ENGAGING OTHERS IN ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: RHETORICAL
PRACTICES IN MYSPACE AND FACEBOOK

by

Stephanie Vie

A Dissertation Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
WITH A MAJOR IN RHETORIC, COMPOSITION, AND THE TEACHING OF
ENGLISH

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2 0 0 7

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA
GRADUATE COLLEGE

As members of the Dissertation Committee, we certify that we have read the dissertation

prepared by Stephanie Vie

entitled Engaging Others in Online Social Networking Sites: Rhetorical Practices in

MySpace and Facebook

and recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement for the

Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

_____ Date: April 11, 2007
Dr. Amy Kimme Hea

_____ Date: April 11, 2007
Dr. Ken McAllister

_____ Date: April 11, 2007
Dr. Theresa Enos

Final approval and acceptance of this dissertation is contingent upon the candidate's
submission of the final copies of the dissertation to the Graduate College.

I hereby certify that I have read this dissertation prepared under my direction and
recommend that it be accepted as fulfilling the dissertation requirement.

_____ Date: April 11, 2007
Dissertation Director: Dr. Amy Kimme Hea

STATEMENT BY AUTHOR

This dissertation has been submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for an advanced degree at the University of Arizona and is deposited in the University Library to be made available to borrowers under rules of the Library.

Brief quotations from this dissertation are allowable without special permission, provided that accurate acknowledgment of source is made. Requests for permission for extended quotation from or reproduction of this manuscript in whole or in part may be granted by the copyright holder.

SIGNED: <u>Stephanie Vie</u>

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

My sincerest thanks go to my committee members, Dr. Theresa Enos and Dr. Ken McAllister. Ken, I remain indebted to you for your encouraging guidance throughout my time at the University of Arizona, particularly as chair of my comprehensive exam. I couldn't have made it without you. Theresa, the time I spent working under your leadership on *Rhetoric Review* was so illuminating; I am grateful to you for helping me continue to hone my interests in academic journal editing and publishing. As you are a foundational member of the field of rhetoric and composition, I am honored to have had the opportunity to study with you at the University of Arizona.

My chair, Dr. Amy Kimme Hea, deserves particular thanks for her constant support, patience, and theoretical guidance throughout my dissertation. You have been a compassionate and encouraging mentor and I hope to pay this kindness forward someday as a faculty member myself. Thank you for helping me find my place within the computers and writing community and pushing me to new heights in my academic work.

I couldn't have completed my academic journey without the emotional and financial support of my family. My parents, Cheri and George Vie, have always been there when I needed their assistance. To my siblings, George, David, and Carol, thanks for forging ahead of me and smoothing my path. Finally, to Jeff—you have willingly agreed to plunge forward into whatever the future may hold for us and I love you for that. Thank you for sharing this journey with me.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS--*Continued*

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

ABSTRACT

While computers and composition researchers are concerned with the theoretical and pedagogical impacts of new technologies in our field, these researchers have only recently begun to consider the ramifications of the growing use of online social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook in academia. This dissertation fills a much-needed space in the field in its consideration of the pedagogical implications of social networking sites. Online social networking sites can provide teachable moments to talk with students about audience, discourse communities, intellectual property, and the tensions between public and private writing. Thus, if writing instructors ignore the growing conversation regarding online social networking sites, they may potentially miss out on familiar and accessible spaces for teaching rhetorical analysis.

In this dissertation, through a qualitative analysis of undergraduate students and university writing instructors, I trace common threads in these individuals' attitudes and perceived beliefs about MySpace and Facebook. In chapters 1 and 2 I draw on Michel Foucault's theories of bio-power and confession to raise questions and concerns regarding pedagogical uses and abuses of online social networking sites, focusing specifically on issues of privacy and surveillance. In chapter 3, I outline the methods and methodologies that guided the qualitative portion of my study; the results of this study are reported in chapters 4 (students' views of social networking) and 5 (instructors' views), respectively. In chapter 5, I use technological literacy as a framework to argue that the immense popularity of online social networking sites coupled with the sheer amount of writing produced by students in these sites provides a compelling reason for rhetoric and

composition instructors to begin paying attention to online social networking sites. To

conclude chapter 5, I provide specific classroom activities that focus on MySpace and

Facebook for instructors interested in bringing social networking back to the classroom.

These classroom materials can be adapted to multiple classroom settings and can be

modified based on a particular instructor's pedagogical needs.

CHAPTER 1: AN INTRODUCTION TO ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

Chances are, if you haven't already heard about MySpace.com or Facebook.com, you soon will.[1] College students in the United States comprise the majority of the population of these and similar online social networking sites used to socialize with friends and family. Whether they are searching for contacts from the past or looking to meet new friends, these "Generation M" individuals have eagerly joined online social networking sites in record numbers.[2] Many of the more popular online social networking sites boast millions of users, prompting researchers to take notice of the potential of Web 2.0 to fundamentally change our communication behaviors.

What is an online social networking site? Like many emergent technologies, online social networking sites are difficult to define because they draw heavily on features from other successful web applications. Too, these sites are still very new, most only a few years old, and definitions regarding what constitutes a social networking site continue to be debated. The distinctions between computer-mediated communication technologies are notoriously slippery: for instance, how does one differentiate between a blog, an online diary, and a web journal? While the differences may be minor, purists argue that there are distinct features distinguishing blogs from web journals (boyd, "Defining and Categorizing Weblogs"; Mortensen). Similarly, online social networking

---

[1] Hereafter MySpace and Facebook.

[2] The term "Generation M" was used in a 2005 Kaiser Family Foundation study (Roberts and Foehr) to describe young adults born after 1980. Most commonly, the "M" stands for *media*, reflecting the most common characteristics of members of Generation M: they are media-savvy (but often uncritical of media usage) and adept at multitasking with various technologies, such as mp3 players, instant messaging clients, and handheld gaming devices. "M" can also stand for *me*; members of Generation M have sometimes been criticized as self-centered and egotistical. For a more detailed discussion of Generation M, see chapter 4.

sites are often conflated with blogs, online classifieds like Craigslist, course management

software like Blackboard or WebCT, and other software applications that can be used

within online social networking sites but are not themselves social networking

applications. Although MySpace, for instance, contains a blogging application, a

classified advertising section, a space to rate professors, and so on, these features enhance

the overall site but are not crucial factors that define MySpace as an online social

networking site.

Online social networking sites can best be understood within the context of "Web

2.0," a concept that emerged from a conference sponsored by O'Reilly Media and held in

October 2005. Here, participants brainstormed the foundational principles they saw as

characterizing the paradigm shift of the Internet—from static, isolated repositories of

information (Web 1.0) to dynamic, user-driven, participatory sites (Web 2.0). Ross

Mayfield, CEO of SocialText, a California company that creates wiki software used to

create collaboratively edited web pages, noted at the conference, "Web 1.0 was

commerce. Web 2.0 is people" (Singel). Online social networking sites attempt to bring

people together within user-driven, participatory forums, usually targeted toward

particular subgroups like college students, activists, pet owners, and so on. Members

network by creating profiles, or virtual personas, and connecting with others; in chapter 2

I discuss in greater detail the subtleties of the term "member," which has varying

connotations across the range of online social networking sites. These sites therefore exist

to facilitate the formation of social ties, whether strong (familial bonds and very good friends) or weak (acquaintances and coworkers one doesn't know very well).[3]

Thus Web 2.0 highlights the *social* or participatory nature of World Wide Web software, or social software. Social software allows users to communicate via computer-mediated environments; some examples include wikis, blogs, instant messaging, discussion forums, and document collaboration sites. These software applications help people share their writing, hold conversations, debate with each other, buy and sell goods, and more. Online social networking sites, therefore, are computer-mediated environments that rely on social software applications to allow individuals to build user profiles, seek out connections with others, and establish nodal relationships among selected user profiles. These "virtual digital places that occupy neither space nor time . . . where people actively convene to commune with others" (Kozinets 367) allow individual users the chance to bond through shared interests, group affiliations, or mutual social relationships. Howard Rheingold describes virtual communities as "social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (xx). Both Kozinets's and Rheingold's definitions highlight personal connections as a requirement of online social networking sites.

---

[3] For more information on interpersonal ties, see Mark Granovetter's foundational article "The Strength of Weak Ties" and his revised and expanded "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited." Granovetter posits that both strong and weak ties are necessary to provide individuals with diverse information and to facilitate social networking.

Works Cited

Granovetter, Mark. "The Strength of Weak Ties." *American Journal of Sociology* 78.6 (1973): 1360-80.
---. "The Strength of Weak Ties: A Network Theory Revisited." *Sociological Theory* 1 (1983): 201-33.

Hundreds of online social networking sites are available, each with a slightly different look and feel. Some of the more popular sites are MySpace, open to the general public; Facebook, populated mainly by high school and college students; Classmates.com, which helps former classmates reunite; and Orkut, an online social networking site owned by Google. Many online social networking sites are members-only dating sites (like Match.com and OkCupid) while others focus more on journaling activities (such as Xanga and LiveJournal).[4] The sites with the highest numbers of members usually offer an angle to entice users to register, return often, and incorporate the site into their lives.

The two sites I will be analyzing throughout this project are MySpace and Facebook, chosen because of their widespread use among today's college students. MySpace is arguably the most popular of all of the currently available online social networking sites with approximately 173 million members as of April 2007.[5] MySpace, which debuted in 2003, offers many communicative features such as an instant messaging client; an in-house e-mail system, MySpace Mail; music videos and song downloads; and photo galleries and slideshows, among others. The cofounders of

---

[4] There is some contention whether or not journaling and blogging sites like Xanga and LiveJournal should be considered online social networking sites. They do fit the definition that I have provided in this dissertation: Xanga, LiveJournal, and similar sites privilege blogging and journaling but at the same time provide social software applications to establish individual user profiles and encourage nodal connections between individuals. Similarly, social software researcher danah boyd considers sites like these "edge cases" but does concur that they contain most of the features of typical online social networking sites. However, she seems to disagree that dating sites like Match.com should be considered online social networking sites because "they are very profile-centric but the social network is peripheral" ("Social Network Sites"). These examples illustrate that defining online social networking sites (as with many other technological terms) is a complicated, constantly evolving process.

[5] When users log in to their MySpace accounts, they are presented with three figures: the total number of users in the network; the number of views their profile has received; and their last log-in date. The 173 million member figure is taken from MySpace's own report of the total number of users in the network in April 2007.

MySpace, Tom Anderson and Chris DeWolfe, created the site as a promotional space for bands; after Anderson failed to promote his own band via traditional methods, he envisioned an online arena for bands to connect to one another for free. Anderson notes in an interview with *Forbes* magazine that the site provides features and freedoms that other online social networking sites didn't at the time.

> A lot of the early growth . . . had to do with the features and what our competitors were not allowing people to do. We recognized from the beginning that we could create profiles for the bands and allow people to use the site any way they wanted to. We didn't stop people from promoting whatever they wanted to promote on MySpace. (Pace)

By designing their site based on the users' needs and wants, MySpace became immensely profitable for Anderson and DeWolfe, who sold the site to News Corporation in July 2006 for 580 million dollars (Gonsalves).

Facebook, introduced in 2004, has fewer members than MySpace; there are only 19 million Facebook members compared to MySpace's 173 million ("Facebook Overview"). Facebook is also more restrictive than MySpace in its feature offerings: no instant messaging clients, music videos, streaming profile songs, or photo slideshows, though Facebook does offer unlimited photo storage and an in-house e-mail system, My Messages. Though Facebook and MySpace differ significantly, both sites fit my criteria for classification as online social networking sites targeted toward college students.

As noted earlier, defining online social networking sites is decidedly difficult; while definitions of virtual communities abound in the literature, online social networking sites are a part of, yet markedly separate from, spaces like the WELL that Rheingold discusses at length in *The Virtual Community*. One of the clearest definitions

of online social networking sites is offered by danah boyd in her blog *Apophenia.org*; boyd argues that a social network site, her term of choice, is "a category of websites with profiles, semi-persistent public commentary on the profile, and a traversable publicly articulated social network displayed in relation to the profile" ("Social Network Sites"). I build on her definition by positing that online social networking sites must also provide privacy policies and tools for users to protect their personal privacy in these spaces. Thus, a computer-mediated environment must possess four particular features to be considered an online social networking site. These are the node-link structure, the personal profile, privacy policies and features, and personalization tools.

First, the node-link structure forms the basis of the networking aspect of these sites. Participants form groups and individual links between users based on their interests, affiliations, and so on; each user then operates as a node in the system connected to other nodes. These nodal connections form networks of participants. Sherry Turkle notes how on the Web "one's identity emerges from whom one knows, one's associations and connections" (258), and nowhere is this clearer than in online social networking sites, where the number of friends collected often resembles a popularity contest. Secondly, each user must create a personal profile to advertise his or her presence to other users. When a new user joins an online social networking site and sets up a profile, he or she can share personal information with others. Therefore, each site has a different privacy policy and various privacy features. Finally, online social networking sites offer ways for individuals to differentiate their profiles—like decorating a room—through the use of

personalization tools. Some sites offer a great deal of personalization, while others prefer uniformity across the board.

As online social networking sites become more familiar to our students, rhetoric and composition instructors should consider the ways in which they could—and already do—impact the writing classroom and our pedagogical frameworks for approaching the teaching of writing. Indeed, students are already engaging in a multitude of composing processes online, including in online social networking sites. They produce a great deal of writing in these spaces through their blogs, comments, the personal profile, and messages to each other. And as many computers and composition researchers have pointed out, the majority of writing today takes place in computer-mediated spaces at all points in the writing process, from prewriting to drafting, presenting, publication, and finally dissemination ("Why Teach Digital Writing?"). The immense popularity of online social networking sites coupled with the sheer amount of writing produced by students in these sites illustrates the potential for these spaces to impact composition teachers' understandings of student writing.

At the same time, the presence of online social networking sites is always lurking—or beckoning—right around the corner, paradoxically inviting both the danger of surveillance and the potential for increased community. Online social networking sites have the potential to enhance community-building efforts in writing classrooms via the creation of new spaces where instructors and students can correspond. Such spaces can also serve to emphasize the boundaries between classroom members and reinforce hierarchies of power through surveillance. Indeed, much of the discourse surrounding

online social networking sites in the media has focused on surveillance activities such as those outlined in the next section. This dissertation therefore aims to explore online social networking sites within the larger framework of Foucaudian bio-power, focusing in particular on the dual tropes of privacy and surveillance and confession as outlined in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality, Volume I*.[6]

Privacy, Surveillance, and Online Social Networking Sites

Jason Johnson, an undergraduate at University of the Cumberlands in Williamsburg, Kentucky, was suspended from school in April 2006 after administrators discovered his MySpace profile detailing his relationship with his boyfriend, a freshman at Eastern Kentucky University. The student code of conduct at Cumberlands, a Southern Baptist-affiliated school, requires students to avoid "sexual behavior not consistent with Christian principles," including premarital sex and homosexuality (Hoover A46). Johnson and Cumberlands reached a legal agreement on April 19, 2006, allowing him to complete his semester; additionally, Cumberlands agreed not to report to other institutions that Johnson was to be suspended and receive failing grades in his courses ("Dozens Rally"). School administrators insist that they did not seek out information regarding Johnson's MySpace profile, noting that "administrators learned of his Web page" from an unnamed source (Hoover A46). In a similar incident, Theodore Schrubbe, a dental student at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was suspended and ordered to repeat a semester after posting harsh comments about a teacher on his blog along with descriptions of some weekend drinking, which the school interpreted as binge

---

[6] Hereafter *History of Sexuality*.

drinking. A fellow student complained to administrators about the blog, which was then

combed for evidence (Twohey A1). Though the student never gave identifying details

about the instructor, he was charged with being "guilty of professional misconduct in

violation of the dental school's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct" (Twohey A1).

The student was originally ordered to repeat a semester's worth of classes (which cost

$14,000 in tuition), but perhaps more importantly, he was threatened with expulsion if he

continued to post material on "any blog sites that contain crude, demeaning and

unprofessional remarks" (Twohey A1). Though Schrubbe's suspension was overturned in

January 2006—he was instead placed on probation, ordered to perform one hundred

hours of community service, and asked to apologize to his classmates—many critics still

viewed the revised punishment as excessive (Maternowski). Like Jason Johnson,

Theodore Schrubbe was incriminated after university administrators objected to his

online writing.

As computers and composition researchers, why should situations like these

attract our attention? The simple fact is that such electronic persona issues are becoming

more commonplace; even students who are daily Internet users, whom we might

characterize as net savvy, may feel a false sense of security about their online personas.

This false sense of security might lead users to portray themselves online in ways that

inaccurately represent their offline selves: "If one's own particular [personality] becomes

too familiar, one can update it, embellish it, expand, and dramatize it" (Greenwald 276).

Many researchers have contended that the perceived anonymity afforded by online

interactions can lead to greater disinhibition and identity deception (Keisler qtd. in

Rheingold 53; Berson and Berson 31; Turkle 254; Fleckenstein 151). These daring

individuals may feel uninhibited—perhaps, like Johnson, they wax rhapsodic over love

and relationships, or like Schrubbe, loudly protest what they see as mistreatment at the

hands of instructors or fellow students. They can be "hardcore" and "dirty," saying things

online they feel they can't say out loud (Greenwald 296). But that feeling of security to

speak online in ways they wouldn't offline can result in serious repercussions.

     Additionally, scenarios like those described earlier could happen to instructors

too; many have fallen prey to the deceptive anonymity of the Internet. "The Phantom

Professor," an adjunct writing instructor at Southern Methodist University, was careful to

blog about students and her university in such a way that she felt no one would be able to

pinpoint exactly who was being written about. After complaints from students about her

sometimes caustic comments, however, the English department chair at Southern

Methodist University researched the authorship of the blog and discovered the author's

true identity: Elaine Liner. Dr. Liner was asked not to return to teach the next semester

and she continues to blog as The Phantom Professor, though obviously no longer

anonymously (Jaschik, "The Phantom Professor"). Analyzing her awareness of the

audience for her blog, Liner recalls, "I thought I was 'fictionalizing' enough of the details

to keep me out of trouble . . . I also had no idea anybody was reading it" (Liner,

"Answering the Critics").

     Whether or not Liner truly believed no one was reading her blog, it served a

specific purpose for her: a space to vent, to feel less like a phantom "floating from

classroom to classroom, getting little recognition from my tenured colleagues other than

the occasional reminder that I was not one of them and never would be" (Liner, "Dealing

with a Dooce").[7] Liner turned to her blog to chronicle her feelings of invisibility on

campus. When her identity was exposed and she was fired, Liner was shocked: "I never

expected it. It actually took me a few days to make the connection between [the] blog and

[my] firing" ("Dealing with a Dooce"). Even if she did assume an audience was viewing

her blog, clearly she never assumed she would be fired as a result of her writing.

However, it is precisely this misguided sense of anonymity and limited audience that

showcases the need to teach rhetorical awareness in online spaces.

    With the shift to increased online writing, there is a corresponding need to extend

our understanding of "being rhetorical" in online spaces. Throughout this project I draw

on the phrase "being rhetorical" from James E. Porter's "Legal Realities and Ethical

Hyperrealities: A Critical Approach to Cyberwriting." Porter uses the phrase to describe

the complexities that arise from the production and distribution of online text, particularly

focusing on positionality and power relations. I use being rhetorical as a trope to guide

my own observations and analyses of the participants in my research study on privacy

and surveillance in online social networking sites. Porter examines the legal realities that

technical writers must account for when writing online, focusing in particular on issues

related to intellectual property and copyright ("Legal Realities" 45). His chapter

addresses many legal and ethical rifts in offline and online writing. For example, Porter

examines whether or not electronic text can be freely redistributed under the Fair Use

---

[7] Getting dooced refers to being fired as a result of something one has written online. The term was coined by Heather Armstrong, whose blog URL is dooce.com; Armstrong's "About this Site" page notes: "[In 2002] I was fired from my job for this website because I had written stories that included people in my workplace. My advice to you is BE YE NOT SO STUPID. Never write about work on the internet unless your boss knows and sanctions [that] fact."

doctrine, including whether or not electronic discussion group messages should be redistributable. Porter describes another example of a legally and ethically contentious area: whether employees' e-mail or other writing produced on the job is private. He notes rightly that it is impossible to become an expert on every legal and ethical aspect related to online writing, and indeed his discussion focuses less on the specifics of certain situations and instead offers a critical rhetorical ethic that attends to the writing contexts that form, constrain, and maintain discursive relations ("Legal Realities" 63-64). He poses that writers must remember that writing is never neutral, that all writing involves the exercise of power, and that these matters are always complex and involve human relationships ("Legal Realities" 67).

Though Porter focuses specifically on technical writing, his concerns can be addressed to any writing situation online and his call for technical communication teachers and administrators to teach students how to interrogate their work for legal and ethical issues is applicable to all writing instructors ("Legal Realities" 68). By "being rhetorical," I mean the awareness of power, discourse conventions, and audience—both anticipated and unanticipated—that any writer must engage with when putting words on a page. Because of the advent of online writing, which often straddles the public/private sphere, I argue that we must teach students to "be rhetorical" both online and off.

I want to pause at this point to acknowledge the difficulty of such a goal. The task of teaching students rhetorical awareness has always been complex, and now rhetoric and composition instructors must also attend to the broader span of writing online. Some of the most crucial concerns regarding online writing and virtual persona issues are even

now being negotiated. There are many contradictory issues at stake: how can online writing be both private and public? How can one deal with the ramifications of writing for an unanticipated audience? The challenge of negotiating such paradoxes is precisely why rhetoric and composition instructors must engage in critical dialogues with their students regarding ways to be rhetorical in online spaces. My project represents one of the many voices in the current conversation regarding discourse, power, identity, and audience issues as they impact online writing.

Authors who write online must develop a multifaceted rhetorical awareness. This awareness includes a broader sense of potential audiences, a greater longevity of individuals' work, and the potential for their words—their lives—to be watched, tracked, and discussed in other forums. Indeed, online surveillance is increasingly widespread, with many employers prescreening job applicants, administrators watching instructors, and teachers spying on students. Our ever-increasing reliance on nodal networks and online communities has already created new ethical dilemmas that computers and composition researchers and teachers must grapple with. As Porter points out in "Why Technology Matters to Writing," the emergence of the networked computer created new social and historical contexts and impacted publishing practices (385). By tracing his writing history and noting how different technologies changed his own writing process, ideas about writing, and understanding of rhetoric, Porter shows through his own literacy narrative how we have arrived at a moment of potential change. In particular, he argues that we must move beyond a narrow focus on technological tools. We should more broadly assess the social implications of emergent technologies, the "socialized writing

dynamic and the conglomerate rhetorical dynamic of readers, writers, and users and their impact on society" (Porter, "Why Technology Matters" 388). This dissertation aims to achieve that task through its examination of online social networking sites and their potential impact on students and instructors.

Therefore, rhetoric and composition instructors must continue to incorporate issues of rhetorical awareness of online spaces into their classrooms, particularly a rhetorical awareness that asks students to engage critically with online social networking sites. Such awareness would bring issues of audience to the forefront and ask students to assess their own web presence, online identity, and virtual embodiment. Scholars have already called for such incorporation (Faigley; Hayles; Selfe and Selfe; DeWitt, "Out There"), arguing that rhetoric and composition instructors must teach students how to be "rhetoricians, rhetors, and subjects under construction by others" (Romano 258). In chapter 5, I present classroom assignments that use MySpace and Facebook to teach students how to grapple with intended and unintended audiences, to critique intellectual property issues, and to examine their own subject positioning in virtual spaces through their online social networking personal profiles. These assignments are offered to meet Romano's pedagogical goal of teaching students to become more effective rhetors by understanding the construction of their virtual personas and negotiating these personas for different audiences.

Though users of online social networking sites have varying degrees of freedom in constructing their virtual personas, the introductory examples of Jason Johnson, Theodore Schrubbe, and Elaine Liner illustrate how many users fail to anticipate the

broader audience who may view their profiles. Without an understanding of how their

online subject positioning can be used to (dis)empower themselves, students and even

instructors may leave the composition classroom ill-equipped to negotiate a digital age in

which the distinctions between virtual and real-life selves, spaces, and situations are

increasingly blurred. Many researchers have examined the intersections of computerized

technologies and power/authority from different vantage points of representation, such as

Turkle's *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet*, Pamela Takayoshi and

Kristine Blair's *Feminist Cyberscapes: Mapping Gendered Academic Spaces*, and Lisa

Nakamura's *Cybertypes: Race, Ethnicity, and Identity on the Internet*, to name a few.[8] As

I analyze MySpace and Facebook throughout this project, my research is guided by an

interest in the ways that power and identity influence communication behaviors and

personal relationships in these sites. Turning back to the cautionary tales recounted at the

beginning of this chapter, I am most concerned about the potential for online social

networking sites to be used punitively in academia against instructors and students.

     My analysis of online social networking sites stems from the commonly held

assumption that these sites are somehow free from surveillance, outside of the panoptic

gaze that Foucault outlines extensively in *Discipline and Punish* and which I discuss in

terms of its influence on online identity. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault

illustrates how the body is an "object and target of power" that can be "manipulated,

shaped, trained" (136). One danger for users of online social networking sites is that they

---

[8] One may note that these authors/editors are all female; many women have written about online representation in large part because feminists have long been invested in critiquing (among other issues) portrayals of women in the media with online spaces being no exception.

may neglect to imagine the ways in which their virtual personas, just like their real-world bodies, can be objects and targets of power.

Foucault's concept of bio-power, encompassing his examinations of surveillance, normalization, and confession, forms an ideal framework for my discussion of MySpace and Facebook, two online social networking sites both valorized and vindicated in the media for various reasons. Many of Foucault's insights into the normalization practices of the educational system can be applied to current university practices today, such as honor codes, codes of academic integrity, tenure decisions, and so on. His examinations of surveillance provide a framework for critiquing many technologies: classroom monitoring software, plagiarism prevention and detection services, and online social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook. Foucault's bio-power offers a means to understanding the public/private writing that often appears in online social networking sites. I outline the theories of surveillance and normalization as well as confession in greater detail in the next section.

As classrooms come to include different physical and temporal boundaries, surveillance is paradoxically both ubiquitous and difficult to trace. Universities already use computerized technologies to monitor student behaviors and to enact surveillance practices to ensure appropriate classroom behavior. Universities have now begun moving toward the use of entertainment vehicles such as online social networking sites to surveil the classroom even outside of the traditional boundaries of space and time that traditionally defined *the* classroom. In chapters 4 and 5, I interrogate current attitudes toward and uses of online social networking sites to help illustrate some potential ways

they can be incorporated into college writing classrooms. In particular, this incorporation

can strengthen and complicate current stances toward teaching critical rhetorical

awareness of online writing for both students and instructors.

The Black Iron Prison of the Panopticon

The work of legendary science fiction author Philip K. Dick, a master of paranoia,

largely deals with fear—of being watched, discovered, found out. Dick's 1977 novel *A*

Scanner Darkly is a disconcerting, twisting tale of an undercover policeman, Bob Arctor,

who slowly realizes that he is actually investigating himself. Arctor, who deals the

addictive drug Substance D, is being watched by a policeman named Fred. Because

Substance D causes splitting of the two hemispheres of the brain, creating distinct and

combative personalities, Fred and Arctor never realize that they are truly one and the

same. *A Scanner Darkly* was released in September 2006 as a film directed by Richard

Linklater and produced by Tommy Pallotta. Pallotta describes the connections between

science fiction, fear, and surveillance that motivated the film in an interview with *SciFi*

magazine:

> Drug hysteria has been replaced with terrorist hysteria. It's still the same impulse.
> It's still fear. About surveillance, for me personally—one of the best books I ever
> read was Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* . . . [P]eople in fear of constant
> surveillance . . . will control themselves. They'll censor themselves. This is
> something that everyone on the creative end of this project felt very strongly
> about. (Marano 28)

Dick himself was so paranoid he believed in a "Black Iron Prison" of political and social

control which he wrote about at length in his 1981 novel *VALIS* as a place where

"everyone who had ever lived was literally surrounded by the iron walls of the prison;

they were all inside it and none of them knew it" (55). Prisons, surveillance, fear, and

social control—these elements that inspired Dick and that motivated Linklater and

Pallota's adaptation of *A Scanner Darkly* can be traced back, as Pallota noted in his

interview, to Foucault's groundbreaking philosophical work.

    Discipline and Punish offers readers a means of theorizing surveillance and its

impact on online users. Through his examination of the prison systems of the eighteenth

and nineteenth centuries, Foucault demonstrated the effects of disciplinary power on

physical bodies that are not necessarily coerced through the use of physical force. Rather,

the constant reminder of the *potential* of such force—the threat of the beating rather than

the beating itself—suffices to ensure submission. Though Foucault focuses mainly on the

prison system, his analysis reaches beyond prisons to schools, hospitals, and even

workplaces. All of these institutions can operate as systems of domination where

normalization practices ensure submission. He shows how systems of domination, even

those that do not seem at first to be punitive, effect changes in individuals and on society.

    Foucault focuses on Bentham's panopticon, a lighted watchtower in the center of

the prison, as a physical manifestation of power.[9] As Foucault explains, the light

emanating from the tower prevented prisoners from knowing whether they were being

observed or not, and thus the panoptic gaze served to "induce in the inmate a state of

conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power"

(*Discipline and Punish* 201). The ultimate goal of such discipline is normalization, "the

production of useful and docile subjects through a refashioning of minds and bodies"

---

[9] The concept of the panopticon is not Foucault's originally; he used the prison system that Jeremy
Bentham envisioned in the late eighteenth century as an example of how individuals could be coerced into
self-regulation of behavior through the threat of being seen. The idea of the panopticon has remained a
central foundation on which our understandings of many highly organized, disciplined, and regulated
sections of society (such as the military, the educational system, hospitals, and factories) rest.

(Best and Kellner 47). Normalization demands that individuals conduct themselves appropriately—determined, of course, by those in power, those who are able to apply the disciplinary judgment to enforce their own values and ideals in others. Foucault likens power to a capillary system where normalization processes ensure that power "reaches into the very grain of individuals, touches their bodies and inserts itself into their actions and attitudes, their discourses, learning processes and everyday lives" (*Power/Knowledge* 39). Normalization demands the individual change almost completely; his or her life must be reshaped, attitudes and practices altered, until finally the individual has been transformed. Indeed, Foucault focuses at length in the first volume of his *History of Sexuality* on the effects of power over physical bodies, what he calls bio-power. Bio-power, literally control over other bodies, offers power over living beings and mastery of them. Foucault again refers to the necessity of the norming process, those continuous regulatory mechanisms used to measure, evaluate, and appraise individuals and groups (*History of Sexuality* 143-44). The panopticon is one such expression of power and normalization over physical bodies.

The panopticon assured that prisoners, assuming the constant gaze of the guards, regulated their own actions to meet the standards of behavior expected of them by their watchers: "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power . . . he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* 203). This shifts the responsibility for behavioral correction onto the subjected rather than to those traditionally considered powerful. This shift is vital because, as Foucault points out, discipline and punishment no

longer need to be tied to the corporeal body or even enacted by those in charge. With the advent of the panoptic gaze, subjects can be coerced and molded simply by the *possibility* of being watched; no physical punishment or even threat of physical punishment is necessary. "It is the fact of being constantly seen, of being able always to be seen, that maintains the disciplined individual in his subjection," notes Foucault in *Discipline and Punish*, and thus "visibility is a trap" (187, 200). Through constant watchedness, individuals begin to self-regulate and finally dominance becomes so complete that they no longer necessarily need reminders of their watchers.

There are clear connections between the Foucaudian panoptic gaze and its effect on behavioral self-monitoring and our increasing reliance on the Internet and other computerized technologies. Indeed, in their article "Policing Ourselves: Defining the Boundaries of Appropriate Discussion in Online Forums," Johndan Johnson-Eilola and Stuart Selber argue that our online self-monitoring makes us complicit in our own submission. Johnson-Eilola and Selber examined a technical writing discussion list, TECHWR-L, to consider the range of conditions responsible for understandings of "appropriate discourse" on this listserv (269). They found that when listserv members introduced "off-topic" or contentious materials on the list, a variety of responses ensued, ranging from silencing of the original authors to heated debates regarding the nature and purpose of the list and finally to decisive action from the list owner. Johnson-Eilola and Selber specifically call on Foucault's discussions of power and normative behavior to describe the discourse practices of TECHWR-L. They argue that pedagogically, teachers must help students understand "both the mechanisms through which power is exercised

and when that power operates oppressively—and, furthermore, how to rearticulate oppressive relations of power into egalitarian ones" (289). Making students and instructors more aware of the interplay of power within online social networking sites and critiquing the potential for surveillance afforded by the sites is one way to carry out Johnson-Eilola and Selber's goal.

David Lyon argues in his book *Surveillance Society* that modern-day surveillance systems reinforce social and economic divisions, channel choices and direct desires, and even constrain and control (4). Though Lyon points out that surveillance is not inherently antisocial or always harmful (much like Foucaudian power, which functions not only to repress but also to create knowledge), in many ways surveillance systems have negative connotations because they "tend to be visible only when by mistake or misdemeanour [sic] we fall foul of them or when they fail publicly" (2). Surveillance systems that operate benignly in the background do not necessarily call our attention to them. Only when things go wrong do we tend to notice the presence of surveillance systems and view them negatively.

More importantly, Lyon contends that "the rise of surveillance society has everything to do with disappearing bodies" (15). As we move toward greater disembodiment in our online activities, we may lose many of our traditional means of developing relationships, such as face-to-face interactions. We therefore depend to a greater degree on what could be thought of as surveillance (or more negatively, "cyber-stalking"), that is, "the focused and purposeful attention to personal details . . . that is a major means of holding together disembodied relationships" (Lyon 16). Technologies

like the telephone and e-mail allow individuals to keep in contact despite separations

caused by distance and time; now, online social networking sites hold similar promise.

One major difference between such sites and earlier technologies is the greater ease with

which we can pay attention to others' personal details in sites like MySpace and

Facebook. For example, when I log in to Facebook I can see via the News Feed when my

friends last logged in, where they are currently located (school, work, or home), and what

recent activities they've participated in; currently there is no way to opt out of this

feature. Maintaining friendships is easier if I know, for instance, whether Michael has

recently broken up with Sarah or if Rob just dropped out of school. At the same time, it is

dangerous to rely too much on these small snippets of information ("August 17, 5:38

p.m.: Jane and Julia are now friends. August 25, 2:01 p.m. Jane is moving! September 1,

9:41 a.m.: Jane is working on diss proposal") which give only the briefest of insights into

the complexities of an individual's life. Both MySpace and Facebook have faced

criticism for their design features that allow the widespread broadcast of personal details

to potentially hundreds, even thousands, of individuals at a time.

Paying attention to personal details is ameliorated by the overtly confessional tone

of many online social networking sites. The writing in online journals and personal

profiles is largely focused on the individual and often blurs the distinction between public

and private. Though authors may write frankly of sensitive matters, online social

networking member profiles are often available to individuals who may not know the

author personally. Confession is foundational to Foucault's *History of Sexuality*, in which

he depicts confession as

a ritual of discourse in which the speaking subject is also the subject of the statement; it is also a ritual that unfolds within a power relationship, for one does not confess without the presence (or virtual presence) of a partner who is not simply the interlocutor but the authority who requires the confession, prescribes and appreciates it, and intervenes in order to judge, punish, forgive, console, and reconcile. (61-62)

While the author/speaker may feel that he or she has exercised power through confessing and laying bare intimate life details for others to examine, Foucault points out that the agency of domination resides "in the one who listens and says nothing; not in the one who knows and answers, but in the one who questions and is not supposed to know" (*History of Sexuality* 62). The classroom has long been a locus of tension regarding the place of personal writing. Intensely personal writing, what Jeffrey Berman calls "risky writing," can be empowering for students but can place rhetoric and composition instructors in difficult positions. Teachers must grapple with assessing and responding to such confessional writing. A similar tension is played out in online social networking sites. The highly individualized personal space of the profile spurs many students to provide intimate details about their lives for their friends. If an administrator or a parent—an authority figure "not supposed to know" about such details—stumbles across these intimate details, that authority figure is then placed into a position of power by virtue of the information confessed indirectly to them.

Moreover, the act of surreptitiously viewing personal information can be pleasurable; there is an undeniable desire for many people to read another's diary or snoop in someone's e-mail. The popularity of reality television in recent years is one example of the pleasure of voyeurism; shows like *Newlyweds*, *The Real World*, and *Punk'd* offer viewers the chance to observe other peoples' lives. Whether chronicling the

daily ups and downs of a celebrity marriage (*Newlyweds*), observing seven strangers

"stop being polite and start getting real" in their shared house (*The Real World*), or

videotaping celebrities as practical jokes are played on them by a fellow star (Ashton

Kutcher on *Punk'd*), reality television shows ostensibly present reality, though this

"reality" is often heavily edited and scripted. Regardless of veracity, the popularity of

reality television speaks to our society's obsession with the voyeuristic gaze and exploits

the desire to watch others confess. Foucault observes in *History of Sexuality* that "we

have since become a singularly confessing society . . . one confesses one's crimes, one's

sins, one's thoughts and desires, one's illnesses and troubles; one goes about telling, with

the greatest precision, whatever is most difficult to tell" (59). Above all, these confessors

strive to present the truth. Reality television shows, diaries, and online social networking

profiles provide us pleasure because we believe that in viewing them, we are somehow

privy to a heretofore hidden "truth."

