

Facebook in the classroom: Blended audiences and multiple front-stages

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Abstract: In New Zealand, the use of social media for educational purposes is being encouraged (Ministry of Education, 2013). Yet, while educators focus on the educational advantages of using social media, there is little research available on the effects on students. This paper explores the way a small group of senior students from one New Zealand secondary school negotiated their identities on a class' Facebook page. This qualitative study uses Goffman's dramaturgical metaphor and poststructuralist conceptualisations of discourses and fluidity of identity. The findings offer an insight into the tensions faced by this group of students as they negotiated their identity presentations to blended audiences when the boundaries between public and private are blurred. The students' identity performance and participation on the page was influenced by power differentials, the structure of the page, and an awareness of audience. This has implications for the way educators use social media in classrooms.

Keywords: Facebook; classroom; education; identity; New Zealand; NZ; secondary; blended audiences; front stages; Goffman; online learning environment; collaborative; social network sites.

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1 Introduction: Using Facebook in school

In New Zealand, teachers have begun to explore the use of Facebook as a supplementary learning environment. This encroachment of school into the previously social space of Facebook blurs the boundaries between the public and private spheres and has implications for both teachers and students. The user's awareness of their audience plays a role in what is assumed to be 'private' when posting to an audience of friends, yet in reality may be 'public' if privacy settings have not been utilised. By contrast, school classrooms may be viewed as public, yet are relatively mediated and private with a controlled and limited audience of classmates and teachers.

Morrison (2010) argues that profiles on social networking sites are limited by the connections of the online Friends network in the material world. The presence of offline friends as network Friends (boyd and Ellison, 2007) limits the amount a user can vary their online profile presentation from their face-to-face presentation in other contexts. As contacts from various life contexts are pulled together onto one social network site, individuals must juggle the multiple portrayals of identity and images of self that are reflected back by others. Every status post, *Like* of a page, or photo posted, will reveal aspects of the user's identity to their social network. This has implications for the way young people negotiate their identity when different contexts merge and social network sites are used for both social and educational purposes.

This study aims to answer the following research question: How do students negotiate their identity on Facebook pages that are being used for educational purposes? Sub-questions involved exploring how students craft their identity on Facebook; how the participating teacher and students used Facebook for educational purposes; and the implications for students of blurring the boundaries between public and private spheres.

Part two of this paper outlines the theoretical framework that shaped our research. We then locate the study within existing literature in part three, before explaining the research design in part four. Part five presents the key findings, before part six discusses what Facebook as an educational tool may mean for students. We conclude by suggesting implications from this research for educators and students and offer our concluding thoughts.

2 Theoretical framework: Identity, discourse and audience

It is important to acknowledge the theoretical framework, which has informed the research question and design because “theory frames how we look at and think about a topic” [Neuman, (2006) p. 26]. Of primary importance to this research is the conception of identity. We acknowledge the influence of social processes upon identity formation and performance. Identity is more than individual identifiers. What is important is not only how an individual sees his/her self, but also how they want to be seen by others, and how others see them (Taylor, 2010). Identity can be conceptualised as a performance; a view which affords a sense of agency (Butler, 1988; Goffman, 1959), although this approach is not meant to imply that the individual is unaffected by social structures (Jones, 1997). We adopted a conceptual framework that focused on identity performances whilst acknowledging the impact of public and private spaces upon these performances. Goffman’s (1959) dramaturgical analogy recognises the effect of contexts upon performances of identity. In conjunction with the poststructuralist concept of discourses, the analogy provides a conceptual bridge between the performance of identity and public/private spaces.

