

Social Media: Archiving, Engaging and Capturing Youth

Digital Youth: How Social Media are Archiving, Engaging and
Capturing the Lives of Young People

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation, entitled “Digital Youth: How Social Media are Archiving, Engaging and Capturing the Lives of Young People,” examines how children and youth experience networked sociality in a historic moment that places growing economic value on the content users generate online. By conceptualizing the digital archive, I have laid out a comprehensive framework that accounts for the following issues: i) economic concerns, foregrounded in how user-generated content has become an integral source of surplus value for the networked economy; ii) privacy concerns, which relate to the privacy agreements to which young people must consent when they join social networks, to questions around the rearticulation of private and public spheres online, and finally to the growing importance placed on the computational power of algorithms required to process big data; iii) the extended and intensified sociality engendered by networked affective spaces which produce new ways for young people to engage with their peers and produce subjectivities; and, iv) the political possibilities circulating both discursively and as acts of civic engagement. In addition, given that more ubiquitous access does not necessarily equip young users to understand the myriad challenges accompanying a profoundly networked and mediated existence, I argue that more pedagogical techniques and practices are required. This dissertation concludes by outlining why educators need to integrate data literacy as opposed to media literacy in the classroom. By foregrounding the prevalent role that social networks play and will continue to play in the lives of young people I argue that educators and parents have a responsibility to not only help children and youth appreciate how their immaterial labour is being cultivated, but equally to provide them with valuable skills that will not only facilitate new forms of sociality but civic engagement.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION: SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE LIVES OF YOUNG PEOPLE	1
Facebook as the Paradigm of Social Networking Sites	6
A Culture of Disclosure?	11
Structure of the Thesis	13
CHAPTER 1: SOCIAL NETWORKS AND THEIR ARCHIVES OF FEELING	23
Web 2.0: Understanding Social Networks	26
Are you logged in? Why are Social Networks so Sticky?	31
Towards a Theorization of the Digital Archive	38
What’s Inside Your Archive? – Towards an Archive of Feelings	50
Archive of Feeling	55
CHAPTER 2: PUTTING THE PROSUMER TO WORK: THE PRODUCTION OF ECONOMIC VALUE	69
The Prosumer – A Culture of Participation	73
How Do Privacy Policies Work, and What Do They Allow to be Archived?	85
The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)	89
The Conflation of Play and Labour: Immaterial Labour 2.0	98
A Case Study: Coke needs your help!	104
CHAPTER 3: YOUTH, CITIZENSHIP, AND SOCIAL MEDIA	112
Citizenship: Sovereignty vs. Connectivity	115
Social Citizenship	117
Cultural Citizenship	121
Acts of Citizenship: Occupy 2011 vs. Kony 2012	124
Occupy 2011	129
Kony	136
The Public Sphere	139
CHAPTER 4: TOWARDS A NEW DATA LITERACY: UNDERSTANDING PRIVACY IN THE AGE OF BIG DATA	150
Towards an Understanding of Privacy	153
New Politics of Privacies	160
Conceptualizing Privacy: Agency over the Digital Archive?	163
Conceptualizing Privacy: Big Data, Algorithms and a New Aggregated Subject	170
Towards a Data Literacy Toolkit	180
CONCLUSION: TOWARDS A NEW POLITICS OF THE DIGITAL ARCHIVE	190
WORKS CITED	197

LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1: Screen shot of a social logins	36
Figure 2: Facebook Advertising	47
Figure 3: The initial poster produced by Adbusters.	129

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I would like to acknowledge that parts of my first chapter: “Social Networks and Their Archives of Feeling” will appear in the chapter entitled: “Social Networks and Their Archives of Feeling,” in Susanna Paasonen, Ken Hillis and Michael Petit’s *Networked Affect*, MIT Press, Forthcoming 2013. Parts of this chapter have also appeared in my article entitled: “The Subjective Architects: When Tweens Learn to Immaterial Labour,” in the *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 35(4), in 2011.

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Introduction: Social Media in the Lives Young People

This dissertation, entitled “Digital Youth: How Social Media are Archiving, Engaging and Capturing the Lives of Young People,” examines how children and youth experience networked sociality in a historic moment that places growing economic value on the content that users generate online. Not only have social media altered everyday life and cultural practices, bringing about an entirely new participatory framework for social engagement, they have brought privacy debates to the forefront, particularly as we watched the case of Edward Snowden unfold in the media in 2013. This notorious American whistle-blower divulged how the United States government had been working with the world’s top social networking sites to spy not just on enemies of the United States but on its allies. After telling the world that nobody’s online personal data were safe, he was now sitting without a passport in Moscow, awaiting asylum-seeker status. While it is too soon to fully grasp what the impact social media will have and already have had on our lives, particularly in the West where access is easier, it is imperative that we begin to develop theoretical frameworks and tools to better conceptualize the ontological effects and impacts of these technologies.

Framing the relationship that younger demographics have with social media will provide a greater understanding of their relationship with digital culture. David Buckingham and Julian Sefton-Green urge us not to reproduce a paternalistic relationship with new media and to avoid simplistic discursive frames that focus on “whether media are ‘good’ or ‘bad’ for children” (390). Such reductive and ultimately prescriptive approaches frame digital engagement in a profoundly pejorative way,

negating the cultural practices of young people online. Such a totalizing approach places more power with the structure, as opposed to the subject, instilling a profound need for regulation. Instead, Buckingham and Sefton-Green seek to complicate the relationship that young people have with technology, moving away from a morality that preaches abstaining from, as opposed to understanding digital cultural practices—in short, moving away from a media-effects paradigm rooted in a technological determinism that places agency with technology, as opposed to audience members and users (391).

To account for how young people are using social networks, my dissertation puts forward the digital profile archive to theorize the diverse ways in which young people actively curate their online subjectivities. The digital profile archive is constituted within the networked participatory architecture of Web 2.0, which facilitates and intensifies sociality, while simultaneously creating new opportunities for surplus value and exchange. Online marketing can no longer adequately function without the constant input of user key word searches, likes and dislikes. The cultural repository that now exists within the circuits of social media have many concerned about privacy, particularly for young people who will never know a world without using these networked circuits. Marketing practices have now been revolutionized, the consumer is no longer, just the consumer but an active producer of the goods that they will eventually buy. My work therefore introduces the prosumer—the producer-consumer—to account for the ways in which economic practices rely of the content that users, particularly young people, produce.

By foregrounding how children and youth are using social media and why corporations are interested in their content, my analysis then moves on to question

what possibilities exist for online forms of civic engagement. The connectivity afforded by social media undeniably brings about new spaces of economic foreclosure—new private spheres—given the relatively small concentration of ownership. However, the explosion of social movements from the Arab Spring, to Occupy, to Turkey or to Brazil, have equally provided rich examples of the civic possibilities that social networks can facilitate. This dissertation, therefore, inquires into the threats to civic participation and a meaningful public sphere that are posed by the shift towards virtual modes of community, but, equally, it attends to the possibilities that the skills learned online may be mobilized to produce a more civically-engaged generation. Pedagogical strategies for engaging young people are required, given the role that social media will play in their everyday lives. The digital archives that this new generation are producing will always be at risk of being exploited, but they equally represent sites of political possibility, which is why I argue that providing a data literacy to empower young users can contribute to a more active and empowered experience online.

My starting point rests in trying to understand precisely how and why young people are engaging with Web 2.0 technologies, what affective ties go into building their profile archives alongside the possibilities that these sites—and their archives—offer for more active civic engagement. My dissertation provides insight into how young people engage online by examining the social, political, and economic struggles that are taking place within these contested networked circuits.

Briefly, Web 2.0 platforms are predicated on a participatory architecture, a term coined by Tim O'Reilly in 2005 to describe what he argued was an important transformation in the history of the World Wide Web. It marked how users could now

not only communicate with their friends on email or via texts, or have to depend on experts for all of their content; instead, they could now enter and participate in virtual worlds while simultaneously actively creating content. As such, it meant the rearticulation and production of new tools that extended sociality on the web.

For corporations like Google—one of the pioneers of Web 2.0—an entirely new way of accumulating surplus value unfolded. For example, their AdSense software, which relies on the keywords of users to generate relevant ads, removed the randomness of the messages that were being delivered to searchers. The innovation of these practices meant, as O'Reilly argues, a new-found ability to “harness [the] collective intelligence” of users for material gain (“Web 2.0”). Corporations with an inherent understanding of the value of hyperlinking were thereby able to appreciate the power embodied in *folksonomy* (collaborative, user-based indexing of digital content) and *tagging* (the means by which content is categorized) and went on to become highly successful. Google, Yahoo, eBay, and Amazon, all possessed this foresight and instinct to harness the general intellect or rather creative capacity of their user's active participation to accumulate value.

Without people and their ideas and their creative capacity as users, the economic logic of Web 2.0 would cease to operate. As such, another theme that runs through this dissertation is a tension that accumulates around value. How do we understand networked sociality? On the one hand, these participatory structures produce social value for young people who find new ways to extend themselves online. However, networked sociality simultaneously produces economic value for corporations positioned to capitalize on user-generated content. This double articulation is a tension (see chapter 2) that can never be fully resolved. Notwithstanding, this conflict of value

must at least be acknowledged if we are going to productively engage in practices that acknowledge the cultural practices and experiences of young people. Scholars such as Christian Fuchs and Mark Andrejevic provide important political and economic critiques of Web 2.0 environments. However, if we do not try to understand the success of social networks, then how can we meaningfully understand those inherent tensions that exist within their architectural foundation?

In looking at how Web 2.0 has changed how young people can now engage with their communities, I have primarily considered how they use social networking sites, that is, spaces in which users have more intimate relations with their peers. However, there are other platforms, such as Twitter, a microblog, which are based more on shared interests, and are not necessarily predicated on close, familiar ties. In many respects, Twitter merits its own study; however, very little research has been done with respect to the ways in which younger people between eight and fourteen are using this platform. For this reason, I have shifted my focus almost exclusively to the ways in which this demographic takes up and uses social networks, given the diverse ways in which they can participate more exclusively with their friends.

Educators and parents need to come to terms with the growing digital presence of young people, which often begins before they are born. According to one survey done by AVG Technologies in 2013, parents all over the world are steadily increasing the digital footprints of their children. In Canada, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, and Australia, 82 percent of children under two years of age already have a digital profile; and for those living in the United States, this number increases to 92 percent, beginning with that first ultrasound picture that parents upload onto Facebook (Hogg; Palfrey and Gasser). It is imperative that we come to terms

with the social, political, and economic implications of the increasing digitization of everyday life and the networked cultures in which young people now find themselves embedded.

In his essay “Confronting the Challenges,” written in 2009, Henry Jenkins is clear on his position: “the key issue isn’t what the media are doing to our children but rather what our children are doing with the media” (194). His commitment to the participatory possibilities of the platforms that young people are using is steadfast and immovable. For him, “consumption becomes production; reading becomes writing; spectator cultures become participatory culture” (194). In short, the relationship that young people have with technology is transformative: it affords agency to a demographic that is more often considered to be innocent and in need of protection (Jenkins; Castañeda; Wallace).

Facebook as the Paradigm of Social Networking Sites

Throughout my dissertation, I have stayed with Facebook as an object of study, for four main reasons. First, in 2007, at the time I began my doctoral research, Facebook was the main social network outside of a number of child-friendly platforms that existed, many of which were predicated on Facebook.¹ Unfortunately, several of these initial social networks, which I discuss here, have since disappeared or evolved into something else as children decide where they want their sociality to flow and circulate online.

¹ The genealogy of social networks began before Facebook in 1997. Earlier manifestations created networked places where young people could participate online with their peers. What Facebook revolutionized was the ability for friends to not only connect but instantly know when content was being added by anyone in their networks.

Second, I chose Facebook due to its significant impact upon digital cultural practices. Social networks did not begin with Zuckerberg's iteration; danah boyd and Nicole Ellison provide a complete history of social networks, tracing them back to SixDegrees.com, which launched in 1997 (211). The hallmarks of social networks—that is, the ability to create a profile alongside the ability to add and search for friends—were all present on SixDegrees.com. Both boyd and Ellison speculate that these features actually existed before, on early online dating and community sites. However, what SixDegrees.com did differently was to successfully combine the messaging technologies of AIM and/or ICQ, which supported lists of friends; moreover, it made these affiliations visible to others in that community (214).