Conclusion

Through a series of qualitative surveys and interviews, this dissertation assesses

how students and rhetoric and composition instructors use online social networking sites,

examines their attitudes toward such sites, and finally describes some of the ways that

online social networking sites could be brought into the writing classroom. In chapter 2, I

perform site analyses of MySpace and Facebook to detail the connections between some

of the design features offered and issues of privacy and surveillance. In chapter 3, I

outline my methods and methodology for my qualitative study of undergraduate students,

graduate students, and college writing faculty, the results of which are presented in

chapters 4 and 5. In chapter 5, I define technological literacy by calling on Cynthia L.

Selfe's discussion of literacies of technology and arguing that rhetoric and composition

instructors should continue to address technological literacy in the writing classroom. I

then present several assignments that can be used in writing courses of varying levels to

teach technological literacy. Finally, I conclude the dissertation by calling for further

academic analysis of online social networking sites by rhetoric and composition

researchers.

CHAPTER 2: MYSPACE, FACEBOOK, AND THE WATCHFUL I/EYE:

PRIVACY AND SURVEILLANCE IN ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES

In early September 2006, a small change to the online social networking site

Facebook resulted in massive repercussions. With the implementation of the "News

Feed" feature, Facebook members would instantly be made aware of even minor changes

in their friends' profiles, down to a time-stamp detailing when the changes occurred.

Ruchi Sanghvi, the product manager for News Feed, wrote about the latest Facebook

offering in the site's official blog at 2:03 a.m. on September 5, 2006.

> News Feed highlights what's happening in your social circles on Facebook. It
> updates a personalized list of news stories throughout the day, so you'll know
> when Mark adds Britney Spears to his Favorites or when your crush is single
> again. Now, whenever you log in, you'll get the latest headlines generated by the
> activity of your friends and social groups. ("Facebook Gets a Facelift")

The backlash from users was almost instantaneous; at 11:45 p.m. that same day, Mark

Zuckerberg, the creator of Facebook, posted a follow-up blog entry titled "Calm Down.

Breathe. We Hear You."

> We've been getting a lot of feedback about Mini-Feed and News Feed. We think
> they are great products, but we know that many of you are not immediate fans,
> and have found them overwhelming and cluttered. Other people are concerned
> that non-friends can see too much about them. . . . And we agree, stalking isn't
> cool; but being able to know what's going on in your friends' lives is. This is
> information people used to dig for on a daily basis, nicely reorganized and
> summarized so people can learn about the people they care about.

While it is true that this information was previously accessible—News Feed presented

these details in an aggregate form that didn't require members to poke around their

friends' individual profiles—the implementation of this feature resonated strongly with

Facebook users. After countless e-mails to the company, the formation of several anti-

News Feed Facebook groups (the largest, "Students Against Facebook News Feed," has over 339,000 members), and several planned site boycotts, Facebook relented.[10] Zuckerberg apologized in the blog on September 8, 2006, and Facebook subsequently rolled out new privacy options, including the ability to opt out of News Feed.

Facebook users remained wary, however, and bloggers relating these recent events chronicled users' feelings of anger, betrayal, and disappointment. On the heels of this upheaval came another major change to the site: In late September 2006 Facebook opened its membership pool to everyone. Previously membership was only open to college students with valid e-mail addresses through their school; membership was gradually opened to high school students, companies, and finally to anyone. The furor over News Feed and unrestricted Facebook membership illustrates the often-paradoxical concerns of online social networking site users regarding privacy and surveillance. Paul Kloet, an Indiana University undergraduate, sums up the challenge thusly: "People say they don't want other people to know their information, and that they cherish their privacy, and then they publish everything about themselves on the Web" (Brennan). Online social networking sites are popular largely because they make it easy to keep in contact with friends and family. To facilitate this contact, most users post personal information in their profiles. But in most online social networking sites, every connection is a "friend" because the sites do not differentiate between relationships with nuanced

---

[10] Students Against Facebook News Feed has 339,858 members as of March 20, 2007. On September 24, 2006, the group had over 690,000 members. In September 2006, Facebook implemented the News Feed feature and also changed from a private social network to one open to the public. The drop in membership of protest groups like Students Against Facebook News Feed could be attributed to students leaving Facebook as well as to students acclimating to the site changes and subsequently resigning from protest groups.

terms like "acquaintance," "co-worker," "ex-boyfriend," or "sibling."[11] Users may

therefore share highly personal information with individuals they do not consider their

friends outside of the site. It is often difficult to reconcile the deluge of personal

information presented in online social networking profiles with the desire for individual

privacy. Controversies like the backlash against Facebook News Feed are useful teaching

moments for rhetoric and composition instructors, who can draw on these controversies

as jumping-off points to discuss students' online writing and personas. I will return to

these pedagogical complications more specifically in chapter 5. This chapter focuses on

privacy and surveillance issues brought to the forefront by certain design features in

MySpace and Facebook.

Online Social Networking Sites and the Composition Classroom

Computerized technologies have been theorized and examined both for their

potential pedagogical uses as well as their effects on reading, writing, and social

relationships. In 1999, Selfe called for educators to pay attention to technology to help

students better understand the "social, economic, and pedagogical implications of new

communication technologies that affect their lives" ("Technology and Literacy" 432).

Though technologies such as MOOs and MUDs, listservs, electronic conferences and

bulletin boards, and even video games have been theorized for potential pedagogical use,

online social networking sites have not yet been incorporated into the classroom with any

regularity. Sites like MySpace, Facebook, LiveJournal, Friendster, Xanga, Tribe.net, and

---

[11] Orkut is one notable exception. On this site, users can group friends using the following categories: best friends, good friends, friends, acquaintances, or "someone you haven't met." However, the site notes that "your friends will not be able to see what category you have placed them in; that information is visible only to you," diminishing the usefulness of this feature somewhat ("Orkut Help").

others operate as vehicles for entertainment. While they often are populated by school friends and may even reference educational activities or courses, they are not analogous to the classroom itself with its rules, constraints, and expectations. They are a means to relaxation, an enjoyable extension of real life, a fun space to hang out—but not yet widely sanctioned by schools for educational use.

Indeed, those schools that have begun to use online social networking sites in connection with educational goals have mainly incorporated them punitively to track students and follow their behaviors online, like in the case of Duquesne University student Ryan Miner, who was ordered to write a research paper after creating a homophobic Facebook group (Bugeja). Similarly, undergraduates at the University of Kentucky and Northern Kentucky University were disciplined for drinking in their dorms after their Facebook profiles featured photos of students cavorting in the residence halls with beer. Administrators argued that "they essentially convicted themselves by posting incriminating photos on their Facebook profiles" (Coomes). What is missing thus far in the field is a critical examination of how online social networking sites are already being co-opted by universities to surveil students and why, by virtue of the sites' purpose and design, this differs from previous uses of educational technology to track and police behavior.

Educational practices have been critiqued for their potential in reinforcing oppressive behavior, and in fact, in a review of the literature, Joseph Janangelo's 1991 *Computers and Composition* article "Technopower and Technoppression: Some Abuses of Power and Control in Computer-assisted Writing Environments" uses Foucault's

panopticon as a framework for discussing "some of the exploitation of individuals that occurs within writing classrooms by those who organize computer systems" (48). Janangelo's piece focuses on three categories of oppressive behavior: teachers observing students; teachers observing teachers; and students observing students. He shows through three separate examples how computerized technologies were used to reinforce "the powerfully hegemonic social milieu in which [technology] is embedded and employed" (48). In each case, the examples showed how the individuals failed to use appropriate discourse and behavior for each situation (Janangelo 50). We see this in online social networking sites, where individuals often write freely of personal issues, of drug use, sexual abuse, and irresponsible behavior, the sort of confessional behavior Foucault describes in *History of Sexuality* as another dimension of bio-power. However, many of these confessional writers forget that their musings are publicly available and therefore subject to the panoptic gaze. In situations like these, universities could potentially use online social networking sites to reinforce standards of power sanctioned by educational practices. Like Janangelo's examination of instructors' surveillance of electronic writing conferences (in one instance, an instructor caught a student who planned to skip class while the instructor was out of town), online social networking sites can also be used to police the classroom.

However, the author focuses on technologies that were used for educational purposes and, in several cases, even within the physical boundaries of the classroom itself. Though Janangelo rightfully points out that we should "create more egalitarian learning environments that will prove accessible, 'amenable' . . . and adaptable to the

many competing discourses that seek a voice in our classrooms" (61), his examination of the oppressive potential of computerized technologies focuses only on classroom-related tools: electronic writing conferences used in classrooms to discuss course readings and an instructor's computer and the files contained within. Like the electronic conferences, MOOs, and other computerized technologies Janangelo discusses in "Technopower and Technoppression," online social networking sites may one day be incorporated into the classroom with greater regularity. Janangelo's piece is a prophetic call that we can heed before that watershed moment has come.

An Examination of Site Design

The design of many online social networking sites may lead some users to forget the potential for surveillance. Users may mistakenly view their audience as consisting only of those in their circle of friends. For example, the theme of MySpace, "a place for friends," intimates a welcoming, non-threatening environment, a place where the user can feel at home and free to communicate with others without fear. The site invites a feeling of safety that may lull users into forgetting the pervasiveness of the constant watchful gaze. Again, it is necessary to note how in Foucault's discussion of the panoptic gaze in *Discipline and Punish*, an individual must first know that he is being watched to self-regulate his behavior: "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, *and who knows it*, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power" (202, emphasis mine). The crucial factor is the knowledge of being watched. Students may not yet actively assume that those in positions of power over them—employers, parents, instructors, and administrators—are members of such sites and can therefore check up on them.

Individuals who actively use online social networking sites, for example, do not necessarily feel threatened by a watchful presence and self-regulate their behavior.

Though privacy options are offered in these sites, they can be difficult to find or use and are not failsafe. Members may assume that the employment of available privacy settings protects their profiles from surveillance. This false sense of security leads these individuals to neglect the same sort of self-regulation they would use in offline situations. There are, however, "any number of ways that someone's profile can be exposed even with restricted privacy settings" (Read and Young). Additionally, many believe that the whole point of a social *networking* site is lost if privacy settings are used; Pablo Malavenda, Associate Dean of Students at Purdue University, argues that "students are aware of the privacy settings. But what is the point of being on Facebook if you restrict your profile? The conveniences that Facebook offers outweigh, in their minds, any threat or danger" (Read and Young). Users like these may be loathe to use privacy settings, feeling that they violate the spirit of online social networking sites, where one can look up long-lost friends and catch up with their lives by reading their blogs and viewing their pictures. Finally, enabling privacy settings can actually make it more difficult for users to enjoy online social networking sites because these settings create additional work for the individual profiled; users who enable the "approve all comments" privacy setting, for example, must then individually approve or deny every comment posted to their profiles, whereas without this setting enabled, comments are automatically approved by the site.

While some students may be aware of privacy settings and choose not to use them, others may be unaware of their existence or lack the technological know-how to

use privacy settings correctly. Kevin Eric De Pew cautions us to avoid reinforcing the ranks of the technoelite by neglecting to teach uninformed students about available technological features. In his article "The Body of Charlie Brown's Teacher: What Instructors Should Know about Constructing Digital Subjectivities," De Pew reminds us of our responsibility as writing instructors to teach students about "the ethical implications of their technological practices" (111). De Pew feels that students who are already familiar with the available privacy settings in online social networking sites have an advantage over those who do not; the former therefore have "a more extensive repertoire for composing digital subjectivities" (111). Knowledge of features and tools in one web site or software package does not automatically transfer over to another; for instance, I point out in chapter 4 that many students who regularly use privacy tools in Facebook are unaware of those same tools in MySpace. But De Pew's call to teach students how to use software tools to produce desired results from their audiences is important; while larger issues of ideology are crucial to examine, instructors should also consider the impact of different technological features on a rhetorical situation. Like Porter, De Pew argues for teaching students how to be rhetorical. Rather than assuming students will make effective choices regarding their online identities or hoping that available privacy tools will suffice, rhetoric and composition instructors must explicitly discuss many of the issues brought up by online social networking technologies—and in particular, those that deal with online identity and privacy.

In order to examine how the design of online social networking sites may encourage a misleading sense of security that can encourage users to forget to "be

rhetorical," I first briefly outline the major differences between my two sites of analysis, MySpace and Facebook. I focus particularly on the differences in overall site appearance as well as on the features offered to members to individualize their profiles. In my analysis, I look specifically at four major design features of each site: privacy, personalization, friending, and writing activities. First, I note existing privacy tools in each site. Next, I outline the available personalization options for user profiles. Third, I discuss the friending process on each site, and finally, I examine the most common writing activities, such as blogging.[12] Though these are not the only design features available, they comprise some of the main differences between my sites of analysis; in addition, many of these features play a major part in establishing the online identity of site members. The (mis)use of these design features can be a starting point to understand students' rhetorical positioning in online social networking sites.

MySpace: "A Place for Friends"

<u>Privacy and Surveillance in MySpace</u>

All online social networking sites are concerned with safeguarding users' privacy. Both MySpace and Facebook shift much of the responsibility for safety onto the user by offering privacy options but leaving them turned off by default. When users register and set up their profiles, they are offered several screens of personal information to fill out. From basic information like name, age, and gender to more personal identifying details like sexual orientation, marital status, income level, and height and weight, a MySpace

---

[12] "Friending" another user is an accepted practice in online social networking sites: "When you get home, friend me on MySpace." These sites have spawned several other new verbs, often incorporating the site's name, such as "facebook" ("I got facebooked by some guy in my class," "I haven't facebooked in days") and "livejournal" ("Something happened to me today and I wanted to livejournal it").

profile can reveal a great deal about an individual. However, there are no guarantees that

the profiles are truthful or that the account was created by the individual portrayed. In a

recent case of false portrayal, Michael Tracey, a Colorado journalism professor, was the

victim of a fake MySpace profile featuring his photos and "all kinds of weird details."

Tracey suspected a student had filled out the profile (Bugeja). MySpace, however, does

not investigate profiles on a regular basis for authenticity.

MySpace's registration page notes that the choice to include particular personal

details is the responsibility of the individual user: "You can disclose as much or as little

information about yourself as you want…. We will only share what you choose to share."

The site makes new profiles public by default and all privacy settings are left unchecked

by default as well (fig. 2.1).

Figure 2.1: MySpace Privacy Settings

Users must first realize that these privacy settings are available and then choose to use

them. There are nine privacy options and seven are described in more detail on the

privacy settings page (fig. 2.2).

Privacy Settings:

Return to Account Settings

We care about your privacy at MySpace!

To make sure you have a fun and comfortable experience on MySpace, we let you control how other users contact you and view your profile.

- Check "Require email or last name to add me as a friend" if you want other users to be required to know your email address or your last name in order to send you an add friend request (this prevents people who don't know you from trying to add you as a friend).
- Check "Approve Comments before Posting" if you want to review comments to your profile and journals before they are posted. Comments will NOT appear unless and until you approve them.
- Check "Hide Online Now" to make your online status invisible to other users.
- Check "Show My Birthday to my Friends" to alert your friends when your birthday is near.
- Check "No Pic Forwarding" to prevent other users from emailing links to your images from the site.
- Check "Friend Only Journal Comments" to allow only your friends to post comments on your blog entries.
- Check "Block Friend Request From Bands" to block unwanted friend request from bands.

Figure 2.2: Details of MySpace Privacy Settings

By describing in greater detail how these options affect an individual's profile, MySpace

has attempted to make the privacy options page more user-friendly.

Despite the fact that MySpace offers these privacy options, many members decide

not to enable them. It could be argued that enabling privacy options defeats the purpose

of a social networking site; after all, if it is difficult to forge connections among users,

why bother? However, some users choose to enable one or both of the two main privacy

features available. The first and most powerful feature is the ability to set an entire profile

as private; this feature is shown in the checkbox in fig. 2.1, "Who Can View My Full

Profile."[13] Private profiles show only the user's name (not necessarily his or her real

name), profile picture, and basic identifying details like age and location, as shown in fig.

2.3.

Figure 2.3: Tasha's Private MySpace Profile

When combined with a pseudonym or secondary e-mail address, this privacy

feature makes it difficult for unauthorized users to find an individual's profile in an

online social networking site. However, if a user's profile is private because he or she is

under sixteen, the profile can easily be viewed by creating a MySpace account and setting

the age parameter to sixteen or under. The user's private profile is then viewable because

the default privacy settings for members under sixteen make their profiles viewable to

anyone else under eighteen on MySpace. In addition, several recently discovered security

loopholes have allowed users to view comments, pictures, videos, and the first two

---

[13] By default, MySpace profiles for individuals who are thirteen, fourteen, or fifteen years old are set as private. Users who are at least sixteen years old can choose to set their profiles private if they wish.

hundred characters of blogs posted to supposedly private profiles. In some cases,

MySpace administrators took months to rectify these glitches (Bosworth).

      The second main privacy feature is the ability to set blog privacy levels. Blog

entries can be tagged as public, friends only, private (only the blog owner can read these

entries), or preferred list (a subset of the user's friends list). Within my own blog, I can

set each individual entry's privacy level. However, the subject line of all blog entries,

regardless of privacy setting, is visible on the front page of any publicly accessible

member's profile. By offering four different privacy levels for blog entries, MySpace

makes it easy for users to differentiate between potential readers of an individual's blog.

This way, a member can write about sensitive material and allow a subset of individuals

access without having to set his or her entire profile private. By default, all blog entries

are tagged as public, so it is again up to the individual author to know about the privacy

settings and opt to use them.

      The continued use of privacy features will make it difficult for unauthorized

individuals to access personal information contained on MySpace. Those who guard their

profiles and blogs out of fear of retribution may eventually seek online social networking

sites where they could once again feel free from the possibility of surveillance. A shift to

a more guarded user base could undermine the atmosphere of friendliness that MySpace

has attempted to establish. The value of a social networking site lies in its members; users

tend to join sites where they know people already or where they can invite others to join.

But when members leave a site because they no longer trust other users to act

appropriately or they rely so heavily on privacy features that they become difficult to interact with, something of the "social" in social networking seems to have been lost.

Friending

Every new MySpace user has a friend—Tom, as in Tom Anderson, one of the cofounders of the site—to illustrate the potential of the MySpace friending feature. (Many users, however, seem to resent this "sham friendship" and quickly delete Tom.) Anderson's presence in the site serves to reassure users of the friendliness (and, by extension, the safety) of the site and thereby convince users to participate. Instead of a faceless corporation, users are presented with Tom's smiling photograph and reassurance that "I'm here to help you with MySpace. Send me a message if you're confused by anything." Users may be encouraged to keep their profiles, pictures, and blogs public just like Tom but they may not realize that Tom has a second, private profile (and that his MySpace cofounder, Chris DeWolfe, has only a private profile). Tom's private profile notes "[I'm] using this account and adding people I actually know, and have met. I want to have the 'real' myspace experience," implying that his primary, public profile is just a marketing tool and possibly an avenue for technical support.

On MySpace there are two main types of linkages between nodes: friendship links and group links. A user can choose to friend another user, creating a singular link between those two individuals. The number of friends one can have is potentially limitless but users can only showcase a certain number of friends on their main profile page. This feature, colloquially known as the "Top 8" (because users were once limited to eight friends on their main page), allows members to showcase from four to twenty-four

friends on their profile page. Users can also choose to join groups based on categories of

interest; the group members do not have to be friends to join the same group.

MySpace has been successful because it allows users to feel not only like they've

created their own space but also that they can be friends with their media heroes.

Individuals who want to feel close to their favorite bands or actors find MySpace

appealing because there are few artists, celebrities, musicians, or comedians left who do

not have a MySpace profile (Reiss 164). Take the example of Dane Cook, a popular

comic with over a million friends on MySpace. Cook, who accepts every friend request

he receives, relentlessly plugs merchandise via his profile. His career has soared and he

now has an HBO series and a hit album (Levy and Stone 52). Online social networking

sites like MySpace and Facebook collapse traditional hierarchies between individuals,

creating the illusion of an egalitarian world where even regular people can commune with

the famous (or where regular people can *become* famous). Comments like those left on

Dane Cook's profile illustrate how users engage in what they see as a dialogue between

themselves and their celebrity friends. These comments are highly conversational,

addressing Cook by name and assuming a level of intimacy that would normally be

reserved for people one knew well in real life.[14]

> hey daney boo.....lol.......that was really cool of you to stop by the base in cali to
> kick it with the soldiers before they go off to kuwait....i heard you kicked
> everyones ass in the card games....hahaha.....oh and shame on you giving
> everyone bacardi shots......gonna get them in trouble....j/k. anyway for reals....you
> gonna be comin down to seattle again? to do a show that is....:) so i'll talk to you
> laters.....

---

[14] Comments are reproduced exactly as originally posted; no changes in grammar, spelling, or capitalization
have been made.

DANE! man, just watched teen choice awards, loved it! I taped it too, if you ever want to see it again, you know who to ask.

Okay, so I keep having dreams about you and I have been a fan of yours since before you became popular, so I'm pretty much convinced that you and I need to be together. Message me and we can set that up. Great, thanks.

The immense popularity of MySpace has allowed users like Cook to successfully tailor the site to their needs for promotion and marketing.

Cook's profile also shows how MySpace barely restricts the friending process. Users do not have to know each other in real life to be MySpace friends and profiles with thousands of friends are common. The most significant difference between MySpace and Facebook is the public nature of profiles. MySpace makes user profiles public and searchable by default; one can view comments, the main photo, blog titles, a user's top friends, groups, and interests without being a site member. Facebook, which requires membership to move beyond the main log-in page, by default makes user profiles viewable to only those users within the same network. For instance, if I sign up with an arizona.edu e-mail address, Facebook only allows me to view profiles of users in Arizona or who have graduated from a school in Arizona. In terms of surveillance, it is easier to spy on MySpace users than on Facebook users, but the restricted networks in Facebook coupled with the lower numbers of friends per member encourages Facebook members to post more personal information on their profiles than MySpace members. And as discussed later in this chapter, physical surveillance is easier to achieve with the help of Facebook.

Personalization

MySpace allows users a great deal of individuality within the overall site. Like all web pages, MySpace profiles are based on HTML code, but unlike Facebook, MySpace users are encouraged to personalize their profiles. Users familiar with HTML can easily manipulate their pages; other options include using a pre-made layout or template available online. Members can change background colors or fonts, add interactive cursors, and embed songs or videos in their profiles. MySpace users "write what they like, stream their choice of music, link to their favorite sites, turn their profiles into HTML Niagaras of cascading style sheets" (Reiss 146). This level of personalization is both a blessing and a curse for MySpace. The "design" of MySpace profiles may put off some users who then leave the site altogether. The sheer number of MySpace members strains the site's servers appreciably; MySpace had numerous service outages in 2006. Enterprising hackers can exploit embedded profile codes and alter users' pages or infect members with viruses.

Despite these problems, MySpace remains popular with undergraduate students. However, the growing number of administrators and faculty joining MySpace may drive such users away; for instance, undergraduates at Purdue University told the Associate Dean of Students that he was "ruining Facebook" and that administrators shouldn't be on there as the site wasn't intended for them (Read and Young). Adolescents like having spaces of their own where adults are not allowed (Arnett; Takayoshi, Huot, and Huot; Huffaker and Calvert). If administrators and faculty begin invading particular online social networking sites, many individuals may leave for other sites where they can once

again feel free to interact without a watchful adult near. However, if students leave

without learning how to interact with others in surveilled online spaces, then these

students will not learn from the experience. The same scenario will simply continue to be

played out in the next social networking site.

<center>Writing Activities</center>

There are three major areas for public writing activities in MySpace: the user

profile, the blog, and comments. The language of the user profile provides pre-existing

sections for members to fill out: "about me" and "who I want to meet." Members can

showcase their interests, inventory their favorite music, movies, television shows, and

books, and list their heroes. MySpace blogs are personal diaries with entries that, as noted

earlier, can be labeled for a specific audience by the author. Finally, friends can leave

brief messages on a comments column on the right-hand side of the default user profile

(Facebook has a similar feature called the Wall) or on users' photos. MySpace comments

tend to be brief, witty sayings, the equivalent of waving hello to someone in a hallway.

Only friends can leave comments on a MySpace profile or a Facebook Wall and unless a

user turns off the ability to receive HTML comments, friends can leave multimedia

comments like pictures or music videos.

Because the comments column is displayed prominently on the user profile, it

tends to get more use than MySpace Mail, which allows users to internally e-mail each

other. Unless users have set their entire profiles as private, comments can be read by

anyone. The only way to control comments is to use privacy settings to disable HTML,

moderate comments (all comments must be approved before posting), or disable

comments entirely. Comments in MySpace and Facebook can easily be used for

surveillance and users can fall into the trap of visibility via the comments function.

Students who use the comment column as a place to brag about activities to appear

popular run the risk of someone else interpreting those comments improperly. Rather

than using MySpace Mail, users post comments on the public profile for many reasons: to

show off, to boost their friends' popularity (users with many comments may be seen as

more popular than those with few), and to signal that no response is necessary (some

users feel that comments, unlike e-mail, do not necessitate a response). In a way, friends

leave comments for not only the individual profiled but also others to see.

Ironically, some individuals may view public commenting as less risky than

privately MySpace mailing a friend, as one of my own MySpace friends noted:

> It's open conversation vs. private conversation. When people converse socially in
> a public place, they not only draw attention to themselves as individuals, but are
> in many ways doing so in a way that is much safer than private conversation. . . .
> The question is: What would you say to me [in a private message] that you would
> not say in front of people? (Wyvill)

For this user, then, the public nature of the comments function feels "safer" because any

profile comment is made in front of a crowd of friends. Other students who use the

comments function draw attention to themselves, but in the wake of active surveillance of

MySpace profiles to punish students, they should be aware that comments left on public

profiles are not necessarily less risky.

Though comments are one-sided, with a bit of clicking back and forth one can

piece together entire conversations between users. It is simple to ascertain where an

individual has been recently, what they have been doing, and who they have been with—

just follow the comment trail. For example, it would be quite easy to find MySpace users based on comments left in their profiles as exemplified by a comment left in my profile (fig. 2.4) which has a great deal of identifying information.
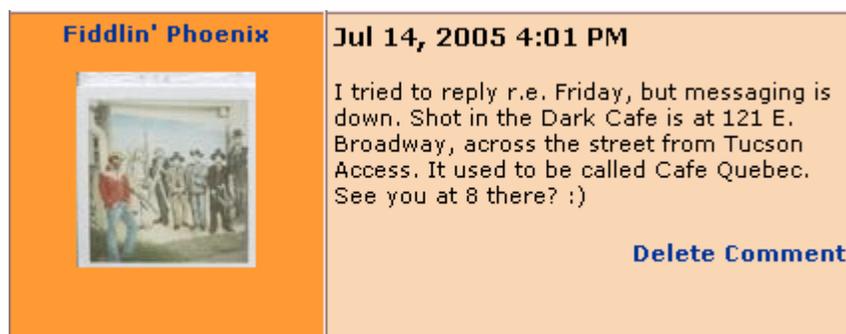
Figure 2.4: A MySpace Comment with Too Much Information

Users can delete comments left on their own profile once they notice them, but damage may have already been done. Tracy Mitrano, Director of Information Technology Policy at Cornell University, warns students that comments and photos posted to online social networking sites may end up in Google's online cache even after the material is deleted (Read and Young). Individual profiles also may still be visible in Google's cache after deletion. Thus, the comments function, blog, and personal profile all provide excellent points from which to speak to students about their online personas, as many may be surprised at the ease of finding out a great deal of sensitive information via their profile. Students may not realize that their so-called private profiles can still be viewed after deletion or via security flaws.

Facebook: "We're Not an Online Community"

In contrast to MySpace, Facebook (introduced in 2004) has fewer members, fewer individual design opportunities, and even ostensibly a different purpose. Facebook's

founder, Mark Zuckerberg, has explicitly noted that he feels the site is a reflection of

real-life connections and not an online social networking site: "We don't view the site as

an online community—we bill it as a directory that is reinforcing a physical community. .

. . I think that [it] can only reinforce preexisting communities" (Nagowski). Facebook's

"about" page defines it as a social utility that connects people with friends and others

who work, study, and live around them ("About Facebook").

Compared to the flashy advertisements and user profiles that abound in MySpace,

Facebook looks staid. MySpace's log-in page appears cluttered, full of advertisements, an

ever-changing "cool new people" section, and announcements for multimedia content

offered within the site. No overall color theme dominates aside from the blue-and-white

navigation bar at the top of the screen. Because of the competing items on the screen, no

one part of the log-in page immediately draws the reader's eye. Additionally, though both

sites are ad supported, Facebook's log-in screen does not feature any advertisements, but

the MySpace log-in page features constantly rotating ads (in fig. 2.4, a fairly prominent

Sierra Mist sponsorship logo). By comparison, Facebook seems sparse (fig. 2.5).

Facebook's log-in screen, a simple blue-and-white layout with little text, reflects its

overall mission: to serve as an easy-to-use directory of offline relationships. This design

simplicity brands the site. Individual profile pages within Facebook differ little in their

look and feel; unlike MySpace, users can't alter the HTML of their page to individualize

the look of the profile.

Figure 2.4: MySpace Log-in Screen

Figure 2.5: Facebook Log-in Screen

Privacy and Surveillance in Facebook

In MySpace, users can rely on pseudonyms and secondary e-mail addresses for

additional layers of privacy; in fact, the MySpace Terms and Conditions page specifically

states that members are not to include last names in their profiles. In contrast, Facebook

users must register with an e-mail address and their full names, both of which are

displayed on their profiles by default. The most a Facebook user can do is request to be

listed by first name and last initial only. In a random sample of one hundred user profiles

within the University of Arizona network, only two individuals had changed their names

from the default. However, both profiles were publicly viewable and the users' official e-

mail addresses included their last names. Even though the users had removed their last

names from their main profiles, with one click I discovered their first and last names, e-

mail addresses, full birth dates, and, in one case, the classes that individual was taking at

the University of Arizona.

     Even individuals who are aware of privacy issues in Facebook may still give out

potentially dangerous information. One Facebook user writes in his profile under "about

me":

> The reason I have a cartoon avatar for my main picture is that I don't like the idea
> of someone being able to find a photo of me simply by punching in my name.
> This way, I at least have some measure of control over who can gain any
> information about me. Think i'm paranoid? Guess what: Police, school
> administrators, and potential employers have all admitted to looking up dirt on
> facebook and myspace. Still think it's a good idea to post that photo of you piss
> drunk holding a cheap beer at a frat party?

However, this user had listed where he lives (the dorm name and even the room number);

the six classes he was enrolled in during the semester, complete with title and number; his

first and last name; and his official university e-mail address. With a Google search using

only his first and last name, I found his profile in an online reality game site where his

photo and AOL Instant Messenger name were both listed. This twenty-year-old college

student chose not to list his photo in Facebook to give him a "measure of control" over

his information, but he may not have realized the magnitude of his visibility online. The

information the student made available in the different virtual spaces he participated in

varied; this student is an example of how individuals often manage their public online

personas inconsistently. Similarly, if one types in "party" in the Facebook search bar,

hundreds of events will be listed, many with phone numbers of the event host, the address

of the party, detailed maps, and guest lists featuring the full names of attendees (fig. 2.6).

Figure 2.6: A Facebook Party Page

Finding out detailed information about individuals with the help of Facebook is

simple and many students jokingly refer to the site as "Stalkerbook." Facebook's chief

security officer appeared on Capitol Hill twice in the summer of 2006 to defend the site's

policies on privacy and security (Read and Young). Some students seem to forget that

Facebook memberships can be held by administrators, instructors, principals, and so on—

not just other students. Several schools specifically advocate that faculty and

administrators join online social networking sites, like Mercyhurst College in Erie,

Pennsylvania. Joseph Howard, Assistant Director of Residence Life at Mercyhurst,

"encouraged faculty and staff to join Facebook to move away from the notion of

Facebook as a 'no holds barred' student forum. The goal was to exert some 'norming'

influence online" (Read and Young).

Foucault's description of the norming processes of educational systems in

Discipline and Punish echoes the administrative language of schools like Mercyhurst that

encourage a strong faculty presence on online social networking sites. This puts both

faculty and students in a precarious position of power; faculty members are coerced into

policing these sites and must decide whether to report students or alert them to the

presence of instructors, while students may feel resentful of an academic presence

encroaching on a site used for entertainment purposes. Other schools attempt to force

certain students or groups to quit using Facebook. Student athletes at Kent State in Ohio

had until August 1, 2006, to remove their profiles or risk losing their athletic scholarships

(Loew, "Kent Banning" 1A). After reviewing the site's privacy tools, Kent athletic

director Laing Kennedy relented, stating that athletes could maintain Facebook profiles as

long as they consented to monitoring by coaches and academic advisers:

Students also will have to allow their coaches and academic advisers to monitor their profiles, and anything they post will have to meet university guidelines for appropriate behavior.

The new rules are an additional burden for the coaches, Kennedy said in an interview yesterday, but "at the same time, (monitoring student behavior is) part of our job." (Loew, "Kent Lifts Ban" 1B).

Kennedy's initial response to the threat Facebook posed was borne out of ignorance; he was unaware of the privacy options available in the site. While student athletes can now choose to participate in Facebook, they were not given the option to refuse monitoring of their profiles. Kent State student athletes were made aware of the presence of their coaches in Facebook and were told they would be monitored; Kennedy has required that students who choose to participate in Facebook must enable particular privacy features (students must set their profile private, making it available only to approved friends) and give coaches and administrative staff access (Abbey).[15] Their choice mirrors that of most individuals with regard to online social networking sites: refuse to participate or join and

---

[15] Both blogging and participation in online social networking sites have resulted in court cases questioning the application of First Amendment rights to these virtual spaces. Kent Athletic Director Laing Kennedy is quoted as stating that the rules regarding student athletes' participation on Facebook "is not a First Amendment issue" (Abbey). Duquesne University student Ryan Miner (mentioned earlier in this chapter) appealed Duquesne's decision to force him to write an essay as punishment for creating an anti-gay Facebook group by arguing that his First Amendment rights had been violated. At Syracuse University, a group of students created a Facebook group criticizing a graduate teaching assistant in the English department; the students who created the group were expelled from the class and ordered to apologize to their classmates. An associate dean at Syracuse in the graduate studies program stated that the university needs First Amendment training because "the comments are silly, juvenile, stupid and distasteful, but fully protected" under the First Amendment (Capriccioso). First Amendment rights, including free speech, and privacy are complex, controversial issues made even more so by the tensions between what is deemed public or private online. As schools increasingly monitor students' online writing and personal profiles for evidence of illegal activities as well as offensive or hateful speech, it is likely that there will be a corresponding increase in the number of court cases focusing on First Amendment rights in virtual spaces. A clearer understanding of the application of the First Amendment to online writing is crucial in light of punitive action taken against individuals for what they have said online.

knowingly consent to surveillance to reap the benefits of the sites. Such examples reflect the potential for panopticism in online social networking sites as a result of faculty and administrators' presence in these spaces.

<div align="center">Friending</div>

Another major difference between MySpace and Facebook is the friendship linkages available. Most MySpace users do not set their profiles as private and there are no limitations on how many friends one can have in MySpace. MySpace users can employ third-party software packages to spam other users with friend requests, a practice so common among bands, in fact, that MySpace offers a specific option to block these requests. In contrast, Facebook users are discouraged from randomly adding friends they do not know in real life. Facebook friend requests are worded to encourage reciprocal friendship between users who already know each other. When accepting a friend request, the site prompts an individual to clarify how he or she knows the other user using a list of suggested connections such as "we go to school together," "we worked together," and so on. If the user chooses "I don't know this person," Facebook responds, "Then why are you asking to be this person's friend?" Friendship in MySpace functions under less explicit social rules than in Facebook, while a real-world interaction or connection between users seems almost a prerequisite in Facebook.

While MySpace does not actively police profiles, Facebook's terms of service state that profiles must be the accurate representation of a real person. Chris Hughes, a Facebook spokesman, states that "you can't create a profile for Tom Cruise using your account. When users report a profile, we take a look and decide if the content seems

authentic. If not, we'll remove the user from the network" (Bugeja). It is unclear how

often removals happen; after I searched for "Michel Foucault" I found nine user profiles,

each with a different picture of the philosopher. Some of "Michel's" friends include

Plato, Hannah Arendt, Theodor Adorno, Roland Barthes, and Martin Heidegger.