2.1 *Discourses and identity*

This study draws upon poststructuralist theories of discourse, which are useful for examining how identity is constructed and reconstructed in different contexts, such as Facebook and other social media. Discourses are signifying practices that construct and constrain possibilities through language and meaning (Belsey, 2002). Through talking about, and sharing assumptions about concepts such as social network sites, we not only explain social network sites, but also construct and reproduce social network sites. In doing so, these discourses become part of public narratives about social network sites (Somers and Gibson, 1993) that normalise social processes, which come to be seen as common sense. Dominant social discourses reflect cultural hierarchies and through the interactions of social institutions and social actors, power is reproduced (Foucault, 2002). For example, on a class’ Facebook page, teachers and students may act in a way that discursively constructs and reinforces the teacher’s authority as adult and school representative. Thus, knowledge and the ability to exercise power are positioned on a hierarchical scale. Through these interactions, students may be discursively positioned as lacking knowledge and status, while teachers may be discursively positioned as in possession of knowledge and status (Bishop, 2010). Notably, it is possible that students will be more knowledgeable in the Facebook environment than their teacher, which may challenge traditional hierarchical positionings.

We also acknowledge that individuals perform contextually-dependent multiple identities, which at times may be contradictory. For instance, a student may represent a subject position of ‘good student’ on the class’ Facebook page, yet, position herself as ‘anti-establishment’ or ‘rebellious teen’ on her private profile. While the options for performed identities may be limited, the student still exercises power and agency in taking up as her own, or resisting, the discursive practices shaping her subject position(s) and this may influence how others read her performance (Butler, 1988). Non-participation on Facebook, for example, may be read as

careful protection of identity by some, or may be read as technically disadvantaged by others. Interactions therefore are performances that allow individuals to construct, and co-construct, identities for audiences in different contexts (Belsey, 2002).

2.2 Context and audience: Front-stage and back-stage performances of identity

To understand student identity negotiation on Facebook pages that are used for educational purposes, we need to acknowledge the different contexts Facebook offers for identity performance. Goffman (1959) offers a dramaturgical analogy where social interactions are akin to theatrical productions, taking part across front- and back-stages. On the front-stage, individuals are performing in such a way as to reconcile their identity with socially sanctioned subject positions. For instance, students may perform front-stage subject positions of ‘school leader’ and ‘role model’ on their Facebook public profile. These performances may give way to other subject positions back-stage. Back-stage performances are where an individual feels she can ‘be herself’. The back-stage is a private space, where the individual may rehearse ways to subvert or resist the expectations of the front-stage audience. Facebook, however, poses a problem for individuals in terms of identity performance and control. Through the merging of multiple audiences, such as offline friends, online Friends, classmates, teachers, workmates, and family, students are juggling multiple front-stages. They risk being exposed if their performance does not match expected identities, or the wrong audience glimpses their back-stage identity.

Social network sites therefore blur the boundaries of public and private spaces. As technologies allow individuals to integrate work and home spaces and “dismantle temporal and geographical barriers that separate home and work roles” [Ellison, (1999), p.347], public and private can be viewed as a continuum, fluid and negotiated, rather than a categorical divide (Ford, 2011). Within public spaces are private spaces, and within these private spaces are further divisions of public and private (Gal, 2002). Facebook is a ‘public’ site, yet offers an illusion of ‘private’ space through privacy settings, while still rendering basic profiles compulsorily public. With formal educational use of Facebook, the school and class are drawn into the student’s home, rendering the public/private distinction in a state of negotiation, reliant on the individual user’s ability to manipulate privacy features and juggle a ‘work/life balance’. For students and teachers, the front-stage of the school is thus integrated with the back-stage of the home. As a result, students need to juggle multiple front-stage performances and audiences whilst still being subject to social discourses of what it means to be ‘cool’ amongst their peers.