From 1997 to 2002, a number of social networks were developed, most notably LiveJournal in 1999, the Korean site Cyworld in 2001, and of course Friendster in 2002. In 2003, we saw an explosion of such sites, most notably LinkedIn and Chris DeWolfe and Tom Anderson's MySpace. Just two years later, the now infamous Mark Zuckerberg gave the world Facebook. While there have been many different iterations of these sites and even more iterations to come, what distinguishes Facebook is the sheer mass of its user base. As of 2013, its numbers are falling, but there are still more than one billion people with active accounts (Garside). While part of the instantiation of social networks into our everyday life practices cannot be divorced from the increased consumption of smartphones and their ubiquitous connectivity (the average user checks for status updates fourteen times a day), Facebook still provides a tipping point with respect to user participation. In this respect, if people log out of Facebook and log on somewhere else, this social network has still provided a new baseline for sociality. Zuckerberg undeniably helped to usher social networks into the everyday

routines of hundreds of millions of people. Networked sociality is now so inherently normalized it is arguably somewhat banal. This may be even more the case for young people, who are growing up in a world where the social network is reaching its full maturity. They may not all use Facebook, but all social networks launched to target their demographic have aspired to model themselves after this social network and to become the next Facebook for tweens.

Thirdly, I am interested in the participatory architectural form of social networks. Such sites, whether they are Facebook, Instagram, or Pinterest, are set up and designed so that individuals can easily log in and develop a profile consisting of personal information, including their interests, likes, and hobbies (Richards; Gunawardena; Notley). For users, the social network represents something new, an entirely different way to express sociality. Not only can people easily link their profile with their selected friends' profiles, but, more importantly, the code that created Facebook's News Feed allowed equally for simultaneous connectivity. Now, every status, every picture, and every link can be shared immediately with everyone in a user's social network.

Ironically, the launch of this feature was met with outward hostility. According to danah boyd, "users formed groups like Students Against Facebook News Feeds to protest against the feature; over 700,000 people joined the aforementioned group to express their frustration and confusion" ("Privacy" 13). The outrage was so severe that it prompted Mark Zuckerberg to issue a response on his blog, "Calm down. Breathe. We Hear You," followed later by an invitation to users to embrace the "Free Flow of Information on the Internet" (Zuckerberg, qtd. in "Privacy" boyd 13). In hindsight, we know now that Zuckerberg did not take down this feature but rather

continued to make it more all-encompassing and transparently panoptic. Just a few years later in 2013, not only can users immediately see what content their friends are uploading but with the integration of geolocation, Facebook has now made it possible users to track the exact location of their peers.

At the time, in 2006, users felt that the News Feed challenged any semblance of control over the circulation of their own content (boyd, “Privacy” 14). Arguably, this was always an illusion. However, what boyd stresses, is that before, learning about other users was more deliberate. With the advent of the News Feed, users no longer had to go directly onto their friends’ profiles to see their updates, as on MySpace. From Facebook’s point of view, such a cumbersome process potentially meant that certain details would be lost. For a user, now learning about their peers, simply required logging in to one location. It brought about a sense of exposure and hence vulnerability as it dissolved any perceived demarcation between what was considered private and what was considered public. Users felt their sense of agency over their own content was being threatened. While, as Zuckerberg pointed out, the News Feed did in fact only display the information that users were posting, the direct exposure of their profiles was perceived as an invasion of privacy (15).

The significance of the News Feed should not be underestimated. In a moment, cultural practices on Facebook changed, and cultural practices on social networks changed. The impact, however, is difficult to measure as there are countless ways in which it can be interpreted. For the purposes of my dissertation, what I would like to retain from this moment, is the impact that social networks like Facebook had and are having on our perception of privacy. Young people in particular will, for the most part, never know an existence outside of networked social relations. In addition, the

News Feed has facilitated the rapid dissemination and circulation of information, making it an important platform for political content and civic engagement.

The final reason I have chosen Facebook relates directly to the profound role it has played in the newest chapter of capitalist accumulation: the consumption of what corporations are now calling *big data*—the sum total of every keystroke, preference and traceable movement online. Jose van Dijck has written on this topic in her newest book, raising the question of what happens when “social activities are translated into algorithmic concepts” and hence more readily quantifiable (“Connectivity” 13). From one perspective, it may appear that social relations are what drive connectivity on sites like Facebook; however, when we stop and consider that every single interaction is being stored and used for surplus value, connectivity suddenly becomes quantifiable. The data that users produce is increasingly sought after by corporations so that they can exploit user preferences and target them more specifically. The value for marketers is not the totality of data that Facebook has in raw form; those millions of terabytes sitting in databases are effectively useless. Instead, value lies in the ability to turn all of those bytes into readable, accessible and meaningful patterns.

The algorithm, a computational tool, allows for the extraction of patterns, creating opportunities for companies like Facebook to maximize the surplus value they can extract from the users who participate on their sites. As a result, marketers can now extend what they already know about their pre-existing demographics. Haphazard techniques and practices have suddenly become drastically diminished as sites like Facebook develop more sophisticated algorithms to make sense of user-generated content. Thus, as sociality becomes codified, our cultural practices become subsumed by a new regime of accumulation. This new economic model provides a

context for why I have tried to theorize the user-profile as an archive and how the tension around value culminates in subjectivities such as the prosumer.

A Culture of Disclosure?

While parts of my dissertation can be generalized to include everyone using social networks, I have primarily focused my research on children between eight and fourteen. It is a key, critical premise of my dissertation that for the new generation of young people, the stakes are significantly higher. Social media are creating what Carrie James et al. call a new “culture of disclosure” (26) particularly for younger users, predicated on a distinct set of beliefs, norms, and affective practices that legitimate the constant uploading of personal materials. And yet, while there is a growing awareness among youth that their digital footprint is increasing, the Pew Research Foundation in 2007 indicated that “surprisingly few people are using strategies to limit access to their information” (Madden et al.). While this may have been the case, just a few years later, youth are much technologically literate and critical.

In Davis and James’s research, “there is evidence that young people’s privacy-protecting behaviours on social network sites have increased over time to the point where they are more likely to engage in these behaviours than older adults” (7). However, what is equally of interest here is precisely how this generation characterizes privacy. Similar to the early Facebook users who resisted the News Feed, young people currently conceptualize privacy in terms of control over their own content, and have learned several strategies to remain online while protecting themselves so that they will not be too exposed (Davis and James 14). That being said,

this does not mean that they are spending less time on social networks. Another report published in 2013 by the Pew Research Center revealed that young people are using more social media and sharing more information than ever. What this study also revealed is that young people are not overly concerned by third party access to their data on the sites (Madden et al. “Social Media”). Perhaps this is a result of how accustomed they are to being online. In the words of one 14-year-old, “I don’t really think [privacy] means much anymore at this point. I mean, privacy to me is—most of my life is very public and I know that” (qtd. in Davis and James 14). Here we see how, in the networked architecture of digital platforms, sociality can never be fully divorced from disclosure.

My interest in this younger demographic of users comes from wanting to understand a generation that will increasingly experience sociality within networked social relations. Already 38 percent of children who use Facebook are under thirteen, and many young people, beginning at age nine, are now turning to other social networking sites such as Instagram (owned by Facebook), Kik, and Snapchat (Pew “2013”).² Already 91 percent of young people have now uploaded at least one photograph, and have disclosed more personal information about themselves than ever before (Pew “2013”). I have therefore foregrounded the central role that social media plays in the everyday lives of young people to consider how it effects their sociality, intimacy,³ as well as their political life. Thus, I have put forward a way of

² Users have to be thirteen years of age to use these sites, but that does not stop young people from circumventing the terms of use and logging on (Van Grove).

³ While I do not address this in my dissertation, the phenomenon of “sexting”—sexual texting—has recently become a significant concern (Palfrey; Moran Ellis).

understanding the social, economic, and political struggles that are a part of these technologies. Providing conceptual tools for understanding this current historical moment will facilitate new strategies for engaging in the cultural practices of young people.

Part of the challenges I have encountered stem from the fact that some of the most prolific scholars in this field, namely Sonia Livingstone, Nick Couldry, David Buckingham, Henry Jenkins, Mimi Ito, and danah boyd, to name but a few, cover mainly the social and cultural practices of teenagers or young adults. As a result, the demographic I have researched throughout my project includes both younger users between eight and fourteen and young adults between the ages of 14 and 19. While I have tried to remain focused on the use of younger users, this was simply not always possible, particularly in looking at issues around civic engagement. Nevertheless, by providing a rigorous framework for how a slightly older demographic engages social media, provides a context for younger users.

Structure of the Thesis

I consider my project as endeavouring to provide an overview, theoretical framework, and tools and therefore, as contributing to a larger dialogue for understanding some of the rich and affective ways in which people engage on social media. Implicit in my approach is an assumption about the savviness of our younger users; however, equally, I am backed by a large body of empirical research suggesting that while children between eight and fourteen years of age may know how to use mediated technology effortlessly, they are still challenged when it comes to understanding the impact and permanence of the traces that they leave behind.

Chapter 1. In my first chapter, “Social Networks and their Archives of Feelings,” I begin by trying to understand the parameters of networked sociality. If, on the one hand, young people understand how compromised social media are, then why are they sharing more personal information? Or, on another, why has Greenblatt found a discrepancy between the attitudes that young people clearly express about the need for privacy online and their actual behaviour (“Online Privacy”)?

To approach these questions, I engaged research on affect theory. By so doing, this first chapter examines the architectural structure of social networks, putting forward Ann Cvetkovich’s “archive of feelings” as a theoretical tool to conceptualize how sociality circulates and intensifies on these platforms. I initially drew on the insights of Foucault, who first tried to theorize the role that archives play in capturing discourses that maintain social structures. I also have drawn from the work of scholars such as Sara Ahmed and Brian Massumi to incorporate the constitutive role affect plays in building levels of intensity amongst users. I argue that the concept of the digital archive offers an innovative approach to understanding social media’s affective impact upon the everyday, lived experiences of users.

Part of understanding such cultural practices includes a more nuanced approach for conceptualizing what goes into the choices that young people make when they are uploading content for their friends to see. Here, the concept of the archive offers both a practical and theoretical means to examine the material body as it extends into the virtual circuits of social networks, and provides a framework for understanding the kinds of social and economic value being generated. As we will see, the kinds of choices people make around what content to include are not made lightly. Such choices are intentional and are meant to build and foster their affective networks. A

status, link or a picture always has the power to bring archives together through comments and likes. In these moments, affect can accumulate, binding profiles together, while increasing the circulation of user-generated content.

Content not only matters, but as I argue, users maintain a highly affective relationship through practices of curating their own data. The digital profile as archive thereby opens up a more sophisticated way of theorizing not just how we must write ourselves into being (Sundén 31), but, more importantly, to think of our own digital curation. That is, the archive of feeling allows us to make sense of the *choices* that allow certain content to be entered into those user-generated profiles. This ongoing curation-of-the-self is an important mechanism of sociality alongside the production of subjectivities. It is an ongoing and self-reflexive process that will always have the potential to affect a user's network of friends—those who choose to comment on or share the original content. The affective relationship that users have with the content that they upload and choose to affiliate themselves with facilitates social flows within those networked circuits, thereby constituting a multiplicity of archives of feelings/digital profile archives.

Chapter 2. In the second chapter, “Putting the Prosumer to Work: The Production of Economic Value,” I extend my conceptualization of the virtual archive by looking at its constitutive relationship with the prosumer. Here, I delve more deeply into the economic relations that make up digital profile archives. I am interested in how these virtual sites rely on their users' content and participation to generate revenue. By so doing, I examine how social networking sites such Facebook, Club Penguin, or Togetherville—to name but a few examples—extract surplus value from their young users.

I argue that social networks need to appease marketers by generating privacy policies that force users to opt out as opposed to opt in. More open agreements facilitate direct access to user-generated content and more meaningful possibilities for advertisers to connect with their desired target markets.⁴ Given that social networks generate revenue from their ability to produce target audiences for marketers, a site like Facebook becomes more appealing if they have algorithms that will allow corporations to gain specific insight about specific demographics. Surplus value is thereby dependent on the ability to successfully mine user-generated content. The privacy policies of social networks are important tools for shaping the parameters of the ways in which user profile archives become proprietary.

