bits of the self are easily shared through social media mobile applications that keep users signed into various platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, Instagram) by default, and provide one-click options to share the image, along with text, with those in users' social networks. The platforms themselves further support this level of sharing by prompting users with messages such as "What's on your mind?" or "What's happening?" accompanied by blank text space and photo upload options. Moreover, platforms and applications often capture user data automatically, recording a host of data points such as location, purchasing patterns, and physical activity. Finally, research shows that users expect one another to document frequently and hold one another accountable for recording life events (McLaughlin and Vitak 2012). This normative expectation is perhaps best captured in the popular colloquial phrase: "Pics or it didn't happen." That is, documentation is a shared expectation among social media users, compelling individuals to

record and share as an integral part of the identity process. Indeed, users do not merely document themselves via social media, but one another, too.

The work of documentation on social media distributes across users' networks, bringing the audience actively into the process and product of performance. Certainly, the role of others in identity performances is not unique to social media. Identity theory has long established that to make claims on identity, persons rely on others to play counter-roles and respond appropriately to the actor's self-presentation (Cast and Burke 2002; Cast, Stets, and Burke 1999; Riley and Burke 1995). Yet, the conditions of social media give the audience a particularly heavy hand, augmenting the role of others in performances of the self. A defining characteristic of social media is that it is, necessarily, *social*. Users can write on each other's walls, comment on each other's posts, send @connects, and tag one another in photographs, comments, check-ins, and status updates. Because of this, profiles are collaborations or coconstructions (Donath and boyd 2004), made up of both self- and other-generated content (Walther, Van Der Heide, Hamel, and Shulman 2009).

Research shows that in viewing social media profiles, people give greater weight to other-generated content, and less weight to self-generated content (Walther et al. 2009). Concretely, tagged images are of greater performative significance than those self-images a user uploads directly, and wall postings convey a stronger message than status updates. Those impressions that hold the greatest sway on social media are therefore in the hands of users' networks, which, as discussed previously, can be quite large and hold conflicting expectations about the user's identity. Moreover, both self- and other-generated content remain archived and searchable, creating permanent identity artifacts.

Rather than fleeting moments, even banal interactions are archived on social media. Facebook Timeline, for example, displays profiled content including images, status updates, tags, and interactions that span as early as a user's birth (or even before, through, for example, sonogram images and pregnancy announcements) and continue indefinitely. Even when a user deletes a piece of content, or sends it through a nonarchival service (e.g., Snapchat) it often remains stored on servers and/or the saved archives of those who had access while the content was available.

Social media profiles are therefore "exhibitions" in which user data are preserved and performances persist over time, seeping into and informing future identity claims (Hogan 2010). The condition of permanence through social media has been described as the end of forgetting (Bossewitch and Sinnreich 2012: 224) and the loss of an evolving self (Goodings and Tucker 2014: 46):

> Knowing what somebody "did" seems to be interactionally problematic as it mediates a fixed sense of the body, which follows along in a linear fashion and where all moments can be understood in terms of a succession of fixed points in the past. This function fails to grasp the ability for the past to be created anew. As profiled content latches users to earlier performances, the past becomes fixed and future lines of action constrained.

Identity theory models identity as a responsive process. The identity-verification loop presumes that persons can take in perceptual meanings from the situation regarding how they think others see them and, when perceptual meanings contradict the identity standard, work to counteract this. This becomes complicated by identity artifacts that do not go away but, instead, remain as evidence. When these meanings coincide with self-views, the identity standard is reinforced. When they conflict, however, these identity artifacts become persistent hurdles to identity verification. Accumulating too many artifacts that conflict with the identity standard may be a means of closing off social structures, making salient identity difficult to enact.

In short, social media users can carefully curate their images but remain beholden to participation by broad and overlapping networks and the relative permanence of performance through social media platforms. Identity theory offers a framework with which researchers can examine the implications of increased control vis-à-vis relinquished control over the identity performance within the social media environment.

I therefore propose Research Questions 2–4a:

2. Under what conditions of digitally mediated interaction is identity verification more/less likely?

3. What strategies do social media users employ to avoid identity disconfirming inputs?
   a. Do avoidance strategies vary with variations in identity salience?
4. What strategies do social media users employ to manage identity-disconfirming inputs once they have been enacted?
   a. How do identity disconfirming inputs affect the identity salience hierarchy?