3 Literature review

3.1 Educational use of social network sites

Much of the academic research on the use of social network sites in classrooms looks at higher education (Hew, 2011). Students use social network sites such as Facebook, to form informal peer learning and support networks with classmates, and to share notes and research (Madge et al., 2009; Selwyn, 2009). Social network site use often increases communication between

staff and students, as well as contact amongst students, which encourages shared-learning opportunities. Staff and teaching assistants further enhance the informal co-construction of knowledge via social network sites when they are able to play a less formal instructional role on the social network site (Munoz and Towner, 2011). Yet teachers and students are often unaware of the full range of possibilities offered by social network site use in the classroom. Clark et al. (2009) found that teachers tended to focus on the ‘distracting’ socialisation affordances of technology such as texting, email, and social network site use, while students focussed only on the obvious features their technologies provided. For instance, students were often unaware of the way their online practices could contribute to learning (Greenhow and Robelia, 2009) and often utilised social network sites for observation of content rather than participation (Pempek et al., 2009). Although students are often using these technologies in the classroom, with or without the teacher’s knowledge, there is a need for educators to lead the way in utilising new technologies for maximum educational advantage (Clark et al., 2009).

The power differential between students and teachers should not be ignored. When teachers use social network sites formally for educational purposes, their offline authority persists. Nonetheless, by including digital technologies within the classroom-learning environment, teachers are able to model best practice, such as appropriate posting and safety considerations (Clark et al., 2009). For instance, issues of privacy and safety are paramount as negative or inappropriate comments and behaviours that are publically stated via social network sites can have consequences for both teachers and students (Davies and Lee, 2008; Timm and Duven, 2008).

3.2 The New Zealand context

In New Zealand, the use of social media for educational purposes is being encouraged (Ministry of Education, 2013). Social network sites such as Pinterest, Google+, Facebook, and Twitter are increasingly promoted for classroom use alongside education-specific Learning Management Systems (LMS) (see for example, CEPNZ, 2012; Grosseck et al., 2011; Techlink, 2012). Yet broadband or bandwidth restrictions have been identified by schools as affecting the use of most externally hosted LMS, such as Moodle (Johnson et al., 2011). Infrastructure restrictions may be the reason educators have followed students to the publically available online social network sites such as Facebook, with 26% of secondary schools reporting that their students use Facebook for educational purposes (Johnson et al., 2011). It is difficult to determine the accuracy of these figures however, as they are based on estimates by school principals. The figures also do not determine who, teachers or students, is responsible for the educational populating of Facebook. Nonetheless, the principals’ estimates provide an indication that students are already moving, with or without their teachers, to utilising public social network sites such as Facebook for educational purposes (see also Greenhow & Robelia, 2009).

Social network sites are often already used by learners in their personal lives (CensusAtSchool New Zealand, 2013) and the use of these sites for educational purposes extends the teaching environment from the public classroom, into the private home. This blurring of boundaries

allows for scaffolding of learning (Foucault, 2002; van Aalst, 2009), where teachers and students can contribute varying degrees of expertise, and meaning is collectively/socially constructed. Social interactions on social network sites allow for more than the construction of ‘formal’ knowledge and learning, and knowledge is not constrained to the topic in hand. Each interaction also allows the social actors to gain knowledge of, and form impressions of, the other actors within the field of interaction (Goffman, 1959). In this way an image of an actor’s digital identity is formed.

3.3 Identity construction on social network sites and the role of audience

Although, the provision of personal information, or identifiers, is often linked by the literature to increased risks of victimisation, and fuels parental fears (Mesch, 2009), social network sites are also seen as sites of identity construction and experimentation for young people (see for example, boyd, 2008b). The construction and management of social network site profiles is a form of identity performance. However, social network site profile constructions are shaped by more than choices of what information to disclose. They are negotiated through the filters of site architecture, self-presentation choices, concepts of friendship and audience, contextual cues, notions of public and private spaces, and temporal aspects. Identity performance is possible in the choice to complete, or not, the available data fields to construct a biographical narrative (Livingstone, 2008). Thus, social network site profiles both represent and reinforce social discourses through the way the site architecture shapes profile construction. For instance, gender is presented as a binary choice, male or female; and young people are further constructed as in need of protection through age restrictions on site membership. Each of these factors shapes the way an individual works to construct and present an online identity, and the way that presentation is read by others. Nonetheless, although profiles give a glimpse of self-representation, “for all that is revealed there is much more that is not” [boyd, (2008a) p.121].