I examine how economic value is generated via a deeply symbiotic relationship which commences when users upload content into their profiles. Young people provide immaterial labour as they participate directly within networked circuits to hang out with their friends (Ito); precisely in this moment, they become part of the production process—the moment of convergence between production and

⁴ For example, one study performed by Rozendaal et al. in the Netherlands in 2013 examined the impact that immersive advertising strategies have had on young people between the ages of nine and twelve. They studied children who actively participated in virtual worlds such as Neopets, Club Penguin, and Habbo Hotel, because these spaces directly profit from their relationships with various corporations. Ads in Habbo Hotel may simply hang in rooms where children spend their time. Other ads, such as those in Neopets, are actually built into the games that children play. Rozendaal et al. were interested in the effects that these messages would have on young people. Interestingly, what she and her colleagues found was that those children who were the most adamant that they would *not* be affected by the messages of the ads, were actually the more susceptible to their messages (Rozendaal et al. 147–149). While I will provide a more in-depth analysis of these branded experiences throughout my dissertation, I begin with this example to emphasize that while I am interested in the cultural practices and possibilities that social networks offer to young people, I equally do not want to negate the role of educators and parents. The line between agency, prescription, and pedagogy is a delicate balance to achieve.

consumption that brings forward the prosumer. Marketers therefore seek to involve users by facilitating their desire to add value, be helpful, and—most importantly when it comes to Web 2.0—participate. Subsequently, as social networks allow the conflation of play and labour, so do they provide a framework for the economic success of these kinds of social platforms.

If young people did not enjoy going online and participating, and if privacy policies did not facilitate the mining of their data, then value could never be generated from their digital archives. It is my contention that sites like Facebook acknowledge this symbiotic relationship, which is why, as I discuss in this chapter, Zuckerberg has gone to great lengths to undermine existing legislation that seeks to protect children under the age of 13 from data mining.

While this chapter does at times address a general audience, without a clear understanding of how revenue streams are generated on social networks, without a clear understanding of the intentionality that is directly embedded within privacy policies and, most importantly, without a clear understanding of the constitutive relations that cohere within these networked spaces, then we cannot produce a viable digital literacy for children who either already are or will actively engage on these sites.

On June 1, 2013, Pepsi introduced its Like Machine at a Beyoncé concert in Antwerp, Belgium. Anyone who attended that concert was invited to stand in front of this machine, log on to Pepsi's Facebook site with their smartphone, and *like* Pepsi's corporate page. In return, the Like Machine was able to use GPS technology to know the exact location of whoever liked their page, pairing the machine with the liker, and offer a free can of Pepsi (Kenney). As I will later show with my own case study of

Coke's new machines, in the moment that any user decided to like Pepsi's page, they effectively gave the company permission to access their respective user profile on Facebook. Thus, while the age range in this chapter moves beyond children who are between eight and fourteen, this demographic is still implicated, particularly as they become more independent consumers.

Chapter 3. The third chapter of my dissertation, "Youth, Citizenship and Social Media," examines the political possibilities of social networks. While the previous two chapters examine how social and economic value accrues within these sites, this chapter focuses on the how social media can facilitate acts of citizenship. What still needs to be addressed are those political relations that reside in the ways in which social media has become an instrumental site and conduit of struggle. The data that is collectively produced does not just enable new kinds of social and economic relations, but equally political relations. What still needs to be accounted for are the ways in which social media can and does impact political engagement.

To do so, I compare and contrast social movements that have occurred between 2011 and 2013, which have relied on social media to quickly circulate and disseminate information. Examples such as Occupy and Kony provide insight into the participatory possibilities and limitations of social media, rearticulating traditional forms of civic engagement. Networked technologies do not create new forms of politics; rather, such technologies facilitate the circulation of struggles that take place outside formal institutions that are commonly associated with the production of citizens. Thus, the aim of this chapter is not to negate but to examine the participatory culture that undeniably comprises the experiences of some (not all) of those engaging in social networking sites.

In researching the mediated practices of young people, I draw on scholars such as Burgess, Foth, Laebe, Couldry, and Urrichio who put forward cultural citizenship to theorize how the participatory cultures in which we are collectively partaking, facilitate different forms of sociality and politics. The movement towards networked politics is captured in Isin's claim that we are shifting from a paradigm of "We the People" to "We the connected." The linking of archives can equally propel bodies to act. However, Isin is not optimistic about this transition and in many respects sees it as a foreclosure. For him, the political subject of "We the Connected" can only ever act within a deeply privatized environment maintained by an exclusive concentration of media ownership. Isin's critique captures the concerns of many scholars who are trying to theorize the different civic possibilities that may potentially arise out of Web 2.0.

The last point I make in this chapter, following van Dijck, is to consider whether social media transform or create a new private sphere. Here my question is: do these networked spaces create new or at least ameliorated public spheres and thereby new forms of "deliberative democracy" (Dalgren 2)? Or, to engage Jodi Dean, are we wasting our time given that such spaces are simply new manifestations of capitalist market relations? Given that citizenship and networked sociality are becoming intertwined, I want to take seriously those networked circuits that a large number of people are using to convey their discontent. The decisions young people make to curate themselves into being are not only to extend their pre-existing social relations but to establish solidarity with others who share similar ideological positions and want to produce different ontologies. The affective objects cohere and extend in myriad formations. While there will always be critics such as Evgeny Morozov, who presents

a scathing critique of the decentralized, participatory nature of networked platforms (“Social Movements”), it has been too difficult to ignore how social networks are transforming political participation.

Chapter 4. Finally, I conclude my dissertation with a chapter that explores pedagogical strategies for engaging young people within a networked digital culture. In this last chapter, “Towards a New Data Literacy: Understanding Privacy in the Age of Big Data,” I begin to outline how young people consider privacy, particularly in a historical moment when their lives are increasingly being lived online. Here I point to a larger project, one that I intend to continue and expand. After sketching out how social media affect socially, economically, and politically structured relations, I am particularly concerned to reflect on how theoretical insights might be translated into a curriculum for young people, a curriculum that will not only engage with these technologies in their private lives at home but now increasingly in the classroom.

My final chapter is not meant as a critique of pedagogical practices; conversely, it accepts the inevitability of the digital classroom. In many respects teachers have little or no choice but to accept the historical moment in which they find themselves and to provide a curriculum that engages young people with the media that they are using. I take note of debates that critique a culture that is too eager to incorporate technology as well as of even those political economic critiques that may point to some of the relationships that schools have with particular infrastructure bodies (Selwyn; Noble). For the purposes of this chapter, however, I take for granted that children will be or are already using social media and therefore require practices to help facilitate a safer, more empowered experience.

Rather than rehearse received concepts of safety and literacy, my argument is focuses on the economic implications of ‘big data’ and how these affect our understanding of privacy. Traditionally when we consider this concept with respect to younger users, we begin with discourses of cyber-safety. These aspire to teach children how to maintain control over their own content. When issues about privacy are raised within this demographic, educators tend to focus on content, such as what happens when information that users feel do not belong in the public domain inadvertently circulates online.

In addition, we need to consider privacy from the perspective of data exploitation (Andrejevic, “Privacy”); asking how corporations like Facebook passively absorb material into their own databases? Moreover, with the onset of algorithmic power, which is bringing about new computational possibilities that render our data more usable, the stakes for a new data literacy are higher than ever. In this chapter, I therefore address and outline those stakes and begin a dialogue to consider what tools might facilitate a more empowered and informed approach for young people to engage online in a big data world.

The body of empirical research that is being performed on the cultural habits, approaches, and practices of young people is growing daily. Here I have incorporated some of this research. However, arguably a more systematic approach is needed, to provide a new media literacy approach that foregrounds not only issues about cyber-bullying and sexting but, equally, ever-present and contradictory economic relations. We need to discuss the way that privacy is being compromised and how data are being used. This constitutes a conversation that needs to take place not simply in the

classroom but, increasingly, on a policy level. We need to provide tools for young people so that they can more easily discern networked environments.⁵

The digital profile archive, the immaterial labour of the prosumer, and the possibility for new civic engagements all represent different ways in which we can approach our understanding of social networks. To engage young people, there needs to be a multifaceted approach or risk alienating the rich experiences they are having online. As you read through this dissertation, you will not find a totalizing perspective, but rather an intervention that aspires to come to terms with the inevitable role that social media now play in the lives of young people.

⁵ Especially because they are spending at least two hours a day online, of which 80 percent is spent on social networks (Van Grove).

Chapter 1: Social Networks and Their Archives of Feeling

According to *The Guardian*, in 2009 the world's digital content exceeded 487 billion gigabytes. Such an astounding amount of data seems almost incomprehensible, but to put it in perspective, if all of these gigabytes could be written out and printed into books, the stack would stretch from the Earth to Pluto ten times (Wray, "Internet Data"). What is even more astounding, is that two years later, this number has more than doubled and is now being measured in zetabytes, where one zetabyte is equivalent to 100,000,000,000,000,000,000 bytes. In just 20 minutes on Facebook, its one billion users generate 1.3 millions tags for photographs, 1.5 million invitations, 1.8 million status updates, 1.97 million friend requests, 2.7 million photographs, and over 10.2 million comments (Rao; Facebook). Thus, increasingly, as signs are converted into binary code, and cultural practices become more instantiated on Web 2.0 social media platforms such as Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and Google +, among others, we are witnessing a phenomenal transformation in how information is communicated, shared, produced, and used to build and extend both virtual and material social networks, alongside new subjective formations (Fuchs; Castells; O'Reilly).

As many scholars have and continue to argue, we are in the midst of a new phase of capitalist accumulation that relies on information as the primary site of surplus value and exchange (Hardt and Negri "Empire", "Multitude"; Berardi; Castells, "Network"; Fuchs, "Society"; Dyer-Witheford). This economic system is predicated not simply on the "rapprochement of culture and the economy" (Allen 39) but on a more complete elision of these mutually constitutive material and symbolic

spheres (McFall; Du Gay and Pryke). Given the amount of information that is generated within the circuits of social networking sites such as Facebook, developing a conceptual framework that accounts for the contradictory ways in which young people are increasingly interacting as users can help to theorize the rapid rise of “a new economy based on the networking of human intelligence” (Tapscott xiii).

For the younger users or the ‘digital natives’, that is, those who see new digital technologies—computers, smartphone, tablets—as the primary mediators of human-to-human connections” (Palfrey and Urs 4), posting information has become an essential way of life. Concerns for this demographic do not stem from the permanence or the visibility of their personal information (boyd, “Identity”), but rather revolve around the diverse platforms they are using, what will be shared, and finally who will be able to access their content (James et. al.; Palfrey and Urs).

To enter into this conversation, I would like to introduce the digital archive as a key organizing concept. What I call the ‘user-profile archive’ can help to theorize and understand the data we produce, and, by so doing, provide insight into why our digital footprint will only ever continue to expand exponentially. The digital profile—which comprise the personal archives built inside social networking sites—is only becoming more ubiquitous, given its importance as a vehicle for sociality within the information age. Digital archives play a polyvalent role, facilitating both extension and domination, that is, enabling respectively a desire for networked connectivity and the accumulation of surplus value. In this chapter, I propose that the digital archive offers a theoretical paradigm that can help us to grasp the impact social media is having on the everyday lived experiences of users. Theorizing digital profiles as archives is useful because they act as the primary interface between the networked, textual body

and the material corporeal body. In short, such archives imbricate the material and the symbolic, as people “regularly project themselves into the Internet so that others may view their presence and interact with them directly” (boyd, “Identity” 5). In so doing, young people come to ‘write themselves into being’ (5); however, this process often occurs within a digitized environment that is always already compromised by economic relations.

The digital profile archive can help to theorize and understand how our data affects us, and by so doing, provide insight into why our digital footprint looks to continue to expand exponentially. The next point for this chapter, is how affect circulates in social networks, how it produces value, and what role these archives play within our information society. I focus on how value—both social and economic—accumulates in social networks. For these technologies to remain viable they must rely on the immaterial and affective labor of users who continuously upload and update their online profiles and subsequently, generate vast amounts of useable data (Coté and Pybus, “Myspace”, “Facebook”). In addition, I want to examine the “stickiness” of social networks (Ahmed “Happiness”) or rather the levels of intensity that reside within a user’s virtual archive. Here I draw on Ann Cvetkovich’s conceptualization of the archive as an affective and sentient ‘archive of feeling’ to examine how affect accumulates within user profiles and moves people, producing another kind of value: social value.