OUTCOMES

Identity theory posits that the consequences of nonverification are emotional distress. How this distress manifests varies across social, role, and person identities. These variations are rooted in self-esteem theory (Cast and Burke 2002). There are three dimensions of self-esteem: self-worth, self-efficacy, and authenticity, which map onto social, role, and person identities, respectively (Stets and Burke 2014c). Computer-mediated-communication research has focused on self-esteem broadly, as well as its component parts (self-worth, self-efficacy, and authenticity), as both predictors and outcomes of social media use. Although these studies do not employ identity theory directly, they are useful in starting to derive research questions about the relationship between social media and identity-verification outcomes.

Researchers have concerned themselves with the effect of social media participation on self-esteem, with conflicting results. Some show that exposure to one's own profile and time spent using social media positively affect self-esteem (Gentile, Twenge, Freeman, and Campbell 2012; Gonzalez and Hancock 2011), while others find that time spent using social media and frequency of checking social media accounts decrease self-esteem (Kalpidou, Costin, and Morris 2011; Mehdizadeh 2010). These conflicting relationships may be explained through an identity theory framework.

Research shows that those with low self-esteem are eager to self-disclose via social media (Forest and Wood 2012). On Facebook, those

with low self-esteem use fewer privacy settings (Christofides, Muise, and Desmarais 2009) and disclose a greater breadth of information than do those with higher self-esteem. This suggests that those experiencing low self-esteem actively engage in identity performances. Christofides et al. (2009) suggest that this may be a function of the need for those with low self-esteem to elicit feedback.

Although the authors of these studies employ self-esteem as a stable personality characteristic that predicts level of social media engagement, identity theory offers an alternative explanation. Low self-esteem is an affective outcome of nonverification (Cast and Burke 2002; Stets and Burke 2014c). Nonverification leads to efforts by which persons change behaviors to better correspond with meanings in their implied identity standard. That is, nonverification decreases self-esteem and compels an active identity performance. From an identity theory perspective, these findings therefore suggest that low self-esteem may drive more active engagement on social media outlets as users work to verify identity meanings and, ultimately, feel better about themselves. In addition to broad measures of self-esteem, social media researchers have examined self-worth, self-efficacy, and most prominently, authenticity.

Self-worth is most closely connected with group-identity verification (Stets and Burke 2014c). Research shows that scanning one's own Facebook profile increases feelings of self-worth, and that people are motivated to log on to their social media accounts following a blow to the ego (Toma and Hancock 2013). This is because social media functions not only to display key aspects of the self but also to highlight and reaffirm social connections with family, friends, and communities (Toma and Hancock 2013: 321). In this vein, survey data show that the need to belong and collective self-esteem have positive effects on attitudes toward social media (Gangadharbatla 2008). The need to belong refers to the need for social acceptance (Baumeister and Leary 1995), while collective self-esteem refers to the strength of a social or group identity (Tajfel and Turner 1986). That is, those who report a strong desire for connection and who maintain strong group identities view social media more favorably. In line with findings from identity theory (Stets and Burke 2014c), high

levels of self-worth are empirically tied to successful group identification within social media.

Self-efficacy refers to the belief that one can perform necessary actions to achieve desired goals (Bandura 1977). Feelings of self-efficacy are tied to role-identity verification (Stets and Burke 2014c). Research shows that among diverse populations, including American college athletes (Kim 2013) and German social network site users (Krämer and Winter 2008), those with more connections on social media have a greater sense of self-efficacy. It is unclear whether and how network size ties into role identities specifically. However, keeping in mind that larger networks contain diverse role-identity expectations, we may speculate that those with large networks have the opportunity to enact multiple roles, which, research shows, bears psychological benefits (Thoits 1986, 2003). In contrast, those struggling to verify their role identities may limit their connections via social media, circumventing the problems of context collapse. Therefore, shrinking networks may be both an indicator of, and/or impetus for, low self-efficacy. This remains to be tested.

As with global self-esteem, Kim (2013) finds that those with low self-efficacy post more frequent status updates. However, Krämer and Winter (2008) find that those with *high* self-efficacy include more data in their profiles than those with lower self-efficacy. These contradictory findings might well be parsed out if measured with regard to role identity specifically.