Through interactions with Friends, individuals form co-constructed identities (Mallan and Giardina, 2009). Mallan and Giardina argue that this collaboration mimics the interactional negotiations of knowledge construction on wiki sites. These ‘wikidentities’ develop through the postings, comments, photo tagging and other interactive performative actions of identity construction on social network sites. As internet users produce texts online, they “type oneself into being” for their audience of Friends [Sunden, (2003), p.3]. However, Friends may act as script editors, editing and re-writing the individual actor’s performance, through comments and posts, to ensure it is an ‘authentic’ and acceptable (to them) representation of the socially known identity. The result is a negotiated ‘truth’, or accepted performance, which is not fully within the individual’s control (Mallan and Giardina, 2009). Furthermore, when Friends interact on an individual’s profile or wall, the “behavioural residue” they leave behind conveys an impression, not only of themselves, but also of the individual [Walther et al., (2008), p.35].

When Facebook is used for educational purposes, tensions exist as front-stages collapse and audiences become blended. Work, social, family, and friend networks merge as blended audiences and have to be addressed with the same profile (Kendall, 2007). With these issues in

mind, this paper will explore the way students constructed and performed their online identities when using Facebook for educational purposes.

4 Research design

4.1 The participants

Participation was invited from schools and, as a result, a small class of nine senior students and their teacher from an urban, single-sex, New Zealand high school took part in this qualitative study. The students were aged between 17 and 19 years and were in their final year of schooling. Eight of the students used the class' subject-related Facebook page, and one student did not belong to any online social network sites. All participants signed ethics consent forms to signal their understandings of the purpose and scope of the research. Non-class members also interacted on the Facebook page. For instance, younger students taking the same subject, as well as ex-students of the class also posted. These interactions were redacted from analysis, as consent had not been obtained, although the impact from this visible audience has been acknowledged in the findings.

4.2 Data collection process: Interviews and screenshots

An initial, semi-structured group interview was held with six participants to elicit the students' self-reported perceptions and experiences of using a social network site such as Facebook. Over the following two school terms (four months), online observations and screenshots of the class' Facebook page were collected and analysed for patterns of interactions to identify the educational uses of the Facebook page. The screenshots were printed and the interactions from non-participants were deleted before analysis. Towards the end of the observational period, individual interviews were also held with the participants. The interviews were semi-structured and involved open-ended questions developed in part from the data provided via the group interview and the emerging analysis of the online observations. All group and individual interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed by the first author for analysis.

4.3 Analysing the data

For poststructuralists, an interview narrative is underpinned by multiple discourses and thus offers more information than that provided verbally. In this sense, "talk is not just 'data', it is also discourse" [Cameron, (2001), p.145]. During the interview, participants shape and construct their identity and positioning through their narratives (Cameron, 2001; Wetherell, 1999), meaningful silences (Poland and Pederson, 1998) and laughter (Gronnerod, 2004). Zembylas and Vrasidas (2007) note that silence in online text-based communications may also be meaningful, signifying anxiety, confusion, reflection, or non-participation. Furthermore, the asymmetrical power relations of the interview also serve to shape participants' responses (Cameron, 2001). With this in mind, audio-recordings of the interviews were listened to multiple times and interview transcripts were carefully developed to take note of the discursive cues, such as laughter and silence, which were used by participants. The interview transcripts

and screenshots were then studied repeatedly to identify major themes and discourses. Data relating to common themes was then drawn together and any contradictory data was explored for relevance to the research focus. In the following findings, all names used are either self-chosen or allocated pseudonyms.