Sites such as Facebook would not exist if they did not reproduce sociability. Users want to be where their friends are (boyd, “Social Networks”), which is why they keep logging on. Within this context, we can perhaps understand why on Facebook alone, there are 684,478 pieces of content posted each minute (Tepper,

“How Much”). Moreover, as I will argue, it is precisely this social value that propels the production of our digital archives. Our data profiles are, in this sense, not just sites of surplus value, but important spaces for sociality and hence subjectivization. Yet, such digital archives only ever exist when social and economic relations elide. Hillis, Petit and Jarrett make a similar argument in their work that explores the architectonic principles of ‘Google Books’, a project that seeks to scan and index every single book into a singular digital library. Such an enormous (and impossible) undertaking requires the ‘general intellect’ of users to circulate and produce economic value for Google. However, this is not a straightforward process, given that, at least on the surface, the creation of such an expansive library could be viewed as both a service and benefit to the user. What should be emphasized is that in order to gain access to the Google Book archive, an individual must ‘search’, creating a unique result—a unique archival event. The act of searching thus becomes a part of the user-generated content that Google relies on—instantly subsumed—rendering the searcher into a ‘body of information’ (169), and hence part of the archive. While we cannot move away from these inherent contradictory communicative relations, we can turn to the production of the personal user-profile archive as a means for understanding this double articulation of value. The digital archive can therefore illuminate how the conflation of economic and social relations is not simply an alienated process but inherently engaged and active.

Web 2.0: Understanding Social Networks

The terrain in which digital archives operate is known as the ‘social web’ or Web 2.0 technologies. In 2005, Tim O’Reilly was the first to popularise this phrase,

arguing that there was a dynamic shift in the way that computer-mediated technologies were altering how users could communicate/interface online. The Internet was no longer about software, created by one company that would run on a single computer and would be experienced by a single user. Instead:

Web 2.0 is the network as platform, spanning all connected devices; Web 2.0 applications are those that make the most of the intrinsic advantages of that platform: delivering software as a continually-updated service that gets better the more people use it, consuming and remixing data from multiple sources, including individual users, while providing their won data and services in a form that allows remixing by others, creating network effects through an ‘architecture of participation’, and going beyond the page metaphor of Web 1.0 to deliver rich user experience.” (“Web 2.0”)

What O’Reilly is trying to capture is the shift away from a one-to-many broadcast model, towards a many-to-many networked or distributed model of communication. This means, instead of the Encyclopedia Britannica, we have Wikipedia, instead of a personal webpage, we have blogs that coalesce in communities of bloggers, or instead of a virtual bulletin board, we have Facebook. The days when people purchased software and installed it on their home computers are quickly becoming out-dated as we move towards web-based platforms that are free and accessible and operate as ‘services’ for all users. As such, one does not purchase YouTube and then watch the videos that this company decides to circulate. Instead, the entire success of YouTube is predicated on the fact that it operates as a free ‘service’ enabling people to upload, circulate and watch shared content. Web 2.0 technologies actively require direct

participation and feedback to remain relevant. Without users, such platforms quickly lose their market value, as seen in the recent resale of MySpace, which was initially purchased by Rupert Murdoch for 580 million dollars in 2005.⁶ The instant success of this early social network was short lived and MySpace quickly began losing users as Facebook became increasingly popular. As a result, as people logged out, advertising revenue decreased and News Corporation was forced to sell off this asset (bought by Justin Timberlake, among others, in June 2011) for a mere 35 million dollars, that is, 16.5 times less than its 2005 selling price (Stelter, “News Corporation”).

What sets Web 2.0 platforms apart is the architecture of participation, which has changed the way in which we now come to expect user-friendly services that allow for the quick and easy transmission of information (Pybus). We see this most clearly operating within social networking sites—virtual spaces that are driven by the active participation of users. Given the centrality of social networks for understanding the digital archive, it is good to take a moment to understand some of their key characteristics. According to boyd, what defines these computer-mediated environments are the ways in which they allow users to:

⁶ From 2005 to early 2008 MySpace was the most visited website in the world, surpassing even Google as the most visited site in the United States. When Rupert Murdoch bought this social network its membership was nearing its peak of 100 million active users. Once Facebook began to assert itself in 2008, those numbers began to dwindle, and, in 2012, just before its resale, there were only some 24 million users. This dramatic decrease in the number of users considerably reduced the site’s value as it lacked the user-generated data which propels advertising revenue.

Construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system;
Articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection;
View and traverse their list of connections and those made by others
within the system. (“Social Networks” 42)

What is required for a social network to function, are the relationships of users— affective relationships—which are predicated on active participation. Users, therefore, do not typically go to these sites to meet strangers, but to maintain pre-existing off-line friendships (Lampe, Ellison and Steinfield). The success of Facebook is based on the emotional experiences that people expect to have when they log on. For example, research suggests that people turn to social networks to be comforted when they are feeling down (Sheldon, Abad and Hinsch), seek aggrandizement when they are feeling insecure (Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin; Gonzales and Hancock) or more generally, to seek positive emotional experiences (Sas et. al.). Thus, as more and more people log on to these sites, affect accumulates within the ‘networked publics’ that are produced within these virtual environments.

A ‘networked public’ is perhaps one of boyd’s most popularized concepts and is relevant for understanding how sociality functions within social networks. Her theoretical starting point is with Sonia Livingstone who argues that a ‘public’ is a “common understanding of the world, a shared identity, a claim to inclusiveness, a consensus regarding the collective interest” (“Social Networks” 9). Public, in this sense, can refer to a local or much broader affiliation of people that converge around shared ideas and interests. Publics, however, can equally be “imagined communities” (Warner), sites of social exchange (Ito), or as Nancy Fraser argues “arenas for the formation and enactment of social identities” (Fraser qtd. in boyd, “Social Networks”

41). Network publics, therefore, build and extend sociality, allowing it to pass from the material world into the virtual circuits of cyberspace. By so doing, social relations are both constructed and restructured by networked technologies (39). In other words, while networked sociality may not radically transform pre-existing social relations, the medium itself restructures them, allowing new communicative practices to emerge.

While we are still in the midst of comprehending the impact of these technologies, what is certain, is that sites such as Facebook have unequivocally transformed how people, young people in particular, interact with their peer groups. The immediacy by which information is deployed and the level of interactivity that results from distributive communication networks enables new forms of social, cultural and political relations to emerge and intensify within these highly mediated environments. However, participation can only occur inside the parameters that are set by the technology, rendering the actual structure of any social network important. This underlying architectural form determines how people will represent themselves, how they will connect with one another, and how information will be able to circulate. In short, it configures the parameters of the digital archive.

For boyd, this underlying structural formation is what actively configures how people can come together and participate, shaping the informational flows that get generated by those who come into contact with one another (41). The architecture of the social network equally enables and perpetuates the continuous uploading of data. Users do not just share *any* status updates, or *any* link or *any* photograph, but rather immaterial objects with an affective significance. The digital profile is not just a traditional dataset; rather, it is a holder of affective data that accumulates and

circulates, affecting other users on the platform. Such a culmination of social and affective relations coincides with the conceptualization of the ‘culture of disclosure’ that describes young people as wanting, or perhaps in more extreme cases, feeling some compulsion to upload more and more information about themselves. Producing and circulating all this data constructs iterations of a user’s virtual sociality. While I will take up notions of identity construction in a moment, for now, I want to focus on the breadth and scope of these sites and their impact on communicative practices.

Are you logged in? Why are Social Networks so Sticky?

Facebook is already slated to surpass one billion by the end of 2013 (Wasserman). If we pause for just a moment and reflect on the number of people who are now invested in these virtually connected communities, we would find that in the United States alone, 80 percent of teens between the ages 12 and 17, and 87 percent of young adults between the ages of 18 and 29 are using social networks (Pew). Such a high percentage of people coincides with the enormous amount of time that users spend logged in and producing content. In 2008, the average person spent 3.2 hours a month on social networks, and, just three years later, in 2011, there was a 300 percent increase, with users now averaging over 9.6 hours a month (Lu et. al.). Not surprisingly, of that time logged, 7 hours and 46 of those minutes were spent on Facebook (Parr, “Spend”). For younger users, who are not supposed to be on Facebook until they have reached 13 years of age, statistics predict a dramatic increase in their usage of social media. According to the research put forward by eMarketing, in 2007 there were 8.2 million American children logged on to social

networks and estimated there were more than 20 million as of 2011.⁷ While it is difficult to determine how many children are logged in, we can use the success of Moshi Monster, a British Social Network aimed at tweens, as a benchmark.

Moshi Monster is perhaps one of the most successful social networks for young children, second only to Disney's 'Club Penguin'. Both of these websites are in the race, actively competing to become the 'pre-Facebook' Facebook for young children between the ages of 6 and 12 (Sawyer, "Children"). As such, they have produced digital environments for young people so that they can 'learn' and become accustomed to using social networks. In the words of Moshi Monster's founder, Michael Acton Smith:

We wanted to create a middle ground. Something between an Internet Wild West and a site that is completely locked down. We treat kids with respect, we know they are smart, and it's up to us and their parents to give them guidance about how to behave in this brave new Internet world. It's the same as giving them guidance on how not to talk to strangers and how to cross the road. With Moshi, they learn in an environment that is deliberately designed for them. (Acton qtd. in Sawyer, "Children")

While Acton's intentions seem almost valiant and pedagogical, it is difficult to look beyond the 100 million dollars in profit that the company generated in 2011.

Briefly, Moshi Monster appeared just a few short years ago in 2008. Michael Acton Smith began in the gaming industry as the co-founder of 'Mind Candy'—a company with little acclaim and attracted very few children to use its gaming

⁷ This is difficult to confirm due to the lack of publically available statistics.

products. Moshi Monster, however, changed everything. Now being heralded as the next ‘craze’ for young children, this social website builds on its predecessors, such as Club Penguin or Neopets, and invites children to adopt and care for their own pet monster in a virtual world. The goal is to play video games in order to win lots of ‘Rox’ or Moshi Monster money. This currency is what allows children to care for their monster in number of ways, including the purchase of virtual items such as food, furniture or special toys. While logged on, kids can invite their friends into their social network and communicate with them through specific features such as the “pin board” (similar to the Facebook Wall) or in the Moshi Monster forum.

The site has been a success for a number of reasons, which is illustrated by the large number of children who are now members, which in 2011 was estimated at 35 million and in just over a year had nearly doubled to 60 million (Halliday). Acton believes this massive increase has to do with the site’s configuration. In his view, according to an interview in *The Guardian*, Moshi Monsters has been so successful “because of three elements: nurture, social and story. Nurture: kids like to care for things, from a doll, or a real-life pet, to a virtual pet, or imaginary friend. Social: they like to interact with each other. Story: they get bored quickly. If an online environment doesn't have a decent story embedded deep within its psyche, then kids will just stop using it” (Sawyer, “Children”). Another element of the company’s success can be attributed to their aggressive marketing policy, which has pushed the sales of Moshi Monster products, including a variety of toys and trading cards, alongside a magazine and Moshi TV.⁸ All of this has resulted in a massive amount of

⁸ Moshi Monster TV is the name used for their YouTube presence. Members are invited to make videos about their Moshi Monster pets. These videos can be animated, or

profit for this social network, indicating emphatically that this younger generation are now officially on the radar as an important target market. Not surprisingly, then, it is widely expected that the number of social networks that are aimed at tweens will only increase.

Moshi Monster and other similar sites equally highlight some of the clever techniques and practices that are now being deployed to keep users, whether they are young or old, logged in. Marketers refer to the amount of time spent on a website as the degree of ‘stickiness’, which, in this industry, equates to an important measure of value. Success, here, is based on the average number of minutes and the number of times per month that a user comes to any given website. Social networks are the most ‘sticky’ because they are predicated on user-generated content, indeed, nine of the ten most sticky sites on the Internet are social networks (Cuevas).⁹ Without people actively logging in and inputting data, such sites would quickly lose their market value. When we look at the amount of time users spend on Facebook, we can see that this is perhaps one of the most successful examples. However, what makes this site a success is not just in how it gets users to keep coming back, but in how it gets users to actively interact within its networks. Practices which encourage stickiness are

more frequently appear as storyboards that appear on paper. Once a user’s narrative is complete they upload these to the site and they become a source of conversation and popularity among users.