Facebook may not actively police profiles, but in asserting that the site is populated with

authentic profiles only, the site mistakenly encourages users to feel safe in posting

personal information.

By virtue of one particular design feature embedded in each site—the friend

request feature—MySpace at first seems to lend itself to potentially greater abuse than

Facebook. It is more difficult, but not impossible, to find out private data about an

individual outside one's own network on Facebook. Thanks to Facebook's automatic

privacy settings, users are less likely to be watched by those outside of their network of

friends. However, people within a local network, as shown previously, can find out very

detailed information regarding individuals in a geographically proximal area.[16] It is more

dangerous for me to know someone's university dorm room number or home address

only ten miles away because the likelihood that I could actually use this information is

---

[16] The U.S. Department of Justice collects statistics on criminal victimization and publishes the results through the Bureau of Justice Statistics (http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/). A 2005 report on distribution of incidents by distance from home and type of crime shows that for crimes of violence (rape, sexual assault, robbery), 25% are committed five miles from the victim's home or less and 18.6% are committed fifty miles from home or less. Only 3.7% of violent crimes are committed more than fifty miles from home ("Criminal Victimization"). While property crime (theft) more often takes place away from the victim's home, violent crime seems more prevalent close to the victim's home. Similarly, a study of stalking on college campuses concluded that female college students are at high risk for stalking by male college students on their campus (Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 261). Most women are stalked by someone they know; less than a quarter of stalking victims are pursued by strangers (Fisher, Cullen, and Turner 264). Thus, geographical proximity as well as prior acquaintance are both important factors in violent crime and victimization.

much greater. While Facebook users may feel safe that their information is only being shared with members of their network, these networks can be huge.

Some members may decide to leave Facebook for whatever reason. Disturbingly, users can deactivate their accounts but cannot truly delete them. If a user tries to resign, he or she is presented with the following message: "You want to leave Facebook? Really? How else are you going to spend your time? Well, if you really want to leave you can deactivate your account from the 'My Account' page." Users are then required to provide a reason for leaving to deactivate their profiles. If users decide to return, they attempt to log in to their old accounts and Facebook will confirm the intent to reactivate: "We knew you'd be back. In order to reactivate an account, simply attempt to log in with your old log-in e-mail and password. Once this attempt is made, a message will be sent to your log-in e-mail address explaining how to get back on the site." The privacy policy further addresses profile caching: "Removed information may persist in backup copies for a reasonable period of time but will not be generally available to members of Facebook." As in MySpace, leaving the site by deleting one's profile does not necessarily offer a user complete invisibility.

<div align="center">Personalization</div>

While MySpace has allowed users a great deal of control over their individual profiles, Facebook provides fewer personalization options. One important way Facebook users can personalize their profiles is by joining groups. Members join these groups to proclaim their interests, political leanings, or just general silliness. And some of them are truly silly: Finish Your Drink . . . there are Sober Kids in India (1,031 Arizona members);

I Facebooked Your Mom Last Night (433 members); Beer Pong (1,936 members); and I Wear Flip Flops Everyday (2,146 members). Group memberships differentiate users and sometimes provide more personal information about them than they might like.

Because Facebook has fewer personalization opportunities than MySpace, most individualization emerges in three areas: Wall postings (discussed in the next section), the personal profile, and user photos. Photos can be commented on in both sites, but Facebook has an interesting variation, the "tagging" feature. On a mouse-over of a user's name, a white box appears in the photo to "tag" the named individual (fig. 2.7).

Figure 2.7: A "Tagged" Facebook Photo

By tagging a photo, a member notes by name every individual pictured. The tagged picture then shows up in both the original user's profile as well as the profiles of those

pictured and tagged. Unfortunately, users can be tagged in embarrassing photos;

Facebook recommends "if you are having problems with someone constantly tagging you

in embarrassing photos, just remove them as a friend . . . If you don't want the photo to

be shown at all, please talk to the person who posted it. They should be respectful enough

to remove unwanted photos." Users have little control over pictures that they have not

uploaded to the site themselves.

<div align="center">Writing Activities</div>

Facebook features a prominent space for comments on the main page called the

Wall where friends can post short comments and back-and-forth conversations often

ensue. There are some significant differences between MySpace's comment column and

Facebook's Wall. First, multimedia/HTML comments are not allowed in Facebook, so

friends cannot post pictures or videos on a Wall. Secondly, Facebook has a feature called

"Wall-to-Wall" that easily allows a visitor to see the back-and-forth conversation

between two users (fig. 2.8).

Figure 2.8: Wall-to-Wall Messages

While this feature makes it much easier for an individual to potentially surveil another

user, Wall-to-Wall only works for two users in the same network. So, a user in the

University of Arizona network could see the conversation between two UA Facebook

members but that same user could not see the Wall-to-Wall of a friend in the Arizona

network and that person's friend in the University of Iowa network. Finally, MySpace

members cannot restrict individual users from viewing their comments, but Facebook

allows individuals to restrict their Walls five different ways: all of their networks and all

of their friends; some of their networks and all of their friends; only themselves; or no

one. Because comments in online social networking sites serve to communicate with

many users at once, members tend not to restrict their Walls. In a random sample of thirty-five public Facebook profiles in the Arizona network, only one member had restricted his Wall to make it invisible. Like photos, comments in online social networking sites are a highly visible way for students to communicate with each other, but they can also be used to surveil students; however, most choose to keep their comments/Walls visible despite the potential for surveillance.

Remembering to Be Rhetorical: Online Presence and Personas

Sites like MySpace and Facebook offer infrastructures for both the socialization of individual space and the individualization of social space. They are a potential threat to privacy while at the same time they function as "a condition for the fulfillment of the need for social communication and information in the same spheres of privatized life" (van Dijk 158-59). Their popularity has moved them beyond an existence outside of the sphere of the classroom. Even if online social networking sites are not overtly brought into the classroom by the instructor, students are highly likely to use online social networking sites to communicate with each other and, by extension, bring the sites' influence into the classroom themselves. Online social networking sites have not yet been theorized pedagogically in rhetoric and composition as a beneficial addition to the classroom. Most discussions of social networking, in fact, center on how to resist the influence of these sites in the classroom and, following Foucault's examination of how educational pedagogy uses surveillance to create docile bodies (*Discipline and Punish* 147), on how administrators and instructors can use them to police student behavior. But students have taken to these sites with a fervor that makes the incorporation of social

networking into the classroom almost inevitable.

These sites offer opportunities for rhetoric and composition teachers to instruct their students in some ways to be rhetorical in online spaces. Returning to Porter's discussion of the necessity of rhetorical awareness both online and off, he remarks that "it is politically dangerous to hold on to a simplified view of the writing process as I Writer producing My Text to be read by You Reader. It is dangerous, especially in cyberspace writing, to presume that your writing will have a limited and well-defined audience" ("Legal Realities" 64). Those who are constantly aware of being watched in virtual spaces become hyperaware of their own personas; they begin to even more carefully construct themselves and question both their language and their actions: "When I'm under constant surveillance, who's in control? . . . *How much control do I have over my own environment?* If I can't control the external environment—what people *see*—I can try to control the internal environment—*what I present*" (Hunter 259, emphasis in original). In the Foucaudian panopticon, prisoners normalize their behavior because they know that guards are monitoring them; similarly, individuals constantly aware of being watched online normalize their behavior. Part of this normalization includes, as Hunter notes, what they present to the world through their actions and words. Rhetoric and composition instructors are often keenly aware of the power they hold in the classroom and tend to be careful when writing themselves in online spaces.

Students, in contrast, appear less aware of the power online identity holds. Online social networking site users in particular seem not to realize the dangers of their virtual personas and often show a lack of audience awareness in sites like Facebook and

MySpace. Such authors do not fully grasp how their writing and their online identities may come back to haunt them. Additionally, these individuals might not fully realize how the multiple identities that compose them (student, friend, child, parent, worker, significant other) can come into conflict online, where several aspects of the same person can be visible and compared to each other at once. Especially in sites like Facebook that encourage confessional behavior through their design features, students may be lulled into presenting themselves in dangerous ways or even in a manner that years from now they might regret.

In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault outlines how individuality was once "below the threshold of description" and that constant observation was a privilege, not an oppressive weight upon an individual (191). But the framework of discipline then shifted the focus away from privilege and made writing a means of power and control:

> To be looked at, observed, described in detail, followed from day to day by an uninterrupted writing was a privilege. The chronicle of a man, the account of his life, his historiography, written as he had lived out his life formed part of the rituals of his power. The disciplinary methods reversed this relation, lowered the threshold of describable individuality and made of this description a means of control and a method of domination. It is no longer a monument for future memory, but a document for possible use. (*Discipline and Punish* 191)

Foucault's words seem almost prophetic when one considers the conflicts that currently abound regarding online writing. Students have been dismissed from school over inflammatory comments written in their online profiles; job seekers have been turned away by employers because of the seekers' web personas. A July 2005 *Chronicle of Higher Education* article, "Bloggers Need Not Apply," detailed how potential job applicants for a position at a Midwestern college were derailed by their own blogs: "Our

blogger applicants came off reasonably well at the initial interview, but once we hung up

the phone and called up their blogs, we got to know 'the real them'—better than we

wanted, enough to conclude we didn't want to know more" (Tribble 3).[17]

At the University of Arizona in Tucson, adjunct lecturer Dr. Deborah Frisch

resigned from the psychology department after she posted contentious comments on the

conservative blog Protein Wisdom. To the blog owner, Frisch wrote, "Hope no one Jon-

Benets your baby. . . . If I woke up tomorrow and learned that someone else had shot you

and your 'tyke' it wouldn't slow me down one iota" (Everett-Haynes 4A). Frisch, who

has a history of inflammatory online behavior, admits:

> I play a dangerous game by being a professor and also having a very rabid left-
> wing blog and also posting nasty inflammatory comments on other people's
> blogs. The issue is how these rabid, crazy, right-wing nutcases have stalked me,
> told on me, reacted totally out of proportion to a joke in bad taste I posted on a
> blog (Jaschik, "Crossing a Line").

Though Frisch seemed to know she was crossing the line, she kept on—at the cost of her

job. Examples like Tribble's article and Deborah Frisch's firing demonstrate that even

individuals who are presumably aware of the audience(s) they are writing to in online

spaces may not realize how their writing can be used against them (or they realize but

write what they like regardless of the consequences).

---

[17] According to his *Chronicle* byline, "Ivan Tribble" is the pseudonym of a humanities professor at a small liberal arts school in the Midwest. After the publication of Tribble's piece, the blogosphere was rife with indignant responses to his condemnation of blogging. Tribble does not simply point out that one should be careful what one says online, but instead implies that academics should not maintain blogs that showcase their personal interests because these interests could derail a job search. Tribble clearly shows a bias against blogging: "The pertinent question for bloggers is simply, Why? What is the purpose of broadcasting one's unfiltered thoughts to the whole wired world?" (3) A similar case can be made for maintaining an online social networking profile; some academics I surveyed confessed that they saw participation in these sites as inappropriate for academics. To them, a MySpace or Facebook account reflected badly on the individual instructor portrayed. This is yet another obstacle to encouraging academics to theorize online social networking sites pedagogically.

The previous anecdotes also illustrate how an individual's multiple identities, both offline and virtual, are always potentially in conflict. Madan Saroup comments in his book *Identity, Culture, and the Postmodern World* on Foucault's conception of the self, noting that Foucault

> conceives of the self as constituted through certain "practices" or techniques which are determined by the social context but are mediated through an active process of self-fashioning by the individual. This reinvention of the self is primarily an aesthetic experience, an "aesthetics of existence," the principal aim of which is to make one's life "a work of art." (88)

Though online social networking sites and journals offer many artistic means of self-fashioning, what Foucault perhaps did not anticipate was the many ways that our online selves would be watched carefully, surveilled, to create those docile bodies in education, the military, and the workplace.

I encourage rhetoric and composition instructors to extend Selfe's call for critical technological literacy which she outlined in her *CCC* article "Technology and Literacy: A Story about the Perils of Not Paying Attention":

> Composition teachers . . . need to recognize that the relevance of technology in the English studies disciplines is not simply a matter of helping students work effectively with communication software and hardware, but, rather, a matter of helping them understand and to be able to assess—to pay attention to—the social, economic, and pedagogical implications of new communication technologies and technological initiatives that affect their lives. (432)

If we as rhetoric and composition instructors do not pay attention to our responsibility to educate students about how to be rhetorical, and if our students do not pay attention to how their online personas can potentially be used against them, then we will be doing both our students and ourselves a great disservice. Power, Foucault reminds us, is everywhere. But this does not mean that power is necessarily negative, or that power

must be oppressive. In this case, informing students of the real possibilities of online surveillance can encourage them "to think as carefully about what is not being said as about what is being said" (Johnson-Eilola and Selber 289). Encouraging students to think carefully about what they themselves should or should not say in their online profiles and blogs is one important way to balance the potentially oppressive power relations Foucault describes through teaching rhetorical awareness in the writing classroom.

CHAPTER 3: METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

In the previous chapters, I provided a definition of online social networking sites and analyzed the design features in MySpace and Facebook. Chapter 3 sets up the framework for my qualitative study of online social networking sites by describing the specific methods I have employed as well as the methodologies that inspire my work. In this chapter I first describe the overall methodological design of the study and how it complements previous research on computer-mediated communication. I next discuss the research questions that guide my study. Finally, I note my methods for soliciting participants for the surveys and interviews.

Methodological Framework: A Critical Approach to Technology Studies

After pointing to the dearth of "critically conscious" research on female computer users and their relationships with technology, Takayoshi presents a student narrative in "Complicated Women: Examining Methods for Understanding the Uses of Technology" that she sees as more complex than those previously published (125). While describing Aerin's story, she addresses the tendency for computers and composition research to fall along a technological binary: either deterministic or optimistic. Aerin's experience is offered to suggest that our reliance as a field on narratives tends to result in scholarship that supports marginalizing and oppressive stories of women's relationships with technology (Takayoshi 125). In an historical reflection on articles published in the last twenty years of *Computers and Composition*, Sibylle Gruber recounts the shift from early enthusiastic analyses of technology to more substantive accounts and finally to increased awareness of the need for critical inquiry "that provides a center without diminishing the

plurality inherent in the uses of technologies" (23). Laura Gurak's *Cyberliteracy*:

Navigating the Internet with Awareness advocates a critical technological literacy that

"acknowledges that technologies have consequences" (7) and that requires an individual

to "become an active participant in the discussion" about technology (28). Amy C.

Kimme Hea uses articulation theory to challenge binaries fostered by specific narratives

about the Web in her article "Rearticulating E-dentities in the Web-based Classroom:

One Technoresearcher's Exploration of Power and the World Wide Web" (332). Her aim

is to combat deterministic narratives to negotiate more equitable classroom spaces

(Kimme Hea 343). These authors all provide necessary reminders against assuming

instrumentalist and substantivist perspectives of technology, instead urging researchers to

move toward more complicated and dynamic research work.

Indeed, the starting point for my research—my curiosity at the plethora of

negative media stereotypes regarding online social networking sites—echoes Takayoshi's

puzzled response to the many deterministic person-based narratives recounting the ways

in which women are "belittled, oppressed, [and] silenced" by technology (129-30). For

example, Bill Anderson's article "Writing Power into Online Discussion" focuses on

students enrolled in a distance education class, 91% of whom were female. Anderson

examines these students' understandings of their online interactions, focusing specifically

on power relations among groups of students and the impact of other factors (time and

instructors) on their discussion activities (113). His analysis follows along Takayoshi's

complaint regarding the binary nature of much qualitative research; Anderson describes

the women in the class "making decisions to post . . . [and] making decisions not to post"

(114), for instance, and notes that "participants worried about time . . . [but] time was not

an issue for all students" (119-20). These tautologies do little to advance our critical

understandings of the effects of technology in the classroom.

Anderson's analysis of power in online discussion boards draws in part on

Janangelo's work that examines the "evils" and "exploitation" that sometimes occur

when using technology in the classroom (48). As noted in chapter 2, Janangelo's piece

offers a Foucaudian analysis of electronic bulletin boards in writing classrooms. An oft-

cited example drawn from his article, Ella's story, is one that Takayoshi uses as a central

thread to make her point regarding the prevalence of negative portrayals of women and

technology in computers and composition research. The description of the rapidly

heightening online diatribes against Ella, a recent United States immigrant, is powerful

and disturbing, yet readers are never told what happens to Ella. We are only ever shown

(secondhand) verbal abuse at the hands of her fellow students. Takayoshi argues that

Janangelo's depiction of Ella is but one example of the tendency for "teacher-told

narratives of classroom moments involving women's experiences with computer-

mediated communications" to finish at a point where women feel disappointment and

hurt (135). While Ella's story is both memorable and vivid, it also highlights many of the

difficulties of narrative interpretation: the assumptions that the researcher accurately

understands what happens in the classroom, that his or her own subject position does not

complicate interpretation, and that students represent themselves to teachers truthfully

(Takayoshi 128).

Scott Lloyd DeWitt also provides "a cautionary tale for teachers who may be unaware of opposition awaiting students whose identities are being shaped by their online experiences in "Out There on the Web" (229). His examples of research participants with online presences, including web pages, are mostly male. The two women who share stories with DeWitt, "Sze" and Caryn, are both presented as instances of potential negative repercussions of being out sexually on the Web: "Sze" discusses her feelings of vulnerability at the possibility of being out on a personal web site and Caryn questions whether to identify as lesbian when searching for academic jobs ("Out There" 238-39). The only other female in the article, Joie, is depicted as "fragile" and uncomfortable being out beyond the classroom (DeWitt, "Out There" 242). Anderson, Janangelo, and DeWitt all describe to some extent the harmful and oppressive potential of online technologies and focus mainly on their own interpretation as teachers of students' negative experiences.

I too have chosen to interrogate power and the oppressive potential of online social networking sites through a qualitative research methodology. My analysis of the oppressive potential of online social networking sites points to some larger issues at stake that rhetoric and composition instructors should begin attending to. Rather than focus entirely on negative instantiations of online social networking sites, I attempt to provide balance by describing many of the positive contributions of social networking; the stories I present are meant to provide snapshots of the complexities of participation in sites like MySpace and Facebook for students and instructors today. While I realize that the stories related in the next two chapters present a limited view of instructors' and students'

attitudes toward online social networking sites, I believe that my focus on the individual experiences of these social networking site members reflects some of the purposes of these sites and offers a starting point for future research in the field on this subject. Because sites like MySpace and Facebook already influence the classroom, one of the strongest ways to examine the effects of online social networking sites on students and teachers is to talk with them and hear their stories as rhetorical constructions.

I chose a qualitative methodology in large part because online social networking sites highlight the profiles of the individual members who populate these sites. Many of the existing design features offer members ways to showcase their personalities, their preferences, by creating a unique user profile. While the user profile offered in nearly every social networking site is the most familiar design feature that allows members to emphasize their individuality, the sites also offer other exclusive design features: MySpace blogs, Facebook News Feeds, and LiveJournal journal comments are just a few. Thus, I approached my study as a series of conversations with instructors and students to discover more about their individual attitudes toward online social networking sites and their lived experiences using (or choosing not to participate in) these sites. To understand more about why users made particular rhetorical choices and how those choices affected their sense of privacy in a site, I relied on in-depth interviews with participants. The survey I administered helped me see a broad picture of how individuals used online social networking sites; for example, I asked respondents to check off a series of writing activities they participated in or to rank design features from most to least important. The survey could only provide me with a limited view of what participants were doing in

online social networking sites, and so to gather more detailed information and triangulate my data, I performed in-depth follow-up interviews. During these interviews, I often provided printouts of users' online social networking profiles and asked individuals to talk through the rhetorical choices they had made when setting up and maintaining the profile. Our dialogues helped me better understand how the user profile and other design features in online social networking sites serve as a rhetorical construction for individual users.

The narrative patterns that arose from these conversations provided a context within which I could critique current educational use of online social networking sites as surveillance tools and also suggest ways to incorporate these sites into the classroom to teach rhetorical awareness of online identity formation. The primary goal of my study is to provide a range of experiences with online social networking sites as described by undergraduate students and university writing faculty. I then identify thematic issues of concern for users of online social networking sites, particularly regarding privacy and surveillance, identity, and time. I also suggest potential pedagogical uses of these sites.

In employing a Foucaudian framework for my examination of online social networking sites, I have selected to interrogate the effects of power on individuals. In his essay "The Subject and Power," Foucault argued that "it is not power but the subject which is the general theme of my research" (778). While Foucault's words imply a disconnection between individuals and power, his work is in fact always concerned with the intimate relationship between the two. Foucault suggests that "in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and

attempts made to dissociate these relations" ("The Subject and Power" 780). A qualitative study looking at surveillance practices, power, and rhetorical constructions in online social networking sites is one possible way, then, to extend Foucault's general aim to investigate the different modes in which human beings are subjected to bio-power. Bio-power makes individuals into subjects by providing them with binary identities with which to conform—categories like man/woman, sane/normal, teacher/student—what Foucault called "dividing practices" ("The Subject and Power" 777-78). Furthermore, normalization constricts individuals within those divisions by prescribing the limits of appropriate behavior. I aim in my study to interrogate the ways in which my participants feel constrained by and resist the identities and categories offered to them in online social networking sites as well as those appropriate behaviors sanctioned by academic institutions for these individuals.

Takayoshi does warn against privileging stories at the expense of other potential methodological stances, and this is an important reminder for qualitative researchers (127-28). Interpretation is always caught up in issues of power, and this is a point that I have tried to keep at the forefront of my mind throughout this project, particularly as I try to move away from the seductive binary of either/or technological determinism toward a more complicated view of online social networking sites. The methods I have chosen for my project—surveys, interviews, rhetorical analysis, and site observations—require interpretation, which problematizes (rather than suppresses) the researcher's own interpretative stance (Kirsch and Sullivan 257). Such problematization encourages self-awareness and reflexivity; for instance, Heidi McKee reflects on her own subject

positioning as a white middle-class female academic studying flaming in an online

diversity forum to explain how her assumptions introduced bias into her research (415-

16). DeWitt reflects on his own coming out process in "Out There on the Web,"

describing how this process has shaped his identity before turning to the interpretation of

his research participants' construction of gay/lesbian/bisexual identity online (230-32).

Sandra Harding insists that the researcher

> be placed in the same critical plane as the overt subject matter, thereby recovering
> the entire research process for scrutiny in the results of research. That is, the class,
> race, culture, and gender assumptions, beliefs, and behaviors of the researcher
> her/himself must be placed within the frame of the picture that she/he attempts to
> paint. (9)

In my project, then, I have tried to "paint myself in" to the picture as much as possible, a

move I think particularly important in light of my own participation in the online social

networking sites I analyzed and my relationships (both personal and professional) with

many of the participants I interviewed. To address the issue of interpretation, I gave

participants opportunities to review what I have written about them and encouraged re-

envisioning and reinterpretation of their stories, a method drawn both from feminist

interview research and ethnographic methodologies. Sharing the research process and

coupling this with my own reflexive stance cannot entirely negate power differentials in

interpreting participants' stories, but I do see it as a step in a more egalitarian direction.

Cyberspace Ethnography

In recent years, ethnographic methods have been increasingly applied to online

research projects in a range of disciplines; these studies, often referred to as

cyberethnographies or virtual ethnographies, use qualitative research to examine online

spaces. In 1998, Steven Jones provided an edited collection titled *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*. This methods text explicitly addressed the World Wide Web, at that time still fairly new, and its impact on social researchers. The contributors critiqued both quantitative and qualitative Internet research methods, in many cases offering very specific practical research advice. David Hakken's book *Cyborgs@Cyberspace?* takes a more precise tack as one of the first texts to explicitly investigate Internet ethnography. Hakken moves from a general overview of ethnographic research into the specifics of "doing ethnography in cyberspace" to account for cyberspace dynamics in meaningful ways (44). Christine Hine provides a solid overview of web-based social research in *Virtual Ethnography* by addressing the challenges and the possibilities researchers face when choosing to perform their work online. As the title suggests, Hines's work focuses specifically on the translation of traditional ethnographic research methods, such as case studies and participant interviews, from offline to online spaces. Chris Mann and Fiona Stewart also examine some potential challenges of online research in their *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: A Handbook for Researching Online*, which addresses such topics as grounded theory, e-mail questionnaires, and visual and textual cues in online interviews. In 2005, Hine readdressed the complexities of cyberspace ethnography in her edited collection *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*.

Though many texts that deal with qualitative research methods now mention the influence of the Internet, such sections tend to be brief; Web-based research is treated as merely another aspect of traditional research methods. In comparison, texts like those

offered by Jones, Hakken, Hine, and Mann and Stewart present online methods as a

developing area of qualitative research. These texts examine cyberspace research both

practically (for example, outlining methods and describing resources) and critically

(addressing the impact of the Web on research methodologies themselves). Web-based

qualitative research methods continue to develop as the Web itself expands.

Ethnographers face similar issues whether they are performing their research

online or off. For instance, the researcher must first decide who to observe and where to

collect data. Many researchers gravitate toward communities they are already involved

in: "Ethnographers who study their own community may already have access to almost

all facets of that community's life, most likely have roles in the community that existed

before the study, and consciously or subconsciously know the rules of behavior within

the community" (Kirsch 161). One of the main advantages of online ethnography is the

Web's seeming spacelessness, what Hakken calls "non-site boundedness" of Internet

research (59). That is, cyberethnographers are in some ways afforded greater choices in

terms of possible research sites; the multiplicity of online communities provide

researchers potentially limitless spaces in which to carry out their projects. But web-

based research can also be challenging as a result of this non-site boundedness.

Attempting to define and delineate online communities can become troublesome; the

complicated relationships among individual users, corporate owners, site managers, and

domain name hosts can be confusing for online researchers. In my own project,

attempting to define online social networking sites and separating these sites from similar

online technologies such as blogs, journals, and course management systems was a challenge.

Understanding ownership of individual user profiles in online social networking sites is likewise complicated. Who "owns" a MySpace profile in terms of its intellectual property and copyright considerations? Is it the individual who signs up and creates the profile? MySpace administrators? Rupert Murdoch, who owns News Corporation (who in turn owns MySpace)? What about the contributions of all the individuals who help play a part in the creation of the user profile, perhaps by adding comments on the user's page, tagging him or her in pictures, or posting YouTube videos on his or her site? And what of a user who uploads an artist's copyrighted material to his or her MySpace page—does this constitute copyright infringement? However, these challenges provide fruitful avenues for further research and underscore some of the reasons why web-based research is growing more popular in rhetoric and composition.

One also cannot simply assume that carrying out web-based research in an unfamiliar or perhaps hostile community will be unproblematic. Just like offline communities, online communities tend to form around groups of like-minded individuals; there are rules, regulations, discourse conventions, ingroups, and outsiders. The varying purposes and conventions of online communities shape the interactions that occur within their "walls." Online communities can take different forms. They can be sites where "users scarcely talk to each other . . . and never see or sense each other's presence. Privacy, anonymity, reliability, speed, and visual appeal are desired properties of this [kind of] virtual space" (Feenberg and Bakardjieva 1). They can appear as "personal

networks [that] provide the very communal resources and experiences that local neighborhoods do not: support, sociability, information, and a sense of belonging" (Barney 37). Like Facebook, they can function as hybrid communities that reinforce offline spaces where many users know each other. Thus, researchers must first attempt to understand the nature of the community where they will be performing research; this is usually accomplished online by lurking in the site long enough to recognize the environment and its conventions. Lurking is often hailed as a way for the researcher to begin making steps toward joining the community and to protect the researcher from missteps that may result in rejection or flaming from community members.

However, a critical component of ethnography is the participatory nature of ethnographic research; one cannot lurk forever but must eventually begin participating as a member of the community. What then of the researcher's subject positioning? If he or she wishes to participate as a member of the community, making the shift from lurker to participant may not progress smoothly if community members disapprove of the ethnographer's changing role. Certainly lurking calls into question the ethical obligations of a researcher; the covert research that lurking constitutes is in many ways similar to the kinds of surveillance I noted earlier that Anderson, Janangelo, and DeWitt critique. Stephen North cautions that ethnographers must understand the interchange between observing and participating in a community:

> The central [e]thnographic technique is participant-observation: the investigator tries to become, in some sense, an acceptable member of the community under investigation. . . . The object is to gain some understanding of an alternative imaginative universe by coming, through some kind of gradual immersion, to inhabit it. Obviously, though, the degree to which such habitation is possible varies considerably. (294)

There is always compromise between allowing events to unfold naturally and potentially influencing future behaviors by asking participants to consider their own actions, between interacting with others in the research site because of shared interests and acting as a researcher in that same site. There is also a tension in deciding on the limits of one's own participation in a research site, particularly in online spaces where anonymity is more easily achieved than offline. These tensions can be valuable in that they often spur virtual ethnographers to more carefully consider their own subject positioning, ethical stance, and engagement with the research site, perhaps leading them to make more informed choices about their methods and methodologies.

Because ethnographers also participate in their own studies, they cannot distance themselves completely and thus cannot clearly delineate the boundaries between researchers and participants. As a member of MySpace and Facebook, I regularly interact with other members of these sites. One of the many roles an ethnographer plays is participant observation, which provides a sense of immersion in the research subject but can result in tensions as well. Marion MacLean and Marion Mohr discuss these tensions from the standpoint of the teacher-researcher, drawing connections between the immersion of the teacher-researcher in her classroom and the immersion of the ethnographer and her research community:

> In a 1993 article, Shirley Brice Heath reviewed a transcript from her study *Ways with Words* and reflected on the multiple roles she played in that study—woman, parent, teacher, academic, and ethnographer. She writes, "The ethnographer attempting to avoid 'taking sides' is right in there in the fishbowl of multiple and conflicting roles and values" . . . As a teacher-researcher, you, too, are in a fishbowl of conflicting roles and values, but for you the starting point is one of participation, not observation—immersion, not distance. (106)

MacLean and Mohr's fishbowl metaphor seems particularly apt for my study. While I am primarily a researcher in this situation, I also play the roles of observer, participant, teacher, and student; this multiplicity of roles wherein the researcher also examines her own subject position is what Carolyn Ellis and Arthur P. Bochner term "autoethnography" or "reflexive ethnography" (739-40). Reflexive ethnographers not only examine their research sites and participants, but also look inward at themselves, exposing the self and blurring the distinctions between the personal and the cultural (Ellis and Bochner 739).

Such a reflexive ethnographic stance is particularly necessary in researching online social networking sites. Their purpose is to facilitate the formation of social ties, to construct communities and create connections. As a researcher studying sites where connections between individuals are so highly privileged, I am, as Ellis and Bochner note, "inside what [I am] studying" (743). Even before beginning my research, I played multiple roles in MySpace and Facebook—a friend to some, a teacher to others, a coworker, partner, even enemy to a few. Turkle's work on fragmented identity in her book *Life on the Screen: Identity in the Age of the Internet* is showcased through case studies of computer users who "build a self by cycling through many selves" (178). Like Turkle, who described her life on the screen in terms of the multiple "Sherrys" she envisioned (209), I see my own online identity as encompassing overlapping, shifting, ever-changing roles. These multiple roles help me understand the varying (and sometimes conflicting) roles that social networking site participants embody as we interact both in these virtual networking sites as well as in the physical settings where we live, work, and

play. As I began using these sites long before I envisioned them as a research setting, I find that my stance as a researcher is strongly influenced by ethnographic, reflexive research methodologies that provide complex critical examinations of technology and its effects.

Research Methods

Project Development and Research Questions

One impetus for my study of online social networking sites was my own students' increasing use of MySpace to contact me about coursework. I have been a MySpace member since May 2005 but up until the fall of 2005, I had not yet integrated it into my teaching or even mentioned it in class. That semester, however, many of my students took the initiative and found me on MySpace. Some looked up my account and sent me friend requests while others used MySpace Mail to ask questions about homework for our class. As I began hearing more and more students trading usernames or urging one another to "look me up on Facebook" or "do a search for me on MySpace," I realized how much online social networking sites were becoming a part of college students' lives.

Because they filled a niche for entertainment and communication in my life, online social networking sites became part of my daily routine as well; I log on to MySpace daily and Facebook weekly. As an ethnographer it seemed constructive for me to write my dissertation about a phenomenon that I myself readily participate in. As well, online social networking sites have already begun affecting the classroom in many ways; academic news sites such as *Inside Higher Education* and *The Chronicle of Higher Education* have regularly examined reports of student and instructor (mis)use of

MySpace and Facebook. Threads on discussion lists like WPA-L (the National Council

of Writing Program Administrators listserv), TechRhet (a technology instructor listserv),

and Teaching Composition also showed stirrings of academic interest in online social

networking sites. Michael Day posted on WPA-L in October 2005 to urge

compositionists to begin looking at Facebook:

> I know about Facebook, not really through my students, but through my 18 year old daughter. Apparently, among college students, it's sort of a necessity to be on Facebook, and people are now finding friends on their new campuses through this medium. . . . It's all a part of our focus, in FYComp, on helping students identify and write. In short, we can't ignore Facebook, so let's maybe think of some good writing assignments that analyze and construct Facebook entries. (Day, "Re: Facebook?")

In January 2006, the Teaching Composition mailing list considered the value of "play" in

assignments after a member asked,

> What might it mean for our use of technologies (wiki or otherwise) if we foreground the fact that we're trying to alter not only how student writers use computer technologies, but how they value them? On the other hand, can writing teachers gain from recognizing (and enlisting) the entertainment value of technology? Should we be (more) playful? (Gustafson, "Facebook, Social Software, and Valuing Technology")

In February 2006, TechRhet subscriber Nick Carbone posed the question "How many of

you with .edu homes have MySpace accounts so you can reach your students?" (Carbone,

"Ultimate Pesky e-Mail Fix: Students won't use it in the future?") And in July 2006,

WPA-L list members began to discuss the addition of a technology literacy plank to the

WPA Outcomes Statement for First-Year Composition; under this literacy plank,

members argued for the inclusion of the rhetoric of online social networking sites.

As online social networking sites have become more visible to rhetoric and composition teachers, many in the profession have begun to consider the problems and potentials of these sites' inclusion in the classroom.

About the same time that I truly delved into online social networking sites, I noticed the proliferation of cautionary media tales regarding them. Though online social networking sites were thus far beneficial additions to my life, many news reports focused largely on the drawbacks of social networking. Parents worried that the sites were havens for sexual predators; exposés broadcast on television shows like CBS Evening News ("MySpace: Your Kids' Danger?") and Dateline NBC (Stafford, "Why Parents Must Mind MySpace") played on parents' fears. In Tucson, the public library held a series of workshops on MySpace advertised with the tagline, "Today, thousands of Tucson children will play in an area where they might not realize the consequences. Predators know about it. Now, the Tucson library wants you to know about [MySpace] too" (Rathbun).

Several well-publicized deaths and disappearances related to online social networking sites did little to quell parents' worries. The parents of two runaway girls in California blamed MySpace for their disappearance ("Vigil Held"). A 58-year-old man in Georgia was accused of luring a seventeen-year-old boy to his home via MySpace, then sexually abusing him; the boy text-messaged his family for rescue ("Teen Text Messages for Help"). A Michigan sixteen-year-old flew to the Middle East to marry a man she met on MySpace after telling her parents she was going to Canada with friends ("Teen Heading Home"). Such stories feed on and amplify parents' fears regarding their

children's safety; however, a large number of these stories sensationalize the Web as unsafe and blame the sites for the adolescents' actions—rather than the parents.

As well, universities worry that their reputations may be tainted by student behaviors and attitudes projected via online social networking sites. Some, like the University of New Mexico, banned online social networking sites entirely (Mitrano 22). Other schools forbade certain groups of students from using them; at one point, Kent State banned student athletes from using Facebook and threatened them with the loss of their athletic scholarships if they refused to comply (Loew, "Kent Lifts Ban" 1B). Many schools placed strict guidelines on the use of online social networking sites, such as Greek students at Northwestern University who cannot interact in any way with pledges on Facebook (Seetharaman). The level of media saturation emphasizing the negative aspects of online social networking sites begs further examination. Though of course newspapers and television exposés tend to play up the shock value of news in order to grab the audience's attention, their negative portrayals of online social networking sites seemed to me to heavily outweigh any positive press I could find. As one interviewee, Bob, noted in our discussion of media representations of social networking, "They're only going to report on newsworthy [issues] and things that are newsworthy are often bad, awful things that happen. 'Jimmy made fifteen friends on MySpace' is not a newsworthy event. They're not going to report on that . . . [but] they aren't doing much educating in terms of the positive potential."