5 Key Findings

5.1 *The perceived advantage of Facebook over Moodle*

In this classroom, Facebook was used as an extension of the formal classroom-learning environment. The perceived affordances, or possibilities, offered by both Facebook and Moodle dictated the ways the teacher (Ms Jones) and students utilised the two platforms. For both students and teacher, the perceived benefits of the Facebook page as an interactive environment outweighed the perceived constraints, such as the inability to share large files easily. By contrast, the teacher and students considered Moodle difficult to access because of infrastructure limitations. Nonetheless, the teacher continued to use Moodle as a document repository for teaching resources, whilst using Facebook for discussions and to encourage students to utilise the resources available on the Moodle platform. During the observational period, the main use of the Facebook page appeared to be students confirming homework tasks, and seeking clarification about assignments. The Facebook page therefore replicated classroom teacher-student interactions.

Power differentials were clear in the set-up of the subject page. As the page administrator, Ms Jones was able to post as two identities, 'Ms Jones', or 'the subject page', thus retaining the ability to separate her personal Facebook presence from the page and maintain multiple front-stage performances. In contrast, students joined the page using their personal profile and as a result, their front-stages and audiences merged. Ms Jones also retained final control over matters involving the subject page. She controlled who could post on the page, removing students who did not take her subject, yet allowing former students and other teachers to remain as Friends and followers. Several students misunderstood the 'membership' of the page and believed that only those invited by Ms Jones were able to observe and participate on the page. Kelly, for instance, claimed, "there won't be anyone in there that's not in the [subject] class anyway because it's by invite only". However, as Facebook pages are deemed public, Ms Jones is unable to prevent the invisible audience, or unknown 'non-members' of the page, from observing the page interactions, or indeed posting to the page before she blocks their access. Students were therefore performing on a front-stage to both known and unknown audiences.

5.2 *The impact of audience awareness on page posts*

Despite not knowing 'who' exactly was observing, the students were aware of an audience when posting on the Facebook page and this influenced their posts. Tintin, for instance, sought to maintain a front-stage identity as a 'capable student' to her peers. She reported that she read and observed interactions on the page, but was embarrassed to ask questions publically and preferred to email the teacher privately, especially if she felt it was "a silly question".

Additionally, all students reported being more careful in their language use on the page compared with posts on their personal profiles. Maxine explained that she was conscious of the teacher's presence when she posted on the subject page:

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

Mary also explained that she was more conscious of presentation on the subject page: "I've been more formal on the page than I would be, like, with just my friends, and I wouldn't use inappropriate language". The language choices made by the participants reflect an awareness of the different audiences and thus performances required to maintain desired identities. As Maxine notes, "sometimes you do talk, like you joke completely with your friends and *they* know you're joking, but someone else might actually take it as serious" [original emphasis]. Kelly also explained that she felt different settings required different presentations:

That's just a reflection of like, life. Like I wouldn't talk to a teacher in the same way I would talk to friends, or like I wouldn't talk to people at my work the same way I talk to friends.

The students therefore accepted and re-presented societal discourses of authority and power, accepting that certain behaviours are expected toward authority figures, such as teachers and employers. In doing so, the students acknowledged the different identities and front-stage performances required in different contexts, for different audiences.

As noted earlier, younger students studying the same subject were included as part of the subject page community. Although their interactions were redacted, their presence affected the participants' performances on the page. Jane, for instance, positioned herself as a role model when acknowledging the presence of younger classes: "I act the same, like I just don't post anything immature or anything . . . [because it's] like being a role model because it's not just for our class, it's for all the [subject] students to ask things". The younger students provided anchored relationships (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008) for the participants who were aware of the expectation that, as senior students, they would be role models for their younger schoolmates. Anna explains, "[Ms Jones] was like, be an appropriate user, you're older, you're seniors so you already know the expectations of you". For the student participants, their offline and online contexts collapsed. Their performances as senior students and Prefects on the offline front-stage of the school merged with, and shaped, their performances on the online front-stage of the subject page.

5.3 Performative interactions

Audiences became blended when students were Facebook friends with schoolmates from sports or cultural groups. The students recognised that status updates and communicative interactions were performative actions. Anna, for instance, described posting to encourage her school sports team members and Friends via an informal Facebook group:

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

Such posts allow Anna to position herself as a supportive leader and friend, offline and online. Anna chooses to merge front-stage performances by continuing her offline performance on the sports field in the front-stage context of the sports team's Facebook group. In doing so, her performances may be visible to blended audience members, such as classmates or teachers who are present across multiple contexts.