Interestingly, those with low global self-esteem and low self-efficacy post more content, but posting more content brings about negative evaluations from others (Forest and Wood 2012) and decreases users' self-efficacy (Kim 2013). That is, those with low self-esteem and low self-efficacy engage social media more actively, but doing so exacerbates the problem. This offers an important reminder that identity processes are always interactive and performative inputs do not necessarily affect actual and reflected appraisals in the way an actor intends. In this vein, identity verification requires a believable performance, one in which the actor sincerely conveys the self that they purport to be. That is, performances must come off authentically (Goffman 1959).

Authenticity refers to the presumed underlying *truth* of a social actor's performance (Trilling 1972); it is a performance that does not seem performed but, rather, a spontaneous manifestation of ingrained values (Erikson 1995). It is a merger between person and role, such that the role is no longer a situationally specific performance but a fixed part of the actor's being (Turner 1978). Within identity theory, authenticity is an outcome of person-identity verification (Stets and Burke 2014c). The conditions of pervasive digital mediation create a tension between information control and authenticity (Uski and Lampinen 2016). Actors must work to craft identity performances that remain "accurate" and appear "natural," while employing the extensive tools at their disposal to convey identity meanings. This tension has received significant attention within the literature.

Social media platforms and social network sites in particular, have been called "labor-exposing spaces," referring to the exposure of identity work as users are afforded the time and technological capability to carefully and thoughtfully craft images of the self (Davis 2012). In this vein, research shows that social media users actively police authenticity, censuring those who "try too hard" (Marwick and boyd 2011) or present themselves online in ways that contradict offline performances (McLaughlin and Vitak 2012). Indeed, the push for authenticity via social media spans across otherwise diverse social media platforms (Uski and Lampinen 2016).

Empirically, authenticity on social media is both a predictor and outcome of affective well-being (Reinecke and Trepte 2014). Over time, those who report presenting themselves "authentically" through social media are more likely to report high positive affect, while those who report high positive affect are also more likely to present themselves authentically (Reinecke and Trepte 2014). So authenticity increases emotional well-being and emotional well-being increases authenticity, or conversely, inauthenticity increases emotional distress and emotional distress evokes insincere performances.

Since authenticity is an outcome of verification processes for person identities, the significant and multidirectional relationship between inauthenticity and negative affect among social media users may be a function

of persistent nonverification. That is, those who fail to verify their person identities feel inauthentic and feel bad, perhaps prompting them to adjust their performances to better match how they think others see them. In contrast, those who verify their person identities feel authentic and feel good, enabling them to continue presenting in ways that align with their person identity standards. Again, these relationships await testing.

Social media researchers have long concerned themselves with variables of psychological well-being. Social media studies that examine self-esteem as a global concept, as well as self-worth, self-efficacy, and authenticity, dovetail with the affective outcomes posited by identity theory. Although none of these studies employ identity theory as a framework, they suggest support for the identity theory model and offer the opportunity to test identity theory in digitally mediated environments. I therefore put forth Research Questions 5–8:

5. What is the relationship between authenticity and digitally mediated person-identity verification?
6. What is the relationship between self-efficacy and digitally mediated role-identity verification?
7. What is the relationship between self-worth and digitally mediated social-identity verification?
8. Does identity salience mediate the relationship between self-esteem and digitally mediated person-, role-, and group-identity verification?

MULTIPLE IDENTITIES AND IDENTITY CHANGE

Moving forward, I examine two emergent and interrelated components of identity theory: multiple identities and identity change. Enacting multiple identities is one key factor that can lead to identity change. Although identity theory posits that identities are relatively stable, they can shift slowly over time as persons respond to identity conflict, nonverifying reflected appraisals, and structural conditions (Burke 2006). While conflicting

identities and nonverifying reflected appraisals can result in changes to the identity standard, structural conditions can affect one's hierarchy of identity salience. Each of these is affected by multiple identity enactment. Multiple identity enactment is a key affordance of social media, and is therefore relevant for advances in identity theory.