Therefore, in examining online social networking sites, I chose to focus on privacy and surveillance, especially in light of the many negative descriptions of these

sites in the media. When I looked more closely at current conceptions of administratively sanctioned behaviors for students and teachers in online social networking sites, it became clear that the sites are positioned in many ways to be used as surveillance tools to reinforce traditional power structures in academia. As I participated in these sites and became familiar with their design features, I noted how some specifically helped make surveillance easier or more difficult. I also looked at the different privacy tools offered by online social networking sites and how these affected the interactions between different site users. Finally, because online social networking sites are used mainly by college students and because many institutions now insist on specific guidelines for their use, I chose to explore the viewpoints of students and instructors with regard to educational uses and abuses of online social networking sites. In connection with issues of surveillance, I asked instructors and students whether they had any personal experiences with being surveilled in online spaces; what measures they had taken, if any, to prevent such surveillance; and what rhetorical choices they had made in putting together their online social networking profiles.

I looked at three aspects of online social networking sites: design; rhetorical awareness (including identity formation and audience); and privacy and surveillance. The questions that I explore in my dissertation are provided below.

Design

- How do the online social networking sites MySpace and Facebook construct spaces for social networking? In the design of these sites, what similarities and differences exist?
- What design features of these sites initially attract users and also encourage them to return? How might particular design features be used to surveil individuals without their knowledge?

Rhetorical Awareness

- What are some of the predominant attitudes toward online social networking sites by students and writing instructors?
- How do various users negotiate the concept of audience in online social networking sites? When writing (blogs, comments, and Wall posts, for example), what audiences do individuals envision they are writing for and how does this influence what they write and how they share these texts?
- How do users construct identities in these sites? In what ways do they see their identities bounded by their positions as students or teachers?

Privacy and Surveillance

- How do different conceptions of audience influence users' perceptions of appropriate behavior in online social networking sites? In particular, are students concerned about surveillance by particular authority figures—instructors, employers, and parents? Similarly, how do instructors feel about the potential for surveillance by parents, employers, and students?
- What privacy features are users aware of? What privacy features do users choose to employ and why?

I felt it was crucial to focus on the relationship between instructors and their students in my research questions. These sites call into question appropriate interactions between instructors and their current or former students because many instructors are friends with students in MySpace and Facebook, yet friendship in these sites can have a very different meaning than in offline relationships. Having worked within the boundaries of academe for nearly seven years now, I understand that there are certain officially sanctioned standards that detail acceptable behaviors based on status, rank, and class. Such standards are usually laid out in documents like student codes of conduct or guidelines for teaching assistants that outline behavioral standards for specific groups. Yet a sort of unwritten code exists that is not printed in any book or made available on an official university web site; it varies depending on time, place, person, and a multitude of other factors. Even an

instructor's simplest act—such as a graduate assistant arranging students' chairs in a circle every day; a male instructor wearing a tie and jacket to class; a tenured instructor asking students to call her by her first name; a newly hired instructor referring to her students by last name only and requesting to be addressed as "professor"—can impact the nature of the classroom and the community within it.

My research questions in part attempted to tease out some discussion of these unwritten rules of behavior as they are enacted in online social networking sites. I specifically aimed to present an analysis of my findings regarding these rules of behavior between students and instructors in online social networking sites that draws on Foucaudian understandings of bio-power and surveillance. The responses to the surveys and interviews illuminate current concerns about classroom structure and behavior and the impact of virtual spaces on the physical classroom as well. While a more traditional view of research in the humanities has focused on what Ira Shor has deemed "the 'elsewhereness' of scholarship," which happens "everywhere else except every day in the classroom, where it is needed" (170), there has been a strong move in rhetoric and composition toward research which focuses on student learning and the writing classroom. As Gesa Kirsch and Patricia A. Sullivan note in their book *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*, "research [in composition] frequently begins with the urgency to understand events in the classroom or with a dissatisfaction with teaching methods" (252). When instructors wonder why students seem so caught up in online social networking sites, why they have to check their MySpace or Facebook accounts every day just before class begins, then it seems logical that soon rhetoric and

composition instructors will examine these sites in order to learn more about their own pedagogical practices, student populations, and ways to engage students in the classroom.

Such research is particularly important to the field of rhetoric and composition because, without a strong overlap between theory and praxis, the overarching theoretical concerns of our field—our awareness of what informs us, what drives us, what guides our understanding of why we do what we do when we teach—become disconnected from our practical, day-to-day pedagogies and instructional personas. Kathleen Weiler argues that a critical educational theory which blends both of these concerns can "place human action and consciousness in an historical and social context. We need to be able to encompass both individual consciousness and the ideological and material forces that limit and shape human action" (3). We cannot describe occurrences in our classrooms without connecting these observations to larger theoretical issues and approaches; the disconnect between theory and practice can only serve to limit the field of rhetoric and composition, which is clearly invested in understanding writing instruction generally and students' attitudes and practices specifically. Only by understanding social forces can we begin to transform them through a critical theoretical view of educational practices (Weiler 3). My aim in this project, therefore, is to examine issues of privacy and surveillance in online social networking sites in order to understand more about the boundaries between students and instructors in online spaces.

In the wake of punitive action against student users of online social networking sites, I want to advance my goal of resisting such punitive action and instead embrace online social networking sites as potential sites for pedagogical use in thinking about

rhetorical awareness, online identity building, and so on. Such a goal falls in line with Gurak's call for research projects on online communities that "encourage the excitement of virtual communities but acknowledge and plan for the difficulties of rhetorical exchange in cyberspace" (*Persuasion and Privacy* 133). In the epilogue to *Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace*, her examination of online protests over Lotus MarketPlace and the Clinton administration's Clipper chip encryption device, Gurak raises questions about issues of privacy, identity, and access in cyberspace. My project advances part of her goal: to teach students to become "critical consumers of online information" and to learn about online cases like MarketPlace and Clipper to think about privacy and trust in cybercommunities (Gurak, *Persuasion and Privacy* 134).

<div align="center">

Participant Selection

</div>

Users of social networks are as diverse as the sites themselves. Stereotypes regarding the "typical user" of online social networks abound, particularly among the site users themselves. For example, many Facebook members I spoke with dismissed MySpace as a "high school hangout," while the opposite was also true—MySpace members often described Facebook users as mostly high school students. This stance allowed users to show a kind of brand loyalty by declaring their allegiance to their online social networking site of choice while at the same time denigrating the opposing site as immature. Other responses typifying the divide between the two competing sites reflect the tendency of some users to characterize a competing site as "creepy" or "sketchy":

> I love Facebook, have stayed in touch with hundreds of friends through it, and would be lost without it. However, I think MySpace is sketchy, am skeptical about people with MySpace accounts, and would never resort to it.

> On MySpace, new people would try to hit on me every day, and sometimes they were pretty creepy. But I have never been hit on via Facebook.

In this way, members of a particular site were able to explain their attraction to that site based on the perceived safety of one site over another. For many undergraduate students, Facebook remains the online social networking site of choice because of the perception of safety this once-closed network offered. Similarly, MySpace attracts more instructors than Facebook simply because the Facebook user base has always largely been undergraduate college students. Users sometimes explained that their choice of online social networking site(s) was based on a loosely defined sense of fit. In other words, these participants chose to join and continue to use a particular site because they felt somehow they fit the concept of the typical user there. However, the majority of online social networking sites are open to any web user.[18] As well, membership pools constantly shift as new members are added, other members resign, current members participate, and still other members remain in the database but cease to participate in the site itself. I chose to focus on students and instructors to illustrate how privacy and surveillance plays out in online social networking sites, again drawing on confession and bio-power as well as cyberethnographic methodologies to guide my analyses of these two groups.

---

[18] While Facebook was once a closed social network, it has progressively become more open over time. At first, Facebook was only open to college students with an e-mail domain recognized by the site. Next, high school students were invited to join, followed by selected corporations. Finally, Facebook opened its membership pool to everyone in September 2006. Other online social network sites like MySpace, Friendster, LinkedIn, and so on have been open from the beginning. Very few sites remain closed (invitation only) because this severely limits their participant pool; however, some sites, like aSmallWorld.net, promote the exclusivity and privacy afforded by a closed network as a benefit to users.

Survey

To present an extensive picture of individuals' current attitudes toward and uses of these sites, I started with a survey. While surveys go into less detail than interviews, they can give a wider view of participants' feelings than interviews (Graziano and Raulin 309). As well, the survey results allowed me to choose particular conversational themes to continue drawing out during the interview stage, a process that MacLean and Mohr examine in their guide to classroom-based qualitative studies, *Teacher-Researchers at Work*. The combination of surveys, interviews, site analyses, and self-reflection allowed for greater triangulation to gain a wider perspective or a better angle. These multiple sources of data helped me see a larger picture, to focus on my research project from several angles, and to understand different viewpoints and approaches to my research questions.

Because I focused on the potential impacts of online social networking sites on the writing classroom, I deliberately narrowed my respondent pool to students and instructors. I wanted to hear directly from those individuals who would be affected the most by educational uses and abuses of online social networking sites. To ensure diverse results, I sought participants at all levels of engagement with online social networking sites, from those who deliberately chose not to use these sites, to occasional dabblers in social networking, to devoted users who checked their social networking accounts several times each day. While I limited my study to currently enrolled undergraduate students between eighteen and forty years of age and to university writing instructors of all ages, I

found that participants hailed from a wide variety of backgrounds.[19] The interviewees

chosen represented "information-rich cases" (Patton 182) who I felt would be open to the

semi-structured interview format and would provide the wealth of data needed to provide

the level of "thick description" Clifford Geertz describes as common to qualitative case

studies (6).

The survey was tested in a pilot phase to address potential ambiguities or

language problems. These ambiguities were then addressed in the final survey, which was

a revised version of the pilot that drew on exit interview information provided by the ten

pilot survey participants (five instructors and five students). The exit interview asked

those surveyed to briefly address their experience taking the survey. The pilot

participants were asked what problems they encountered (if any) and where they might

envision restructuring of the survey method or the questions themselves. For the pilot

student survey, I asked for volunteers from my summer 2006 technical writing course.

The pilot instructor survey volunteers were writing instructors at the University of

Arizona who were also friends of mine in MySpace and who had previously expressed

interest in helping me test the survey prior to its full deployment.

---

[19] Students under the age of eighteen or over the age of forty who attempted to complete the survey were prevented from accessing the survey. Instead, a screen notified these participants that because they fell outside the age range selected for the study, they would be unable to finish the survey; they were then thanked for their time. The survey itself was set up so that it could only be completed once per computer, and the majority of participants were e-mailed with a direct survey link, unique to them, that would no longer function after they responded to the survey. Some participants, such as those I reached through a posting on an academic listserv, were provided a general URL rather than a unique link. Instructors who did not want me to send an individual e-mail to each student in their class passed on the general URL to their students and offered students the opportunity to participate (or not) if they desired.

Survey Methods

The first phase of my study was an online survey housed on Zoomerang.com servers. While traditionally researchers have gathered survey data using direct mail methods or (more recently) e-mail, web-based surveys hold distinct advantages over these earlier methods. Web-based survey sites are generally easy to use both in terms of gathering data as well as analyzing collected material (Cook, Heath, and Thompson 824). Additionally, many online survey sites (like Zoomerang, SurveyMonkey, Demographix, and so on) are free; others are available for a subscription fee, usually discounted for educators. Online surveys reduce mailing costs and data entry costs, lower response times, and can be accessed nearly anywhere and at any time (Fetterman 29). The design potential of the Web offers an advantage for web-based surveys as compared to paper-based surveys; online questionnaires can appear more sophisticated, can be easier to navigate thanks to skip patterns, and can offer dynamic features like pop-up boxes, drop-down menus, radio buttons, and so on (Umbach 25). These design advantages could potentially increase a respondent's motivation to complete a survey (Zhang 60). Because Zoomerang offered a reduced student rate and was simple to set up and begin distributing my questionnaires, I chose this company to house my dissertation survey.

Web and e-mail-based surveys admittedly have certain drawbacks as compared to paper-based surveys. Respondents must have access to a computer and the Web to participate (Fetterman 30; Zhang 58). Moreover, the potential pool of participants may reflect a biased sample; that is, online or e-mail-based survey respondents are more likely to be technologically adept and may "self-select" to respond to surveys that examine

technology (Zhang 59). If the server that houses the questionnaire is inaccessible for any

length of time, respondents will be unable to complete the survey (Fetterman 30). Though

mailing costs may be virtually nonexistent, substantial time could be necessary to set up

the survey online, gather e-mail addresses for respondents, send invitation and reminder

e-mails, and respond to participants' queries (Umbach 24). Incomplete survey responses

may be returned at a higher rate with web-based surveys than with e-mail and paper-

based questionnaires (Zhang 65). Despite these potential limitations, I chose to use an

online survey; to me, the ease of use and the potential to reach a fairly large pool of

respondents in a short amount of time outweighed the possible drawbacks.

I solicited survey participants through a variety of methods. I e-mailed former

students and fellow instructors from the University of Arizona and provided them the

survey links to participate. I also posted a description of my study and the survey links to

discussion lists and message boards that were regularly visited by writing instructors,

such as COMPGAT (the University of Arizona's composition instructor listserv), WPA-

L, TechRhet, and Phinished.org (a message board for graduate students working on

dissertations and theses). I also directly contacted potential participants using the internal

e-mail feature in MySpace and Facebook. Finally, I posted a brief description of my

project on my profile page in both sites and offered the links to the two surveys. All

potential participants were provided with a copy of my Human Subjects clearance letter

and were encouraged to contact me with any questions about the process; all participants

gave their informed consent before responding to the survey or participating in an

interview. Potential participants were also advised that their responses would be

anonymous; they would be given a pseudonym and identifying details would be masked as much as possible.

I chose to provide two separate survey links, one for instructors and one for students, to easily differentiate between the different vantage points of these populations. I asked students to provide their year in school and instructors to label their status (graduate teaching assistant; assistant, associate, or full professor; professor emeritus/a; adjunct instructor) and the typical writing classes they taught. There were 87 questions for the student survey and 93 questions for the instructor survey. The two versions of the survey asked a variety of questions, both demographic (age, gender, year in school) and content-based (questions that addressed respondents' attitudes on a five-point Likert, or opinion-based, scale). The demographic questions allowed me to characterize and categorize the survey respondents. For example, the student survey allowed me to focus on a certain demographic: undergraduates between the ages of eighteen and forty. The Likert scale questions asked respondents to choose one selection from a range of five options: strongly disagree; disagree; undecided; agree; and strongly agree (along with "I'd like to skip this question").

A significant number of social networking site members are younger than seventeen and minors make up a small portion of the undergraduate population at many large universities. However, I specifically excluded minors (students aged seventeen or younger) from my study because of the potential difficulties in receiving their informed consent. (The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) would have had to read and sign the consent form as well as the minor participant.) I also excluded students who were forty-

one years of age or older. Most of the media hype surrounding online social networking sites has focused on young college students' behavior and particularly underage drinking. I aimed to target a population sample that would allow me to reach many of the students affected by the media hype (that is, younger undergraduates between eighteen and twenty-four) and make comparisons between this group of students and their slightly older peers (students between twenty-five and forty).

The survey respondents fell along the typical age parameters for undergraduates enrolled at the University of Arizona. This research institution, with a total student population of over 37,000 undergraduate, graduate, and professional students, enrolled 28,462 undergraduates in 2005. According to the University of Arizona Fact Book, the majority of these students were between eighteen and twenty-four years old; 86.52% of the total undergraduate population in 2005 fell within these parameters. Only 423 students were under eighteen while 11.96% were over twenty-four. Even looking at the overall enrollment numbers in 2005, the majority of students attending the University of Arizona in 2005 were between eighteen and thirty-four, which accounted for 90.86% of the total student population of 37,036 ("University of Arizona Fact Book"). Despite opening the survey to any student between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, most respondents fell within boundaries that reflect the University of Arizona's Fact Book majority—eighteen to twenty-four. A full quarter (25%) of the student respondents identified as eighteen, the largest respondent group overall. The number of participants peaks slightly at ages twenty and twenty-one, then drops steadily after age twenty-four (Table 3.1). Of the 354 student respondents, 268, or 77%, fell between eighteen and

twenty-four years of age; 310, or 87.5%, were between eighteen and thirty; and only 33 were over thirty years of age.

Table 3.1: Age Breakdown of Student Respondents
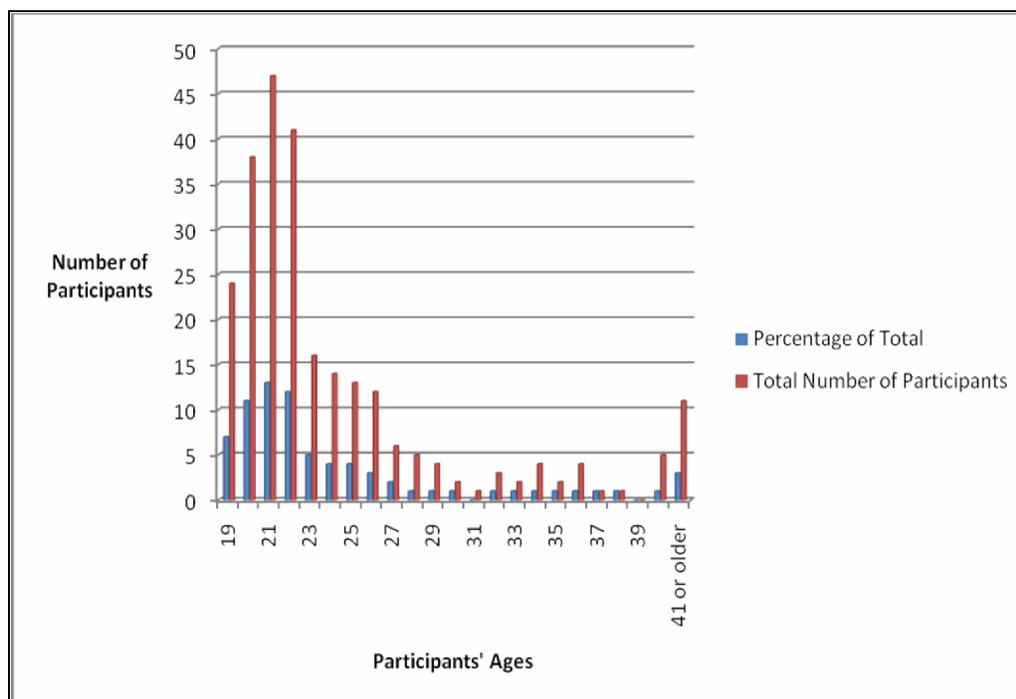
Student respondents were asked to choose an appropriate label from a drop-down menu to describe their age (seventeen or younger; eighteen to forty; forty-one or older); their year in school (first year, sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate student); and their gender (male or female). I also asked whether they were members of MySpace and Facebook as well as the length of their membership. Finally, respondents were asked to provide their contact information (phone number, e-mail address, or both) along with a full name so that they could be contacted for a follow-up interview if they consented to participate further. Participants were not required to give their name or contact information and could skip this step if they wished. Some respondents provided

pseudonyms or provided as little information as they felt comfortable with. Instructors were asked for their gender and classification along with the same requests for membership status and contact information as in the student survey. The one main difference between the two surveys was that I did not ask instructors to provide age-related data; in retrospect, I would have liked to have collected such data to see whether instructors of particular age groups were more likely to use online social networking sites in their teaching.

The questions used in both versions of the survey focused on two distinct areas: (1) the respondents' uses of online social networking sites and (2) respondents' attitudes and beliefs about privacy and surveillance in online social networking sites. For example, a question that attempted to discover more about individuals' uses of the site asked, "When you visit MySpace, what activities do you usually participate in?" and gave a multiple-choice list of common activities: updating your profile, uploading pictures, commenting on others' pictures, reading blogs, and writing in your own blog. Many questions were multiple choice ("which three features do you think are the most important or integral to MySpace?") or Likert scale questions ("the overall design, look, and feel of MySpace appeals to me," where 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree). The benefit of these Likert scale questions is that responses have an "unambiguous ordinality" that allows the researcher to gauge the strength of agreement of the respondents (Babbie and Mouton 153). However, such scalar questions are also limited in terms of the complexity of the response that can be expected. In instances where a question could potentially have unanticipated replies, an open-ended "other" response

provided a space for further explanation. See Appendix B for the consent form; Appendix C provides the interview questions for instructors and Appendix D provides interview questions for students.

Overall, 127 instructors and 354 students responded to the survey. In an attempt to increase the response rate, I sent one follow up e-mail to invited participants who had not yet completed the survey.[20] Studies on web survey response rates have shown that response rates generally increase if at least one reminder e-mail is sent to the participants while response rates of less than thirty percent can be expected if no reminders are sent (Cook, Heath, and Thompson 831). Of the 364 students who began the survey, ten (3%) did not consent to participate because their age was under seventeen or over forty-one, leaving a total of 354 usable student responses. (All of the instructors who began the survey consented to participate.) Though I only reached a small sample of participants, this reflects the fact that my project is meant to encourage a dialogue about online social networking sites rather than provide definitive answers.

Interview Methods

Survey participants willing to participate in a follow-up interview were asked to provide their contact information at the end of the online survey. From the pool of respondents, ten instructors and ten students were chosen for two one-hour face-to-face

---

[20] There were two categories of survey participants, those who were personally invited to participate in the survey via an e-mail I sent to each individual and those who were invited on my behalf (by their instructor or by a fellow student). Typically, those participants who were personally invited were individuals at the University of Arizona, colleagues who had graduated and moved on to other institutions, and students who had consented to releasing their e-mail address to me on the behalf of their instructor. Those participants I was unable to send a personal e-mail invitation to were sent a group e-mail invitation with an embedded survey link; I was unable to track the completion rates of these individuals as I was able to for those who had been sent unique personal survey URLs via e-mail.

interviews to expand on issues brought up in the survey. Because I wanted the capture the

spontaneity of a face-to-face conversation, I asked that respondents live in the greater

Arizona area so that the interview could be completed in person. Table 3.2 shows basic

characteristics of each interviewee to show the diversity of experience each individual

brought to the project.

Table 3.2: Demographic Data of Interview Participants

Pseudonym	Category	Gender	Age	Year	MySpace Acct.	Facebook Acct.
Bruce	Student	M	18	FR	Y	Y
Chrissa	Student	F	18	FR	Y	Y
Erica	Student	F	18	FR	Y	Y
Isolde	Student	F	18	FR	Y	Y
Charles	Student	M	19	FR	Y	N
James	Student	M	19	SO	Y	N
Ernie	Student	M	22	SR	N	Y
Laura	Student	F	22	SR	N	N
Philomena	Student	F	22	SR	N	Y
Linda	Instructor	F	25	grad	Y	Y
Fred	Instructor	M	26	grad	Y	Y
Bob	Instructor	M	27	grad	N	N
Connie	Instructor	F	27	grad	Y	N
Gloria	Instructor	F	29	grad	Y	Y
Mika	Instructor	F	32	grad	Y	Y
Iris	Instructor	F	35	grad	N	N
Sophia	Instructor	F	35	grad	N	N
Donna	Instructor	F	38	grad	Y	N
Sherri	Instructor	F	57	grad	Y	Y

Though I provided a set list of questions for participants to respond to, I

encouraged their input in the interview process and allowed for conversational tangents in

a semi-structured interview format. My preference is based on feminist research

principles that privilege open-ended conversations and questions that respond to the

individual needs of each participant. Kirsch recounts some of the benefits of semi-

structured interviews in her book *Women Writing the Academy: Audience, Authority, and Transformation*. For Kirsch, the open-ended interview process is one where respondents are informed of the purpose of the research, allowed to engage in dialogue with the interviewer, and encouraged to provide feedback during the data interpretation process. This iterative progression of the conversation, where the interviewer and interviewee are constantly doubling back to what has previously been said in order to clarify and add detail, is ideal for allowing emerging conversations to follow their own course (Kirsch 34).

The interviews served to further illuminate the answers that respondents had provided in the initial survey. While the survey asked respondents to categorize their level of familiarity with online social networking sites, the interviews allowed me to more accurately gauge each interviewee's knowledge of the nuances of using MySpace and Facebook. Because these sites are dynamic, constantly adding new features and responding to users' desires, I was able to determine the most important features of the sites and how well they had been hyped in the media. For example, almost all of my participants were aware of the Facebook News Feed feature, even if they could not label it by name, whereas few were aware that MySpace had changed its Top 8 friends feature. Philomena's response during our interview typifies this response; at one point, she interjected, "I don't know what the hell happened to Facebook. It went weird recently. There's like this news feed which is just creepy." As noted earlier in chapter 2, the News Feed feature provides a detailed running commentary on the first page of a user's Facebook profile of all the site activities his or her friends have participated in. News

Feed shows what comments friends have posted, what pictures they have uploaded, and who they have added and deleted from their friends list. Users like Philomena were concerned about the changes heralded by the News Feed feature because it had serious implications for privacy and surveillance, whereas the ability to have a Top 4, 12, 16, or 24 friends was not an immediate security issue.

Data Analysis

At the end of November 2006, there was a wealth of data to be analyzed. One advantage of Zoomerang, the online survey site used to collect survey responses, is that Zoomerang provides subscribers several different data analysis tools such as the ability to filter and cross-tabulate responses. The interviews were transcribed from the digital recordings and coded thematically. A qualitative data analysis software package, NVivo, assisted in the coding process. NVivo is particularly helpful in creating connections among individual themes through the creation of nodal connections much like those found in online social networking sites; the program is able to link both to internal and external (online) documents through hypertext links. As well, NVivo software relies heavily on color rather than plain text. These features make NVivo both functional and interactive (Weitzman 818).

I mapped my coding categories along the research questions I posed earlier. The three areas I was concerned with in my research questions were design, rhetorical awareness, and privacy and surveillance. I coded the interview transcriptions first for specific mentions of MySpace or Facebook. Next, I coded the transcriptions for passages that focused on site design, rhetorical awareness, or issues of privacy and surveillance.

NVivo allows the easy coding of multiple nodes, so within each passage I was able to

highlight smaller sections that corresponded to particular sub-topics connected to the

larger three areas of design, rhetorical awareness, and privacy and surveillance. Within

design, I looked for passages mentioning the use of particular design tools in the sites

(such as HTML templates and setting up a blog), overall site design, and the use of

pictures in one's personal profile. In sections dealing with rhetorical awareness, I looked

for passages mentioning audience, comments on personal profiles, blogging, confessional

writing, public and private writing, and personal responsibility. (While many of these

categories overlapped, NVivo allowed for multiple codes applied to the same section of

writing.) Finally, in sections dealing with privacy and surveillance, I looked for passages

mentioning the use of particular privacy tools, awareness of the privacy policy or terms

of service of a site, interactions between students and instructors, interactions with

parents or employers, media responses, and the Facebook News Feed.

After transcribing, coding, and analyzing data, I chose to share with participants

the most salient passages that had emerged from our conversations during the interview

process. Specifically, I asked for the participants' feedback, asking questions about the

accuracy of the selected passages—in other words, did the individual portrayed feel as

though I had encapsulated their experience as accurately as possible? Again, as

Takayoshi reminds us in "Complicated Women," interpretation is an issue of power

(128). Because the qualitative research process emphasizes the nuances of individual

voices rather than objective facts, both the researcher and her participants should ideally

be involved in the research process. Kirsch and Joy Ritchie offer advice to alleviate the

potential for essentializing others in qualitative research in their article "Beyond the

Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research." They propose that

researchers reinterpret their own experiences through others' eyes and collaborate with

participants in the interpretation of data (Kirsch and Ritchie 8). Without a self-reflexive

and mutually dialogic approach, the authors argue, our research will never truly be ethical

(Kirsch and Ritchie 25). By listening to and sharing information with each other, the

process becomes more of a collaborative effort respecting all members' input.

Conclusion

In the next chapter I discuss the results of my student survey, focusing specifically

on their attitudes toward online social networking sites, their perceived uses of such sites,

and their feelings regarding the ethics of different user groups viewing their online

writing in these sites. Chapter 5 continues this theme by listening to instructors' voices as

they react to many of the same questions posed to the students. Again, I specifically

examine the writing instructors' perceived attitudes toward online social networking

sites, their conceptions of audience and personal identity online, and the various ways

they envision sites like MySpace or Facebook both enhancing and detracting from the

traditional physically based classroom experience.

CHAPTER 4: MYSPACE, FACEBOOK, AND "GENERATION M" IN THE COMPOSITION CLASSROOM

The "digital divide" has been largely theorized as a problem of access, what Charles Moran calls "the forbidden 'A' word of composition studies" (205). Both the Clinton-Gore administration's Technology Literacy Challenge and the Bush administration's "No Child Left Behind" Act frame the digital divide within the binary of access. In 2001, the Technology Literacy Challenge asserted that "every single child must have access to a computer . . . so that every person will have the opportunity to make use of his or her own life" ("Getting America's Students Ready"). President Bush extended this call in his controversial "No Child Left Behind" Act, which offers "a commitment to support teachers, parents, and decision makers in . . . ensur[ing] every child receives the best possible education" ("The Plan"). Implied is the belief that students without technological access will be prevented from living full, rich lives—that such access will serve students by preparing them for immersion in a capitalistic society.

In 1999, Moran took computers and composition researchers to task for examining the intersections of access, gender, and ethnicity while ignoring material issues of access (205-6). To answer Moran's call for additional research focusing on the relationship between access and class, Jeffrey Grabill looks historically at computers and composition research in his 2003 article "On Divides and Interfaces: Access, Class, and Computers." Grabill notes that from 2000 to 2002, access to computers increased among all user groups, though access was, and still is, largely correlated to "income, education, and race/ethnicity" (461-62). What is important to cull from Grabill's assessment,

however, is his contention that "other critical gaps" remain problematic even in the face

of increasing access (462). These critical gaps include knowing how to use technologies,

knowing how to understand and use the substantial amounts of information available in

our culture, and knowing how to be productive using technologies (Grabill 462). This

digital divide may be even more difficult to assess than the material conditions of access

because the former carries fewer visible markers as evidence.

While much attention has been paid to students at risk of growing up without

access to and experience with computers, attention also needs to be paid to students'

critical digital literacies. The problem is not so much providing access for students

surrounded by technology but rather to effectively integrate information literacy

standards into the composition classroom in meaningful ways. The students we often see

in our writing classrooms now belong to a group called "Generation M." These

individuals are increasingly media-savvy and adept at technological multitasking

(Roberts and Foehr 39). They are equally at ease handling multiple instant messaging

conversations as they are downloading ringtones to their Motorola Razr phones and

forwarding viral videos via MySpace and Facebook. But though they possess

technological know-how and access to technology, they lack critical media literacy skills.

As material access continues to increase for many college students, rhetoric and

composition instructors will likely continue to concentrate on the critical gaps Grabill

describes. To do so, we can focus on technologies that students are familiar with but do

not think critically about, such as online social networking sites, podcasts, mash-ups,

blogs, and wikis, among others. To do so, however, instructors first need to familiarize

themselves with these technologies. In essence, rhetoric and composition instructors must "catch up" with the Generation-M students who have left them behind.

In both her 1997 CCCC address and her monograph *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century*: *The Importance of Paying Attention*, Selfe urges composition instructors to pay attention to technology. Selfe iterates her desire for rhetoric and composition teachers to achieve a greater awareness of the literacy agenda supported by the Clinton-Gore Technology Literacy Challenge (xix). In particular, she argues that compositionists have an "ethical responsibility to understand how literacy and literacy instruction directly and continually affects . . . the individuals and families with whom we come into contact as teachers" (xix). Because the definition of technological literacy that the Technology Literacy Challenge offers is in Selfe's opinion "limited and incomplete," efforts to meet the challenge are therefore misdirected (xx). With Gail E. Hawisher, Selfe continues to develop this theme in their edited collection *Literate Lives in the Information Age*. This text deepens Selfe's original call to pay attention to technology by arguing that teachers and schools in the "late age of print" need to rise to the challenge presented by students' increased participation in online spaces (DeVoss et al. 183).

To do so, rhetoric and composition instructors have to meet the needs of students who compose not just with words, but also with video, sound, and images (DeVoss et al. 183). This sort of multimedia composition is what Kathleen Blake Yancey calls "textured literacy," the ability "to use and combine print and visual/digital literacies" (Hart) and what the WIDE Research Center Collective (whose members are Bill Hart-Davidson, Ellen Cushman, Jeffrey Grabill, Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, and James E. Porter) terms

"digital writing" ("Why Teach Digital Writing?"). Certainly one rapidly growing space

where Generation M students are practicing textured literacy and digital writing is online

social networking sites. As Web 2.0 technologies, online social networking sites offer

individuals the chance to create multimodal compositions to express themselves; they can

draw on text, images, sound, and hypertext links to compose these multimedia

compositions via their personal profile in these sites. Effectively connecting this kind of

multimedia composing with literacy issues like those Hawisher and Selfe have long

called rhetoric and composition instructors to attend to is a complex task. This complex

task, however, is one that rhetoric and composition instructors will have to face both now

and in coming years.

The WIDE Research Center Collective concludes that writing instructors must

teach digital writing because

> most—if not all—writing takes place today in computer-mediated spaces. From
> drafting to presenting to publishing and other forms of production, most
> documents are digital creations that are frequently created and distributed
> digitally. And what this means, grand scale, is that writing, today, pushes on
> institutions in ways that writing has not before pushed. ("Why Teach Digital
> Writing?")

The final two chapters of this dissertation, then, attempt to describe some of the

pedagogical implications in paying attention to Generation M's use of online social

networking sites. This chapter focuses on students by first defining Generation M

students as a group and looking at their understandings of privacy and surveillance in

online social networking sites. Chapter 5 centers on rhetoric and composition instructors

by examining their attitudes toward incorporating online social networking sites into the

classroom; as well, I offer different definitions of technological literacy and offer ways to

bring online social networking sites into the classroom to teach technological literacy and rhetorical awareness.

In both chapters I argue that rhetoric and composition instructors must continue to attend to the radical changes in writing and writing instruction wrought by networked computers. One important technological space we must attend to is online social networking sites, particularly helping students attend to issues of rhetorical awareness. As I described in chapter 1, authors who write online must develop a rhetorical awareness that includes a broader sense of both intended and unintended audience, an understanding of the longevity of online writing, and the difficulty of controlling the spread of online compositions. The time has come, then, for rhetoric and composition instructors to engage in a conversation regarding online social networking sites so that we can effectively teach technological literacy and rhetorical awareness in the writing classroom.

Defining "Generation M"

Who are the students who make up the collective group often referred to in the media as Generation M, also known as Generation Media, Generation MySpace, or the Millenials? According to researchers, these individuals, born in the early 1980s, are fascinated by and often highly comfortable with technology. Diana Oblinger in "Understanding the New Students: Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millenials" describes some general trends in Generation M students' "information-age mindsets." These students do not view computers as a technology, she says, but rather as "an assumed part of life" (Oblinger 40). They increasingly access the Internet instead of television, multitask to stay connected with friends and family, and have "zero tolerance for delays" (Oblinger

40). Finally, she notes that Generation M students live in a world where the lines between consumption and creation are blurring: "In a file-sharing, cut-and-paste world, the distinctions between creator, owner, and consumer of information are fading. The operative assumption is often that if something is digital, it is everyone's property" (Oblinger 41-42). Again, while Generation M students are quite comfortable with technology, they are often not as comfortable understanding and critiquing its societal effects.[21]

The Kaiser Family Foundation's 2004 study of the media consumption habits of individuals between the ages of eight and eighteen provides perhaps the clearest picture of Generation M's media activities. Authored by Donald F. Roberts and Ulla G. Foehr, both of Stanford University, the Foundation's study, "Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-Olds," describes a cohort of individuals who have grown up immersed in media and technology. On average, they spend a quarter of every day interacting with media and have easy access to and instrumental literacy with computerized technologies. Through interviews and daily media diaries of 2,032 students between the ages of eight

---

[21] I do not want to stereotype Generation M students and provide reductive assumptions of these students' approaches to technology. Both the survey and the interviews I conducted with students illustrate that students who fall within the generally accepted parameters outlining Generation M—that is, approximately between eighteen and twenty-four years old currently—hold a variety of attitudes toward technology. Not all students participated in online social networks, for example, and those who did approached them in different ways. Some used social networking sites to find romantic partners while others used them to connect with classmates; still others maintained profiles only at the request of others or because it was the popular thing to do. I provide these examples to show how stereotypes about Generation M—like assumptions about any other generation—are flawed in many ways. Yet a review of the literature demonstrates that the field of rhetoric and composition has been concerned for some time with the impact of networked computers on technological literacy. Generation M students in the United States have undoubtedly grown up in a world saturated with computerized technologies; tracing the impact of these technologies on their development is therefore an intriguing avenue for computers and composition researchers. As well, examining popular perceptions of Generation M students may be valuable in considering best pedagogical practices to reach these students in the writing classroom.

and eighteen, the Kaiser Family Foundation study aimed to "explore their access to and recreational (nonschool) use of a full range of media," including print media such as newspapers and books; television and film; video games; music, including mp3s and the radio; and the Internet (Roberts and Foehr 5). They found that the majority of these individuals live in not just media-rich households, but "media-saturated" households.