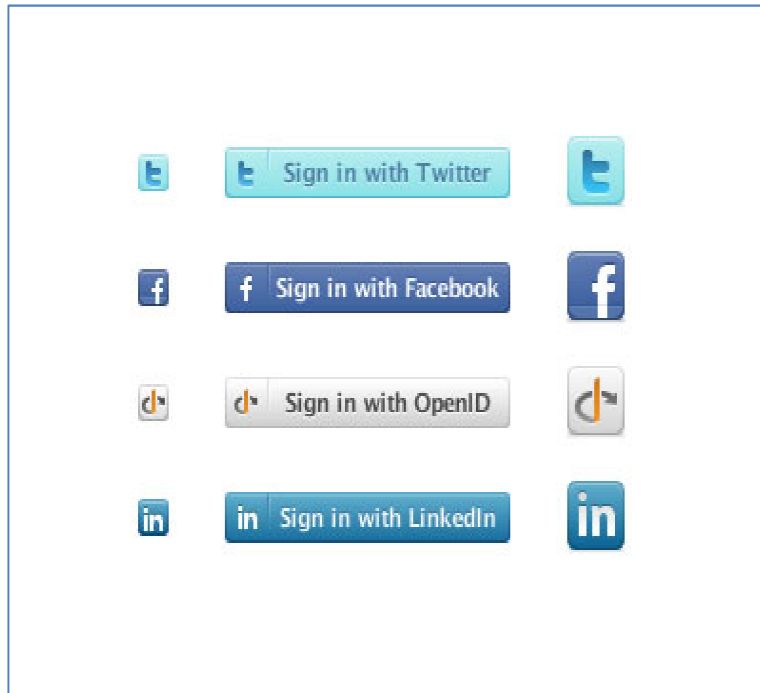
⁹ According to Cuevas, the ‘stickiest’ website on the Internet is the Brazilian social network Orkut, followed by the Spanish social network Tuenti, and Facebook. Interestingly, while Facebook has significantly more users than either of these other social networks, their ‘stickiness’ factor is higher because the average user spends more time and looks at more pages on the other two sites. What should be taken away here is that while size does matter, it is not everything. Thus, in order for a site to be sticky it must have both a large number of users who are signed on but who equally stay and interact within the site. The more users interact, the greater stickiness is accorded.

coveted and when they produce results we see them taken up and reproduced. One practice that has gained momentum is the ‘social logins’.

A social login,¹⁰ also known as a social sign-in, occurs when a user uses their login and password to sign on to a third party site. Typically, people agree to this extension because it facilitates and simplifies logging in (Stelzer). For example, someone might use their Facebook login to access Instagram (a photography application) or Rotten Tomato (movie reviews website/application) or a newspaper such as the Globe and Mail. When this occurs, the user is giving permission to a site—where the social login occurs—to circulate their data amongst their peers. To return to our initial example, any photographs taken on Instagram, or any movies that are reviewed or ‘liked’ on Rotten Tomato, or any articles that are circulated from a newspaper will all be shared with a user’s network public or, more specifically, in this instance, with their Facebook friends. These new kinds of logins not only provide a ‘service’ for the average user who can then easily access their friend’s ‘likes’ and ‘dislikes’ but equally provide more comprehensive marketing profiles for Facebook and those third parties who are interested in user-generated data. Moreover, according to Gigya (the company that created the software for social logins), social logins double the amount of time that users spend on social networks and significantly increase the average number of pages that are viewed (Stelzer). The stickiness of these sites, then, resides in the dynamic ways of attracting users, particularly by promoting synergistic relations that can hold someone’s attention and drive them to return, again and again.

¹⁰ See Figure 1.

Figure 1: Screen shot of a social logins



For Sara Ahmed, this stickiness, is what “sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values and objects” (“Happiness” 31). Affect allows us to make meaning, producing a composition of signs we use to interpret our various emotional states. From this perspective, why might a site like Facebook be considered sticky? For Ahmed, the simple answer would be that it makes users happy. Given that groups cohere around particular orientations, the stickiness of objects comes when we attribute them with an emotional state. I find Ahmed’s concept to be most apposite for the analysis of social media. For example, affect is not necessarily moving from one body to another, but rather, it is something shared, offering a communal orientation. This is precisely the orientation reproduced every time a user logs in to a social network, reinforcing the notion that “the association between objects and affects is

preserved through habit” (35). The happiness that users then feel in relation to Facebook, Moshi Monster, or any other social network then gets circulated every time they enter into these networked spaces and participate, in turn generating a positive disposition towards the site.

User experience and the compulsion to repeatedly login is not necessarily produced when they receive feedback on their posts but in the act of participation itself, which enables the production, accumulation and circulation of particular artefacts in the digital archives. The stickiness of such websites comes when a user’s affective response enables objects to take up more space in the cultural imaginary, giving them more power to not only stick onto any given user, but to equally “slide” onto other bodies who are affiliated within, for example, Facebook’s distributed network (Ahmed, “Politics” 80). As these digital archives gain momentum, they intensify, producing more symbolic currency. The measure, then, of such affective economies resides in the ability of the signs to stick to bodies. For a site like Facebook, the affective ties are strong, particularly as users are expected to update their own profile-archive and/or work on their friend’s archives, allowing affect to both accumulate and circulate.

How social networks build affective relations is critical as this determines the means by which affect circulates amongst users. For Zizi Papacharissi and Alan Rubin, the design of these sites typically includes several elements that bring people together, as well as provides engaging pastimes (which will vary depending on the demographic). The design of social networks also makes it easy to access information, provide entertainment or simply function as convenient spaces to go to gain a large number of benefits (“Networked” 189-193). In short, the structure

provides an opportunity for users to engage in myriad affective social relations through the aggregation and circulation of immaterial objects.

However, do those affective social relations that are produced by users obfuscate larger economic relations that are inherent in the design of these digital spaces? Every keystroke, every link, every comment that people generate can be extrapolated for surplus value. Thus, are users simply being ‘exploited’ or manipulated by those larger political and economic forces to produce value for the information economy (Andrejevic, “Exploitation”)? Or, do users have an inherent understanding of these larger forces, but nonetheless enjoy the effects of networked sociality which are generated when they engage with their divergent groups of ‘friends’? The point here is not to resolve these inherent contradictions, rather to impress that the affective relations experienced within these circuits should not be underestimated. Such affective value is what procures this stickiness and arguably is what keeps people logged in, driving the production of a user’s archive. This is an archive that represents and produces subjectivities, based on choices that determine those subjectivities, and one which will grow exponentially over a lifetime, eventually outliving its user.

Towards a Theorization the Digital Archive

To begin, the digital profile archive must be understood in the context in which it emerges—dynamic and participatory platforms that can extend a user’s sociality and, as we will see in Chapter 2, facilitate new forms of capitalist accumulation. In theorizing the digital profile archive, we must begin by outlining what sets the digital archive apart from its material manifestation. This is important, particularly given

there are some scholars who see no such distinction in terms of the processing of objects. For example, scholars such as Edward Bishop and Michael O’Driscoll argue:

The archive, we now easily recognize, takes a variety of relational forms, including record repositories, museums, and libraries, the term also accounts for all manner of inscription: monographs, film, video, databases, blogs, email, websites, monuments, paintings, and architectures, to offer just a partial list (3).

They see no need for separation between the different forms in which such repositories or rather archives take shape. What is critical for Bishop and O’Driscoll is not the medium by which both objects are archived, but the act of archiving itself; that is, that moment of “forgetting” that foregrounds the set of historical, material and ideological set of practices that makes a collection possible (4). However, while the “event of the archive”—the moment of choice or of inscription, when some object/information is captured over others—is critical for understanding the complex power relations that are interwoven into every archive, the medium in which this act takes place still matters.

I do not wish to take on a technological determinist position, thereby foregrounding a causal primacy to the medium over that which gets archived, or that the means by which objects or information are archived is more important than the “events” transpiring. Instead, I wish to invoke Bruno Latour, who, in his work on actor-network-theory (ANT), argues not only are there “many entanglements of humans and non-humans” (Latour qtd. in Potts, 12; Latour), but also there is a “flattening out of actors-humans and technological-within ANT, which is committed to focusing on the network rather than on individual agents” (Potts 12). In other

words, unlike Bishop and O’Driscoll who privilege the event of the archive, I wish to emphasize the medium in which this event takes place in order to foreground the constitutive relationship between the act of archiving and the site in which this archiving occurs. From this perspective, there is indeed a difference between the material and the virtual archive. Perhaps even a different ontology, given the very different spatio-temporal conditions that act on the processes by which information is stored—and, in the case of the private archives of social networking sites, captured.

The virtual archive for Rudi Laerman and Pascal Gielen begins with Michel Foucault “who first tried to re-articulate this notion into a more general epistemological category and then, in his later work, re-defined it as a primarily sociological reality marked by power differences” (2). In other words, the archive Foucault envisioned in the *Archaeology of Knowledge* was never only a material construct but rather a mechanism to reproduce particular power/knowledge relations, such as the way they were traditionally used in the 18th century as official records to preserve ‘national memory’.

In 18th century Europe the state-formation process was accompanied by the quest to gather more systematic and measurable information on the population and territory (Featherstone 591). By characterising and categorizing bodies, archives have a biopolitical function, sanctioning particular kinds of social and political collective discourses. They determine who would be remembered, who would be important and what would be forgotten. Foucault, therefore, understood archives as “the sum of all the texts that a culture has kept upon its person as documents attesting to its own past, or as evidence of a continuing identity” (“Archive” 129). They are, in this sense, immanently productive, where power relations are neither discontinuous nor rigid but

rather operate in a manner as that “differentiates discourses in their multiple existence and specifies them in their own duration” (“Archive” 146). Foucault’s archive is not a static storage facility but rather an active space of interpretation, making meaning through the ability to privilege certain discourses over others. As such, where archives are housed, which objects are placed inside, and how they are ordered are deeply politicized decisions given the way they each have the ability to fix meaning.

The archive, from this perspective, is much more than a social tool to preserve the “prestige of the past” (Halbwachs qtd. in Appadurai 15). Instead, it functions as a composition of ‘traces’ which can be brought about by contingency, but equally, can be situated as a larger ideological project, making it less about preserving specific memories and more about preserving sets of social and political beliefs and practices. The archive is anything but a neutral or “ethically benign tool” (15). As such, it should come as no surprise that the archives of less powerful groups are often produced by dominant ideological structures to maintain and preserve particular bodies, such as a nation state, or other hegemonic social, political or economic relations (Featherstone). We see over and over again how indigenous populations have had to relinquish control of their own histories, which is why we find the Cuban archive in Madrid, Spain and the Haitian archive in Nantes, France. Such practices have made it even more challenging for those post-colonial bodies to regain their own national history, given that their archives—their histories—have been shipped away (592). Foucault’s interpretation of the archive as a “system of functioning,” as opposed to a “system of unification” is therefore a useful starting point in the theorization of the virtual archive (Foucault 149).

To come back to social networks, while there is a continuous striving to find unity amidst the massive amounts of data that get produced within these networked spaces, such moments are ephemeral. One status update on Facebook yields, multiple comments or likes, perhaps a repost and at least five different advertisements that correspond, while another update on a different topic brings a new composition of textual objects, thus each update brings a new unity, a new interpretation, and a new iteration. The digital archive enables possibilities for unification; however, these are just moments within a larger system of functioning. User profiles, therefore, do not “collect the dust of statements that have become inert” but are continuously (re)filled with more and more information, allowing users to be simultaneously involved and exploited by something that is larger than themselves (Foucault, “Archeology” 146). Here, the archive is not simply of mnemonic or historical importance but has a biopolitical¹¹ function that allows for the production of social, political and economic subjectivities that can actively circulate. In other words, it has the ability to regulate the flow and composition of bodies as life itself becomes an object of power (Coté and Pybus, “Myspace” 92).

¹¹ I conceptualize biopolitics in relation to Maurizio Lazzarato, who, similar to Foucault argued that this formation of power should be understood as a dynamic of forces which functions as strategic relations. In this iteration, power is not a unilateral relation maintained from above, producing subjectivities for the perpetuation of late capitalism. Rather, it is maintained from below and hence the necessity to make sense of the micro relations of power, which ultimately support relations of domination. The political economy of forces that make up biopolitics is what acts upon the subject. Lazzarato’s key argument and contribution was to question how we can move beyond a simple critique of domination towards a more substantial politics that harnesses the multiple points of power embedded within social relations that allow for subjectivization of the *social body*. Yet, such moments of subjectivization are equally important moments of capture, particularly within a historical moment in which the economic and the social can no longer be separated.