Persons have multiple identities within the self and across people within each situation. Within a situation, identity verification requires others to play appropriate counter-roles. As such, each person's identity claims affect others within a group (Cast and Burke 2002; Cast et al. 1999; Riley and Burke 1995). Within a person, identities have varying degrees of overlap. That is, claiming and enacting one identity may or may not have implications for another identity standard. Overlapping identities can support one another, such as spouse and parent, or conflict, such as parent and criminal (Stets and Burke 2014a). Although conflicting identities can cause role conflict, research shows that maintaining multiple identities has psychological benefits, enhancing one's sense of purpose and meaning (Thoits 1986), especially when roles are enacted voluntarily (Thoits 2003) and when these role identities can be verified (Burke and Stets 2009).

The psychological benefits of multiple roles vis-à-vis role conflict may have to do with persons' ability to keep their role identities isolated from one another. As Smith-Lovin (2007) argues, in our fragmented social world, we can usually keep our identities and their relevant networks, separate. That is, simultaneous identity enactments are rare. When they do occur, however, they can be drivers of personal and cultural change (Smith-Lovin 2007). Yet through social media, the simultaneous enactment of multiple identities is not only common but also compulsory. This is made clear in the previous discussion of context collapse, through which networks associated with multiple identities converge in a shared social space. The social media user is therefore always juggling the numerous identities that make up the self and the complex array of counter-roles played by those in a large network.

One route to identity change is the simultaneous enactment of two or more identities with meanings that conflict with one another. When someone enacts conflicting identities, their standards may move toward

each other to minimize the conflict (Burke 2006). For instance, a doctor who brings her child to work enacts the mother and doctor identities simultaneously. The expectations placed on her are different for each role. Identity theory predicts that the mother would reach a "compromise" in which her mother identity took on some characteristics of her doctor identity and her doctor identity more closely approximated her mother identity. She may therefore be more methodical in her parenting and warmer in her patient care. Research shows that for role identities, compromises are not uniform but vary along with level of commitment (Burke and Stets 1999; Stryker and Serpe 1982), degree of salience (Callero 1985; Stryker and Serpe 1982, 1994), and ties from one identity to other identities (Burke 2003; Smith-Lovin 2003; Thoits 1986). Specifically, those roles to which one is more committed, that hold greater salience, and are more closely tied with other identities, tend to be more stable. Through social media, persons lay claim to many identities, with identity standards that may well conflict. Social media platforms therefore provide a theoretically rich environment in which to test the effects of commitment, salience, and network ties as predictors of identity change as they apply not only to role identities but also to person and group identities.

Persistent nonverification of identity meanings is a second route to identity change (Burke and Cast 1991). Cast and Cantwell show this in newly married couples (2007), while Stets (2005) measures identity change in terms of affective response. While nonverification elicits a negative emotional reaction, the reaction decreases over time. That is, when nonverification is persistent, the person feels less bad. This suggests that they are relenting and changing the identity standard rather than resisting the reflected appraisals (Stets 2005). If identity enactment via social media is multiple, so too are the reflected appraisals. Identity claims may be verified by some segments of a user's network but disconfirmed by others. For instance, posting about professional success may elicit congratulatory remarks from colleagues and also, an embarrassing monologue of pride from the person's mother. While the former verifies the "professional" identity, the latter does not.

Finally, structural configurations can generate changes to the identity salience hierarchy. Within a situation, some identities are more readily available while others are less available. When an identity is persistently unavailable, it may reduce in salience. In contrast, identities that become compulsory may increase in salience (Serpe and Stryker 1987, 1993). The availability of identities hinges on the openness of the proximate structure, discussed at length in a previous section. Questions remain about the conditions under which social media platforms are "open" and "closed." It is worth noting here that answering questions about degree of openness on social media platforms creates a pathway to understand how open and closed structures affect changes in the salience structure of the self.

Through social media, we can expect the enactment of multiple identities. Multiple identity enactment affects changes to person, role, and group identities. Researchers can examine how identities change through various social media platforms, while testing hypotheses about identity change more generally. I therefore propose Research Questions 9–12:

9. How do social actors manage the multiple enactment of identity fostered by social media?
10. Under what conditions are social media users likely to experience changes to their identity standards?
11. Under what conditions are social media users likely to experience changes to their identity salience hierarchy?
12. How do salience, commitment, and network ties via social media affect changes to person, role, and group identities?