> Almost every young person lives in a home with at least one TV set, VCR, radio, and CD or tape player; over 80% have video game consoles and personal computers, and subscribe to cable or satellite TV; and with the exception of recently introduced digital TV recorders, more than half of all children live in homes with . . . premium TV channels, Internet connections, and instant messaging capabilities. Moreover, high proportions of these children live in households with three or more of most media. (Roberts and Foehr 14)

Though physical and material access to technology is still a race and class-based issue, even minority students or students in lower socioeconomic brackets have greater access to technology than just a decade prior. With increased access comes an increased need to teach students how to engage with technology. Additionally, because schools are progressively moving toward computer-mediated environments (in part fueled by technology literacy challenges like No Child Left Behind), instructors need to help students "acquire the intellectual and critical capacities they need to critique and choose among available [technological] options" for writing and learning ("Why Teach Digital Writing?").

This ease of access to technology results in students who engage with a wide variety of media in any given day. In fact, because of the extensive access to technology today's students enjoy, Generation M individuals are likely to use multiple technologies at once. Although Generation M students are technologically literate in that they are able

to use multiple media, this literacy is highly instrumental. For them, technology is a

means to an end; with it, they can find information rapidly and then easily incorporate it

into their work. Generation M students are often proficient at searching the Web and

using e-mail; when asked to find materials for a research paper, they first turn to the

Internet and use search engines to find relevant hits, often settling for inferior sources

(Selber 489). Many of these students, however, have never been asked to find an article

in an academic journal online, evaluate a web site for bias, or look beyond common sites

like Yahoo! or Google when searching for resources online. Patricia Senn Breivik, chair

of the National Forum on Information Literacy and past president of the Association of

College and Research Libraries, argues that Generation M students value time over

reliability:

> What is growing ever more obvious is that today's undergraduates are generally far less prepared to do research than were students of earlier generations, despite their familiarity with powerful new information-gathering tools. They use computers to play games and send e-mails, and in the same spirit they are satisfied with whatever "information" a quick search produces. Research shows that students' major attraction to search engines like Google is that they save time. A few minutes on the Internet produces all the information the students believe they need for the next day's assignment. (22)

She goes on to state that universities need to explicitly teach information literacy skills

and references the Educational Testing Services' Information and Communications

Technology (ICT) skills test, which will help educators "evaluate and improve strategies

for preparing students for life and work in an information society" (Breivik 25). In

chapter 5, I further discuss definitions of information literacy and the ETS' ICT skills

test. I want to briefly mention here the results of ETS' preliminary ICT test results to

reiterate that ETS' discussion of Generation M students is framed around instrumental technological media literacies.

The Educational Testing Service found that, of the 6,300 students who took the ICT test, the majority of students displayed weak information literacy skills. Their findings reinforce Breivik's as well as Roberts and Foehr's assertions that Generation M students are particularly lacking in critical digital media literacy skills. ETS defined information and communication technology literacy as "the ability to use technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate and communicate information, and the possession of a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information" ("Educational Testing Service"). On average, students earned about half the points possible on the test and one particular area where students performed the weakest was in demonstrating research skills. For example, in a web search task, less than half of students entered multiple search terms to narrow the results. Students could not perform searches in large databases and minimize irrelevant results. Finally, many were unable to adapt textual materials for a new audience ("Educational Testing Service").

There are certainly problems with the assumptions underlying the ICT test. The test asks students to respond to scenarios that privilege office productivity software like word processing, presentation software, e-mail, databases, and graphing software. Web 2.0 social software technologies are noticeably absent; electronic bulletin boards and instant messaging software are the only offerings that move away from the office productivity suite model. The test focuses only on measuring functional activities, the ability to read, write, and communicate within computer-based environments (Selfe,

Technology and Literacy 11). It cannot measure the kind of critical media literacy understanding Selfe describes as embedded in "the social and cultural contexts for on-line discourse and communication and the ways in which electronic communication environments [affect] our cultural understanding of what it means to be literate" (*Technology and Literacy* 24). Despite such shortcomings, the ETS test does measure many of the research skills students in composition classes are asked to hone and demonstrate: evaluating source materials; communicating with multiple audiences; browsing through online sites for information; synthesizing numerous pieces of information into one document. The test results does demonstrate that, even at an instrumental, skills-based level, Generation M students fall short, to say nothing of their abilities to engage in critical understandings of technology.

To help Generation M students attain greater levels of technological literacy, it is important to pay attention to the technologies that these individuals are attracted to and participate in. (In chapter 5 I further discuss technological literacy.) Computers and composition researchers have long urged instructors to teach from a perspective that incorporates the technologies that students actually use. Hawisher, Selfe, Brittney Moraski, and Melissa Pearson argue that "faculty members can . . . broaden their understanding of, and appreciation for, students' literacies . . . by attending as closely to students' online reading and composing practices as they do to their own more traditional writing practices" (677). DeWitt feels that many rhetoric and composition instructors fail to recognize students' prior knowledge, "their worldviews . . . textual experiences, and . . . developed schemata . . . [that] stem from sources outside those that the academy tends to

value" (*Writing Inventions* 21). He goes on to note that the amount of online writing and

reading that students do is "worthy of our attention" because they are offered multiple

opportunities to "experience moments of invention" (DeWitt, *Writing Inventions* 77-79).

Because Generation M students are often more informed about technology use than their

instructors, Douglas Kellner notes, instructors and students can collaborate on curricula

to learn from each other:

> Critical media literacy teaching should engage students' interests and concerns, and involve a collaborative approach between teachers and students since students are deeply absorbed in media culture and may know more about some of its artifacts and domains than their teachers. . . . Exercises in media literacy can often productively involve intense student participation in a mutual learning process where teachers and students together learn media literacy skills and competencies. (94-95)

And Johnson-Eilola advocates in his book *Datacloud* that instructors should pay attention

to seemingly "irrelevant, annoying, off topic, or innocuous" technologies such as instant

messaging, video games, even turntabling (9). As we live in a "datacloud" of rapidly

changing and rearranging information, guiding students to understand the cultural shifts

that arise from the use of such technologies—including online social networking sites—is

an important means to helping them better "understand, learn from, shape, and extend

these cultural shifts in productive ways" (Johnson-Eilola 5, 9).

The next section of this chapter, in which I report on students' use of MySpace

and Facebook, is one effort to "listen closely and with [an] open [mind] to what students

are saying about … the world they inhabit" (Hawisher et al. 677). That world, of course,

is the world of online social networking, and students are the most prominent inhabitants

of that environment. Because Generation M students are growing up under the influence

of online social networking sites, it is critical that rhetoric and composition instructors help them reflect on the implications of these sites on their personal lives and our society overall. As outlined in chapter 2, many universities are taking official stances against students' use of online social networking sites and a common concern today regarding online social networking sites in academia is the breakdown of boundaries between students and instructors in virtual spaces.

In the next section, I explore some of the common attitudes toward online social networking sites as demonstrated by interviews with Generation M students, and I specifically focus on their understandings of issues of privacy and surveillance in these sites. To continue my examination of Foucauldian bio-power and confession, I outline how the perceived safety of online social networking sites (as demonstrated by the availability of privacy tools, closed networks, and secure site architecture via the site's code) may encourage students to engage in confessional writing aimed at an audience of their friends. However, because instructors (as well as employers and parents) are part of the students' unintended audience in these sites, students should be aware of their broader audience and make appropriate rhetorical choices for themselves when interacting with others in online social networking sites.

How Students Perceive and Use Online Social Networking Sites

Many students' initial introduction to online social networking sites is through a friend. Friends encourage others to join the sites for various reasons. One reason is to build up the friend network within the site and highlight the overall number of friends an individual has in MySpace or Facebook. "People try to have as many friends as possible

on Facebook and MySpace like it's some sort of contest," noted Bruce, an eighteen-year-old first-year student at the University of Arizona. Because online social networking sites' primary function is to help individuals create nodal connections among one another and thereby establish networks of similar members, there are many features within the sites that encourage users to invite new participants to join.

A second reason that students join online social networking sites is to proclaim allegiance to a particular group: in this case, the meta-group of students who use MySpace or who use Facebook. Membership in a particular online social networking site allows these individuals to fit in and demonstrate their group cohesiveness. In *Information and Communication Technologies in Everyday Life*, Leslie Haddon explains how loyalty to a particular technology functions as a way for young adults to signal allegiance:

> At one point in time it became fashionable for young people to have a pager not just because of its functionality but because having the device itself symbolized belonging to a group. Later the mobile phone was acquired because of this symbolic role . . . Yet, fashion considerations did not merely influence the decision to possess a mobile. They also shaped perceptions of what brands of mobiles were appropriate, the desirable age and size of models and, indeed, the choice of operator whose network was being used. These were all ways of demonstrating "street cred" . . . [and] being aware of such factors was part of the successful mastery of personal display. (47)

Haddon's examination of the distinctions between different mobile phones—how the brand, model, and service provider all helped shape the group identity of the user—is applicable to online social networking sites as well. Many Generation M individuals use technology not only as a tool but also as a cultural marker of status. The now-ubiquitous Apple iPod music player is one familiar technology that signals a certain level of status

and belonging. A student bearing a first-generation iPod, for example, may be viewed as coming from a lower economic background than a student with the latest fifth-generation video iPod; the former could also be seen as less tech-savvy.[22]

Membership in a certain online social networking site can similarly signal belonging to a particular group. A college student with a Facebook profile will find a certain sense of solidarity among his or her peers because so many college students belong to Facebook. Other sites offer specialized membership pools: BlackPlanet for African-Americans; CyWorld for South Koreans; LinkedIn for businesspeople; and VampireFreaks for the gothic industrial subculture. The distinctions among different online social networking sites can even signal financial status much the same way an iPod or a cell phone can; for instance, aSmallWorld bills itself as an exclusive, invitation-only online social networking site for "people with large personal networks, frequent travel and highly active socially" (read: financially well-off). Members include celebrities, European royalty, and major businesses such as Mercedes (Crampton 9-10). Some online social networking sites can therefore afford users a certain level of cultural cachet through membership and use.

Even choosing between MySpace and Facebook can signal a distinct group identity with other college students. Several student interviewees spoke of how establishing a Facebook account acts as a "rite of passage" for college students. Erica, for instance, joined MySpace in high school to keep in touch with friends during a month-long separation when she would not have access to a cell phone or instant messaging.

---

[22] That is, until the older iPod model achieves a certain level of cultural status and becomes a collector's item.

Once Erica graduated from high school, though, she established a Facebook account

"because [she] came to college and everyone has Facebook." Now, she said, she uses

MySpace "a lot less, especially since I got Facebook, because most of my friends are in

college now, so we just use Facebook." Similarly, Chrissa essentially abandoned her

MySpace account upon entering college; her friends in MySpace were mainly high

school friends, "and I don't talk to them as much."

In general, undergraduates characterized Facebook as a mature, college-oriented

site and MySpace as a less mature site populated mainly by high school students.

Charles's characterization of the two sites is typical of the interviewees I spoke with.

> [Though] it's changing every day, Facebook traditionally is for college students.
> Started off for Harvard students and then moved on to the Ivy Leagues. So, I use
> Facebook for, like, college. I think I look at Facebook like as a mature MySpace .
> . . kind of like for an older group. MySpace, I mean, I've had that since high
> school, so I think of MySpace as for everyone, for, like, tweens, for teenagers. It's
> for the younger crowd.

Several of the survey respondents echoed Charles's presumption. When asked "why

don't you belong to MySpace?" users responded that they felt too old for the site:

"thought it was for teens/young twentys"; "seems to be a 'kiddie' Web comm"; "I'm not

14"; "have not really looked into it. Is for kids." The assumption shared by many

Generation M students that Facebook attracts "more mature" individuals is difficult to

validate. However, whether it is true that MySpace users are high school age and younger

does not really matter; if enough users believe that Facebook is a more appropriate space

for them, they will elect to participate in this site.

While many students are invited to join online social networking sites at the

behest of a friend, they tend to *participate* in those sites that seem to offer them benefits,

another reason why the majority of the undergraduates I interviewed participate in

Facebook. For these undergraduates, Facebook offers a distinct advantage in that its

population is primarily other undergraduates and there is a clear distinction among

groups; students at the University of Arizona are partitioned off from students at other

universities because of the "network effect." Only users in a particular network, like the

University of Arizona network, can see others in that network. As a result,

undergraduates tend to view Facebook as a safer site. They were also likely to provide

greater levels of personal information in Facebook, update their profiles more often in

Facebook, and log in more frequently to Facebook. The interviewees reinforced this

feeling of safety, remarking that MySpace and Facebook "felt different" because of the

population of the sites themselves. Because Facebook was originally only open to college

students, it seems like an extension of the university itself. As well, individual profiles

are clearly associated with educational institutions and student identity is obvious in

Facebook profiles. In contrast, MySpace, open to anyone with an Internet connection,

seems much broader—and much less safe.

Students' Views of Privacy and Surveillance in MySpace and Facebook

Philomena sums up the perceived differences between MySpace and Facebook by

referring to the "security" of Facebook. Her response is typical of the undergraduates I

surveyed and interviewed who see the closed networks in Facebook as directly impacting

the privacy of the users' personal data contained within.

> Something about Facebook seems different than MySpace. MySpace is more like
> . . . a fun Internet playground, you know, have at it, whereas Facebook is more
> like "this is your networking for all your college buddies and you can put all your
> information and it will still be here." You know, it won't get lost off the note

> board or someone won't be too stoned that they . . . you know, it'll be here, you know, always. It's not going anywhere. So I think Facebook gives more the illusion of professionalism and security maybe.

This illusion of professionalism and security is one reason, as I explained earlier in chapter 2, why students readily post larger amounts of personal information in Facebook than in MySpace. Though Facebook is no longer closed to the public, many users are either unaware of that fact or still feel safe because of the privacy afforded by Facebook's user networks. Chrissa reiterated that the closed network helps her feel protected: "I feel safer on Facebook than I do on MySpace. Because I know only the people in my network can see it and not crazy people from Timbuktu."

Perceptions of safety and professionalism, however, are mutable. Lawrence Lessig discusses how Amazon.com, a popular online media store, changed its policy on the collection and sale of individuals' data:

> Amazon had a privacy policy. The data it was collecting, Amazon said, would not be sold to others, at least if a customer sent Amazon an e-mail asking that such data never be sold. The data was therefore collected only for Amazon's use. . . . At the end of 2000, however, Amazon announced a new policy. From that point on, data from Amazon could be sold to or shared with people outside Amazon, regardless of a consumer's request that it not. . . . The extraordinary feature of this announcement . . . was its retroactive effect. . . . Amazon refused requests to delete earlier data; the consumers who had relied on its policy were told they had no right to remove the data they had given. Their data was now subject to sale. ("Privacy as Property" 249)

Lessig's analysis of Amazon's privacy policy changes can perhaps be read as a cautionary tale for students who place too much trust in the privacy policies or tools offered in online social networking sites. Just because Facebook appears professional and concerned about online safety and privacy does not necessarily mean it will securely protect individuals' personal data forever.

Similarly, Gurak shows how individuals concerned about their private data being

disseminated via Lotus MarketPlace software without their approval ironically often

failed to control their own spread of personal information. She gives the example of

Larry Seiler, who "was clearly opposed to having his personal information pressed onto

CD-ROM and distributed by Lotus [but felt] comfortable posting his home address across

the Internet" (Gurak, *Persuasion and Privacy* 80). Seiler protested the possibility of

Lotus distributing his personal data in a letter posted online that paradoxically included

his personal information:

> Dear Marketeers [sic], I do not want my name included in your "Household
> Marketplace" CDROM database, nor that of anyone in my family, at any address
> I have ever lived at. To be specific, please make sure that the following entries are
> **NOT** included in your database: any last name (especially Seiler, S—, P—,
> or Z—) at 198 L— Street, B—, MA. . . . (Gurak, *Persuasion and Privacy* 81).

Gurak then questions why members of online communities place trust in certain texts,

communities, or companies; this line of questioning is important in examining students'

trust in online social networking sites.

Many student interviewees perceived Facebook as more trustworthy than

MySpace, much like the individuals Gurak describes who trust online discussion groups

to protect their data but not big businesses like the Lotus Corporation. In Facebook, one

factor that lends itself to the perception of trustworthiness is the official Facebook blog,

where site administrators routinely make members aware of new developments in the

site's offerings. Another factor is Facebook's previous history as a closed social network.

The site was once open only to college students, some of whom remain unaware that the

site's status has changed. A final factor that contributes to Facebook's perception of

trustworthiness is the design of the site itself. "We can use *code*, or a technical

architecture, to make it so we do not need to trust," Lessig states. "Or more precisely, we

can trust the technology rather than develop the knowledge we need to trust humans"

(331).

Lessig's point is particularly salient for an analysis of Facebook as compared to

MySpace. Facebook's code and its architecture both have distinct advantages in attracting

certain users who feel these factors lend the site greater trustworthiness in protecting

individual privacy. Facebook's HTML code, which cannot be changed by individual

users, contributed to Charles's sense that Facebook was safer than MySpace: "[In]

Facebook you really can't do anything with it. Really boring, yes, but . . . it's kinda safe.

And if you can't crack the HTML code, *nobody* can crack the HTML code. Not that

nobody [sic] won't." He continued, noting that the possibility of "cracking" Facebook

disturbed him because of the potential for access to so many individuals' personal

information: "Facebook is now made up of, let's say, a million people. One person finds

a way to get in there, they have information for a million people. A million people's e-

mails, a million people's addresses, a million people's cell phones." Students provide a

great deal of personal information like telephone numbers, addresses, birthdates, and so

on in Facebook and this wealth of information could certainly make it an appealing site to

hack. They willingly provide this information because they trust the closed network

model and believe in its safety. Yet as of September 2006, Facebook is no longer a closed

social network.

While many of the students I interviewed were aware that Facebook was now open to the public, a few were not. These individuals, then, had created and updated their personal profiles on the assumption that their information would only be accessible to a small group of college students. Bruce, for example, was surprised when he learned that Facebook was open to the public:

> *Bruce:* Facebook has been, I'm pretty sure, a solely college site until recently when they opened up the high school feature. And there's been kind of an uproar about that, but I don't know if there are any great differences in it. It seems like they both serve the same purpose and they've got a different layout. But . . .
>
> *Interviewer:* Facebook's actually now open to anybody.
>
> *Bruce:* Really?

Students like Bruce, unaware of current changes in the structure of the online social networking sites they regularly participate in, might then inadvertently share more personal information than they'd like out of ignorance. The difficulty then for many users of online social networks is keeping up with frequent site developments such as additional privacy tools, new design features, changes in membership pools, and so on. And as Lessig's analysis of Amazon.com and Gurak's discussion of Lotus MarketPlace show, companies can change their policies seemingly capriciously, leading to an "emotional firestorm" of online protests (Gurak, *Persuasion and Privacy* 29). Certainly after Facebook opened its membership pool to the public, a similar emotional firestorm took place within the site and members were deeply divided over the change.

As a result of Facebook opening its membership pool to the public, many students began to consider using more privacy tools than before. Erica was concerned about the repercussions of opening the site up to non-college student participants: "I like Facebook

a lot more [than MySpace] because it seems to be a college thing . . . now they've opened

it up to . . . people who aren't in college. . . . But I think I mainly still think of it as a

college thing. . . . It kind of made it like a club and now they're opening the club up to

everyone and no one likes that." The change in Facebook's membership pool made users

wary of potential repercussions on their privacy. Similarly, Facebook's News Feed

feature made Facebook users conscious of the potential for surveillance in this site.

Facebook has tried to keep users aware of recent developments, particularly those that

had effects on users' privacy, via the Facebook blog. When new privacy tools (such as

the ability to selectively opt out of Facebook's News Feed feature) appear, users are

made aware of these tools when they first log in to their accounts since the change.

Facebook developers attempt to keep users abreast of new developments in the easiest

way possible: by displaying this information on the users' default log-in page where they

are forced to see it.

Because of Facebook's commitment to keeping users aware of site developments,

students I interviewed knew more about and regularly used Facebook privacy tools.

Oddly, as often as MySpace appears in panicky news reports about surveillance,

MySpace users were less cognizant of that site's developments and privacy tools. Several

interviewees who used Facebook's privacy tools were unaware of similar tools available

in MySpace largely because MySpace has not been as aggressive in informing users

about the site's privacy options. De Pew describes how when users of technologies

"confront the limitations of their technological knowledge," they become aware of what

technology can and cannot allow them to do (111). These users, then, quickly find out

how technical knowledge "influences their strategies for composing a digital

subjectivity" (De Pew 111). Understanding the privacy tools offered in one online social

networking site does not automatically transfer over to another site; students familiar with

Facebook privacy tools can still be unaware of similar privacy tools in MySpace. Some

knew that such tools must exist in MySpace but merely didn't know where to find them.

For students like these, the limitations of their technical knowledge, as De Pew notes,

directly influence their abilities to compose their digital identities.

For instance, Bruce's Facebook profile was private when I looked him up in

October 2006. His MySpace profile, however, was publicly available. During our

interview, I inquired as to why Bruce's MySpace profile was public but his Facebook

was private; I quickly realized that if Bruce had been aware of MySpace privacy tools, he

would have used them.

> If I had the choice—or if I *knew* about the choice—with MySpace, I would have
> made it [my MySpace profile] private as well. But I didn't know enough about
> MySpace to have looked for that . . . I guess that probably has more personal
> information on it. I actually don't remember writing it, but I'm sure I did.

As De Pew states, "success in one context may not translate to another context" (114).

Bruce's ability to compose his identity in Facebook in ways that he saw as protecting his

privacy did not automatically translate over to another context (i.e., his MySpace profile).

He needed supplementary instruction in how to successfully port over to MySpace the

technological skills and awareness he already demonstrated in Facebook.

Bruce had several pieces of personal information publicly available on his

MySpace page. He had filled out a survey about himself and included his full name (first,

middle, and last); his full birth date; his birthplace; the name of his workplace; and the

high school he graduated from. Along with this personal information, a friend had posted

a picture comment with Bruce clearly shown. When I pointed out that I, a complete

stranger, had access to all of this information via his MySpace page, Bruce wanted to

know how to make the profile private: "I never really thought once about my MySpace,

but, yeah. I imagine I will [make it private now] . . . . If I didn't make it private, I would

probably take out something. I'd probably take out my full name and all my personal

information." Two days later when I checked, Bruce's MySpace profile had been

changed to private. Bruce just needed assistance to show him how to use available

privacy tools.

Similarly, Isolde's profiles in MySpace and Facebook were both public in

October 2006 when we first spoke. Although the majority of her profile in both sites was

innocuous, she included a few pieces of personal information that raised red flags for me

as a stranger viewing them: in her Facebook profile, she had included her e-mail address,

cell phone number, birth date, AOL Instant Messenger screen name, and the name of the

residence hall where she lived. In her MySpace profile, she had some personal responses

to a survey that was posted as a public blog. Although Isolde had at least one private

(friends only) blog, the one in which she spoke frankly of her past history of depression

was public. Isolde was actually unaware that either of her profiles were public; she had

assumed she set them private and was concerned once I had pointed out that they

weren't: "I should probably go change that now. I thought it was set private. I thought I

had set it that way. I don't want creepy people looking at me."

Interestingly, though Isolde had more personal information contained in her

Facebook profile, she was immediately concerned with setting her MySpace profile

(which had very little personal information) private. In our interview, she, like many

other undergraduate students I spoke with, referred to MySpace as a "scary" site.

> MySpace scares me, so I don't put that much on there. . . . Like when I first
> signed on to Facebook it wasn't a whole regional thing, which is probably why I
> didn't change it because I didn't hear they went regional. So only people from the
> University of Arizona, only people for the theater areas. So, granted, the U of A
> [Facebook network] has thirty thousand people on it, plus all the alumni.

Because more people were aware of MySpace and could potentially join the site,

MySpace presented greater privacy concerns for Isolde. While Isolde was unaware until

our interview that Facebook had opened its membership pool, she quickly conceded that

the Facebook regional network she belonged to, the University of Arizona, was really

quite large ("thirty thousand people . . . plus all the alumni").

Though she was aware of the blog privacy settings in MySpace and had used

those before, Isolde didn't know about any of the other MySpace privacy tools, such as

setting her entire profile private. Again, because Facebook regularly informs users of new

privacy features, Isolde was aware of some Facebook privacy tools: "On Facebook they

have actually put messages when you first log in about the safety features and what they

were doing with the mini-feeds." But she either had not been a Facebook member when

the site sent out a default message about setting one's entire profile as private or she had

overlooked it. After I showed her how to set her profiles in MySpace and Facebook

private, Isolde thanked me, stating that this kind of one-on-one assistance was probably

the most effective way to help students understand the ramifications of their online social

networking profiles: "I think general teaching is good, but sitting down with someone and saying, 'Did you know this? By the way, you're not private.' Wow, I need to change that. . . . It's hard to check your privacy if you thought it [the profile] was private." After our interview, Isolde changed both her MySpace and her Facebook profiles to private.

Overall, Generation M students did not act on their concerns about privacy and surveillance in substantial ways. Indeed, many of the students I spoke to only seemed concerned about privacy and surveillance in response to my lines of questioning about these issues. Though many students said that they were "very concerned" (27%) or "somewhat concerned" (44%) about privacy issues in online social networking sites, only 6% of respondents said that the most important design feature of MySpace was the ability to set blog privacy levels and only 10% responded that the most important Facebook feature was the ability to set varied profile privacy levels. Students were more interested in using MySpace to leave comments on others' pages (37%), customize their MySpace profile (24%), and upload photos (13%). In Facebook, students liked the ability to post on people's Walls (45%) and upload photos (24%). Their conceptions of privacy seemed limited to not being seen by people outside of their "friends group," people like instructors, employers, and parents. Similarly, in a recent survey of over four hundred Massachusetts Institute of Technology students (90% undergraduates), over one-third of Facebook members (38%) described knowing about privacy features in the site but choosing not to use them. Over half (58.5%) said they were either "not concerned" or "barely concerned" about Facebook privacy (Jones and Soltren 20).

For the most part students didn't fear their profiles being seen by individuals outside of their friends group anyway. "I wouldn't expect a teacher to actually use [these] sites," said Chrissa, who said that if her teachers, employers, or her parents started using online social networking sites, she "would have more privacy settings." Isolde viewed her instructors as "scared" of online social networking: "It kind of scares my teachers because they're not very technologically advanced. My stage manager teacher is a very formidable woman. I'm terrified of her. I couldn't imagine her having Facebook or whatever." Isolde said she would not "curse out . . . [their] shows" if her theatre instructors were active in these sites. Bruce encapsulated the Generation M mentality regarding the interactions between themselves and their elders as "one-upmanship."

> Almost always older people aren't tech-savvy enough or they haven't heard of it. They wouldn't think to look for their own children because they're little saints and would never do anything wrong and I don't know. It seems like the kids assume that their parents are totally oblivious and their employers are totally oblivious and they have . . . they're one up on everybody.

Generation M students perceive their instructors as behind in terms of technological knowledge and prowess. While this perception is somewhat stereotypical, there is a nugget of truth encapsulated in this stance. Even within the field of composition, many instructors resist what they see as the pervasive encroachment of technology, particularly computers, into pedagogy. Such instructors view technology's role in the classroom as reductive, skills-based, and instrumental. (In chapter 5, I provide more of my findings from interviews and surveys with technology-resistant instructors.) Complicating this reductive stance is fruitful in large part because technology influences the writing process

in ways that move beyond mere "technical skills." The WIDE Research Group Collective

defends teaching writing in online and computerized environments thusly:

> Teaching writing thoroughly and comprehensively requires that we address questions of production (how writing is made) and delivery (how writing is distributed). The internetworked computer is both a production tool . . . and a distribution tool . . . [and] understanding how the technology impacts the writing process and rhetorical effect of the writing [is] an absolutely necessary part [of teaching writing]. ("Why Teach Digital Writing?")

The interview and survey results also point to a shift in Generation M's

understandings of privacy and surveillance. For students who have grown up among the

ubiquity of technology, of reality television, of the seeming realization of Andy Warhol's

concept of fifteen minutes of fame for everyone, privacy is a concern to pay lip service to

and not much more. A recent *New York* magazine article, "Say Everything," posits that

"the future belongs to the uninhibited."

> Younger people, one could point out, are the only ones for whom it seems to have sunk in that the idea of a truly private life is already an illusion. . . . Your life is being lived in public whether you choose to acknowledge it or not. So it may be time to consider the possibility that young people who behave as if privacy doesn't exist are actually the sane people, not the insane ones. . . . Someone who has grown up "putting themselves out there" [might have] found that the benefits of being transparent make the risks worth it. (Nussbaum 3)

Many of the students I interviewed reinforced Nussbaum's view: participation in online

social networking sites might mean less privacy, but the benefits are worth it. Such

benefits include the ability to communicate with individuals in geographically distant

locales, the capability to signal ingroup belonging, the chance to meet new people, and

the opportunity to promote themselves online.

Some interviewees also pointed out that, having grown up amidst the pervasive

influence of the Internet, they have long been bombarded with messages about online

safety. Perhaps the constant barrage of negative media depictions of the Internet and messages about online safety has dulled the point so much that Generation M students no longer take notice. Erica likened this to earlier fears about chat rooms and instant messaging.

> They've been warning us about [safety], like, ever since chat rooms and instant messaging became big when we were younger and people found out, you know, kids were handing out their information. You know, they keep telling you, "Be careful. Don't do that." You know, "You're putting yourself at risk." And so I think it's kind of the same warning, so I don't think it would be too weird to just say, you know, "Just remember, it's not just your friends that are looking at your pages. There are some creepy people out there."

For Erica, the central concern, whether in chat rooms, in instant messaging, or in online social networking sites, was giving out information to "creepy people" online. Her stance seemed to indicate that Generation M individuals knew better than to do so. As well, she dichotomizes behavior as "risk-taking" (handing out information to strangers online) and "safe" (providing information for friends). Such a dichotomy is ironic considering that many individuals who have been punished for their online writing were turned in by fellow students, like Theodore Schrubbe. Like Erica, Charles felt that Generation M students already know how to be safe in online spaces.

> We all have this trust, you know. But we're not doing anything stupid. I mean, we're not saying "Hey, here's my phone number, here's my address, here, come get me now." But the thing is, you know, we all know by now. The biggest scare was when AOL Instant Messenger first started and we didn't know. Now everyone knows. Now, I mean, all we need is to teach the little kids, start from a young age and they'll know too.

For many Generation M students, online safety is almost a non-issue: if one refuses to give out personal information to creepy people online, then everything will be okay. This

stance negates any concerns about being rhetorically savvy for both intended and unintended audience members.

As Gurak points out in *Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace*, group ethos, or identity, can play a strong role in individuals' willingness to provide personal information in online communities. Group ethos can lead members to believe they share morality and credibility (Gurak, *Persuasion and Privacy* 13-14). Her example of the perceived divide between Lotus Marketplace and online discussion group members is similar to Charles and Erica's take on the divide between credible student members of online social networking sites and "creepy" strangers. This oversimplification may prevent students from considering the danger of providing too much personal information even to their online social networking "friends." The conflation of several different levels of personal relationships offered by the term "friend" in these sites can also lead students to provide too much personal data. And like the example Gurak provides of Larry Seiler, students like Charles may think they're not "doing anything stupid" but lack the ability to look critically at their own personal profiles in online social networking sites. They may not see how the perceived safety afforded by the site itself in conjunction with a sense of group ethos may lead them to put themselves at risk.

How then can students learn to critically look at their online social networking activities? Computers and composition researchers have called for writing teachers to incorporate critical digital media literacy instruction into the classroom. In chapter 1, I outlined Porter's use of the phrase being rhetorical as a way to think about the awareness of power, discourse conventions, and audience that students must engage with in online

spaces. Selfe uses the expression "critical technological literacy" and extols individuals to understand "the social and cultural contexts for on-line discourse and communication" (*Technology and Literacy* 148). Gurak argues for training students in becoming "critical consumers of online information" who look at cases like the Lotus MarketPlace protests to assess "what these actions mean for future citizen participation in a democracy" (*Persuasion and Privacy* 134). Johnson-Eilola proffers the term "datacloud" to describe the sheer amount of information in our daily lives that we must learn to rearrange, sort, filter, combine, and break down (4). Anne Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola reject the word "literacy" in "Blinded by the Letter: Why are we using Literacy as a Metaphor for Everything Else?" and offer multiple alternatives: rhizomes (Deleuze and Guattari); contact zones (Pratt); border spaces (Giroux) and borderlands (Anzaldua) (368).

No matter what term we use, compositionists should take heed of the underlying message: students need training to understand the differences in "issues of invention and inquiry (exploration, research, methodology) as well as questions of audience, persuasiveness, and impact" ("Why Teach Digital Writing?") If one goal of rhetoric and composition instructors is to teach students critical digital media literacies, then an important aspect of that instruction is assisting students in critically evaluating online social networking sites. So many of the issues Porter, Selfe, Johnson-Eilola, Gurak, Wysocki, and others describe as critical to twenty-first century composition instruction are already playing themselves out in online social networking sites. Chapter 5 further outlines definitions of critical digital media literacy and information literacy and outlines ways that rhetoric and composition instructors can incorporate online social networking

into the classroom; here, I provide specific classroom assignments to help instructors

begin envisioning techniques to bring online social networking into a variety of writing

courses.

CHAPTER 5: BRINGING SOCIAL NETWORKING BACK TO THE CLASSROOM: TECHNOLOGICAL LITERACY IN COMPOSITION TEACHING

This chapter concludes my project by offering some pedagogical problems and possibilities which have emerged from my study of online social networking sites. First, to provide an understanding of how instructors of writing and writing-intensive courses view and use online social networking sites, I present the results of my survey of 127 writing instructors. Throughout, I supplement the survey results with materials gleaned from follow-up interviews with ten survey participants. The results from these interviews help to further illuminate the survey responses and provide a more detailed understanding of instructors' views and uses of online social networking sites. I offer definitions of "information literacy" and "technological literacy" to argue that rhetoric and composition instructors should continue incorporating technology into their pedagogies to teach such a technological literacy. Finally, I provide specific classroom assignments that can be used in a variety of writing courses (from first-year composition to professional writing to advanced composition) to teach rhetorical awareness and technological literacy; these assignments focus on MySpace and Facebook and can be adapted based on an individual instructor's pedagogical needs.

How Instructors Perceive and Use Online Social Networking Sites

Instructors are often unfamiliar with the everyday technologies that their students use regularly—online social networking sites, of course, are among these technologies. Even when familiar with such sites, instructors may choose not to join and create user

profiles in MySpace and Facebook. They demonstrate a lack of participation in online

social networking sites for various reasons. I surveyed 127 instructors of writing or

writing-intensive courses, 50% of whom were graduate teaching assistants; the non-

teaching-assistant respondents identified as adjuncts (21%), assistant professors (15%),

associate professors (5%), full professors (2%), and "other" (7%). The majority of those

surveyed noted that they did not participate in the two online social networking sites

under analysis, MySpace and Facebook. Only forty-seven instructors, or 37%, had

MySpace accounts; thirty-one instructors, or 24%, had Facebook accounts. However,

most respondents were familiar with the sites themselves; only three instructors (4%) said

they "didn't know what MySpace is," while twenty-two instructors (23%) said the same

for Facebook. The prevalence of cautionary news reports on social networking (and on

MySpace in particular) has helped raise awareness of these sites. Again, while the

instructors surveyed were aware of online social networking sites, most chose not to

participate in them.

The reasons for instructors' non-participation in online social networking sites

tended to center on three issues: privacy and surveillance, teacher identity, and time.

Many instructors cited concerns about their online privacy, Web presence, adware,

spyware, or spam as their main reasons for non-participation. Others noted concerns

because of their occupation as a teacher. "It's a student space; I want to respect that" is

one comment that seems to typify the assumption instructors held about online social

networking sites—that these sites are student-created, student-run, and not really for

instructors. Some teachers felt they were not part of the target age group or audience for

these two online social networking sites. Finally, several respondents cited time as an issue that kept them from participating in online social networking. Typical responses included the following: "I think I used MySpace to waste too much time"; "It's a time commitment I'm not willing to spend"; "I'm too busy"; "I know I would be too distracted by it." For these instructors, either a current lack of time ("I'm too busy") or a perceived future lack of time ("I know I would be too distracted by it") was significant enough to keep them from using these sites, and a few hinted at previously wasted time ("I think I used MySpace to waste too much time").

These instructors' unease is important to listen to in considering why and how to teach technological literacies in the composition classroom. If, as Selfe, Hawisher, Kellner, DeWitt, and Alexander argue, technological literacy is an aspect of the classroom that we cannot afford to ignore, then we must pay careful attention to rhetoric and composition instructors who fail to pay attention to technology. I do not want to suggest that all instructors must embrace online social networking sites wholeheartedly; it is not essential to participate in these sites to be able to attend to the ongoing cultural conversation regarding online social networking. However, the dearth of academic attention to online social networking sites in the field of rhetoric and composition is worrisome, particularly as such sites have existed since the mid-nineties.