One last point of separation between the modern or classical archive and the virtual archive is its foundation on a read-only paradigm. The material archive observes, records and stores information, which, in turn, singularizes individuals, while often sedimenting dominant, institutional powers. As Featherstone argues: “archives along with museums, libraries, public monuments and memorials became instruments for the forging of the nation into the people, into an ‘imagined community’ (592). Yet, online, the information that is stored is always in process. Since the Internet, and more specifically social networks and the digital databases that get produced, are radically user-oriented, the digital archive presents the opportunity for not just a singular, but a plurality of “imagined communities.” Thus, unlike the static repositories of information that are stored in a traditional archive, such as the ones that Featherstone mentions, digital archives are constantly being worked on. Their contents are then always in the middle of being re-combined, recontextualized or re-searched (such as Google).¹² This constant updating “is a direct consequence of the new paradigm of permanent transfer” and fits with how Foucault tried to characterize the evolution of the archive: that is, “not a monument for future memory but a document for possible use” (Laermans and Gielen 2). And, while Laermans and Gielen contend that he was illustrating how larger structural apparatuses within the disciplinary society operate through the body, such as the dynamic archives of the prisoner, the child, or the madman, the same logic can still be applied to a more hyper

¹² Google is a good example here, as information is always in process. It’s extremely sophisticated tagging system is the reason it earned 10.58 billion dollars in the final quarter of 2011 and 28 billion in 2010. By integrating AdWord, Google asks advertisers to provide them with key words, which they in turn use to tag a number of different sites in their Internet portal. Each time someone performs a search on Google, using key words, ads appear on the right hand side. Google’s AdWord program is one of the most sophisticated on the Internet, allowing the advertiser to ‘add value’ for every search performed.

individualized archive that mirrors Gilles Deleuze’s modular logic (Deleuze, “Control”, 4). Thus instead of clearly demarcated structures that “constitute individuals as a single body” (4-5); or rather, instead the individual/mass pair that Deleuze called the *dividual*—the postmodern subject who is shattered in myriad pieces and interpellated in multiple directions—the user profile archive leaks and is eminently fluid (4-5). However, instead of the serpent we have the cyborg, as the body and the machine come into increasing contact with one another. As such, how do we conceive of the archive in relation to those everyday life practices that not only ensure the economic success of social networking sites, but more importantly, serve to extend the material self via the emergence of a sentient digital body.

Gaining access to study these archives is very difficult. As Manovich points out, “only social media companies have access to really large social data—particularly transactional data. An anthropologist working for Facebook or a sociologist working for Google will have access to data that the rest of the scholarly community will not” (5). In effect, such companies perform the same roles as Derrida’s “archons”, the document guardians, whose job is to ensure the physical security of what is deposited (placed in the archive) and of the substrate (the actual archive used by Facebook to generate surplus value). Such guardians are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence, which gives them the power of interpretation (2), based on their ability to gather and combine all of the various elements in the archive—“power of consignation.” The archons are therefore entrusted to gather signs and ascribe meaning within the archive. Of course, every combination yields different interpretative outcomes. Thus, the question of who gets to interpret the information within the archive is important.

Social media sites that rely on user-generated data to produce audiences for advertisers base their entire business plans on the ability to find and ascribe meaning to their archives. What sets them apart, however, from Derrida's original archons, is that Facebook is not a "document guardian" (2), but rather a data guardian. As Manovich argues:

The rise of social media along with the progress in computational tools that can process massive amounts of data makes possible a fundamentally new approach for the study of human beings and society...only social media companies have access to really large pools of social data (3).

This data or more specifically what Manovich refers to as transactional data: the billions of cultural expressions, experiences, texts, and links that are uploaded regularly each day, is quickly becoming an important frontier of struggle.

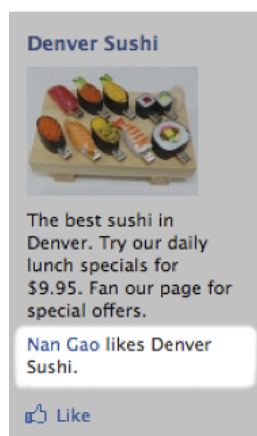
Transactional data, or big data as it is often named in marketing circles, is central for the growth and competitions of brands and their corporations. While some industries will benefit more than others, there is still a tremendous amount of interest among corporations about the potential amount of economic value tied up in all this intangible information being generated by users. The value, however, will not come from the raw bits of data that are uploaded, but rather, from the ability of corporations to find patterns of recognition. By so doing, industries will be able to tap into and become better at targeting and understanding their consumers' needs and desires. This ability to generate surplus value from data will be accrued through increasingly sophisticated algorithms that will be able to determine meaningful topologies for the insurmountable amount of user-generated data.

Until now, when companies wanted to target particular consumer markets they had to rely on summarized customer behaviour reports (Liebenson). Today, however, marketers are now looking for patterns that can be found in user-generated data, patterns that are generated by increasingly sophisticated algorithms that can sift through petabytes of data and find meaning. We can see here the link between the value of algorithms and the once sought after ‘cool-hunter’ (Klein 111).

Originally, the job of the cool-hunter was to conduct ethnographic research on young people, in essence these marketing researchers were sent out as culture spies, charged with reporting the cool trends of young people. Information would then be gathered on a number of different demographics and the cool hunter would compile their data and sell it directly to marketing corporations. By ‘hanging out’ with young people, they were able to capitalize on emerging trends so that they could supply their clients with a competitive edge to capture the imaginary of their ‘hard to reach’ demographics (Gladwell, “Coolhunt”). What was key about these specialized marketing researchers was their unique talents in going out and capturing what was ‘cool’ and packaging this for corporations that were keen to sell their brands to certain demographics. They would often go to where young people congregate, with cameras, so that they could document certain looks and behaviours. However, with the advent of social media, the cool-hunter and their compendium of documents is beginning to look more and more archaic.

Big data allows markets to go right to the source. Instead of commissioning studies, they can rely on the data that is generated by these demographics directly, drawing on a range of images, videos, and other publically available, self-published information. Here, big data allows corporations the opportunity to cut out a more

formalized approach of gathering signs. It provides “the possibility of unlocking some momentous insights that can transform a business or an organization” (Hudson, “Big Data”). Facebook is leading the way, finding innovative approaches to make sense of over 100 petabytes of data that it now stores on all its users. The company is busy tracking how its ads are received across the site based on gender, age and interests. If certain ads start to do particularly well with a demographic then there are signals to deploy more ads. There is increasingly impressive data processing capacity to actually carry this off. Algorithms are continuously being created to better recognize and render the data into useful and useable forms. Facebook’s success is predicated on its ability to produce a meaningful topology for its archive. One simple example is how it takes all of the ‘likes’ of a user’s circle of friends and then applies these to the ads received down the side of the page. Therefore, if someone mentions they went for sushi with a friend on Saturday night, then this person might see an ad down the side of the page for a sushi restaurant that one of her/his other friends ‘liked’ on Facebook (fig. 2). The power of the algorithms is to thereby constantly reconfigure the data that gets entered into user’s digital archives to produce value out a topology that will ideally be perceived as useful to the user (Goldman, “Graph Search”).



(Figure 2: Facebook “advertising”)

From a political economic perspective, what distinguishes Web 2.0 platforms is a reliance on a perennial stream of data. By facilitating the transmission and circulation of user-generated content, we are no longer living in a society that uses digital archives; instead, we are living in an information society that is a digital archive. Everything we do contributes towards an expanding digital footprint, which is only magnified by the growing number of marriages between natural life and big data. Consider these examples which demonstrate this shift toward the digitization of all useable information: Apple's Siri converts voice requests into computer-based commands; Google Now has integrated a natural language processing platform directly into its searchbox, aiming to search and, more importantly, to actually predict what you might want to know; finally, the recent Facebook Graph, in which "they promise to put information that's been filtered, curated, and customized by friends and colleagues at our fingertips" (Sundararajan, "Graph Search"). The archives of social media platforms cannot, therefore, be unlocked with simple "search algorithms", says Greg Satell from Forbes Magazine, rather, what is required are "learning algorithms...[making it unclear] how much we're searching the search engines and how much they're searching us." What equally must not be forgotten is that while the algorithms are produced outside of archives, value is augmented as they become more instantiated within the content that is both produced and procured by users.

Discussions of how to pursue, study, and quantify the information that is generated on social networks are underway as the "effects of network society are now being felt everywhere, from business to science from government to the arts" (Manovich 1). Such changes may leave us to wonder, what will be the impact of the

information society? What does it mean to exist in a historical moment in which every cultural practice, taste, and preference is now a part of a digital database? Can there be any meaningful separation between what may have been previously regarded as economic versus cultural? Yet, despite these contradictions, we cannot get away from generating more data. There are a number of different statistics that point us towards this undeniable effect; for example, according to a press release by EMC (a global corporation enabling businesses and service providers to transforming operations into delivering Information Technology as a ‘service’), the world’s digital data is doubling every two years; in 2011 it has already exceeded 1.8 zetabytes, which could be measured in the following way: every person in the United States would have to tweet three times per minute for 26,976 years nonstop to produce an equivalent (EMC).

With so much information being produced, it appears almost impossible to assign meaning, or rather find a way to privilege information. Yet, I want to argue that, despite the overwhelming number of bytes being generated, the digital is not an absolute archive or database, but is rather quite dynamic. For Brower and Moulder, “the constant updating is a direct consequence of the new paradigm of “permanent transfer” or the “dynamic archive,” which privileges the active user above the stable source” (4). In other words, we cannot get away from our present historical moment, and we need ways to theorize both the construction and circulation of digital archives, which exist in these unprecedented dynamic platforms.

What's Inside Your Archive? – Towards an Archive of Feelings

The user profile or personal archives, act, according to Katherine Hayles, as “new experiences of embodiment” (1). The personal archives or “textual bodies” (1993, p. 24) that account for user profiles represent important performative sites in which identities are produced and maintained, as social networks are often extended into the material, off-line world (boyd, “Identity” 6). The digital archives which are built up highlight the immensely selective yet fleeting process of deciding which data to display, and accounts, at least in part, for how users want to (re)present themselves in virtual spaces. By so doing, they can increase their own social, political and economic networks through the careful management of their respective profiles. Equally, they facilitate the growth of new markets and subsequently new consumer subjectivities via the proliferation of vast amounts of user-generated data.

How users are then positioned in relation to their archives is critical, as these are not static repositories of knowledge but active, ontological sites that are eminently productive. Judith Butler raises this point by linking precarity with performativity. She brings these two concepts in dialogue within one another to ask an important existential question: “who counts as a subject” or rather, who can “become eligible for recognition” (iv)? While Butler relates this to the material enactment of gender, her theorization of recognition can be applied to social networking sites, which are also fluid and flexible sites of identity production.

Facebook’s newsfeed is an important performative public sphere that sets the ontological conditions for “who counts as a life, who can be read or understood as a living being, and who lives, or tries to live, on the far side established modes of intelligibility” (iv). In short, social networks like Facebook allow individuals to

remain recognizable. Identities can then be valorised and reproduced via the immediate feedback loops that get attached to every update that users add to their profile. Yet if Facebook's statistics are true, with over 3.5 billion pieces of content shared each week (Digitalbuzz Blog), then the need for valorisation and/or recognition is intensifying, perhaps because of such moments of intelligibility being so ephemeral. Consequently, the user is being rendered more and more productive, given that the performative act of signifying and remaining present is so precarious. Failure to continuously update and ultimately become a 'good' archivist means that one may cease to remain legible.

The newsfeed, in relation to the archive, is fundamental, given the way it immediately broadcasts to a user's network what is being placed inside a profile archive. Here, the archival event, is a highly publicized and performative moment in which "networked technologies have introduced new affordances for amplifying, recording and spreading information and social acts" (boyd, "Identity" 45). When users then announce to their friends what is happening in their lives by way of a status, a photo or a link, they are equally making identity claims about themselves. What is then posted should be understood as a kind of "performance of social connections before a broader audience" (45). Such acts embody an ideal presentation of how a user would like to present themselves to their online world. For Shanyang Zhao, this can be explained by examining the dual sense of self that individuals carry forward, namely the "now selves" and the "possible selves" (1819).