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The rise of digital social technologies as a central means of communication and interaction presents an exciting time for students of the self in society. Identity theory, extensively theorized and rigorously tested, provides a strong framework with which to understand new forms of sociality. At the same time, the new conditions of a digitally mediated society

offer an opportunity for identity theorists to test new hypotheses and examine the viability of existing assumptions.

Identity theory is instructive in parsing out the structural conditions of social media platforms, and the degree to which the conditions of social media foster or impede control over identity meanings. With its focus on identity verification, such control becomes a central variable within the identity theory model. In turn, the affective rewards of verification—and consequences of nonverification—explain why level of control is of interactional significance.

While identity theory is useful in understanding the effects of digital mediation, the conditions of digital mediation also push current renditions of identity theory. In particular, they call into question what it means to span multiple situations and multiple networks simultaneously. I, therefore, concluded each section with empirically driven theoretical questions about the role of social media in situational structures, identity verification processes, identity verification outcomes, multiple identity enactment, and identity change.

These research questions set an agenda moving forward. Spanning disciplines and subdisciplines, they are a call not only for theoretically informed empirical research but also for collaboration between and within academic fields. Indeed, the work of social psychologists has much to contribute to theories of the digital, and understanding digital mediation will be instrumental to social psychologists as they continue to refine and test the scope and assumptions of their theories.

REFERENCES

Andén-Papadopoulos, Kari. 2014. "Citizen Camera-Witnessing: Embodied Political Dissent in the Age of 'Mediated Mass Self-Communication.'" *New Media and Society* 16:753–769.

Back, Matja D, Juliane M. Stopfer, Simine Vazire, Sam Gaddis, Stefan C. Schmukle, Boris Egloff, and Samuel D. Gosling. 2010. "Facebook Profiles Reflect Actual Personality, Not Self-Idealization." *Psychological Science* 21:372–374.

Bandura, Albert. 1977. "Self-Efficacy: Toward a Unified Theory of Behavioral Change." *Psychological Review* 84:191–215.

Baumeister, Roy F. and Mark R. Leary. 1995. "The Need to Belong: Desire for Interpersonal Attachments as a Fundamental Human Motivation." *Psychological Bulletin* 117:497–529.
Bossewitch, Jonah and Aram Sinnreich. 2012. "The End of Forgetting: Strategic Agency beyond the Panopticon." *New Media and Society* 15:224–242.
boyd, danah. 2010. "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics: Affordances, Dynamics, and Implications." Pp. 39–58 in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, edited by Z. Papacharissi. New York: Routledge.
boyd, danah and Alice Marwick. 2011. "Social Stenography: Privacy in Networked Publics." *International Communication Association*, Boston, MA. Retrieved November 5, 2014. http://www.danah.org/papers/2011/Steganography-ICAVersion.pdf
Burke, Peter J. 1991. "Identity Processes and Social Stress." *American Sociological Review* 56: 836–849.
Burke, Peter J. 2003. "Relationships among Multiple Identities." Pp. 195–214 in *Advances in Identity Theory and Research*, edited by P. J. Burke, T. J. Owens, R. T. Serpe, and P. A. Thoits. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
Burke, Peter. J. 2006. "Identity Change." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 69:81–96.
Burke, Peter J. and Alicia D. Cast. 1997. "Identity Processes and Social Stress." *American Sociological Review* 56:836–849.
Burke, Peter J. and Jan E. Stets. 2009. *Identity Theory*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Callero, Peter L. 1985. "Role Identity Salience." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 48:203–215.
Cast, Alicia D. and Peter J. Burke. 2002. "A Theory of Self-Esteem." *Social Forces* 80:1041–1068.
Cast, Alicia D. and Allison M. Cantwell. 2007. "Identity Change in Newly Married Couples: Effects of Positive and Negative Feedback." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 70:172–185.
Cast, Alicia. D., Jan E. Stets, and Peter J. Burke. 1999. "Does the Self Conform to the Views of Others?" *Social Psychology Quarterly* 62:68–82.
Christophides, Emily, Amy Muise, and Serge Desmarais. 2009. "Information Disclosure and Control on Facebook: Are They Two Sides of the Same Coin or Two Different Processes?" *Cyberpsychology and Behavior* 12:341–345.
Davis, Jenny L. 2012. "Accomplishing Authenticity in a Labor Exposing Space." *Computers in Human Behavior* 28:1966–1973.
Davis, Jenny L. 2014. "Triangulating the Self. Identity Processes in a Connected Era." *Symbolic Interaction* 37:500–523.
Davis, Jenny L. and Nathan Jurgenson. 2014. "Context Collapse: Theorizing Context Collusions and Collisions." *Information, Communication and Society* 17:476–485.
Deuze, Mark. 2011. "Media Life." *Media, Culture and Society* 33:137–48.
Donath, Judith and danah boyd. 2004. "Public Displays of Connection." *BT Technology Journal* 22:71–82.
Erikson, Rebecca. 1995. "The Importance of Authenticity for Self and Society." *Symbolic Interaction* 18:121–144.
Forest, Amanda L. and Joanne V. Wood. 2012. "When Social Networking Is Not Working: Individuals with Low Self-Esteem Recognize but Do Not Reap the Benefits of Self-Disclosure on Facebook." *Psychological Science* 23:295–302.