There are two reasons for this shortage of academic attention to online social networking sites. First, while MySpace and Facebook are relatively recent phenomena (established in 2003 and 2004, respectively), other online social networking sites have existed since approximately 1995 when Classmates.com was created. However, it was

not until Friendster.com debuted in 2002 that an online social networking site truly captured the attention of a substantial number of high school and college students. The direct connection between college students and online social networking sites has only recently occurred and thus by extension captured the attention of academics interested in the direct connection between students and social networking.

Second, while these sites do offer interesting opportunities for teaching technological literacy in the composition classroom, as illustrated in the previous chapters, these sites bring into focus a great number of contentious ethical issues for instructors. Some instructors may therefore need reassurance regarding particular issues before beginning to use these sites pedagogically. Certain concerns repeatedly emerged throughout the interviews I performed with instructors. Thus in the following section I move through the three major areas of concern that instructors shared with me during their interviews: privacy and surveillance, teacher identity, and time.

Instructors' Views of Privacy and Surveillance in MySpace and Facebook

"In order to have this convenience of openness and social bonding and sharing or whatever . . . how paranoid do we need to get?"–Donna

Donna's quote voices a common concern instructors held regarding privacy and surveillance in online social networking sites. Overall, those instructors who did participate in MySpace and Facebook did so with a healthy dose of suspicion; many remained apprehensive of surveillance by students or authority figures. By surveillance, I expand on Janangelo's discussion of surveillance in the classroom, which he defines as instructors' "undetected 'lurking' . . . [to] monitor their students' lab attendance, lab hours, and composing time" (48). While surveillance in online social networking sites

does not necessarily need to focus on classroom-related activities like attendance and composing time, instructors are still able to lurk and find out about their students' personal lives, their habits, and, yes, sometimes their classroom activities as well.

Respondents often placed the onus on instructors to ensure their immunity to surveillance and characterized curious students as likely to surveil their teachers. "As instructors, I think we have to realize what our students could be seeing about us . . . and if we want them to see that. If we don't, we can choose to not put it up or lock our profiles with privacy settings," noted one survey respondent. Another seemed to think it more likely that students would seek out their instructors' online social networking profiles than vice versa: "I understand students' curiosity, and think they are probably more likely to engage in [surveillance] than instructors are." A similar comment shows this respondent's assumption of the inevitability of student monitoring of instructors' profiles: "[It's] not their business; however, we know they will do it anyhow."

These responses seem to pit students against instructors. In such a battle, instructors attempt to keep nosy students from discovering their personal information and using it to make assumptions about their instructors' personal lives. As well, these survey responses underscore the seeming helplessness many individuals feel regarding control of their personal information in online spaces—that information, once published online, is almost impossible to control. The responses highlight a pessimistic view of surveillance via technology as inevitable and as the burden of the individual who chooses to participate in the technological site. In a Foucaudian analysis of surveillance in these sites, individual users become "the principle of [their] own subjection" and adjust their

behavior and their self-representation in the site accordingly (*Discipline and Punish* 203).

Janangelo points out that students (who he equates to inmates) internalize the knowledge

of being watched and are intimidated into policing their own behavior for fear of being

seen (50). In these examples, however, the instructors perceive students as intimidating

them rather than vice versa, an intriguing turn of events considering the traditional view

of the classroom hierarchy of power. Students' scrutiny of their instructors in online

social networking sites inverts traditional notions of classroom surveillance; now students

are just as able to surveil their instructors as the opposite. This is in direct contrast to

computers and composition research that focuses on panoptic classrooms where the

instructor remains in control of surveillance: Janangelo's discussion of instructors' use of

computers to surveil their students and other instructors; Todd Taylor's surrender to

surveillance to retain control of his classroom in "The Persistence of Authority: Coercing

the Student Body"; and Evan Davis and Sarah Hardy's description of how "Blackboard

meets the panopticon" in "Teaching Writing in the Space of Blackboard."

Instances such as these where instructors feel they are intimidated by students

online showcase how traditional classroom power differentials easily break down in

online social networking sites. This breakdown of power has interesting ramifications for

writing instructors. Already computers and composition researchers have examined how

the shift from print to online writing affects textual discourse through technologies like e-

mail and instant messaging conversations; for example, Johnson-Eilola and Selber's

study of TECHWRL looked at the accepted discourse conventions for this particular

electronic discussion list and how individuals begin policing themselves by internalizing

those discourse laws and understanding the consequences of breaking them (270). They continue by noting that people tended to complain

> when participants raise[d] topics that potentially rupture relatively stable hegemonic relations—racism, sexism, civil rights—topics that should be discussed within the context of technical communication, but not without making some difficult admissions about our current culture and the cultural capital of many practicing professionals. (277)

Similarly, many of the stories I have recounted in this dissertation focus on moments when individuals were penalized for their part in rupturing the stable relations established between instructors and their students in academia: the Syracuse University students who banded together to complain about a teaching assistant; the adjunct at Southern Methodist University who lashed out at what she saw as unfair material conditions on her campus, where students wore fancy clothes and drove expensive cars while temporary instructors scraped by and felt invisible; the Duquesne University student who started an anti-gay Facebook group and whose punishment was doled out in the form of a writing assignment. Such ruptures point to the complexities of power relations in academia and should be cause for us to think about the difficult questions behind them. Unfortunately, in many of these instances, those in marginalized positions or those who expressed unpopular opinions about what they saw as the "truth" were further silenced by those in power—the Syracuse students expelled, the adjunct fired, the Duquesne student forced to remove his comments from Facebook.

In her book *In the Age of the Smart Machine*, Shoshana Zuboff complicates the view of administrative surveillance, offering a reading that shows how computers in the workplace can encourage a more democratic—yet not trouble-free—ideal:

> The model is less one of Big Brother than of a workplace in which each member is explicitly empowered as his or her fellow worker's keeper. Instead of a single omniscient overseer, this panopticon relies upon shared custodianship of data that reflect mutually enacted behavior. This new collectivism is an important antidote to the unilateral use of panoptic power, but . . . [h]orizontal transparency breeds new human dilemmas as well. (351)

One of Zuboff's central themes throughout her book is that hierarchical systems of control are ineffective in networked communications technologies, and this breakdown of hierarchies is clear in online social networking sites. But while Zuboff maintains that technology can make networked environments "post-hierarchical" and more egalitarian, the instructors I spoke with overwhelmingly found the breakdown of teacher/student boundaries in online social networking sites distressing. Again, this breakdown of boundaries and the resulting ruptures point to some larger issues we could attend to in academia, such as the widespread reliance on low-paid temporary adjunct workers, particularly in composition, or the popular conception that academia relies too heavily on left-leaning ideals and is quick to ostracize those who counter with conservative views. These are the power differentials that are brought to the surface in interactions between administrators, students, and instructors in online social networking sites and they may provide starting points for us to debate some of these ethical issues in rhetoric and composition.

Protecting One's Privacy

Because they were aware of the breakdown of boundaries between themselves

and students in online social networking sites, most instructors took steps to ensure their

privacy in these sites. The respondents placed the onus on the instructor to either not put

information on the Internet or to carefully consider the information contained in the

public social networking profile. One recommended way for instructors to ensure the

latter was to use available privacy tools in online social networking sites. "If a teacher

doesn't want students to know something, then the teacher should keep that information

private," said one survey respondent. Another echoed this sentiment, saying "If you don't

want students viewing it, you'd better go by an alias or get into a locked network." For

these respondents and others like them, two clear choices emerged: keep one's online

social networking profile public and risk students viewing personal information unless

appropriate self-censoring occurs, or use available privacy tools to place barriers between

sensitive materials and unwanted audience members. These are not the only options for

interactions between students and instructors in online social networking sites, however,

and the tendency for respondents to characterize their choices along such a binary

reinforces deterministic assumptions about technology use that often surface in research

on virtual spaces. A better model might follow along Foucault's discussion of power as a

capillary system; in such a model, power is not possessed by any one individual but is

exercised in a multitude of constantly shifting relations among individuals. As power is

exercised rather than possessed, it is visible in particular practices and therefore we

should turn our attention to the local, individual practices between students and instructors in online social networking sites.

A recurrent theme that surfaced regarding practices of power in online social networking sites is the issue of trust—between individuals and in the site itself. Gloria pointed out the potential insecurities of privacy tools in MySpace and Facebook. When I asked during our interview about the trust individuals place in privacy tools in these sites, she responded, "I don't put any trust in them. To me it's an illusion and to me it's more of me banking on whoever's coming to my page and believing that it's private." Her concerns about the "illusion of privacy" extended to our discussion about the sites' terms of service and privacy policy as well. After I asked if she had ever looked at the privacy policy or terms of service on these sites, Gloria explained why she had not.

> No. Because I just assumed that even though they claim certain . . . I don't think that anything can be private if it's on the Internet and so no. And I just assume that what precautions I take are fine and they give me limited control over it and even when I delete my profile it's still going to be cached for awhile . . . I got into it thinking MySpace is not going to protect my privacy because I'm choosing to put this stuff up here . . . And if I really wanted stuff private, I would never put information on the Internet. . . . If I really wanted privacy, I would not put myself out there.

However, her skepticism was unusual; most of the interviewees had faith that the privacy tools in MySpace and Facebook would sufficiently keep their personal information hidden from view. As Bob noted,

> Internet security being what it is, no such restrictions should be understood as perfect. However, someplace like MySpace, I'm sure somebody would have to really, really try to get access to something that's . . . restricted like that. . . . I would not be super concerned about malicious figures breaking into my blog on my MySpace page. It may be no more than a very superficial layer of security, but it is a superficial layer of security that's probably effective against most people that would want to look at your blog.

Similarly, Donna felt that she "can trust those sorts of things—simple things like 'you have to be added as a friend before you can read this blog.' Most people would not have any clue how to hack beyond that." Connie had faith in privacy tools because of previous experiences with them on others' profiles:

> I've tried to read enough people's blogs and haven't been able to get in that it seems to me that those features must work and I've tried to go to other people's pages [where] their stuff is private so I assume that when other people have tried to get to my page they've encountered the same thing. . . . I know that those things seem to work because I get complaints or e-mails from people saying, "I want to read your stuff."

Thus, for most instructors who maintained profiles on online social networking sites, the available privacy tools were trustworthy enough to reassure them of their profiles' privacy.

A few of the interviewees expressed their unease with the growing corporatization of online social networking sites and similar technologies. MySpace was acquired by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation when that company bought MySpace's parent company, Intermix Media Inc. for 580 million dollars (Gonsalves). Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg has actively been searching for a buyer willing to pay the reported two billion dollar price tag he has placed on the site (Rosenbush). Even sites like YouTube, Skype, and LiveJournal have been bought and sold for lucrative amounts.[23] YouTube was sold to Google for $1.65 billion ("Google to Acquire YouTube"). Skype was bought by eBay for $2.6 billion ("eBay to Acquire Skype"). Finally, LiveJournal was purchased by

---

[23] YouTube is a video sharing site. Skype is a peer-to-peer Voice-over-Internet-Protocol (VoIP) communication network which individuals can use to phone and videoconference with each other. LiveJournal is a blogging site.

Six Apart for an undisclosed amount ("Weblogging Software Leader Six Apart Acquires

LiveJournal").

The interviewees who were uneasy about the corporatization of their favorite

technologies were largely worried about its potential impact on their privacy. Donna

shared that she was more concerned with her searching activities online than her data in

MySpace:

> I get more concerned with my Amazon.com account, credit cards and that sort of
> thing going out. I do find it disturbing that searches, search streams, search
> histories can be saved and associated with you very easily. I use Gmail [Google's
> e-mail service], so I log in and then go off in the little box and search something
> on Google and, because I'm logged in, suddenly that search is tied to my name
> and it's searchable if somebody wants those records.

However, the majority of interviewees admitted that they had not read the Terms of

Service and the privacy policy in either MySpace or Facebook upon signing up. "I

haven't," said Donna. "Sort of embarrassing. . . . Most are . . . standard legalese . . . but

no, actually, I haven't. . . . I could be signing away my house for all I know." Because

Donna had only signed up on Facebook to keep in touch with her family and a few close

friends but she had not personalized her profile beyond the bare minimum, she felt that

these legal documents were not things she needed to explore. Bob, who chose not to

participate in online social networking sites at all, doubted that users would voluntarily

read the Terms of Service or other policy-related documents: "[MySpace] could give you

a 25-page 'how this works, here's the concept behind it, here's what we expect you to do,

here's what you're not allowed to do,' but is anybody actually going to read that whole

document before clicking 'I agree' and putting their MySpace page up? I don't know.

Likely not." Linda seemed unsure whether or not she had looked at any policy pages.

Interviewer:	Do you know anything about the privacy policy or terms of service of any of these sites? When you signed up, did you look at those at all?
Linda:	Not really. Not that I remember. I'm sure I glanced at them and they seemed the same as everything else.
Interviewer:	Do you think it's important for people to read those kind of documents?
Linda:	I think you should probably read them. I didn't but it would probably be a smart idea. . . . I mean, I think it would be good to look and see what kinds of companies they release their information to. I always make sure to uncheck all those little boxes . . . they're always checked, too . . . "Can we share your e-mail address with companies?"
Interviewer:	Do you remember doing any of that on the sites?
Linda:	I probably unchecked the boxes.

Her nonchalance is representative of most instructors' (and students') attitudes toward the

privacy policy and terms of service online.

While most instructors surveyed said they were concerned about privacy and

surveillance, the interviewees' responses seem to indicate that individuals place a great

deal of trust in privacy tools and often fail to question the larger ramifications of sharing

their personal information in online social networking sites. When responding to the

question, "How concerned are you about privacy issues in online social networking

sites," 85% of participants were either "very concerned" or "somewhat concerned" about

their privacy. Their privacy concerns mostly focused on the potential for sensitive

personal information to be seen by individuals outside of the users' "circle of trust"—for

instructors, usually their current or former students and occasionally employers or other

authority figures. These instructors were slightly more worried about the potential for

employers to view their profiles than students; 60% were either "very concerned" or

"somewhat concerned" about administrators viewing their profiles, while 55% responded in kind about students viewing their profiles.

When considering the appropriateness of employers viewing their profiles, instructors seemed divided on the issue, many indicating that they were "torn on the issue" in some way or that "it's a tough call." For one respondent, the appropriateness of employers viewing employees' online social networking profiles "depends on the situation. People should be judged by their actions, and if they represent their own actions in unacceptable ways, an employer would [do] well to attend to this fact." Another respondent differentiated between behavior occurring on and off the work clock to determine the appropriateness of such viewing:

> If employees are using work time and work resources to maintain their personal/social networks, it might be the right of the employer. If privacy and company protection issues are critical, it might also be important for the employer. However, if there is absolutely no directly work-related time or activity devoted to social networks, then I don't think the employer should look, but that doesn't mean the employees shouldn't be aware that their employers could look.

Employers viewing employees' (that is, instructors') profiles were mostly viewed negatively, as "crossing boundaries," "spying," "wholly inappropriate," "invasive surveillance," and "oppressive," among other terms.

In contrast, students' viewing instructors' profiles were viewed less negatively. "Why not?" said one respondent. "It's the publisher's (teacher's) responsibility to censor what he puts out there for people to see." Many of the replies similarly viewed such profile viewing as impartial information-gathering behavior on the student's part: "We're nosy by nature, so it's not exactly inappropriate to look for people we know and snoop around." Another instructor said that such surveillance "doesn't seem as if it should

matter." "If a student wants to engage in this research, I see no reason why not," noted a third survey respondent. Several responses seemed to point a finger of blame at instructors who "maintain a pretty opaque facade when it comes to interactions with students," essentially driving those students to glean whatever personal information they can from various sources. Students "starved for personal information [about] their instructors" might therefore search for their teachers in online social networking sites and "[get] to know a person who may seem a little intimidating to approach." Finally, instructors were aware of the power differentials between employers, faculty, and students.

Because they hold more overt power over instructors, employers were a greater concern in terms of surveillance in online social networking sites. Comparatively, students were generally perceived as less powerful than instructors, less aware of their online presence, and less able to resist their "naturally curious" nature. For instance, one instructor stated that students surveilling instructors "doesn't bother me as much as the opposite because the power differential isn't there." Another said, "The teacher is in a position of power and responsibility relative to the student; therefore, the teacher, as the presumably older, wiser, more experienced half of the equation, in my opinion bears more than half the responsibility for maintaining boundaries." A final respondent felt that instructors could perhaps serve as role models in online social networking sites: "Ideally, students should leave teachers alone, but I think teachers are probably (or should be) more savvy about what they do on their networks, so I don't see the 'monitoring' [as] so bad." These representations of students surveilling faculty echo Zuboff's analyses of

workplace panopticism as "less . . . Big Brother than . . . [establishing] a workplace in which each member is explicitly empowered as his or her fellow worker's keeper" (351). She continues to note that "this new collectivism" is not a trouble-free ideal, though it reflects "an important antidote to the unilateral use of panoptic power . . . [h]orizontal transparency breeds new human dilemmas as well" (Zuboff 351). Instructors seemed to view student surveillance of instructors within the framework of collectivism and empowerment that Zuboff proposes. Their contentions that instructors must therefore be savvier online reflect Zuboff's assertion that horizontal transparency like that which the students and instructors in online social networking sites face breeds new dilemmas.

While employers were of greater concern for instructors when constructing online social networking profiles, students represent a more likely audience. It seems probable that more students will view their instructors' profiles than employers because students comprise a larger population in online social networking sites. During both the survey and the follow-up interviews, instructors spoke more often of carefully constructing their social networking profiles with students' viewing in mind than with employers' viewing in mind. Thus, in the next section, I discuss instructors' concerns about their teacher identities in online social networking sites to explain some of the ways their social networking profiles are constructed with students in mind.

Teacher Identity

"I get a kick out of it all being kind of nakedly false."—Fred

The instructors I surveyed appeared constantly aware of their identities as teachers, even outside the classroom and particularly in online social networking sites.

While a few enjoyed what they saw as the ability to invent new identities in online social networking sites, the majority of instructors talked of their online identities and social networking profiles in burdensome terms. When crafting their profiles, these instructors often anticipated the onerous potential for students to view their profiles. "I don't want my students seeing my MySpace profile because it destroys the persona I present in the classroom," said an instructor. The oppressive presence of students prevented some instructors from venting about classroom-related issues online for fear students might see: "I can't write about my teaching or students even anonymously/vaguely or positively, because I know those words could be used against me by a disgruntled student or someone trying to manipulate me into giving them a break."

The creation of an appropriate teacher identity involves a careful balance for many instructors: an approachable, welcoming persona that also remains authoritative and professional. An invisible wall is constructed between students and the instructor, a wall that allows students to approach the instructor on friendly terms—but they can only approach so far. At a certain point, instructors cross the line between being friendly with students and actually being a student's friend. Where that line is drawn is up to the individual instructor. Many instructors were concerned that a too friendly persona would cause students to see them as pushovers or that students would attempt to curry favor based on their "friendship."

> I feel like the persona I present [on Facebook] should be very much like the one I present in class, and so I worry about being "appropriate" enough. Also, I like the students to feel like I'm approachable, but not to feel like they're my close friend or I'm beholden to them in any way because we've gotten to know each other on a more personal level.

Younger and female instructors were especially troubled by the impact of online social

networking sites on the authoritative persona they tried so hard to build up in the

classroom. Some worried that students might view them as "trying too hard to be hip" by

participating in MySpace and Facebook, that they would be seen as "uncool" because

they acted "too young." Fred, a graduate teaching assistant in his early twenties, argued

that he could get away with certain types of behavior as a teacher now—including

constructing a MySpace profile—but "fast-forward fifteen years [from now] I probably

couldn't." His concern reflects the assumption that online social networking sites are

hangouts for teenagers and young adults only.

Other respondents worried that participation in online social networking sites

might be perceived as unprofessional because these sites are populated mainly by

students. Coupled with the stereotypical media representations of these sites as a haven

for sexual predators and a place where students show off inappropriate partying

behaviors, a number of instructors felt that participation in online social networking sites

would reflect badly on them.

> I usually don't like it when a student "finds" me on MySpace. I think the
> perception is that MySpace is a teenager thing, and that if I'm on it, I'm doing
> something (if not wrong) at least unprofessional.

Apprehension that participation in online social networking sites would be seen as

unprofessional by administrators or students or would break down carefully constructed

student/teacher boundaries in the classroom led many instructors to choose not to

participate in MySpace and Facebook at all. Of the 127 instructors surveyed, seventy-

three individuals (57%) did not participate in MySpace or Facebook because they did not

feel part of the target age group and fifty-one individuals, or 40%, did not feel like they were part of the target audience.

Donna, an adjunct in her late thirties, was one instructor who felt out of place in online social networking sites. Resistant at first to participating in MySpace or Facebook, Donna maintained a blog housed on her own server. She limited her interactions in online social networking sites to viewing her students' blogs and only at their invitation.

> I'm interested in the spaces because a lot of my students are on them so I'd like to see what they're doing. . . . A lot of students have blogs they keep that they've wanted to share with me because I've shared mine with them . . . I've poked around, definitely read blogs online on the social networking things and very purposefully kept myself pretty invisible while I was on there because I wanted to have pointed interactions with the students who invited me to read their blogs . . . and keep myself separate as a teacher.

Donna wanted to remain a passive participant in MySpace, only viewing students' work when invited, and she very clearly stated that she wanted nothing to do with Facebook because of its stronger ties to the educational setting and, by extension, increased opportunity for surveillance by students.

> When the whole Facebook thing came up I was like, "Yeah, it's all my students on here on campus" and feeling a little exposed on campus because all these kids are there. . . . I think that was it more than anything, because it was geared toward specifically . . . to a college or university that that teacher/student role thing was getting in my way a little more than it was at MySpace.

Much to Donna's dismay, a former student created a Facebook profile for her without her permission, which she kept for about six months. He had taken the first semester of first-year composition with her and they had since become friends; perhaps because of that loosening of boundaries, the student thought creating a Facebook profile for his resistant teacher would be an appropriate gift.

He was always complaining, "You need to get on MySpace," and then I got on
MySpace. . . . Then he started pushing Facebook and I was like, "I don't want to
be on Facebook." But for him it was such a big social thing, and since we had
become friends he wanted me on Facebook. So he created an account for me and I
promptly went on and changed the password and hung out on there for a while. I
didn't do anything with it, just posted real basic facts. And current and past
students were finding me and I found that kind of disconcerting so I ditched the
account. Nothing weird was happening, nothing bad was happening, but again it
was that visibility and . . . as a teacher . . . it seemed just a little odd. I wanted to
keep that wall between me and the hordes out there so I ditched the Facebook
account.

Donna referred several times throughout our initial interview about feeling exposed on

Facebook, feeling overly visible, and worrying about the breakdown of boundaries

between herself and her students: "Online interactions can get so odd so quickly . . . like I

was noticing that they speak differently to me online than they do in the classroom or

face-to-face having coffee or something. I wouldn't want [my profile on Facebook] to

turn into a place for misinterpretations, that sort of thing to happen." Donna and her

student danced the "silent dance of the observer and the observed," wherein the person

being watched begins to wonder, "Am I exposed in some way that I would not choose to

be?" (Zuboff 344). Without a doubt, Donna's former student, through this simple act, had

exposed Donna in a way she had not chosen and thus she began to feel vulnerable,

powerless, and self-conscious (Zuboff 344).

In "The Body of Charlie Brown's Teacher: What Instructors Should Know About

Constructing Digital Subjectivities," De Pew discusses how instructors themselves

become "texts" in the classroom:

Instructors are texts in the classroom; in fact, the instructor's body is one of the
most-read texts in the face-to-face classroom. Hierarchically placed below
university administration, instructors are read and written-upon subjects of
discourse. In their rank above students, instructors may feel empowered—within

the immediate moment—to dismiss the student gaze. But instructors concerned with becoming employed or being retained, tenured, or promoted understand that they are not completely immune to the effects of the student gaze … nor should they be unaccountable to their students. (103-4)

Donna's self-consciousness in Facebook reflects the fact that she was a constantly available, visible "text" in the site. This compounded with Donna's status within the university as an adjunct professor contributed in part to her uneasy existence in the site. Donna removed her Facebook account around spring break of that year and told the student: "Dude, you don't just do something like that for people. Come on." She is able to laugh about it now though: "That was my Facebook moment in the sun."

Donna's experience was unique, at least among the instructors that I spoke to, in that this student took the initiative to assist his instructor in becoming a more active social networking participant. He likely felt magnanimous in setting up Donna's Facebook profile for her; because Donna, a self-proclaimed "very casual" teacher, referred to this student as a friend, the student may have felt comfortable enough with Donna to not question his actions. But the power and gender differentials in this situation could be troubling: Donna, a thirty-eight-year-old white female adjunct instructor, was "gifted" a Facebook account by a young white male first-year composition student. Because I focus on issues of power throughout this dissertation, I feel it important to point out that I do not know the student's interpretation of this situation. I want to tread lightly in assigning blame to the student when his voice has not been heard. Takayoshi points out that when instructors tell students' stories, this becomes "an issue of power when the teacher becomes the researcher, scholar, published author" (128). She also resists the pervasiveness of negative portrayals of women's online experiences at the

hands of men (129-30), and again I want to exercise caution in recounting Donna's tale,

particularly because she continues to refer to this student as a friend and seems to harbor

him no ill will. Donna's story, more complicated than it may at first appear, illustrates

how established offline classroom hierarchies may not translate over neatly into online

social networking sites.

Donna saw too much of a clash between her identity as a teacher and the type of

interaction she felt was privileged on Facebook: "It's another party zone and a place to

impress your friends and neighbors with how cool you are, how many parties you go to,

how many friends you've got." In contrast, she viewed MySpace as a "more serious

artistic avenue" where individuals could "eliminate the middle man" and hawk their own

materials.

> I find that aspect of [MySpace] enthralling to watch. . . . I'm beginning to look at
> MySpace as a much more serious artistic avenue . . . especially since this one
> friend of mine whose CD is coming out in a month or so . . . I've had a lot more
> chances to see how it's working for him, how he's using it.

But while Donna valued the artistic dimensions of MySpace, she did not use the site for

that purpose, nor did she construct an elaborate profile: "I didn't really do anything. I just

signed in with the minimum. I don't even remember if I used my real name. I may not

have, I may have used my nickname . . . I have a Web nickname. I don't remember."

Donna's presence on MySpace is typical of many instructors who are curious about

online social networking sites but fear the breakdown of boundaries between students and

instructors. These teachers may create online social networking profiles that contain only

the bare minimum of information necessary to join, then lurk almost invisibly within the

site.

While Donna reluctantly provided as little personal information as possible to gain access to her students' writing, Fred took great joy in mocking the limits of the personal in MySpace and, to a lesser extent, Facebook. His MySpace profile was a sarcastic comment on what he saw as the nature of personal profile construction in online social networking sites: "[My profile] was [constructed] really out of a kind of confusion as to why anybody would do this, and just kind of looking into what the hell is going on." The photos contained in his MySpace profile were photos of strangers: "I only have one picture. It's not me. It's just somebody I . . . it's a picture I came across by accident." He elaborated further about his choice of a photo (a morbidly obese man sitting naked from the waist up in a La-Z-Boy recliner) in our first interview.

> I was thinking about putting up a bunch of random pictures and starting to blog about whoever that person would have been. . . . Just as a spoof. Because I don't think . . . much in the same way I don't find people's entries or constructions of themselves in these places terribly compelling. You know?

Fred saw the construction of MySpace profiles as "narcissism disguised as egalitarianism" and used his personal profile as a space for satire against the "selfish moments" he felt were prized in online social networking sites.

However, even as he tried to remain anonymous by constructing a "nakedly false" persona, Fred could not stay nameless in online social networking sites because of the friends he was connected to. By glancing at the list of his friends and looking at the comments they left on his profile, Fred could eventually be "outed" as a graduate student in a particular program.

> You know, amongst these people are actual friends of mine, so that kind of anonymity is really gone. Right? So that, you know, if you're interested in such things, which God knows why anybody would, I mean you could really find out

quite a bit about me, even though I've tried to not have anything on there, just based on connecting with other people.

Of Fred's forty MySpace friends, sixteen are people he knows; the other twenty-four are musical groups or comedians. Many of Fred's friends use either their real first names, a picture of themselves, or a combination of the two. One comment left on his profile even references him specifically by name: "Happy Holidays, Fred!" But Fred notes that he tries "desperately to not actually be there."

> My MySpace page is attached to an e-mail address that doesn't get used. My name isn't attributed to the thing, so you can't search for me by name. None of the pictures that are up are of me. None of my friends are in my top eight. So you would have to go into it to see who they are. And it's amongst a bunch of random folk anyway.

In online social networking sites, true anonymity seems possible only if, like Donna, one lurks and never adds friends that could betray one's identity.

Similarly, Fred's Facebook profile, though sparse, could easily be connected to his real-life persona. Fred, a graduate teaching assistant, only set up a Facebook profile after his undergraduate roommates begged him to join. Because he was curious about his own students' Facebook profiles, he established a Facebook account: "I figured out that I could look at my student list and see who's going be in my class. . . . kind of a professional self-interest of seeing who I had to be in a room with for the next sixteen weeks." Like his MySpace profile, Fred's Facebook page featured a random picture of a stranger (a man with a cigarette dangling from his mouth, a beer in one hand and another bottle, presumably empty, sitting next to him) and deliberately false information (he lists himself as a 1955 graduate of University of Arizona in dance and Latin). Fred represents

yet another approach to establishing a teacher identity in these sites—in this case, creating a "nakedly false" persona far from one's academic identity.

Fred's play with online identity was ultimately selfish; his efforts to create a profile that poked fun at what he saw as the typical egotistical conventions of MySpace and Facebook were for his own amusement. While students never figured largely in our conversations about the rhetorical choices he made in constructing his profile, a recurring subtext in our discussions—that of "remaining invisible"—had ostensible connections with his awareness of current and former students' presence in these sites. Like Donna, Fred was always aware that students could, and probably would, look at their instructor's online social networking profile if they knew it existed. For instructors, the specter of students being able to see one's social networking profile will inevitably impact the teacher's rhetorical construction of identity in such sites.

Other instructors resisted invisibility or remaining "appropriately teacherly" and instead allowed their private and academic lives to commingle in their MySpace and Facebook pages. Some relied on privacy tools in the sites to partition off aspects of their personas for different audiences. Connie, a graduate teaching assistant in her mid-twenties, used privacy tools to prevent certain students from accessing parts of her MySpace profile, mainly blogs. She accepted friend requests from students if they contacted her but felt for her it was awkward the other way around. Though she had not yet set her entire profile as private, she maintained that in the future she would, probably when she began looking for academic jobs. In the meantime, however, Connie carefully considered how her profile might look to the multiple audiences that could view it: "I just

try really hard not to have anything on there that would be incriminating or that I wouldn't tell anybody that I've met about. I think it's probably mostly my friends. Some of my blogs are private and not all of my friends can read all of my blogs and some of my blogs are friends only." I asked Connie what she would do if more students began sending her friend requests; she noted that she would contemplate making her entire profile private.

> For me, it's a way to interact with friends and they're just not my friends. Not necessarily because I think anything on there is so private, more because interacting with them isn't why I'm on the space. So if . . . I was contacted enough that it was not . . . that every time I was on I was having to explain to somebody, "No, I don't want to add you," if it was detracting from the reasons that I am on the site then I would probably make it private to remove that distraction.

Connie reiterated that "anything that was on the front page [of her profile] I'm pretty much okay with anybody reading."

I pointed out that her main profile picture—accessible to anyone, including her students—was a picture of her holding a Corona beer with the caption, "You gotta love being drunk … what was so funny?" As well, the first line of her profile began, "Upon first glance I'm a fun-loving party girl and I love to go out to bars and parties . . ." I questioned whether students might view her inappropriately based on that information in her profile, and Connie replied, "It's possible, I suppose. In my experience students are surprised when they learn that you're a human being who does things that other human beings do, but their surprise has never been accompanied with a lack of respect for my authority." In the four months since our interview, Connie has changed both her profile picture and her description. While she made it clear that most of her profile was for her

friends' benefit, as Connie draws closer to finishing her dissertation and going on the job

market, she may continue to alter aspects of her online social networking profile to reflect

the new audiences that might come across it.

Gloria, a thirty-year-old teaching assistant, also changed aspects of her MySpace

profile when she knew different audiences (for example, students) would have access to

it. Though her entire profile was set as private, she decided at one point to use her

MySpace profile page in a business writing class to talk about ethos.

> I opened mine up for 48 hours and I did go in and I changed some of my stuff,
> just so that it was less . . . well, less me and more instructor . . . and I deleted some
> comments and stuff that weren't necessarily inappropriate but that they were
> sexual in nature and I didn't feel that was . . . And if [my profile] wasn't private, I
> just wouldn't approve those comments. I'm very controlling.

When I prompted Gloria to further discuss the changes she made during that 48-hour

period, she stated that because the university is a "pretty conservative campus," she

changed portions of her profile that could be seen inappropriately out of context, such as

the titles of some blogs and some of the comments friends left on her page.

> I have [one comment up that I didn't change] and that I leave up there because
> even though I think I'm sure some of my students could find out how to view my
> page, I hope that they wouldn't invest that much time in doing it, because to me it
> just seems like a waste of time. And, you know, if they want to do it, that's fine. .
> . . Especially at this point in the semester, I think that my ethos has been
> established. I'm a credible teacher, I know what I'm talking about and so the
> power has kind of . . . it hasn't necessarily shifted but I think that they aren't
> trying to poke me apart, I guess. I don't know.

Gloria's stance was almost defensive ("if they want to do it, that's fine") but her main

assumption was that students would probably not try to view her profile in the first place.

If they did and they found something inappropriate, she hoped they would ask her about

inappropriate material so she could place it in context: "If they want to talk with me about

it, great. And if they don't and they want to make snap judgments about me, that's fine."
Both Connie and Gloria regularly approved comments before allowing them on their
profiles to keep some modicum of control. Gloria said of the comments privacy tool: "[In
online social networking sites] there's the illusion of privacy . . . but I want to know
what's being put on my page. And that's just one of those. It's a monitoring thing for
me."

For many instructors, then, the choices for participating in online social
networking sites seem limited because of their occupation. They can embrace what
Zuboff calls "horizontal transparency" (351) and fully integrate their academic and
personal identities in the site. They can choose to remain as invisible as possible out of
fear of panoptic surveillance, rejecting many of the options for networking in these
spaces. They can attempt to create anonymous or deliberately false profiles, perhaps out
of fear of surveillance or perhaps for their own amusement. However, their efforts can be
waylaid via their connections with others who are non-anonymous in the sites. Finally,
instructors might choose not to participate at all because of their anxieties about teacher
identity, of being trapped in a game of "us" versus "them" (Zuboff 344).

Time

Concerns about identity are just one reason why instructors may choose not to
participate in online social networking sites. Another emergent recurring theme in the
survey and follow-up interviews was time. Many instructors were reluctant to engage in
what they saw as a time-consuming technology; they feared becoming addicted to or
distracted because of MySpace and Facebook. A recurrent theme throughout my two

interviews with Sophia was her desire not to squander time on online social networking

sites (and on technology in general). Sophia, a second-year PhD student in her mid-

thirties, had been asked to sign up for a LiveJournal blog the previous year in a literature

class, and almost immediately she resented the requirement:

> I felt reluctance. I felt like it was going to require more time than just doing a response. I felt like I took the writing that I put up there a little less seriously than a response paper that I would print out and turn in or even e-mail as an attachment and I think partially that's because of the kind of code of casualness that I think exists on the Web.

Sophia shared that she was not the only student who felt reluctance at the blogging

requirement for this course.

> We talked about [the blogging requirement in class] because people had a hard time signing on. And really, it didn't take that long, but it took longer than opening up Word and typing a response . . . Everybody ended up posting right before class started so there wasn't really even time to read the responses and that also significantly increases the reading load every week if you're supposed to be checking in on what everyone says. It's not that it's a bad thing necessarily but definitely that's a consideration as a grad student. How do I manage more reading when it is already difficult to manage?

Sophia and her classmates' anxieties about the time commitment necessary for blogging

echoes those of many instructors thinking about teaching with technology: how can it be

made manageable time-wise? How long will it take to learn new classroom technologies?

Who will help maintain them if and when they break down? Such questions plague even

instructors experienced with teaching with technology, and for beginning instructors, the

hurdle may ultimately seem too daunting.