The students also acknowledged that any changes to the Facebook profile, such as changes to profile imagery, or the posting of photographic, written, or linked updates, invites commentary from Friends. As Kelly notes:

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

Kelly acknowledges that using Facebook invites attention and feedback on enactments of identity. She also acknowledges that Facebook profiles reflect only what the profile owner has chosen to reveal. For Kelly, Facebook is distinct, yet reflects her offline life. Her reading of Facebook reiterates the ambiguous notion of online spaces as distinct from offline "real life" spaces (Sunden, 2003), yet simultaneously echoes how offline characteristics are replicated online (boyd, 2008a; Valentine and Holloway, 2002).

5.4 Blended audiences and blurred boundaries

Many students were Facebook Friends with some of their classmates, which further blended audiences and served to shape identity performances. Jane explained how she worked to maintain a consistent presentation as she had Friends who were present on the subject page and her personal profile, as well as being friends offline: "I act the same ... 'cos everybody sees what I do". Jane has merged front-stages and therefore needs to present a uniform identity performance to audience members who are present across different contexts: "some of them [my classmates] do see [personal posts] because I'm friends with them, so I kind have to keep up with it". This blended audience provides tensions for Jane in her identity performance and requires self-management to maintain a stable presentation to her blended audience.

The forced blending of contexts through the educational use of Facebook was not popular with all participants. Mary explained that she felt the subject page was intrusive into what she considered a social space:

I don't think Facebook is for schoolwork, it's more for socialising. . . . I haven't written anything on the page, or commented on anything. . . . I just kind of find it awkward with the teachers on the Facebook and stuff. I'd rather do it face-to-

face than over Facebook . . . and I don't like want them to know what I get up to or anything.

Mary's disquiet is fuelled by the blurred boundary between school and home that the subject Facebook page represents. As a result, Mary both reinforces and subverts the use of the Facebook page by the teacher. Like Ms Jones, Mary also wished to maintain boundaries and keep front-stages separated. By *Liking* the page, Mary could stay informed about page activity through notifications on her newsfeed. Yet, she also resisted posting on the page and therefore countered or avoided the use of Facebook for education with which she disagrees. There are tensions therefore in the use of social network sites such as Facebook for educational purposes. The fluid nature of the public-private distinction renders Facebook both publically private and privately public. As a result, the presence of blended audiences affects students' actions and interactions on Facebook.

6 Discussion

Digital identities cannot be separated from their offline embodiments (Sunden, 2003). In this study, the hierarchy of power relations between teacher and students that are inherent in the school environment (Bishop, 2010) were replicated online. Indeed, in exercising her power to maintain the page and control membership and content, Ms Jones reinforced her authoritative positioning as teacher. Although the teacher and most students discursively constructed the Facebook page as beneficial, 'common-sense', and a positive opportunity for a collaborative learning community, we would suggest that this Facebook page did not fully achieve this ideal. In society, power and knowledge are connected (Foucault, 2002). A collaborative learning community would suggest a flattening of hierarchical power relationships between teacher and students. Yet not all participants were able to exercise the same levels of power. Their relative knowledge and positioning within the education field, and the status these positions confer, differentiates the teacher and students (Bishop, 2010; Foucault, 2002). Nonetheless, students may challenge the dominant discursive constructions of teacher and student (Barrett, 2005) by sharing links and information and in those moments of agency, position themselves, not the teacher, as disseminators of knowledge.

The subject page also introduces the formal educational structure of the classroom to what is usually constructed as an informal space for young people (Madge et al., 2009). Furthermore, the public status of the page provides opportunities for an invisible audience that is unknown to those posting on the page. An awareness of audience, or potential audience, and the social expectations that the audience members hold of each other shapes identity performances (Goffman, 1959). For some students, an awareness of audience may lead to observational, rather than interactive, use. These students then become part of the oft forgotten invisible audience observing others' performative interactions (Brooks-Young, 2010).