Gangadharbatla, Harsha. "Facebook Me: Collective Self-Esteem, Need to Belong, and Internet Self-Efficacy as Predictors of the Generation's Attitudes toward Social Networking Sites." *Journal of Interactive Advertising* 8:5–15.

Gathman, Cabell. 2015. "Announcing Bad News on Facebook." *Cyborgology Blog.* Retrieved January 20, 2015. http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2015/01/20/announcing-bad-news-now-on-facebook/

Gentile, Brittany, Jean M. Twenge, Elise C. Freeman, W. Keith Campbell. 2012. "The Effect of Social Networking Websites on Positive Self-Views: An Experimental Investigation." *Computers in Human Behavior* 28:1929–1933.

Goffman, Erving. 1959. *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life.* New York: Doubleday.

Goodings, Lewis and Ian Tucker. "Social Media and the Co-Production of Bodies Online: Bergson, Serres and Facebook's Timeline." *Media, Culture and Society.* 36:37–51.

Gonzales, Amy L. and Jeffrey T. Hancock. 2011. "Mirror, Mirror on My Facebook Wall: Effects of Exposure to Facebook on Self-Esteem." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* 14:79–83.

Gottschalk, Simon. 2010. "The Presentation of Avatars in Second Life: Self and Interaction in Social Virtual Spaces." *Symbolic Interaction* 33:501–525.

Hogan, Bernie. 2010. "The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online." *Bulletin of Science, Technology and Society* 30:377–386.

Huston, Zachary. 2009. "The Best Imitation of Myself: Communication and Arbitrary Construction of the Self." *American Communication Journal* 11:1–15.

Jurgenson, Nathan and P. J. Rey. 2012. "The Fan Dance: How Privacy Thrives in an Age of Hyper-Publicity." In the *Unlike Us Reader: Social Media Monopolies and Their Alternatives*, edited by G. Lovink and M. Rasch. Institute of Network Cultures. Amsterdam. Retrieved October 10, 2014. (http://books.networkcultures.org/unlikeusreader/chapter/the-fan-dance-how-privacy-thrives-in-an-age-of-hyper-publicity/).

Kalpidou, Maria, Dan Costin, and Jessica Morris. 2011. "The Relationship between Facebook and the Well-Being of Undergraduate College Students." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 14:183–189.

Kim, Jongsung. "Relationship between Facebook Usage and Self-Efficacy among College Athletes." *Media Watch* 4:364–374.

Krämer, Nicole C. and Stephen Winter. "Impression Management 2.0: The Relationship of Self-Esteem, Extraversion, Self-Efficacy, and Self-Presentation within Social Networking Sites." *Journal of Media Psychology* 20:106–116.

Luery, Sarah E. 2013. "'It's Complicated': Actual, Ideal, Ought, and Socially Desirable Self Presentation on Facebook." Masters Thesis, Department of Sociology, California State University, Northridge.

Madden, Mary and Katherine Zickuhr. 2014. "65% of Adults Use Social Networking Sites." Pew Internet and American Life Project. Pp.1–14. Retrieved September 12, 2014. http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2011/Social-Networking-Sites.aspx

Marwick, Alice E. and danah boyd. 2011. "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience." *New Media and Society* 13:114–133.

Marwick, Alice and Nicole B. Ellison. 2012. ""There Isn't Wifi in Heaven!' Negotiating Visibility on Facebook Memorial Pages." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 56:378–400.