Sophia's resistance to technology extended into much of her life even though she

spoke of "fascinating possibilities" using technology. Her simultaneous attraction to and

drawing away from technology reverberated throughout Sophia's two interviews. She

talked of her reliance on e-mail and the telephone to keep in touch with friends but

characterized her refusal to participate in online social networking because of "the

perception that it requires time that right now I don't feel willing to give." In our second

interview, Sophia began to complicate her tense relationship with technology. She had

begun to refer to her relationship with technologies in connection with "important or

meaningful interaction[s]." Rather than simply looking at the potential time commitment,

Sophia complicated the idea of time spent with the potential benefits for communication

that certain technologies might bring. By the time we finished our second conversation,

Sophia noted that her resistance to online social networking sites stemmed not so much

from the time commitment involved but the sites' inability to express subtle nuances of

communication: "I guess actually one of the problems I see with these sites is the way

that they're overly reductive. And they can't account for the complexities that happen in

a face-to-face interaction." Iris, a second-year MA student also in her mid-thirties, shared

Sophia's preference for face-to-face interactions and concerns regarding time: "I imagine

that if I did have a MySpace account, I'd spend all night on it, probably in the evening.

And I'd rather cook dinner or go for a walk or hike, go to the dog park, talk with my

husband who's right there in the same room with me . . . I have so little time, I just don't

want to sit on the computer." Iris had neither a MySpace nor a Facebook account and

detailed her general reluctance to use technology: "I use e-mail because I have to, and I

have a [course management] site, so I *get* technology, I just don't choose to use it."

Even instructors who readily used online social networking sites admitted that the

time spent to maintain their profiles could quickly get out of hand. Donna's early

resistance toward MySpace was born out of "that pressure to have to be in there all the

time . . . like we have that kind of free time. I didn't even want to get involved in

something else that I needed to update . . . on a regular basis." And both Fred and Bob

brought up a related point: as each online social networking site is slightly different from

the rest, one could easily end up joining three, four, or more online social networking

sites to maintain contact with different participants in each site. "[Do you] maintain sites

on all the things that your students could potentially be a part of?" Fred asked. "I mean,

this quickly gets out of control, right?" Bob's account of how he ended up with four

different instant messaging programs is very similar.

> When I started instant messaging, ICQ was the new and fancy thing and I still
> have one or two contacts that only use ICQ. I also have one or two contacts that
> only use MSN [Messenger], one or two contacts that only use Yahoo [Messenger]
> and then a bunch of people who use AOL [Instant Messenger]. So I use the
> different instant messaging programs just to keep in touch with a broader range of
> people who do not use as much technology as I do, I guess.

Because Bob, a teaching assistant in his mid-twenties, mainly uses instant messaging

programs to keep in touch with friends and family across the country, he perceives a

benefit from maintaining several instantiations of the same technology. (He also uses a

program that bundles together all of his instant messaging programs, which greatly

reduces the amount of time needed to keep up the separate contact lists.) Part of Bob's

willingness to maintain accounts in four different programs, however, is his overall

technological bent; he states that he is "fairly tech-savvy . . . computer tech is a big part

of my life. I've had several jobs at the university and elsewhere where computers are

primary to my work." While Bob found instant messaging programs worthwhile enough

to maintain four different accounts, online social networking sites held few perceived

174

benefits that he felt would directly affect him: "The major distinction for me is that I use instant messaging to keep in touch with people I already talk to, people I already know . . . and something like MySpace . . . is a way for people that you don't know to contact you and find out information about you, which some people find to be a lovely thing. I am less in favor of that." Like Donna, Bob's feelings of exposure prevented him from participating in online social networking sites; he dichotomized online social networking sites into "people I already know" and "people I don't know."

Despite his unwillingness to use online social networking sites, Bob did see their potential in the composition classroom: "I could see interesting work being done analyzing MySpace pages or Facebook pages as a kind of text that could be used . . . for rhetorical analysis." In fact, because instructors often voiced their concerns regarding privacy in online social networking sites, many expressed interest in using MySpace and Facebook in the classroom to talk about rhetorical awareness and personal identity—what I referred to in chapter 1 as being rhetorical in online spaces. In this instance, being rhetorical means asking students to think about the multiple audiences that might view the online writing in their social networking profiles. It means guiding them to assess their own subject positioning and how hierarchies of power operate in online social networking sites. Finally, it means considering how online social networking sites can perhaps change our ways of viewing writing and online identity—how these sites are embedded in larger cultural ecologies (Selfe and Hawisher 2).

A few survey respondents discussed their approach to bringing social networking into the classroom. "I am using MySpace to discuss e-dentity and 'multiple selves' . . .

this topic goes well with a section of our textbook . . . and updates it, therefore making it more interesting to students," noted one instructor. Another focused on the issues that these sites could help serve as springboards for classroom discussion: "What is privacy? What is the role of teachers and parents for children in these social situations? How important is our right to confidentiality in terms of social preferences and leanings?" Others spoke of bringing social networking into the classroom as a way to meet students halfway "on their own turf," engaging them and keeping them interested by using sites they already enjoyed: "I've used Facebook in class only because my students requested it; they love it. I like to incorporate things they love and get them to think critically about them." In this way, compositionists can honor students' prior knowledge and interests (DeWitt, *Writing Inventions* 21) and offer them what Lester Faigley and Susan Romano term "an education they perceive as relevant to the twenty-first century and not the nineteenth" (57).

There is, of course, the possibility that these sites can contribute to the bifurcation of a teacher's academic and personal identity. Teachers may also feel compelled to spend extra time learning, implementing, and maintaining online social networking site profiles. Finally, many instructors have valid concerns about their privacy and surveillance by students. But overall, Fred notes, these sites can be used to great effect for instructors of rhetorical analysis as long as the focus is kept on that second level of technological literacy that interrogates technology's effects on culture and society.

> I think it makes all kinds of sense to go investigate these, talk about them with your student, but really keep them something else, right? You're talking about . . . making people rhetorically savvy, not about . . . you're not doing a seminar

about how to be a eBay power seller. . . . It would be a great way to talk about . . . to complicate notions of humanity.

The final section of this chapter, then, presents suggestions for incorporating online social networking sites into the composition classroom to interrogate issues of rhetorical analysis and intellectual property that are bound up in the larger concept of technological literacy. I offer definitions of both information literacy and technological literacy to argue that rhetoric and composition instructors should continue incorporating online social networking sites into their pedagogies to teach technological literacy.

Toward a Definition of Technological Literacy

In his 1997 address at the Conference on College Composition and Communication, Faigley looked ten years ahead to the future: "If we come back to our annual convention a decade from now and find that the essay is no longer on center stage, it will not mean the end of our discipline" (40). If the academic essay is no longer the main focus of the rhetoric and composition classroom, then what is? "I expect that we will be teaching an increasingly fluid, multi-media literacy," Faigley portended (41). Ten years later in 2007, Faigley is in many respects correct. In the past decade, the field of rhetoric and composition has seen an increased focus on information literacies, particularly among computers and composition researchers, who are necessarily immersed in the impact of technology on writing and language use (Selber 471). But what do we mean when we use terms like "information literacy" or "technological literacy"? In this section, I showcase the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) Information Literacy Competency Standards and the Educational Testing Service's Information and Communication Technology test as examples of functional

information literacy assessments. Next, I complicate the functional literacy offered by the ACRL and ETS by introducing Selfe and Hawisher's notion of "literacies of technology." Finally, I argue that rhetoric and composition instructors should attend to technology literacy in the writing classroom and offer some ways that online social networking sites can help them achieve this goal.

Information Literacy

In 2000, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) defined information literacy as "a set of abilities requiring individuals to 'recognize when information is needed and have the ability to locate, evaluate, and use effectively the needed information'" ("Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education" 2). The ACRL argues for teaching information literacy because of the "escalating complexity of [our] environment" (2) where students are now faced with an abundance of information choices that they lack the ability to evaluate and understand. The ACRL makes a distinction between information literacy and "information technology skills," which they note is "a distinct and broader area of competence" (3). But while the ACRL rightfully posits that students face an information overload in their daily lives that they need to be taught how to navigate in meaningful ways, the focus of the ACRL competencies is still strongly grounded in the genre of the written essay.

The ACRL competencies cover five standards and twenty-two performance indicators that incorporate different higher-order and lower-order information literacy skills. A sample performance indicator, "defines and articulates the need for information," includes the following student outcomes:

- Confers with instructors and participates in class discussions, peer workgroups, and electronic discussions to identify a research topic, or other information need
- Develops a thesis statement and formulates questions based on the information need
- Explores general information sources to increase familiarity with the topic
- Defines or modifies the information need to achieve a manageable focus
- Identifies key concepts and terms that describe the information need
- Recognizes that existing information can be combined with original thought, experimentation, and/or analysis to produce new information. ("Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education" 8)

Again, these outcomes clearly emerge from the familiar genre of the college research paper: find a topic; develop a thesis statement; develop a focus and keywords; produce new information by building on previous published work. These outcomes easily translate into the benchmarks of the writing process familiar to students working on researched essays in a composition classroom. But as Faigley earlier posited in 1997, if the essay is no longer on center stage, then these standards do not address the full spectrum of information literacies students should possess in an information-rich age.

Based on the ACRL Information Literacy Competency Standards report, the Educational Testing Service (ETS) developed a large-scale study in 2005 to assess students' information literacy skills, the ICT Literacy Assessment Test. In 2006, ETS released a report detailing the preliminary findings from a study of over 6,300 students (high school seniors, community college students, and students enrolled in four-year colleges and universities) who took the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Literacy Assessment Test. The test, designed to assess seven "skill areas," measures students' abilities to define, access, evaluate, manage, integrate, create, and communicate information. The 75-minute test relies on real-time, scenario-based tasks

that include searching through databases for information, sorting e-mails into appropriate folders, comparing and contrasting information from web pages in a spreadsheet, determining the relevance of postings on a discussion board, formatting a word processing document, and preparing a text message for a cell phone ("Educational Testing Service"). ETS found that few students displayed key information literacy skills and that test-takers were unable to show mastery of higher-order rhetorical skills ("Educational Testing Service").

Both the ACRL standards and the ICT test rely on limited and incomplete understandings of technological literacy. I provide them as examples to showcase how efforts to introduce computers into classrooms are often optimistic and instrumental. Optimistic endeavors to increase technology in the classroom can be traced back to technology literacy agendas such as the Clinton-Gore Technology Literacy Challenge and aspects of Bush's No Child Left Behind Act. Such efforts reasoned that increased access to computers would also allow students increased access to technologically supported power structures in society (Selfe, *Technology and Literacy* 65). The Technology Literacy Challenge, the No Child Left Behind Act, the ACRL standards, and the ETS ICT test all showcase an instrumental assumption toward technology in the classroom: that computerized technologies are tools that students can learn, thereby acquiring much-needed skills to survive in society. In the next section, I complicate the definition of information literacy posited earlier by offering a different definition founded on Selfe and Hawisher's critical analyses of technology, that is, a definition of technological literacy.

Technological Literacy

Selfe and Hawisher provide a useful analysis of the various terms used to describe

individuals' understandings and uses of technology: computer literacy, technological

literacy, digital literacy, critical media literacy, and so on in their book *Literate Lives in*

the Information Age. They point to Wysocki and Johnson-Eilola's deconstruction of the

term literacy in "Blinded by the Letter: Why Are We using Literacy as a Metaphor for

Everything Else?" As a term that too easily slips off the tongue, "literacy," Wysocki and

Johnson-Eilola argue, must be complicated, re-imagined, and re-articulated (350, 367).

While I agree with the authors that literacy as a single term cannot possible support the

weight of all the various activities and skills that are conflated with it (Wysocki and

Johnson-Eilola 366), I do not want to move away too hastily from it. In thinking about

what compositionists want students to learn from their writing classes, I feel that literacy

still operates as a familiar term that can keep the conversation about technology-enhanced

student writing ongoing. And as Selfe and Hawisher point out, by linking these abilities

with the term literacy, we can signal the importance that they hold for functioning in a

literate society (1).

For the purposes of this project, I draw on Selfe and Hawisher's understandings of

literacy in *Literate Lives in the Information Age*. Rejecting technological literacy as the

basic acquisition of skills like those presented in the ACRL standards or the ETS's ICT

test, Selfe and Hawisher instead trace the concept of technological literacy through case

studies of individuals who grew proficient with technology during the past twenty-five

years (3). They propose the term "literacies of technology" as a phrase that can "connect

social practices, people, technology, values, and literate activity, which, in turn, are embedded in a larger cultural ecology" (Selfe and Hawisher 2). While the authors prefer the term literacies of technology, they equate it with others—electronic literacy, digital literacy, and technological literacy (Selfe and Hawisher 2). I use the term technological literacy throughout this dissertation, then, drawing on Selfe and Hawisher's definition.

Selfe points out in *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century* that this kind of technological literacy has two levels, one activities-based and one that operates at the level of literacy practices (11-12). At the level of literacy activities or events, technological literacy refers to "events that involve reading, writing, and communicating within computer-based environments," such as researching, organizing, and using technological tools (Selfe, *Technology and Literacy* 11-12); these are the sorts of skills that the ETS ICT test measures. At a level the ETS test does not measure, however, are literacy practices: understanding the complex sets of cultural beliefs and values that influence our understandings of what it means to read, write, and communicate with computers (Selfe, *Technology and Literacy* 12). Both levels of technological literacy are important, Selber argues, and these two levels need not be mutually exclusive (497-98). Students need instruction that will help them gain an awareness of technological literacy practices as well as help them become adept at researching and using technological tools (Selber 498). How then can rhetoric and composition instructors work toward this goal? Incorporating online social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook into the writing classroom is one such possibility to help students in the acquisition of technological literacies.

Using Online Social Networking Sites to Teach Technological Literacy

Increasing shifts toward asking students to assess, evaluate, and create multimedia

texts in composition classes support Faigley's assertion that the academic essay would

eventually retreat as the focus of the writing classroom. Many of these multimedia texts

call into question notions of intellectual property and copyright: audio "mashups" of

different songs; video remixes; even web sites that borrow code and images from other

online sites. Richard Lanham argues that the shift from print to online writing "has

changed the meaning of ownership and authorship in perplexing ways" and that educators

need to prepare students "for the intellectual property questions which are now an

ordinary part of their lives" ("Copyright 101"). Lanham enters the discussion via the

entry point of plagiarism; like Dànielle Nicole DeVoss, Rebecca Moore Howard, and

Kelly Ritter, Lanham is concerned with the increasing ease of student plagiarism enabled

by copying and pasting text on the Web. With plagiarism as his central focus, Lanham

offers a compelling argument for bringing digital intellectual property issues and, by

extension, technological literacy into the classroom.

Lanham offers interesting examples of digital intellectual property issues that

"begin in specific arguments but very soon involve fundamental issues" for student

discussion ("Copyright 101"). One example that immediately springs to mind is online

social networking sites. These online spaces could be used to great effect as examples in

courses that deal with the very issues Lanham argues that rhetoric and composition

instructors are not adequately teaching. MySpace and Facebook are positioned within

larger fundamental issues concerning copyright and the nature of authorship. They are

easily accessible to most undergraduate students, have been repeatedly discussed in the media, and many students either belong to or know someone who belongs to these sites.

Students can quickly make the shift from talking about their experiences in online social networking sites to larger social issues. For example, Lanham states that a course on intellectual property could focus on advertising: "The ownership of brands, and the protection of them, is at the center of intellectual property thinking. There could not be a stronger connection" ("Copyright 101"). Because Web 2.0 technologies rely on the basis of user-generated content, they receive staggering amounts of new material at little cost to the sites' creators. Think YouTube and its homemade videos and content ripped from television or DVD, Flickr's millions of tagged photos, and the 1.6 million plus user-created and edited Wikipedia entries. All of these sites are currently imbricated in controversies about intellectual property and ownership of the materials included within. Certainly MySpace and Facebook both have histories of brand ownership, media hype, and advertising ripe for student analysis.

Many students are already aware of the controversies surrounding online social networking sites; these controversies often color their social networking experiences. One of the undergraduate interviewees, Ernie, labeled himself as "very protective of his personal data and his unique tastes." After News Corporation acquired MySpace, Ernie removed his profile from the site: "I had a MySpace account but once I found out they were bought up by News Corp, that same day I took off my profile, which was like two months later. . . . I don't want to be a social whore. . . . I think they're using it for data mining." Similarly, Charles, another undergraduate interviewee, quickly drew parallels

between Google and its reliance on ad-supported Web searching and the constant spam

messages he received in MySpace and Facebook.

> With my MySpace I'm getting ten messages every day from people that I know
> are not my friends and I don't really want to know me that way. . . . I go, "Okay, I
> got a new event invite. Okay, is a birthday party coming up? No, it's to see
> someone's [pay-to-view Web] camera." It's like Google, you know. Google, they
> do so much advertising, but you'll never see the ads. Because those are so subtle,
> they'll actually turn them into search results so you think it's the most relevant
> search. . . . And then if you click on [the result] then they have to pay the
> company. Which is worse: do you want it to be right up in your face or do you
> want it to be more subtle?

Music is another area that is ripe for discussion in terms of its connection to

digital intellectual property issues. A 2006 special issue of *Computers and Composition*

featured essays on audio from several theoretical, historical, and musical perspectives.

Several essays in this special collection focused on intellectual property and music, most

notably Mickey Hess's "Was Foucault a Plagiarist?: Hip-hop Sampling and Academic

Citation." Hess examines the differing value systems of hip-hop musical artists who

regularly sample others' work and the companies that own the rights to that work. He

argues that equating sampling with plagiarism ignores the way that sampling is similar to

academic citation practices and that the tensions inherent in music sampling offer ways to

think about attribution (Hess 282). Hess's project is one way of using music in the

classroom to discuss intellectual property. Similarly, online social networking sites can

provide examples of music-related tensions that can be brought into a composition

classroom to talk about intellectual property. For example, MySpace user and folk

musician Billy Bragg coerced MySpace to change its terms and conditions in early 2006.

Bragg removed his music, but not his account, from MySpace in May 2006 after

complaining that the terms and conditions implied that the site had "a nonexclusive, fully paid and royalty-free worldwide license" to any songs uploaded to MySpace ("Who Owns the Music"). A month later, in the wake of Bragg's protest movement, MySpace changed its terms and conditions to specifically reassure users that they, not the site, continued to own the rights to their materials.[24]

In his article "Who Owns the Music, MTV or Me?" Bragg poses a question central to the debate regarding intellectual property ownership in online social networking sites:

> The demand that users waive all moral rights to their material in order to join a service brings into question the role of social networking sites. Will they usher in a revolution in the music industry by allowing self-promoted artists to circumvent the major record companies who have stood as gatekeepers of public taste for so long? Or will they simply be the means by which the industry keeps its monopoly on copyright ownership and earnings through the silent harvesting of intellectual property rights? ("Who Owns the Music")

Most students are aware of (if not users of) peer-to-peer networking programs, YouTube, and MySpace music downloads. Thus, Bragg's controversial campaign for artists' rights, like Hess's discussion of hip-hop sampling, provides an opportunity for students to enter into a conversation regarding digital intellectual property and technological literacy.

Lanham provides a final point of entry for introducing technological literacy into the classroom through intellectual property issues: the "economy of attention." The term "economy of attention" was introduced by Thomas H. Davenport and John C. Beck in their 2001 book *The Attention Economy*: *Understanding the New Currency of Business*. They outline a fundamental change in the way business is transacted, from an economy

---

[24] Ironically, Bragg later admitted in an interview that he had not actually read the terms and conditions initially but was notified about them via a concerned friend.

focused on currency and tangible goods to an economy which focuses on gaining, then keeping, a consumer's attention and interest. The increase in consumer goods, including online offerings, means that an individual's attention is more valuable than ever (Davenport and Beck 3).

Online social networking sites are poised to thrive in an economy of attention; viral videos, for example, can be passed rapidly from user to user in a site like MySpace and quickly reach an audience of millions. Charles broached the topic of "Brody Ruckus," a controversial ad campaign on Facebook that began as a ruse to help "Brody," a Georgia Tech student, have a threesome with his girlfriend and another woman. Before he realized "Brody" was just a marketing ploy by the Ruckus Music Network to promote its service to undergraduates, Charles joined the infamous Facebook group: "I'm lucky number 293,000. . . . [and] I looked one day and I think it was like the group wasn't there anymore. . . . And then different news web sites like BBC, they all covered the group. And it was all for Ruckus music." Although disappointed, he admitted it "was a good ploy." Examples such as the "Brody Ruckus" Facebook group and Chase's "Chase +1" credit card campaign (students receive points for purchases on the Chase +1 card that can then be shared with Facebook friends or donated to charity) can be used in the classroom to interrogate how Web 2.0 is now shifting to an "economy of attention" which advertisers exploit.

Classroom Activities

As noted in the previous section, online social networking sites can be brought in to the rhetoric and composition classroom in various ways to teach technological literacy

and rhetorical awareness. What follows are some pedagogical suggestions for how to use MySpace and Facebook in writing courses that can be employed by instructors who are interested in using such sites in the classroom. In some cases, I have offered suggested readings to assign to students prior to beginning the activity; these readings serve as springboards for the activities and the discussions to follow.

<p align="center">"About Me": An Online Social Networking Autobiography</p>

Online social networking sites like MySpace and Facebook that privilege the construction of an individual user profile can be used to teach aspects of rhetorical awareness—the idea of being rhetorical that I have referred to throughout this dissertation. Again, as I noted in chapter 1, I define being rhetorical as "the awareness of power, discourse conventions, and audience—both anticipated and unanticipated—that any writer must engage with when putting words on a page." In particular, MySpace and Facebook profiles can be used to spur students to think about audience. The following assignment invites students to think critically about how their personal profile in an online social networking site might be viewed by different audience members. It also spurs them to contemplate how public and private profiles may result in different assumptions about the individual profiled by particular audiences.

Students are asked to choose a public MySpace or Facebook user profile to analyze. They can analyze a user profile they have already created or create a new profile for the purposes of this assignment, or choose someone famous (a film star, musician, politician, or similar) who has a public profile. (If the student chooses to analyze another individual's profile, such as a politician, then obviously the assignment will shift slightly

to an online social networking biography.) Throughout the autobiography, students should focus on a phrase shared by both MySpace and Facebook: "About me."

In this assignment, students should respond to the following questions (though these are certainly not exhaustive):

- MySpace and Facebook user profiles include an "about me" section for individuals to fill out. Construct an autobiographical narrative about how you chose to fill out your "about me" section. If you change the information in this section regularly, how do you change it and why?

- If you have included a photograph, listed favorites (movies, music, television, books, or activities), and joined groups, how do these profile features add to the construction of your individual identity detailed in the "about me" section? In other words, how does your default photo reflect what you see as your online identity? How might others view you based on what your favorites, your photos, or your groups say about you?

- Examine your audience: Who are you writing or talking to in your profile? (Think of this as your intended audience.) When you set up your profile, who did you imagine might take a look at it? Who did you intend to see this profile? How well do you think that your "about me" reflects the assumptions members of this intended audience may make about you? Now think about your unintended audience—people who may come across your profile that you didn't expect. (Members in this group might include parents, teachers, employers, and so on.) Again, how do you think your construction of "about me" reflects the

assumptions members of your unintended audience may make about you? How might members of your unintended audience view you based on your MySpace or Facebook profile?

- Finally, think about how switching your profile from public to private would impact the ability for others to gather information about you. In what ways are you limited by keeping your profile public—for example, you may not post particular pictures or blogs because your profile is public. Similarly, in what ways would you be limited by making your profile private?

As the majority of college students participate in MySpace and Facebook, this assignment can ask students to think carefully and critically about their own identity construction online while carefully considering issues of audience. As well, students may also make connections between identity, audience, and power as they reflect on how their profiles might be viewed differently by individuals in their inner circle—their intended audience—and by members of their unintended audience. By considering how their profile picture, "about me" text, groups, and favorites all come together to paint a picture of the individual profiled, students can gain a stronger awareness of how their online identities may overlap and even clash with how others see them.

To extend the previous assignment and encourage students to analyze not only textual but also visual and auditory composition, instructors can ask students to re-envision their own "about me" page in different ways. One possibility involves reframing the personal profile as a multimedia collage. This works particularly well when translating a Facebook profile into a MySpace profile (since Facebook does not allow

HTML, CSS, or JavaScript in the personal profile). Thus, students could consider how their profile might change if they had to move from Facebook to MySpace or vice versa: What multimedia elements might they add or delete and why? How would the addition or deletion of multimedia elements like music videos, songs, or graphics influence the student's ability to define his or her personality through the about me section?

Similarly, instructors might require students to re-envision their MySpace profile so that it features only images and sounds—no text. Students would still have to fill out the different sections of "about me" (favorite movies, favorite books, heroes, activities, and so on) but rely on only images and sounds for their composition. Essentially, the student's personal profile would rely on multimedia elements to make a visual argument of sorts about him or herself. After constructing their visual argument, students would write a reflective essay justifying the use of the particular multimedia elements they chose: For example, why did they choose these pictures, videos, and songs? How do they work together to build an argument that persuades the reader to see the individual profiled in a specific way? What difficulties did they encounter when attempting to create an about me page without relying on any text? Next, students could exchange MySpace profiles (but not read the reflective essays yet) and in pairs describe what they see as the visual argument of the other's personal profile. This peer review helps students see some of the ways their personal profile can be read in different ways by a classmate. From here, students could revise their multimedia "about me" in response to the in-class reading by a peer. Throughout this assignment, students reflect on the role of multimedia

elements in online composing and how these elements influence their ability to construct a virtual identity in MySpace.

Finally, students could be required to re-envision their MySpace or Facebook profile for an entirely new audience and, after doing so, evaluate what they changed about their previous profile and why. The majority of students create their online social networking profiles for themselves and their friends. By asking them to add to and delete information from their profile for a prescribed audience, students would be required to carefully weigh the appropriateness of the textual and multimedia elements featured on their profile based on their perceptions of that audience. For example, students could be asked to recreate their Facebook profile as an online portfolio for future employers or to redo their MySpace page for inclusion in a classroom montage that would be shown on an overhead screen in class.

These redesign activities ask students to analyze their audience and select appropriate discourse conventions for that audience as well as consider the power differentials between the students and their intended audience members. In the first example students would need to consider what sort of information "about me" an employer would value, what language and tone would be suitable to use for addressing future employers, and what photographs or other multimedia elements would reflect appropriately on the students' profiles. One important factor for students to reflect on is examining what information they deleted in making the switch from the original personal profile to the revised profile. Students would write a justification of what information they deleted and why they made that choice based on their assumption of how that

information would be received by their audience (the future employer). Students are apt

to see connections among the power differentials between themselves and future

employers and the virtual personas they project in online social networking sites.

In the second example, students would have to think about how their profiles

would appear to other students and the instructor when shown as part of a classroom

montage during class. Again, students would need to consider what information,

language, tone, and visuals would be appropriate for such a mixed audience. They would

need to justify based on their analysis of their intended audience what changes in the

layout, text, and visual and auditory elements would be most effective for that audience.

As in the previous example, students would need to justify the deletion of particular

information based on the knowledge that their peers and instructor would be viewing the

profile. (An interesting extension of this portion of the assignment might ask students to

create a hierarchical map of the power relationships between the different individuals in

the class as well as themselves; students would then detail what profile information they

believe appropriate to reveal to individuals on different levels of the map and why.)

I'll be Seeing You: Critiquing Profiles as an Employer

The previous assignment asks students to focus on their own rhetorical choices

made when constructing (and refining) the user profile in MySpace and Facebook. This

assignment extends the mission of the prior task by asking students to assume a different

position from which to write, that of an employer concerned with the proliferation of

online social networking profiles and their effect on the workplace. In doing so, students

must consider how a member of their chosen discourse community (in this assignment,

an upper-level employee of a particular company) would write as well as what perspective this individual would have on social networking in the workplace. In this assignment, students should first read several media articles about employers' concerns regarding social networking and the workplace and discuss them in class. I have referred to such articles throughout this dissertation and citations are available in the Works Cited section; an online search in a publication like *The New York Times*, *Time*, *Newsweek*, or similar should turn up others. Students then choose an upper-level employee of one of the companies described in the news articles to portray. Alternatively, they can write from the perspective of the president or chancellor of their institution.

Assuming the persona—including the diction, style, and tone they think this individual would use—of their chosen employer, students write a critique of a MySpace or Facebook profile. Ideally a student would choose to analyze the same profile used in the "About Me" assignment, but he or she may opt to look up a user who works for the chosen employer and analyze that profile instead. Writing from the perspective of the employer, the student should compose an advisory letter critiquing the individual's profile and how it reflects on the employer. Throughout the letter, students should integrate facts culled from the news articles discussed in previous class periods. Finally, the letter should end with at least one suggestion of how to present a more professional profile befitting an individual who works for this employer. This assignment allows students to build on what they have learned about audience in the previous assignment by pushing them to consider how professional online social networking site profiles look to current and prospective employers.

As well, issues of power will undoubtedly come up in conversation and in the

advisory letters as students consider whether employers have the right to demand that

their employees portray themselves in certain ways online or surveil employees' profile

pages. To have students respond specifically to issues of power, the following writing

prompts can be used to follow-up on the critique of a personal profile by an employer.

- You have recently received a critique of your MySpace or Facebook profile by an

  employer. Write a letter of response in which you address the critique and

  revisions suggested by the employer and justify why you will or will not be taking

  the employer's advice. In your letter of response, take a stand on the issue of

  employers' viewing employees' social networking profiles without the

  employee's knowledge. Do you think it is appropriate for employers to keep track

  of their employees' actions outside of the workplace? Why or why not?

- Imagine that the critique of your MySpace or Facebook profile from an employer

  had ended with the words, "You're fired." Write a researched argument detailing

  your stance on the issue of employees being fired for their actions and words

  online. In your response, draw on the examples of real-life employees who have

  been fired for their online writing such as Elaine Liner of The Phantom Professor

  blog, Heather Armstrong of Dooce.com, or Deborah Frisch, formerly of the

  University of Arizona (or choose local examples from your own community). Be

  sure to focus on whether or not you believe online social networking profiles can

  be cause for firings and why.

- Imagine instead that your critique came not from an employer but the president of your university. Like Jason Johnson at University of the Cumberlands or Theodore Schrubbe at Marquette University, the president of your school has sent you a letter informing you that, based on things you've said about a teacher or fellow students at your school, you will be expelled from classes for this semester and forced to apologize to your classmates. Write a response outlining your legal rights as a student (having students research or debate First Amendment rights prior to this assignment could be helpful) and describe what you think is the appropriate response by the school in this situation.

These writing prompts can be used either as standalone assignments or as extensions of the previous "about me" projects that extend the discussion of rhetorical awareness into legal and ethical arenas as well.

<div align="center">Let's be "Friends": The Social Dynamics of the Top 8</div>

This assignment asks students to consider how issues of audience impact the construction of their MySpace Top 8. The concept of the MySpace Top 8 is familiar to most students, even those who do not participate in online social networking sites. As described earlier in chapter 2, the MySpace Top 8 is a section of the user profile where an individual can showcase eight friends' profiles; their pictures and user names then are associated with the individual's user profile. While MySpace has since changed the Top 8 feature to allow users to highlight four, eight, twelve, sixteen, twenty, or twenty-four friends, the concept of the Top 8 has entered the popular culture lexicon. In contrast, Facebook features a randomized set of six user profiles from an individual's main

network (usually a school) rather than allow the user to choose which profiles to feature. (Of course, if a user has six or fewer friends in their main network, they will not have enough profiles to enable the randomization feature.) Finally, both sites describe all connections among individuals with the term friend. No other descriptive terms are used aside from friend, so a user may be friends with his or her parents, teachers, employers, significant other, classmates, siblings, and others.

All of these individuals essentially hold the same weight in terms of importance in Facebook because of the randomization of the top six friends in a network. However, in MySpace, users must carefully consider who to include in the Top 8 friends list. In this assignment, therefore, students are asked to discuss how they decided to populate their Top 8 (or Top 4, Top 12, etc.) friends list as well as how they chose the order of the friends within the Top 8 (for example, the number one friend, the first spot on the Top 8, is often reserved for someone particularly special to the user). Who is featured in their MySpace top friends list? (If the student does not have a MySpace account, ask them to think of how they would populate an imaginary MySpace account.) Why did they choose those particular friends? How often do they change their MySpace Top 8 and why? They can also investigate how the population and placement of the Top 8 friends reflects their offline friendships; for example, some individuals place bands or films in their Top 8 to avoid disappointing any of their friends. Returning to the idea of audience, how did the student make choices about the placement of the Top 8 friends based on who he or she assumed would view this profile page? To conclude this assignment, a student might write a letter to one of their friends in the Top 8 justifying their removal from this section.

Using appropriate language and tone for the situation, the student should explain why he

or she is removing their friend from the Top 8 and outline what he or she thinks might be

the intended outcome of the situation. If students in the class are friends with each other

on MySpace, they could even write letters of response to persuade the individual to keep

them in the Top 8. Throughout, students must be aware of their audience and use suitable

rhetorical strategies to persuade their reader(s) of the suitability of removing a top

friend—or of keeping him or her in the Top 8.

<div align="center">The Electronic Cottage Revisited: Technology, Time, and Romanticism</div>

While the previous assignments impel students to consider online identity

construction and rhetorical awareness, this assignment asks them to think about how

technology has been assimilated into U.S. culture and, as a result, how technology

impacts time and their daily lives. First, students should read Langdon Winner's

"Mythinformation" and "Whatever Happened to the Electronic Cottage?"[25] After

discussing these two readings in class, students then keep a daily "tech diary" of their use

of various technologies, including online social networking activities (if applicable), for

one week.

When the week is over, students share their tech diaries with each other in small

groups and compare how much time different individuals spend with technology.

Students may additionally begin consider how to define technology and what constitutes

"using technology." In particular, ask students to highlight how much time they spend in

---

[25] "Mythinformation" is available as a chapter in the book *Composing Cyberspace: Identity, Community, and Knowledge in the Electronic Age*. Ed. Richard Holeton. Boston: McGraw Hill, 1995. 226-239. "Whatever Happened to the Electronic Cottage?" is available online in *Tech Knowledge Revue* 3.2 (July 27, 2001) at <http://netfuture.org/2001/Jul2701_121.html>.

online social networking sites: checking messages, updating profiles, posting comments, writing blogs, and so on. Now, using either Winner's metaphor of a "technology-saturated future" from "Whatever Happened . . ." or "computer romantics" from "Mythinformation," have students write a response to Winner using details from their tech diaries and quotes from one or both of his texts that discusses how their own experiences using technology reflect on his ideas. For example, students can assess whether they consider themselves to be "computer romantics" and how their technology use and time spent in MySpace and Facebook reflects that identity. Do they believe that social networking sites, for example, might provide new avenues for participatory democracy and, if so, how? Or, students can discuss why they do or do not believe that we live in Winner's "technology-saturated future" or electronic cottage and how the recent explosion of online social networking sites contributes to their view.

One possible follow-up assignment that would help students make connections between their attitudes toward online social networking sites and technological literacy is a technology literacy autobiography. This assignment helps students continue to see the impact of technology on society, their school, and themselves. Chapters from Selfe and Hawisher's *Literate Lives in the Information Age* can be provided as models, while typical writing prompts might include the following:

- What are some of your earliest associations with computers? What kinds of technologies did you grow up with?

- How have others (parents, siblings, friends, teachers) helped shape your attitudes toward technology? What roles did some of these individuals play in your growth as a user of technology?

- How has technology influenced your composing processes? Your reading habits? What values do you see reflected in your interactions with technology as you read and write?

- You have already characterized your own relationship with technology earlier in this course. How do you think others view your relationship to technology? How might you like to portray yourself to others and how might you do so?

Students can be encouraged to include visuals in their autobiography and can use Kristin Arola's technology literacy autobiography available on ReadWriteThink.org as an example.[26]

User-generated or User-stolen Intellectual Property?

As discussed earlier in this chapter, online social networking sites provide rich moments to talk about intellectual property issues with students. The following writing prompts ask students to research intellectual property law (including the Digital Millennium Copyright Act, or DMCA) and its application to online social networking sites. First, have students read (in part or in full) Universal Music Corporation's lawsuit against MySpace (UMG Recordings, et al. *v.* MySpace, Inc., Nov. 17, 2006) as well as DeVoss and Porter's *Computers and Composition* article "Why Napster Matters to

---

[26] Arola's technology literacy biography is available at
<http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson325/Sample_TA.pdf> and further pedagogical possibilities for this assignment are available at
<http://www.readwritethink.org/lessons/lesson_view.asp?id=325>.

Writing: Filesharing as a New Ethic of Digital Delivery." Next, have students write a

response to the following portion of the Universal lawsuit against MySpace:

> Defendant MySpace.com ("MySpace") is one of the world's largest and best
>
> known "social networking sites." The foundation of MySpace is its so-called
>
> "user-generated content." However, much of that content is not "user-generated"
>
> at all. Rather, it is the "user-stolen" intellectual property of others, and MySpace
>
> is a willing partner in that theft. No intellectual property is safe in the MySpace
>
> world of infringement . . .