Identity performance through interactions is shaped by audience expectations and by the individual's desire to create a favourable impression (Goffman, 1959; 1967). Individuals negotiate their identity performances subject to potential policing by their blended audiences

(Mallan and Giardina, 2009). Students may use account settings to separate their publically private profile from their subject page identity performances. However, their privately public profiles, and their performative interactions on the subject page, still constitute identity performances that may be read by others (Livingstone, 2008; Mallan, 2009). The public status of the subject page means that the compulsorily public aspects of their profile, as well as their performative interactions on the class page, are available to be read by a public audience. For this participant group, behaviour on the Facebook page was mediated through constructions of acceptable behaviour, both in the classroom and on Facebook, as well as negotiated constructions of performances with the blended audience. The students chose whom to share certain information with, structured their posts to be acceptable to the known audience, and were aware of the expectations of their behaviour as senior students. They therefore negotiated multiple audience expectations in their identity performances.

7. Implications for educators and students

Based on this study, we would suggest that educators encourage a more collaborative approach by making the page, or group, administration more transparent. Teachers may wish to involve students in decision-making over page rules and transgressions, as well as discussions of who can participate in, and observe the forum. Open discussion may also allow teachers and students to consider the extra resources required to enable all class members to fully participate and be fully informed. For example, teachers may consider providing Facebook access within the classroom or a generic class profile. This would ensure equity of access and allow students reluctant to create their own profiles to have access to the interactive discussions, whilst providing some degree of anonymity in their online identity performance. Educators using Facebook may also wish to consider alternative Facebook features, such as the use of Closed or Secret Groups to minimise audience exposure and the non-participation of some students.

We note that the rapid progress of technological advances makes it difficult for educators' professional development to keep pace. Consequently, teachers and students may be unaware of the full potential of social network sites in education. While a collaborative approach would allow students and teachers to contribute and co-construct knowledge, we also consider relevant professional development for educators important.

8 Concluding thoughts

This research set out to explore how students negotiate their identity on a Facebook page used for educational purposes. There is not an abundance of research into young people's use of social network sites in New Zealand. This study therefore contributes to our knowledge of the educational use of social network sites, particularly in the New Zealand classroom. Admittedly, this research is a bounded study, focussed on the self-reported experiences of a small group of students from one urban, New Zealand school, and their teacher, who are using a Facebook page in a particular way for educational purposes. Nevertheless, qualitative research with small groups of students offers the basis for important "logical generalisations" [Patton, (1990),

p.175], which in turn signals what educators should take account of if they incorporate social network sites into their pedagogical practice.

In summary, this class found Facebook useful for interactive posts and discussions. However, power differentials between teacher and students affected interactions and the way students framed their posts. Through posting and interacting, students perform their identity to their audience. The class use of Facebook brought together school, home and social contexts for students as they performed to blended audiences of teacher, classmates, family, offline friends, and online Friends. Digital presentations on the class' Facebook page re-present just one of the many subject positions each student occupies: as students, leaders, role models, young women, sisters, sports people, teammates, members of cultural groups, employees and so on. In negotiating their identities, students need to juggle their multiple front-stage performances to different audiences (Donath and boyd, 2004; Goffman, 1959; Kendall, 2007; Marwick and boyd, 2010). Most students negotiated these tensions carefully, with one choosing to maintain consistent identity performances. However, one student resented the blurred boundaries and minimised her presence on the class page.

The increasing interest in the use of social network sites, such as Facebook, for education has heightened the need for further research in this field, particularly into variables that may influence student adoption of these technologies. Digital learning environments offer students and educators opportunities beyond the traditional classroom and school location. It is important, however, that researchers and educators are reflexive and aware of our assumptions about education, learning, and students, before we join the rush to adopt new technologies. As we introduce new pedagogical changes, we need to consider the effects of these changes on both students and educators.

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