McLaughlin, Caitlin and Jessica Vitak. 2012. "Norm Evolution and Violation on Facebook." *New Media and Society* 14:299–315.

Mead, George Herbert. 1934. *Mind, Self, and Society*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Merolla, David M., Richard T. Serpe, Sheldon Stryker, and P. Wesley Shultz. 2012. "Structural Precursors to Identity Processes: The Role of Proximate Social Structures." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 75:149–172.

Mehdizadeh, Soraya. 2010. "Self-Presentation 2.0: Narcissism and Self-Esteem on Facebook." *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 13:357–364.

Miller, Hugh. 1995. "The Presentation of Self in Electronic Life: Goffman on the Internet." Presented at Embodied Knowledge and Virtual Space Conference Goldsmiths' College, University of London, June. Retrieved October 1, 2010. http://www.douri.sh/classes/ics234cw04/miller2.pdf

Murthy, Dhiraj. 2012. "Towards a Sociological Understanding of Social Media: Theorizing Twitter." *Sociology* 46:1059–1073.

Owens, Timothy J., Dawn T. Robinson, and Lynn Smith-Lovin. 2010. "Three Faces of Identity." Annual Review of Sociology 36:477–499.

Pew Internet and American Life Project. 2014. "Internet User Demographics." Retrieved March 10, 2015. http://www.pewinternet.org/data-trend/internet-use/latest-stats/

Rainie, Lee and Barry Wellman. 2012. *Networked: The New Social Operating System*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Reinecke, Leonard and Sabine Trepte. 2014. "Authenticity and Well-Being on Social Network Sites: A Two-Wave Longitudinal Study on the Effects of Online Authenticity and the Positivity Bias in SNS Communication." *Computers in Human Behavior* 30:95–102.

Riley, Anna and Peter J. Burke. 1995. "Identities and Self-Verification in the Small Group." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58:61–73.

Serpe, Richard 1987. "Stability and Change in Self: A Structural Symbolic Interactionist Explanation." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 50:44–55.

Serpe, Richard T. and Sheldon Stryker. 1987. "The Construction of Self and Reconstruction of Social Relationships." *Advances in Group Processes* 4:41–66.

Serpe, Richard T. and Sheldon Stryker. 1993. "Prior Social Ties and Movement into New Social Relationships." *Advances in Group Processes* 10:283–304.

Serpe, Richard T. and Sheldon Stryker. 2011. "The Symbolic Interactionist Perspective and Identity Theory." Pp. 225–248 in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research*, edited by S. J. Schwartz, K. Luyckx, and V. L. Vignoles. New York: Springer.

Smith-Lovin, Lynn. 2003. "Self, Identity, and Interaction in an Ecology of Identities." Pp. 167–178 in *Advances in Identity Theory and Research*, edited by P. J. Burke, T. J. Owens, R. T. Serpe, and P. A. Thoits. New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.

Smith-Lovin, Lynn. 2007. "The Strength of Weak Identities: Social Structural Sources of Self, Situation, and Emotional Experience." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 70:106–124.

Stets, Jan E. 1995. "Role Identities and Person Identities: Gender Identity, Mastery Identity, and Controlling One's Partner." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 60:185–217.

Stets, Jan E. 2005. "Examining Emotions in Identity Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 68:39–56.

Stets, Jan E. and Chris F. Biga. 2003. "Bringing Identity Theory into Environmental Sociology." *Sociological Theory* 21:398–423.

Stets, Jan E. and Peter J. Burke. 1994. "Inconsistent Self-Views in the Control Identity Model." *Social Science Research* 23:236–262.

Stets, Jan E. and Peter J. Burke. 2014a. "The Development of Identity Theory." *Advances in Group Processes* 31:57–97.

Stets, Jan E. and Peter J. Burke. 2014b. "Emotions and Identity Non-Verification." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 77:387–410.

Stets, Jan E. and Peter J. Burke. 2014c. "Self-Esteem and Identities." *Sociological Perspectives* 57:409–433.

Stets, Jan E. and Michael J. Carter. 2011. "The Moral Self: Applying Identity Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 74:192–215.

Stets, Jan E. and Michael J. Carter. 2012. "A Theory of the Self for the Sociology of Morality." *American Sociological Review* 77:120–140.