Briefly, the "now self," is what psychologists refer to as those established identities that are known and displayed to others while the 'possible selves' are images of the self that are currently unknown, although they are desired, fantasized

over or perhaps repressed (1819). The Facebook newsfeed presents an opportunity to “narrow the discrepancy” between this actual and ideal/possible self (Ellison, Heino and Gibbs) by providing agentic possibilities to users to feel empowered as they try to “actualize the identities they hope to establish but are unable to in face-to-face situations” (Zhao 1819). Conversely, scholars such as Manago et. al. argue that while the performative elements of sites such as Facebook propel users to want to actualize an ‘ideal’ self, it is still important to be critical of what this notion of ‘ideal’ actually means.

According to Lenhart and Madden, more often when young people begin to post information about themselves they frequently succumb to their gender stereotypes. Often times, girls will try and make themselves look more physically attractive and sexual (Livingstone; Lampe, Ellison and Steinfeld). Moreover, according to Manago’s study of MySpace, sexualized photographs of girls were particularly rewarded, receiving more comments than other materials they posted about themselves. The impact of these rewards was to encourage girls to post more of these sexually suggestive pictures so that they would continue to elicit positive responses from their peers. Subsequently, there is a kind of performativity¹³ that is tied to the newsfeed that gets reproduced in the diverse choices that users make when they carefully curate the objects that will come to represent who there are online. The

¹³ “Performativity must be understood not as a singular or deliberate ‘act,’ but, rather, as the reiterative and citation practice by which discourse produces the effects it names” (Butler 2).

“acts”¹⁴ of gender are not lost within the virtual circuits of social networks but are rather magnified, particularly when users are rewarded for conforming to social expectations that demarcate pre-existing normative identities. Facebook’s newsfeed is perhaps one of its most important features, a performative virtual playground that drives the production of identities and the accumulation of data in the profile archive.

How subjectivity within networked environments is conceptualized is still deeply contested. For Sherry Turkle, the self is multiple and partitioned, with different versions of ourselves that we present to our friends, our family and the world at large. While there is a “moving fluidity” amongst all of these disparate selves, how we come to express who we are online is driven more by the medium as opposed to the individual user. Thus she argues, “technology is the architect of our intimacies”, it determines how we will come to express ourselves (19). Each social network has a different modality of self expression and this will effect how we will come to construct who we are within those circuits. Conversely, identity formation can be conceived as somewhat more cohesive, with all of our multiple selves coming together to produce a more singular, albeit fractured identity that is not driven uniquely by the architecture of the technology but by an active need for sociality (Papacharissi, “Networked”). Despite the fundamental differences within both of these positions, each points to a more complete elision between the online and off-line subject. Where once we could easily identify a singular material body, today we co-exist simultaneously within multiple networked publics.

¹⁴ Acts are similarly understood as political (see Chapter 3). Engin Isin has written extensively on the how acts enable politics, see his chapter entitled “Theorizing Acts of Citizenship” in Isin and Nielsen’s *Acts of Citizenship*.

The open and public nature of socially networked environments will equally have a considerable impact on how users will participate. Clearly, people do not log on to social networks to live anonymous lives, but instead to live what Zhao and her colleagues refer to as “nonymous” or rather (semi)public lives (1816). In other words, people do not go to these spaces to completely reinvent themselves. Instead, these networked platforms allow a introduction of one’s self via a number of performative tools that allow users to communicate to their worlds how they want their tastes, likes, dislikes, affiliations, and in general their personality to be conceived (Mendelson and Papacharissi 2). This performative palette, however, is typically put into practice when a user is relatively cognizant of their audiences, which is why users will often upload more truth than fiction (Zhao et. al.).

As social networks become sites of identity formation, the importance of the (re)production of vast amounts of useable data becomes crucial to this process. Here we can begin to see why thinking about a user profile as an archive offers a more nuanced way to conceptualize the sheer amount of the data that gets uploaded. In short, it allows us to not only think about how “we write ourselves into being” as argued by Sundén and later by boyd, but more importantly, to think about those power/knowledge related questions that emerge when we begin to conceptualize the *choices* that determine which information will come to represent ‘us’ and affect others. Perhaps instead, it might be more appropriate to ask: ‘how do I *curate* myself into being?’

The social activity on social networks is a vehicle for the production of identities. According to Sundén, people keep going back to these sites in part because the border between the material and the virtual continues to erode (79). The computer

screen that was once conceived of as a fixed window or a mirror in which people could see into or rather see their own reflection within, has shifted. Now, it functions as an affective surface, or rather a second skin which is capable of interfacing the body with other worlds and other people (Sundén). Moreover, given the portability of these virtual spaces, such as through the mobile phone, the digital profile should not simply be understood as a static repository of data but rather, as a social practice that enables subjectivization or rather the activation of new subjectivities both in the virtual and the fleshy body. As such, the specific ways in which individual users gather signs together to create a unity of meaning is perhaps why the virtual profile is not just an archive filled with artefacts but with affect.

Archive of Feeling

For Ann Cvetkovich, an “archive of feeling” is predicated on “an exploration of cultural texts as repositories of feelings and emotions, which are encoded not only in the content of the texts themselves, but in the practices that surround their production and reception” (7, my emphasis). She uses this to examine how affective sociality functions as a mechanism for the subjectivization of the queer subject. Specifically, she brings together different elements of queer public culture by including oral histories, performance and literature, as well as specific LTBGQ archives such as the ‘Lesbian Herstory Archives’ in Brooklyn, New York and San Francisco’s Gay and Lesbian Historical Society. The uniqueness of her work lies not just in the important compendium of documents that comprise the archive, but rather in its attempt to capture ‘lived experiences,’ which in turn leads to the production of what she understands as lesbian public cultures. In this model, experiences or practices are impregnated within the interstices of the archive’s materiality, thereby filling the

“archive of feeling” with traces of affective sociality—indeed, a way of life—which helps bring these “queer publics” together (Coté and Pybus, “Facebook”). For Cvetkovich, objects extend and are hence steeped in cultural meaning, each with their own affective history. Her archive of feelings preserves not just knowledge, but emotion, captured in those discrete moments in which we are affected by intimacy, sexuality, love and activism (240). What then culminates, for her, are those sensory moments that build ‘emotional memory’.

The feelings or lived experiences that Cvetkovich wants to privilege in her archive, echoes that which coheres Spinoza’s “conative bodies,” or rather “associative or social bodies” (Bennett 2). Similarly, following Massumi, affect is not simply an emotion as used in the every day sense; rather, it can be employed, as it was by Spinoza, denoting the process by which we experience the world around us. This process is active and can interrupt the way in which meaning gets both constructed and understood (212). Ultimately, this raises interesting questions around agency and more specifically about the political possibilities of mobilizing a more engaged subject. Affect, at least in this sense, can be understood as a set of forces that “drive us towards movement, towards thought and extension, that can likewise suspend us (as in neutral) across a barely registering accretion of force-relations, or that can even leave us overwhelmed by the world’s apparent intractability” (Gregg and Siegworth 1). Subsequently, affect is made up of a constitutive and hence interrelated dynamics which traverse other bodies, facilitating the continuous composition, decomposition and recomposition of social relations. However, affect does not simply leap from one body to another, for if we conceptualize it in this way we would fall risk of ignoring the contingency that allows us to simultaneously move and be moved by others. Thus

as bodies come together and are driven apart, similar to the ways in which digital archives temporarily link and then move apart, users come to affect and be affected by those who are networked with them. This relational process, which, according to Deleuze, propels bodies to “act” (Deleuze, “Affect”), is what can produce and interrupt the ways in which meaning gets both constructed and understood (Massumi 212).

An archival event, as we recall, is enacted in the moment of inscription, that is, the moment in which an object is brought into the archive. This is a carefully curated event that relates directly to how users will come to represent themselves online—re/producing virtual subjectivities. In addition, those immaterial objects that have been chosen to circulate carry affective significance. Affect, from this perspective, is represented via the object that is placed in the archive; however, it also exists beyond the symbolic representation of users. Ahmed raises similar questions in relation to how “emotions shape the very surfaces of bodies” on which they operate (“Politics” 4). This exteriorization relates to how we are ‘affected’ by the discursive frames that “align individuals with communities—or bodily space with social space” (“Politics” 118). We can see a similarity here with how Deleuze speaks about how bodies are propelled into motion by the potential that resides in any given moment—and is, at least in part, what coheres the practices that exist on social networks (Ahmed, “Affect”). In other words, each object that gets uploaded, carries with it the ability to affect an open-ended number of users in the network, from the person who uploaded the object to all those with which that person is connected, based on their affective response. This affective feedback loop is a key reason why such sites are so successful.

To then be able to capture an essence of what procures a memory and hence that which lies in between and propels bodies into action is what “marks a body’s belonging to a world of encounters” (Gregg and Siegworth 2). Herein, the archive of feelings can only exist within a larger composition of bodies—assemblages “with distinctive histories of formation but finite life spans” (Bennett 4). Such unusual archives are highly specific, fragmented and ultimately resist the coherence of a singular narrative. These uneven topologies of lived experiences are what make digital archives in social networks so dynamic. When each user places something into their archive they are uploading an object that has a social and hence affective value. The object has the potential to affect, as it moves in between, and, is shaped by the larger network of friends who come into contact with whatever has been posted. Affect accumulates as it moves in between a user and her/his distributed network, sedimenting and providing cultural significance to that which gets circulated.

To examine how affect accumulates in social networks, let us consider what goes into uploading a photograph on a site like Facebook. Mendelson and Papacharissi show in their study on college students’ use of Facebook, that photographs help to maintain relationships and memories, while facilitating the production of highly performative subjectivities. As such, most photographs tend to foster community through the sharing of common experiences and values (26). While in most respects, all photographs whether they are on Facebook or in a photograph album, possess the important function of “preserving biographical memories” and “are used to tell and retell experiences...serving as mnemonic devices for the moments that bond us together” (2), the permanence, visibility and searchability (boyd, “Social

Networks”) of those photographs found in social networks help to reify and construct mediated identity performances.

As Papacharissi and Mendelson point out, while there has always been a degree of performativity embedded in photographs, which is observed in the ways in which people want to be photographed, such as where they desire their photographs to be taken or in how they will display their photographs, what is new, in relation to social networking sites, is in how they circulate and reach such diverse audiences. Before there was more discretion regarding to whom a particular photograph might be shown. Close friends might be privy to the pictures taken at the party the night before; however, it would have been inappropriate to share these with members of your family or even worse, with an employer. Today, those boundaries increasingly converge, normalizing the broad circulation of photographs.

For college students, most of the pictures taken tend to be highly conventional, including photos of peer groups, parties or other events, such as the holidays. Moreover, when these pictures are posted, they are often meant to generate large number of posts from friends. This would suggest that the point of uploading a photograph is not simply to preserve a moment in time. Instead, as Papacharissi and Mendelson argue, the importance of the photograph that appears on Facebook are the motivations and desired outcomes that are inscribed at the moment of its production. Thus, embedded within the digital print that appears in someone’s profile archive is the explicit desire for circulation. Here, then, it is not just a digital print that gets upload, but an assemblage of all of those relations that went into its production and begin to circulate once a user’s network begins to comment on it (Mendelson and Papacharissi). To then return to Cvetkovich, her archive of feelings provides an entry

point for theorizing the affective sociality that resides within the user-generated content that gets housed within respective profile archives.

The reason I want to posit the user profile as an affective archive or an archive of feelings is that it “both represents the individual and serves as the locus of interaction” (boyd, “Social Networks” 43). Profiles, like the newsfeed, are inherently performative, allowing users to express to their communities who they are and what they represent. Yet, while they provide important sites of subjectivization they are by no means absolute. Subjects who represent themselves in these networked spaces often make choices that will allow the archive to represent an ideal image of who they are (Dunne, Lawlor and Rowley; Shao). Part of this drive to produce an ideal self is brought about by reading other people’s profiles and learning what is socially acceptable and desired behaviour, a practice also referred to as ‘social learning effects’ (Burke et. al. 2009). What we then place in our archives is intensely selected or curated, given the resounding permanence and totalizing effect this information will have once it begins to circulate.