In this response, students should draw both on DeVoss and Porter's article as well as

legal documents regarding the DMCA and the Universal lawsuit to defend either

MySpace or Universal Music Corporation. (A variation on this assignment would be to

have students mimic the style of the Universal lawsuit and write a response in the style of

a legal brief from MySpace's perspective responding to the lawsuit.) In particular, how

might Universal and MySpace reach an agreement that respects others' work while at the

same time respects users' interests in access, Fair Use, and works in the public domain

(DeVoss and Porter 202)?[27]

    To extend this assignment further, students could create a video response (or

"video blog") regarding the MySpace/Universal controversy appropriate for posting to

---

[27] Both YouTube and MySpace reached agreements with Universal in 2006 to use filtering software to block unlicensed material from appearing in these sites. Instructors may wish to have students consider whether this was an appropriate measure to take; alternatively, they may have students rhetorically analyze the language and tone of the original Universal lawsuit against MySpace and contrast it with Universal's press release in February 2006, "Universal Music Group Joins With MySpace.com for Video-on-Demand" (http://new.umusic.com/News.aspx?NewsId=360).

YouTube (a video-sharing site that was also sued by Universal in 2005).[28] In class, show

the trailer for the film *Alternative Freedom*, a documentary about copyright law and

digital rights that features interviews with digital activists like Lessig.[29] Analyze the

visual argument presented in this approximately three-minute trailer and discuss how the

filmmakers used text, visuals, and sound to attempt to persuade the viewer. In particular,

what associations do they derive from some of the images in the video and why might

those images have been chosen (for example, the Statue of Liberty, bombs dropping from

planes, the cover of DJ Danger Mouse's *The Grey Album*) Finally, students use video

equipment to create their own response in the style of the *Alternative Freedom* trailer by

juxtaposing words, pictures, and music that responds to the MySpace/Universal lawsuit.

They should provide their stance on the issue, support their stance with appropriate

evidence, and create an aesthetically pleasing video montage. Such an assignment also

provides an opportunity to teach what DeVoss and Porter refer to as a "positive ethic of

sharing" regarding intellectual property, fair use guidelines, and Creative Commons

materials as students work with music and images for their project (202).

How can the previous assignments help students strengthen their technological

literacy and learn more about rhetorical awareness in online spaces? Harnessing students'

prior engagement with online social networking sites teaches students that what they

learn in their composition classes is applicable not only to the classroom but outside of it

---

[28] One caution for instructors who may want to have students post their finished videos on YouTube or look at other video blogs on YouTube as examples: Comments on YouTube are uncensored and sometimes contain a great deal of profanity. Instructors may want to download a local copy of a video file and show it sans comments or prescreen the page the video appears on to ensure it is appropriate for class. "YouTube Sued! Will Copyright Kill the Video Star" is another user-created video that could serve as a suitable example video blog; search YouTube or find it at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rr9SQ4qkMMk>.

[29] The trailer is available online at <http://alternativefreedom.org/?page_id=7>.

as well. Students learn to employ rhetorical techniques and tools such as audience

analysis, diction, tone, and evidence not only in print-based texts like the academic essay

but also in spaces that can make use of multimedia elements like sound, video, and

images. Assignments such as these teach students that rhetorical awareness is not only a

classroom-based skill but something that can be applied to nearly all aspects of their

lives, including in spaces perhaps dismissed as popular and therefore nonacademic. As

rhetorical awareness is valuable not just in the classroom but in everyday life, students

have the opportunity to think about their interactions with others in online social

networking sites in ways that will help them extend their classroom knowledge to their

lives outside the classroom as well.

Conclusion

To assist students in strengthening their technological literacy and rhetorical

awareness, particularly in online social networking sites, we must first be able to

understand and critique these sites ourselves. This includes being aware of the everyday

WWW spaces where students congregate. If we disregard online social networking sites,

we are potentially missing out on a familiar and accessible example of rhetorical analysis

that we can harness for our classrooms. Selfe and Hawisher argue that educators cannot

continue to ignore the increasingly expansive networked environments students use to

communicate lest they run the risk of their curricula no longer holding relevance for those

students (233). As I have proposed in this final chapter, online social networking sites can

provide teachable moments to talk with students about audience, discourse communities,

intellectual property, and the tensions between public and private writing. I am not

necessarily recommending that instructors have students showcase their online social networking site profiles in the classroom or that instructors create their own profiles, though these are certainly both pedagogical possibilities. I want to encourage academics to take a new look at online social networking sites and begin thinking about how these sites, like other networked technologies before them, are even now changing our ideas about writing and the teaching of writing.

Turkle observes that "life online does provide new lenses through which to examine current complexities" and online social networking sites offer a lens through which academics can examine a variety of issues, from audience to discourse to copyright and intellectual property (232). What I propose is that rhetoric and composition scholars begin looking at online social networking sites through an academic and pedagogical lens to examine the complexities these sites showcase. This dissertation is a step toward engaging others in a conversation about the moment of possibility in front of us; I hope that we will begin to explore this moment more fully.

APPENDIX A

31 July 2006

Stephanie Vie, Ph.D. candidate
Advisor: Amy Kimme Hea, Ph.D.
Department of English
445 Modern Languages
P.O. Box 210067

RE: BSC B06.234   ENGAGING OTHERS IN SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES: RHETORICAL
PRACTICES IN MYSPACE, LIVEJOURNAL, AND FACEBOOK

Dear Ms. Vie:

We received your research proposal as cited above. The procedures to be followed in this study
pose no more than minimal risk to participating subjects and have been reviewed by the
Institutional Review Board (IRB) through an Expedited Review procedure as cited in the
regulations issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (45 CFR Part
46.110(b)(1)] based on their inclusion under research category 6 and 7. As this is not a treatment
intervention study, the IRB has waived the statement of Alternative Treatments in the consent
form as allowed by 45 CFR 46.116(d) and the need for signed informed consent has been waived for
parts of the study, as the research involves no risks or procedures for which consent is normally
required outside of the research context as stated in 45 CFR 46.117(c)(2). Although full Committee
review is not required, a brief summary of the project procedures is submitted to the Committee
for their endorsement and/or comment, if any, after administrative approval is granted. This
project is approved with an **expiration date of 31 July 2007**. Please make copies of the attached
IRB stamped consent documents to consent your subjects.

The Human Subjects Committee (Institutional Review Board) of the University of Arizona has a
current Federal Wide Assurance of compliance, number FWA00004218, which is on file with the
Department of Health and Human Services and covers this activity.

Approval is granted with the understanding that no further changes or additions will be made
either to the procedures followed or to the consent form(s) used (copies of which we have on file)
without the knowledge and approval of the Human Subjects Committee and your College or
Departmental Review Committee. Any research related physical or psychological harm to any
subject must also be reported to each committee.

A university policy requires that all signed subject consent forms be kept in a permanent file in an
area designated for that purpose by the Department Head or comparable authority. This will
assure their accessibility in the event that university officials require the information and the
principal investigator is unavailable for some reason.

Sincerely yours,
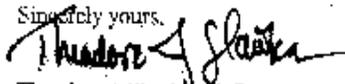
Theodore J Glattke, Ph.D.
Chair, Social and Behavioral Sciences Human Subjects Committee

TJG:pm
cc: Departmental/College Review Committee

APPENDIX B

SUBJECT'S DISCLAIMER FORM

Title of Project: Engaging Others in Social Networking Sites: Rhetorical Practices in MySpace, LiveJournal, and Facebook

You are being invited to voluntarily participate in the above-titled research study. The purpose of this project is to examine how individuals, including, but not limited to, current users of social networking sites, such as MySpace.com, Facebook.com, and LiveJournal.com, approach and use the site(s). The researcher is interested in talking with participants about their experiences, attitudes, and understandings regarding social networking sites. You are eligible to participate because you are a current instructor (including as a graduate teaching assistant or associate) who teaches any undergraduate-level writing-intensive courses in the English department (or its equivalent, such as a Writing department) of your institution.

If you agree to participate, your participation will involve the completion of an online survey housed through Zoomerang.com. The survey completion will take place in a location convenient for you and should last approximately half an hour (30 minutes) or less. You may choose not to answer some or all of the questions. Any questions you have will be answered and you may withdraw from the study at any time. There are no known risks from your participation and no direct benefit from your participation is expected. There is no cost to you except for your time and you will not be compensated for your participation.

Only the principal investigator and the chair of her dissertation committee (Dr. Amy Kimme Hea of the English Department at the University of Arizona) will have access to your name and the information that you provide. In order to maintain your confidentiality, your name will not be revealed in any reports that result from this project. All survey information is housed online in a secure, password-protected website.

You can obtain further information from the principal investigator, Stephanie Vie, Ph.D. Candidate, The University of Arizona Rhetoric, Composition, and the Teaching of English program at (520) 260-8231. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may call the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program office at (520) 626-6721.

By participating in the survey, you are giving permission for the investigator to use your information for research purposes.

Thank you.

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (INSTRUCTOR)

1. Before we begin talking about online social networking sites, can you tell me about yourself?
2. What particular courses have you taught in the English department?
3. How long have you been teaching?
4. Are you a member of any online social networking sites?
   a. (If yes) Approximately how long have you been a member of this site/these sites? Do you have a favorite site, or one you visit more often than others?
   b. (If no) Can you explain further why you do not belong to any online social networking sites?
   c. (If they once were, but left) Can you explain further why you no longer belong to any online social networking sites, even though you once did?
5. How do you feel about the design of the online social networking sites you have seen or belong to? In other words, how do you feel about the way these sites look and perform?
6. In a sentence or two, how would you define social networking?
7. In a sentence or two, what do you think is the purpose of online social networking sites?
8. How often do you update your profile, your pictures, or your blog on the online social networking sites you belong to?
9. Picture your audience—who you are writing to or talking to through your profile. Who do you imagine is your audience? Who is looking at your online social networking profile?
10. Have you ever had someone view your profile that you didn't want reading it?
    a. (If yes) Can you tell me more about that instance?
    b. (If no) Why do you think this has not happened?
11. What do you think about employers viewing job applicants' online profiles?
12. (If instructor is about to enter the job market) Do you plan to change or modify your profile(s) in any way for the job market?
13. What do you think about instructors viewing current or former students' profiles?
14. What do you think about students viewing their instructors' profiles?
15. Do you feel that online social networking sites have any beneficial uses for the classroom or for teaching? Why or why not?
16. Do you feel that your online social networking presence reflects the "real you"? Why or why not?
17. What do you think is the future of online social networking?
18. Can you tell me about the privacy policy in the online social networking sites you use?

19. Can you tell me about the terms of service in the online social networking sites you use?
20. Have you heard of the Deleting Online Predators Act? What is your opinion of this act?

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (STUDENT)

1. Before we begin talking about social networking sites, can you tell me about yourself?
2. Are you a member of any online social networking sites?
    a. (If yes) Approximately how long have you been a member of this site/these sites? Do you have a favorite site, or one you visit more often than others?
    b. (If no) Can you explain further why you do not belong to any online social networking sites?
    c. (If they once were, but left) Can you explain further why you no longer belong to any online social networking sites, even though you once did?
3. How do you feel about the design of the online social networking sites you have seen or belong to? In other words, how do you feel about the way these sites look and perform?
4. In a sentence or two, how would you define social networking?
5. In a sentence or two, what do you think is the purpose of online social networking sites?
6. How often do you update your profile, your pictures, or your blog on the social networking sites you belong to?
7. Picture your audience—who you are writing to or talking to through your profile. Who do you imagine is your audience? Who is looking at your online social networking profile?
8. Have you ever had someone view your profile that you didn't want reading it?
    a. (If yes) Can you tell me more about that instance?
    b. (If no) Why do you think this has not happened?
9. What do you think about employers viewing job applicants' online profiles?
10. What do you think about instructors viewing current or former students' profiles?
11. What do you think about students viewing their instructors' profiles?
12. Do you feel that your online social networking presence reflects the "real you"? Why or why not?
13. What do you think is the future of online social networking?
14. Can you tell me about the privacy policy in the online social networking sites you use?
15. Can you tell me about the terms of service in the online social networking sites you use?
16. Have you heard of the Deleting Online Predators Act? What is your opinion of this act?

WORKS CITED

Abbey, Rachel. "Facebook Ban Reversed for Student Athletes." *Stater Online*. 4 July 2006. 22 Apr. 2007 <http://media.www.stateronline.com/media/storage/paper867/news/2006/07/05/News/Facebook.Ban.Reversed.For.Student.Athletes-2120404.shtml>.

"About Facebook." *Facebook.com*. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.facebook.com/about.php>.

Anderson, Bill. "Writing Power into Online Discussion." *Computers and Composition* 23 (2006): 108-24.

Armstrong, Heather. "About This Site." *Dooce.com.* 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.dooce.com/about.html>.

Arnett, Jeffrey J. "Adolescents' Uses of Media for Self-socialization." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 24.5 (1995): 519-33.

Babbie, Earl and Johann Mouton. *The Practice of Social Research.* Oxford: Oxford UP, 2001.

Barney, Darin. "The Vanishing Table, or Community in a World that is No World." *Community in the Digital Age: Philosophy and Practice*. Ed. Andrew Feenberg and Darin Barney. Lanham, MD: Bowman, 2004. 31-52.

Berman, Jeffrey. *Risky Writing: Self-Disclosure and Self-Transformation in the Classroom*. Amherst, MA: U of Massachusetts P, 2001.

Berson, Ilene R. and Michael J. Berson. "Challenging Online Behaviors of Youth: Findings from a Comparative Analysis of Young People in the United States and New Zealand." *Social Science Computer Review* 23.1 (2005): 29-38.

Best, Steven and Douglas Kellner. *Postmodern Theory: Critical Interrogations.* New York: Macmillan, 1991.

"Bob." Personal interview. 5 Oct. 2006.

Bosworth, Martin H. "MySpace Glitch Gives Hackers Teen Data." *ConsumerAffairs.com*. 31 Aug. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.consumeraffairs.com/news04/2006/08/myspace_hack.html>.

boyd, danah. "Defining and Categorizing Weblogs." *Misbehaving.net*. 18 Jan. 2004. 20
        Mar. 2007 <http://www.misbehaving.net/2004/01/defining_and_ca.html>.

---. "Social Network Sites: My Definition." *Apophenia.org*. 10 Nov. 2006. 23 Apr. 2007
        <http://www.zephoria.org/thoughts/archives/2006/11/10/social_network_1.html>.

Bragg, Billy. "Who Owns the Music, MTV or Me?" *Guardian Online*. 31 Aug. 2006. 20
        Mar. 2007 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,1861352,00.html>.

Breivik, Patricia Senn. "21st Century Learning and Information Literacy." *Change*
        Mar./Apr. 2005: 21-27.

Brennan, Eamonn. "Facebook Updates 'Creepy.'" *Indiana Daily Student*. 6 Sept. 2006.
        20 Mar. 2007 < http://www.idsnews.com/news/story.aspx?id=37230>.

"Bruce." Personal interview. 11 Oct. 2006.

Bugeja, Michael J. "Facing the Facebook." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 27 Jan. 2006:
        C1.

Capriccioso, Rob. "Facebook Face Off." *Inside Higher Ed.com*. 14 Feb. 2006. 22 Apr.
        2007 < http://insidehighered.com/news/2006/02/14/facebook>.

Carbone, Nick. "Ultimate Pesky E-Mail Fix: Students Won't Use it in the Future?"
        Online posting. 24 Feb. 2006. TechRhet. 20 Mar. 2007
        <http://interversity.org/lists/techrhet/archives/Feb2006/msg00262.html>.

"Charles." Personal interview. 5 Oct. 2006.

---. Personal interview. 20 Oct. 2006.

"Chrissa." Personal interview. 17 Oct. 2006.

"Connie." Personal interview. 27 Sept. 2006.

Cook, Colleen, Fred Heath, and Russell Thompson. "A Meta-analysis of Response Rates
        in Web- or Internet-based Surveys." *Educational and Psychological Measurement*
        60.6 (2000): 821-36.

Coomes, Mark. "Meeting in Person? So '03." *Courier-Journal*. 28 Dec. 2005. 13 Jan.
        2006. <http://www.courier-
        journal.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?aid=/20051228/news01/512280372/1008>.

Crampton, Thomas. "Join? Well, if You Have to Ask…" *International Herald Tribune*. 29 Aug. 2005. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.iht.com/articles/2005/08/28/business/net29.php>.

Davenport, Thomas H. and John C. Beck. *The Attention Economy*: *Understanding the New Currency of Business*. Boston: Harvard Business School P, 2001.

Davis, Evan and Sarah Hardy. "Teaching Writing in the Space of Blackboard." *Computers and Composition Online* (Spring 2003). 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.bgsu.edu/cconline/DavisHardy/index.html>.

Day, Michael. "Re: Facebook?" Online posting. 23 Oct. 2005. WPA-L. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://lists.asu.edu/cgi-bin/wa?A2=ind0510&L=wpa-l&D=1&O=A&P=59622>.

De Pew, Kevin Eric. "The Body of Charlie Brown's Teacher: What Instructors Should Know About Constructing Digital Subjectivities." *Computers and Composition* 21 (2004): 103-118.

DeVoss, Dànielle Nicole, Gail E. Hawisher, Charles Jackson, Joseph Johansen, Brittney Moraski, and Cynthia L. Selfe. "The Future of Literacy." *Literate Lives in the Information Age*. Ed. Cynthia L. Selfe and Gail E. Hawisher. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2004. 183-210.

DeVoss, Dànielle Nicole and James E. Porter. "Why Napster Matters to Writing: Filesharing as a New Ethic of Digital Delivery." *Computers and Composition* 23 (2006): 178-210.

DeWitt, Scott Lloyd. "Out There on the Web: Pedagogy and Identity in Face of Opposition." *Computers and Composition* 14 (1997): 229-243.

---. *Writing Inventions*: *Identities, Technologies, Pedagogies*. New York: SUNY P, 2001.

Dick, Philip K. *VALIS*. London: Gollancz, 2001.

"Donna." Personal interview. 28 Sept. 2006.

---. Personal interview. 18 Oct. 2006.

"Dozens Rally for Student Expelled for Being Gay." *MSNBC.com*. 19 Apr. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/12394904/>.

"eBay to Acquire Skype." *Skype.com*. 12 Sept. 2005. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://about.skype.com/2005/09/ebay_to_acquire_skype.html>.

Educational Testing Service. "2006 ICT Literacy Assessment Preliminary Findings." 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.ets.org/Media/Products/ICT_Literacy/pdf/2006_Preliminary_Findings.pdf>.

Ellis, Carolyn and Arthur P. Bochner. "Autoethnography, Personal Narrative, Reflexivity: Researcher as Subject." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000: 733-69.

"Erica." Personal interview. 17 Oct. 2006.

"Ernie." Personal interview. 18 Oct. 2006.

Everett-Haynes, La Monica. "Blog Blunder Fells UA Teacher." *Tucson Citizen* 11 July 2006: 4A.

"Facebook Overview." *Facebook.com*. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.facebook.com/press.php>.

Faigley, Lester. "Literacy after the Revolution." *College Composition and Communication* 48.1 (1997): 30-43.

Faigley, Lester and Susan Romano. "Going Electric: Creating Multiple Sites for Innovation in a Writing Program." *Resituating Writing: Constructing and Administering Writing Programs*. Ed. Joseph Janangelo and Kristine Hansen. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann/Boynton-Cook, 1995. 46-58.

Feenberg, Andrew and Maria Bakardjieva. "Consumers or Citizens? The Online Community Debate." *Community in the Digital Age: Philosophy and Practice*. Ed. Andrew Feenberg and Darin Barney. Lanham, MD: Bowman, 2004. 1-30.

Fetterman, David M. "Web Surveys to Digital Movies: Technological Tools of the Trade." *Educational Researcher* (Aug./Sept. 2002): 29-37.

Fisher, Bonnie S., Francis T. Tullen, and Michael G. Turner. "Being Pursued: Stalking Victimization in a National Study of College Women." *Criminology and Public Policy* 1.2 (2002): 257-308.

Fleckenstein, Kristie S. "Faceless Students, Virtual Places: Emergence and Communal Accountability in Online Classrooms." *Computers and Composition* 22 (2005): 149-176.

Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Vantage, 1977.

---. *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Ed. Colin Gordon. New York: Pantheon, 1980.

---. *The History of Sexuality.* Vol. 1. New York: Vintage, 1990.

---. "The Subject and Power." *Critical Inquiry* 8.4 (1982): 777-95.

"Fred." Personal interview. 28 Sept. 2006.

---. Personal interview. 10 Oct. 2006.

Geertz, Clifford. *The Interpretation of Cultures*. New York: Basic, 1973.

"Gloria." Personal interview. 29 Sept. 2006.

---. Personal interview. 18 Oct. 2006.

Gonsalves, Antone. "News Corp. to Acquire Intermix Media." *InternetWeek*. 18 July 2005. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.informationweek.com/story/showArticle.jhtml?articleID=166400491&tid=13692>.

"Google to Acquire YouTube for $1.65 Billion in Stock." *Google.com*. 9 Oct. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.google.com/press/pressrel/google_youtube.html>.

Grabill, Jeffrey T. "On Divides and Interfaces: Access, Class, and Computers." *Computers and Composition* 20.4 (2003): 455-472.

Graziano, Anthony and Michael Raulin. *Research Methods: A Process of Inquiry*. 5th ed. New York: Allyn, 2004.

Greenwald, Andy. *Nothing Feels Good: Punk Rock, Teenagers, and Emo*. New York: St. Martin's, 2003.

Gruber, Sibylle. "The Good, the Bad, the Complex: *Computers and Composition* in Transition." *Computers and Composition* 21.1 (2004): 15-28.

Gurak, Laura. *Cyberliteracy: Navigating the Internet with Awareness*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 2001.

---. *Persuasion and Privacy in Cyberspace*: *The Online Protests over Lotus MarketPlace and the Clipper Chip*. New Haven, CT: Yale UP, 1997.

Gustafson, Tim. "Facebook, Social Software, and Valuing Technology." Online posting. 25 Jan. 2006. Teaching Composition. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://mailman.eppg.com/pipermail/teaching_composition/2006-January/002460.html>.

Haddon, Leslie. *Information and Communication Technologies in Everyday Life*. New York: Berg, 2004.

Hakken, David. *Cyborgs@Cyberspace? An Ethnographer Looks to the Future*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Harding, Sandra. "Introduction: Is there a Feminist Method?" *Feminism and Methodology*. Ed. Sandra Harding. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1987. 1-14.

Hart, D. Alexis. "Textured Literacy: An Interview with Kathleen Blake Yancey." *Kairos*: *Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy* 11.2 (2007). 20 Mar. 2007 <http://kairos.technorhetoric.net/11.2/binder.html?interviews/yancey/TexturedLiteracy.html>.

Hawisher, Gail E., Cynthia L. Selfe, Brittney Moraski, and Melissa Pearson. "Becoming Literate in the Information Age: Cultural Ecologies and the Literacies of Technology." *College Composition and Communication* 55.4 (2004): 642-92.

Hayles, N. Katherine. "The Materiality of Informatics." *Configurations* 1.1 (1993): 147-70.

Hess, Mickey. "Was Foucault a Plagiarist?: Hip-hop Sampling and Academic Citation." *Computers and Composition* 23.3 (2006): 280-295.

Hine, Christine. *Virtual Ethnography*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000.

---. *Virtual Methods: Issues in Social Research on the Internet*. Oxford: Berg, 2004.

Hoover, Eric. "Gay and Christian." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 28 Apr. 2006: A46.

Huffaker, David A. and Sandra L. Calvert. "Gender, Identity, and Language Use in Teenage Blogs." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 10.2 (Jan. 2005) <http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol10/issue2/huffaker.html>.

Hunter, Richard. *World Without Secrets: Business, Crime, and Privacy in the Age of Ubiquitous Computing*. New York: Wiley, 2002.

"Information Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education." 2000. Association of College and Research Libraries. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.ala.org/ala/acrl/acrlstandards/informationliteracycompetency.htm>.

"Iris." Personal interview. 13 Oct. 2006.

---. Personal interview. 19 Oct. 2006.

"Isolde." Personal interview. 16 Oct. 2006.

Janangelo, Joseph. "Technopower and Technoppression: Some Abuses of Power and Control in Computer-assisted Writing Environments." *Computers and Composition* 9.1 (1991): 47-64.

Jaschik, Scott. "Crossing a Line." *Inside Higher Ed.com*. 10 July 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://insidehighered.com/news/2006/07/10/frisch>.

---. "The Phantom Professor." *Inside Higher Ed.com*. 11 May 2005. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2005/05/11/phantom>.

Johnson-Eilola, Johndan. *Datacloud*: *Toward a New Theory of Online Work.* Cresskill, NJ: Hampton P, 2005.

Johnson-Eilola, Johndan and Stuart A. Selber. "Policing Ourselves: Defining the Boundaries of Appropriate Discussion in Online Forums." *Computers and Composition* 13 (1996): 269-291.

Jones, Harvey and José Hiram Soltren. "Facebook: Threats to Privacy." Unpublished Massachusetts Institute of Technology term paper. Dec. 2005. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.swiss.ai.mit.edu/6095/student-papers/fall05-papers/facebook.pdf>.

Jones, Steven, ed. *Doing Internet Research: Critical Issues and Methods for Examining the Net*. London: Sage, 1999.

Kellner, Douglas. "New Media and New Literacies: Reconstructing Education for the New Millenium." *The Handbook of New Media*: *Social Shaping and Consequences of ICTs*. Ed. Leah A. Lievrouw and Sonia Livingstone. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2002. 90-104.

Kimme Hea, Amy C. "Rearticulating E-dentities in the Web-based Classroom: One Technoresearcher's Exploration of Power and the World Wide Web." *Computers and Composition* 19.3 (2002): 331-46.

Kirsch, Gesa E. and Joy Ritchie. "Beyond the Personal: Theorizing a Politics of Location in Composition Research." *College Composition and Communication* 46.1 (1995): 7-29.

Kirsch, Gesa E. and Patricia A. Sullivan, eds. *Methods and Methodology in Composition Research*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1992.

Kirsch, Gesa E. *Women Writing the Academy: Audience, Authority, and Transformation*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1993.

Kozinets, Robert V. "On Netnography: Initial Reflections on Consumer Research Investigations of Cyberculture." *Advances in Consumer Research* 25.1 (1998): 366-71.

Lanham, Richard. "Copyright 101." *Academic Commons*. 25 July 2005. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.academiccommons.org/commons/essay/lanham-copyright-101>.

Lessig, Lawrence. "Privacy as Property." *Social Research* 69.1 (Spring 2001): 247-69.

Levy, Steven and Brad Stone. "The New Wisdom of the Web." *Newsweek* 3 Apr. 2006: 47-53.

"Linda." Personal interview. 28 Sept. 2006.

Liner, Elaine. "Answering the Critics." *The Phantom Professor*. 11 May 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://phantomprof.blogspot.com/2006/05/answering-critics.html>.

---. "Dealing with a Dooce." *The Phantom Professor*. 10 May 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://phantomprof.blogspot.com/2006/05/dealing-with-dooce.html>.

Loew, Ryan. "Kent Banning Athlete Web Profiles." *Columbus Dispatch* 22 June 2006: 1A.

---. "Kent Lifts Ban on Web Site—Athletes Can Put Profiles on Facebook.com." *Columbus Dispatch* 4 July 2006: 1B.

Lyon, David. *Surveillance Society: Monitoring Everyday Life*. Philadelphia: Open UP, 2001.

MacLean, Marion S. and Marion M. Mohr. *Teacher-Researchers at Work*. Berkeley, CA: National Writing Project, 1999.

Mann, Chris and Fiona Stewart. *Internet Communication and Qualitative Research: A Handbook for Researching Online*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000.

Marano, Michael. "Doctored Phil." *SciFi* Aug. 2006: 26-29.

Maternowski, Kate. "Marquette Dean Overturns Suspension for Blog." *Badger Herald* 15 Jan. 2006. 24 Sept. 2006 <http://badgerherald.com/news/2006/01/15/marquette_dean_overt.php>.

McKee, Heidi. "'YOUR VIEWS SHOWED TRUE IGNORANCE!!!': (Mis)communication in an Online Interracial Discussion Forum." *Computers and Composition 19* (2002): 411–34.

Mitrano, Tracy. "A Wider World: Youth, Privacy, and Social Networking Technologies." *Educause Review* (Nov./Dec. 2006): 16-28.

Moran, Charles. "Access: The 'A' Word in Technology Studies." *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies*. Ed. Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 1999. 205-220.

Mortensen, Torill Elvira. "Personal Publication and Public Attention." *Into the Blogosphere: Rhetoric, Community, and Culture of Weblogs*. Ed. Laura J. Gurak, Smiljana Antonijevic, Laurie Johnson, Clancy Ratliff, and Jessica Reyman. June 2004. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://blog.lib.umn.edu/blogosphere/personal_publication.html>.

"MySpace: Your Kids' Danger?" *CBS Evening News*. 6 Feb. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2006/02/06/eveningnews/main1286130.shtml>.

Nagowski, Matt. "The Face Behind thefacebook.com." *Current Magazine*. 30 Nov. 2004. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/6596533/site/newsweek/>.

North, Stephen M. *The Making of Knowledge in Composition: Portrait of an Emerging Field*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, 1987.

Nussbaum, Emily. "Say Everything." *New York Magazine*. 12 Feb. 2007. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://nymag.com/news/features/27341/index.html>.

Oblinger, Diana. "Understanding the New Students: Boomers, Gen-Xers, and Millenials." *Educause Review* July/Aug. 2003: 37-47.

"Orkut Help." *Orkut.com*. 23 Apr. 2007 <http://help.orkut.com/bin/answer.py?answer=11765&topic=10315>.

Pace, Natalie. "Q&A: MySpace Founders Chris DeWolfe and Tom Anderson." *Forbes.com* 4 Jan. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007

<http://www.forbes.com/digitalentertainment/2006/01/04/myspace-dewolfe-anderson-cx_np_0104myspace.html>.

Patton, Michael Quinn. *Qualitative Evaluation and Research Methods*. 2nd ed. Newbury Park, CA: Sage, 1990.

"Philomena." Personal interview. 12 Oct. 2006.

Porter, James E. "Legal Realities and Ethical Hyperrealities: A Critical Approach Toward Cyberwriting." *Computers and Technical Communication*. Ed. Stuart C. Selber. Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1997. 45-73.

---. "Why Technology Matters to Writing: A Cyberwriter's Tale." *Computers and Composition* 20 (2002): 375-394.

Rathbun, Sandy. "Public Library Warns of MySpace.com Danger." *KVOA Tucson*. 13 Oct. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.kvoa.com/global/story.asp?s=5534147>.

Read, Brock and Jeffrey R. Young. "Facebook and Other Social-Networking Sites Raise Questions for Administrators." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 4 Aug. 2006: A29.

Reiss, Spencer. "His Space." *Wired* July 2006: 142-164.

Rheingold, Howard. *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. 2nd ed. New York: Addison, 2000.

Roberts, Donald F. and Ulla G. Foehr. "Generation M: Media in the Lives of 8-18 Year-olds." The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation. Mar. 2005. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.kff.org/entmedia/7251.cfm>.

Romano, Susan. "On Becoming a Woman: Pedagogies of the Self." *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies*. Ed. Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia L. Selfe. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 1999. 249-267.

Rosenbush, Steve. "Facebook's on the Block." *BusinessWeekOnline*. 28 Mar. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.businessweek.com/technology/content/mar2006/tc20060327_21597 6.htm>.

Sanghvi, Ruchi. "Facebook Gets a Facelift." *Facebook Blog*. 5 Sept. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://blog.facebook.com/blog.php?post=2208197130>.

Saroup, Madan. *Identity, Culture and the Postmodern World.* Athens, GA: U of Georgia P, 1996.

Seetharaman, Deepa. "Northwestern U. Officials Advise Greek Houses on Facebook Faux Pas." *Daily Northwestern.* 19 Oct. 2005. *LexisNexis* <http://web.lexis-nexis.com>. Path: University News; University Wire.

Selber, Stuart A. "Reimagining the Functional Side of Computer Literacy." *College Composition and Communication* 55.3 (2004): 470-503.

Selfe, Cynthia L. "Technology and Literacy: A Story about the Perils of Not Paying Attention." *College Composition and Communication* 50.3 (1999): 411-436.

---. *Technology and Literacy in the Twenty-First Century*: *The Importance of Paying Attention*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 1999.

Selfe, Cynthia L. and Gail E. Hawisher. *Literate Lives in the Information Age*: *Narratives of Literacy from the United States*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum, 2004.

Selfe, Cynthia L. and Richard J. Selfe, Jr. "The Politics of the Interface: Power and Its Exercise in Electronic Contact Zones." *College Composition and Communication* 45.4 (1994): 480-504.

Shor, Ira. *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*. Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1992.

Singel, Ryan. "Are You Ready for Web 2.0?" *Wired* 6 Oct. 2005. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.wired.com/news/technology/0,1282,69114,00.html>.

"Sophia." Personal interview. 28 Sept. 2006.

---. Personal interview. 20 Oct. 2006.

Stafford, Rob. "Why Parents Must Mind MySpace." *NBC News*. 27. Jan 2006. 5 Apr. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/11064451>.

Takayoshi, Pamela, Emily Huot and Megan Huot. "No Boys Allowed: The World Wide Web as Clubhouse for Girls." *Computers and Composition* 16.1 (1999): 89-106.

Takayoshi, Pamela. "Complicated Women: Examining Methodologies for Understanding the Uses of Technology." *Computers and Composition* 17 (2000): 123-38.

Taylor, Todd. "The Persistence of Authority: Coercing the Student Body." *Literacy Theory in the Age of the Internet*. Ed. Todd Taylor and Irene Ward. New York: Columbia UP, 1998. 109-21.

"Teen Heading Home after Trip to Mideast to Meet Man from MySpace.com."
    FoxNews.com. 9 June 2006. 20 Mar. 2007
    <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,198848,00.html>.

"Teen Text Messages for Help, Man Arrested." *MSNBC.com*. 29 Sept. 2006. 20 Mar.
    2007 <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15065101/>.

Tribble, Ivan. "Bloggers Need Not Apply." *Chronicle of Higher Education* 8 July 2005:
    3.

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

Twohey, Megan. "Marquette Suspends Dental Student for Blog Comments." *Milwaukee
    Journal Sentinel* 5 Dec. 2005: A1.

Umbach, Paul D. "Web Surveys: Best Practices." *New Directions in Institutional
    Research* 121 (2004): 23-38.

United States Dept. of Education. "Getting America's Students Ready for the 21st
    Century: Meeting the Technology Literacy Challenge." 29 June 1996. 20 Mar.
    2007
    <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/technology/plan/national/index.html>.

---. "The Plan." National Education Technology Plan. 24 Mar. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007
    <http://www.ed.gov/about/offices/list/os/technology/plan/2004/site/edlite-
    background.html>.

United States Dept. of Justice. Bureau of Justice Statistics. "Criminal Victimization." 10
    Dec. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007 <http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/cvictgen.htm>.

"The University of Arizona Fact Book, 2005-6." The University of Arizona Office of
    Institutional Research and Development. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007
    <http://oire.arizona.edu/files/Fact_Book/UA_Factbook05-06_proof02.pdf >.

van Dijk, Jan. *The Network Society: Social Aspects of New Media*. London: Sage, 1999.

"Vigil Held for Missing Calabasas Girls." *CBS2.com*. 25 Feb. 2006. 20 Mar. 2007
    <http://cbs2.com/topstories/local_story_056132443.html>.

"Weblogging Software Leader Six Apart Acquires LiveJournal." *SixApart.com*. 5 Jan.
    2005. 20 Mar. 2007
    <http://www.sixapart.com/about/press/2005/01/weblogging_soft.html>.

Weiler, Kathleen. *Women Teaching for Change: Gender, Class, and Power*. Westport, CT: Bergin, 1988.

Weitzman, Eben A. "Software and Qualitative Research." *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. Ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000. 803-20.

"Why Teach Digital Writing?" The WIDE Research Center Collective. *Kairos: Rhetoric, Technology, Pedagogy* 10.1 (2005). 20 Mar. 2007 <http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/10.1/binder2.html?coverweb/wide/index.html>.

Wysocki, Anne and Johndan Johnson-Eilola. "Blinded by the Letter: Why are we Using Literacy as a Metaphor for Everything Else?" *Passions, Pedagogies, and 21st Century Technologies*. Ed. Gail E. Hawisher and Cynthia Selfe. Logan, UT: Utah State UP, 1999. 350-368.

Wyvill, Clarke. "Re: Comments." MySpace message to Stephanie Vie. 1 Aug. 2006.

Zhang, Yin. "Using the Internet for Survey Research: A Case Study." *Journal of the American Society for Information Science* 51.1 (2000): 57-68.

Zuboff, Shoshana. *In the Age of the Smart Machine: The Future of Work and Power*. New York: Basic, 1988.

Zuckerberg, Mark. "Calm Down. Breathe. We Hear You." *Facebook Blog*. 5 Sept. 2006. 20 Mar. 2