Stryker, Sheldon. 1980. *Symbolic Interactionism: A Social Structural Version*. Menlo Park, CA: Benjamin Cummings.

Stryker, Sheldon. 2008. "From Mead to a Structural Symbolic Interactionism and Beyond." *Annual Review of Sociology* 34:15–31.

Stryker, Sheldon and Peter J. Burke. 2000. "The Past, Present, and Future of Identity Theory." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63:284–297.

Stryker, Sheldon and Richard T. Serpe. 1994. "Identity Salience and Psychological Centrality: Equivalent, Overlapping, or Complementary Concepts." *Social Psychology Quarterly* 57:16–35.

Stryker, Sheldon, Richard Serpe, and Matthew Hunt. 2005. "Making Good on a Promise: The Impact of Larger Social Structures on Commitment." *Advances in Group Processes* 22:93–123.

Stutzman, Fred, Robert Capra, and Jamila Thompson. 2011. "Factors Mediating Disclosure in Social Network Sits." *Computers in Human Behavior* 27:590–598.

Tajfel, Henri and John C. Turner. 1986. "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior." Pp. 7–24 in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Behavior*, edited by S. Worchel and W. Austin. Chicago: Nelson-Hall.

Thoits, Peggy A. 1986. "Multiple Identities: Examining Gender and Marital Status Differences in Distress." *American Sociological Review* 51:259–272.

Thoits, Peggy. A. 2003. "Personal Agency in the Accumulation of Multiple Role-Identities." Pp. 179–194 in *Advances in Identity Theory and Research*, edited by P. J. Burke, T. J. Owens, R. T. Serpe and P. A. Thoits. New York: Kluwer.

Toma, Catalina L. and Jeffrey T. Hancock. 2013. "Self-Affirmation Underlies Facebook Use." *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 39:321–331.

Trilling, Lionel. 1972. *Sincerity and Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Turkle, Sherry. 1995. *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Turner, Ralph H. 1978. "The Role and the Person." *American Journal of Sociology* 84:1–23.

Uski, Suvi and Airi Lampinen. 2016. "Social Norms and Self-Presentation on Social Network Sites: Profile Work in Action." *New Media and Society* 18(3):447–464. doi: 10.1177/1461444814543164.

Vitak, Jessica. 2012. "The Impact of Context Collapse and Privacy on Social Network Site Disclosures." *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 56:451–470.

Walther, Joseph B., Brandon Van Der Heide, Lauren M. Hamel, and Hillary C. Shulman. 2009. "Self-Generated versus Other-Generated Statements and Impressions in Computer- Mediated Communication: A Test of Warranting Theory Using Facebook." *Communication Research* 36:229–253.

Zhao, Shanyang, Sherri Grasmuck, and Jason Martin. 2008. "Identity Construction on Facebook: Digital Empowerment in Anchored Relationships." *Computers in Human Behavior* 24:1816–1836.

APPENDIX

Application: A piece of software that a user downloads to a computer or mobile device to support a specific task (e.g., listening to music, accessing a social media platform, tracking food and exercise).

Check-in: This is a term used for location-based mobile applications. A user "checks in" when they arrive at a destination. This check-in broadcasts to the user's network.

@Connect: This is how people tag one another. It is most commonly associated with Twitter but is also part of other social media platform designs.

Followers: Those who "follow" a person's posts on a social media platform. Following can be nonreciprocal.

Friends: Those who share a reciprocal connection via a social media platform. This usually refers to social network(ing) sites, that is, social websites that resemble networks of personal homepages (e.g. Facebook, MySpace, Google+).

Newsfeed: A stream of content reflecting recent activity from those in a person's network.

View publication stats

Platform: The environment in which software and code objects operate. The platform shapes what the software and code can do (e.g., Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook are all platforms).

Profile: A biographical sketch of the person associated with a particular social media account. This sometimes includes a log of their activities on the particular social media platform.

Status Update: Text or images that a person posts on their own social media account (this usually refers to Facebook).

Tagging: Creating a hyperlink connected to another person or persons' social media profile(s).

Wall: An interactive space on which members of a person's networks can add content. This becomes part of the person's profile and often shows up in others' newsfeeds.

QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY
05-Jun-2017
COPY MADE ON BEHALF OF
Australian National University