Brian Massumi’s theorization of the archive in his article “The Archive of Experience,” argues that language is what allows us both to archive and to remember (1). His ‘archive of experience’ compliments Cvetkovich’s archive of feelings. However, instead of looking specifically at how affect accumulates within objects and bodies, he is interested in how shared experiences between “forms of life” produce what he calls vitality affect—that which gives form to the parts of our lives that are fundamentally shared through the ‘rhizomatic’ movement of affect. For Massumi, those objects within the archive have resonance because of the relational traces that they embody. As such, the production of affect within a social network like Facebook

should never be understood a singular process. While a user might be affected by the content that they upload, ultimately the site's popularity comes from the highly relational/participatory means by which those individual archives circulate. That which is then posted, always has the potential to be worked on by 'friends'. In these instances, affect slides, becoming "vital" as users make decisions to affiliate themselves with particular people and particular pieces of content, thereby momentarily linking archives. Thus, as more comments and likes are added or links and photographs get shared, so does an inherent desire for affiliation.

Massumi's theorization of vitality affect (149) provides another way of understanding the deeply relational process inscribed in circulating content, but more importantly, the role affect plays in those productions of digital subjectivities. As findings suggest, the more we use sites such as Facebook and the more we post, the more we are motivated to generate and share additional content (Wang et. al). Thus, while he does not specifically envision digital archives, the very architecture of social networks is predicated on networked sociality that requires users to share experiences. Vitality affects thus take objects that may have formally existed on their own and brings them into a larger composition and system of meaning. Here our archives produce sociality as they bind and cohere relations based on the circulation of our data. More importantly, if these profiles did not exist in this composition with other archives, then their resonance within our everyday lives would be significantly diminished.

To come back to the profile, each time we upload something about ourselves, there is an intention. What we choose to upload is part of the construction of our virtual subjectivities, however we are not fully actualized until whatever we have

chosen to circulate is received by members of our networks. The profile or rather our archives must in turn circulate amongst our peers to be externally valorised. In the moment of recognition, via a ‘like’ or a ‘comment’, the archive becomes that much more sedimented as part of who we are. Affect bridges the gap between our intentions (based on the content we choose to circulate and hence bring into our archives) and what we perceive (how it gets received by others). This is what allows our content to resonate beyond ourselves so we can actually experience the moment that data is uploaded as an important ‘archival event’, facilitating the procurement of our virtual subjectivities via our affective archives. Such acts are not just embodied in the letters or images that appear on the screen but rather in the affect that is generated between users who are constantly valorising each other’s content.

For the users of a site like Facebook, those personal archives are much more than just data that get accumulated but should rather be understood as a composition of communicative and social practices—an assemblage. Following Foucault and later Maurizio Lazzarato, the archive is made up by biopolitical practices (“Biopolitics”), which enable the subjectivizing role of the archive, particularly via the affective circuits that get built up and nurtured as sociality increasingly circulates within these networked spaces.

Within these networked relations found in the digital archive, cultural meaning gets produced and circulated by users. Corporations such as Facebook are eager to capitalize on this flow of intangibles, setting up their social network to function like a database—intensely mining the immaterial data of its users. This immaterial extraction of information has been called immaterial labour, a concept developed by the autonomist theorist Maurizio Lazzarato and made prominent by Michael Hardt

and Antonio Negri in *Empire*. Briefly, although it will be discussed in greater detail in the next chapter, it describes the labour that utilizes information (i.e. knowledge workers) and which produces the cultural content of commodities. It also signifies, for the purposes of this chapter, the affective component of labour—ranging from the caring and well-being, traditionally the realm of ‘women’s work’, to the social relations which are the focus of my chapter. Within this context, affect can be interpreted as a constitutive element of immaterial labour (Coté and Pybus, “MySpace”), referring not directly to the production of emotion but rather to that which manipulates the “feeling of ease, well being, satisfaction, excitement or passion” (Hardt and Negri, “Empire” 108). In other words, there is an interrelationship between affective and immaterial labour which in part, propels affinities with particular subjectivities, mobilizing action and interaction between the subject and the object if its interpolation.

Antonio Negri explores the relationship between immaterial labour and affect and identifies the emerging ‘attention economy’ by focusing on the role interactivity plays in the production of subjectivity. Within this framework, he argues that there is an “apparent paradox” between value and labour power, stating:

The more the measure of value becomes ineffectual, the more the value of labour-power becomes determining in production; the more political economy silences the value of the labour force, the more the value of the labour force is extended and affects the global and biopolitical plane. On this paradoxical rhythm labour becomes affect, or rather, labour finds its value in affect, in so far as the latter is defined as ‘power to act’. (Negri, “Value and Affect”)

Affect, in the context that Negri defines, becomes a new driver for the production of surplus value, influencing both use and exchange value. Thus, in Negri's reinterpretation of Marx's "theory of value," he is less interested in the material relations that increase the value of the commodity, but rather, puts more emphasis on the intangible affects that get both produced and circulated. In turn, the "more the value of the labour force is extended and affects the global and biopolitical plane" the more corporations seek to reproduce ontological affinities between the consumer and the object of its desire, to ensure that profits are maximized.

Michael Hardt echoes the importance that Negri places on the production of affect in his article entitled "Affective Labour". With a special emphasis on the information economy, Hardt focuses on the role postmodernization plays in transforming the modern industrial factory. Similarly, for Negri, in the neoliberal epoch, he argues that "the factory is, with the indispensable aid of information technologies, disseminated into society, deterritorializing, dispersing, and decentralizing its operations to constitute what some autonomists term the diffuse factory or the factory without walls" (Negri qtd. in Dyer-Witheford 80). Wage labour becomes decentralized, both temporally and spatially, and in some instances becomes indistinguishable from unpaid labour.

The shift in labouring practices points to the beginnings of a new capitalist paradigm that Marx called real subsumption. For Hardt, this process occurs when "capital suffuses the entire form of life. [Thus] to be socialized, is to be made productive and to become a subject, is to be made a subject of value" (Hardt). In part, it is this quantitative shift in employment which has facilitated "the migration [of jobs] from industry to services" (Hardt). As a result, in place of the factory lie vast networks of

culture and communication which produce not just commodities but subjectivities.

And so, Hardt argues, “all forms of production exist within the networks of the world market and under the domination of the informational production of services” (Hardt). Affect becomes central and gets taken up in relation to both immaterial labour and biopower.

In describing immaterial labour in relation to affect, both Hardt and Negri point to ‘caring labour’. On the one hand, this only begins to give voice to the vast array of feminist literature that exists on the topic; on the other, it speaks to the production of social networks, community and biopower. This articulation suggests that the traditional divide between economic and cultural production of human relations is breaking down—bringing together affect and immaterial labour to form an immanently productive relationship. Thus it is through biopower that the “potential of affect” is fully realized (Hardt).

Foucault’s paradigm of biopower, is eminently suited to the kind of immaterial and affective labour we have been discussing. Biopower is not simply that which targets and manages populations, nor is it just “a form of power that regulates social life from its interior” but one that actively produces and reproduces life (Hardt and Negri “Empire” 23-24). Indeed, as Maurizio Lazzarato points out, “biopolitics is a strategic relation; it is not the pure and simple capacity to legislate or legitimize sovereignty... [it] coordinates and targets a power that does not properly belong to it, that comes from the outside” (“Biopolitics”). Thus biopower continuously seeks to frame or ‘manage’ life by reconfiguring the dynamic forces it targets. Within this context, one could argue that affect is a modality of biopower—the binding glue that produces sociality, meaning and life, and thus extends the dynamics of this power.

Here we see how affect, in accordance with Hardt, is ontological—that is, it produces reality by cohering relations. To come back to the digital archive, affect is what propels users to upload more and more information, to maintain and cohere their circles of friends, while simultaneously reproducing their own subjectivities. The more one is invested in such archives, the greater the intensity and accumulation of those affective relations and hence practices. Users are their own architects within this biopolitical landscape, hence there must be more awareness to the ways in which economic relations flourish in these spaces. Marketers intuitively understand how to capitalise on social relations, opening up new possibilities that reside in the “generation of passionate interests” as people increasingly come to express their “intimacies publicly” (Thrift 293).

In theorizing the user-generated archives within social networks, it is then critical to consider both the economic and social values that are generated, particularly the latter, as without it, the former would not exist. As Andrejevic has argued in his work on social networks, such forms of sociability “rely on privately owned and operated infrastructure” (86). Thus, even though sites such as Facebook, which now finds itself in a slightly more precarious position, given that in 2013, its stocks are worth less than half of what they started on the market as in 2012 (Ryan), it would be a mistake to discount this data generating behemoth, particularly given the enormous amount of personal information that it has access to. However, the value that is being produced on these sites does not come from the full subsumption of all the immaterial objects that users collectively upload. Instead, it is concurrently generated in the specific combinations of data that can be broken down, organized and analyzed.

The ability to select and make meaning is thereby paramount to extracting value from the vast amounts of user-generated data that is produced.

If we look at the industry in 2013, only five billion dollars is being generated from the data being produced on social networks; however, by 2017, some technology organizations are predicting that this industry will grow to be worth over 50 billion dollars (Brooks). What is missing are the sophisticated tools to extract precise value and meaning from the vast amounts of useable data that is being produced. Already, companies such as Teradata Aster have asserted themselves as a contender in this new realm of pattern recognition, winning a global business award for their software which “enables organizations to harness data from non-traditional sources such as social media and web logs and to analyze it for new business insight in order to better understand consumer behaviour and preferences” (Teradata Association). Such companies have only started to assert the power, and as we move forward into this new data society, made up by countless digital archives, those businesses with the resources to analyse and produce meaning will have a clear competitive advantage.

The archive allows us to speak of the enormous amounts of data that we both produce and circulate online and becomes an entry point for understanding the big data that Manovich outlines in his work. As Jay Parikh, Facebook’s Vice President of Engineering stated in August 2012: “The world is getting hungrier and hungrier for data. Big data really is about having insights and making an impact on your business. If you aren’t taking advantage of the data you’re collecting, then you just have a pile of data, you don’t have big data” (Red Orbit). The archive, thus, offers both a practical and theoretical means to examine the material body as it extends into the

virtual circuits of social networks and provides a framework for understanding the kinds of social and economic value being generated.

To focus only on the material outcome of this value is to negate how and why we want to generate so much data. Capitalism does not simply create ‘worlds’ (Thrift) or spaces to procure surplus value but rather (following a more autonomist tradition) seeks to exploit the social practices that are poured into these social networks. To focus only on how our data is exploited by corporations, negates those very real affective relations that propel the increased production and circulation of data by users. As we move into the data society, we must focus on both: i) what propels the production and circulation of user generated content; and, ii) the immense amount of capital tied up in extracting the useable data from the affective archives we collectively produce.

Chapter 2: Putting the Prosumer to Work: The Production of Economic Value

In the age of big social data, myriad mechanisms have been set up to “capture large pools of social and cultural knowledge” (Terranova 38), creating opportunities for an entirely new economic model to develop. As we are only just beginning to see, while an increasingly digital and networked society offers more conveniences and efficiencies, one of the main consequences is that individuals are losing control over their data and hence over the identities produced in their digital archives. Unlike anyone born in previous generations, ‘digital natives’ have never known anything but a networked information age. For young people, data is not necessarily private but rather a vehicle to effectively communicate and extend their pre-existing networks. The ubiquity of screens, particularly with the advent of smart phones, has meant an even greater increase in collective connectivity and has translated into an abundance of data produced online. In fact, users are so accustomed to accepting the privacy conditions that are established by companies online, only one in four people actually stop to think about how their data is being expropriated by corporations that desire an intimate understanding of every existing demographic (Sharma, “Sharing the Profits”).

Our digital archives are fuelling an entirely new economy. I will therefore extend my conceptualization of the virtual archive, by looking at its constitutive relationship with the prosumer. By so doing, I will examine how social networking sites such as Facebook, Club Penguin or Togetherville—to name but a few examples—extract surplus value. While my previous chapter emphasized the kinds of networked socialities produced and circulated within digital archives, here, I will

foreground some of the debates around the extraction of user-generated content, also referred to as big data.

As new markets are being created, it is important to step back and consider how social networks are recalibrating what Tapscott and Williams have called a new ‘Wikinomic’ model, predicated on the active participation of users (2007). Businesses have therefore learned to capitalize on user-generated participation by effectively “putting consumers to work” (Ritzer 163). I began this discussion in the previous chapter, by examining how social networks facilitate the extension of a user’s communicative capacities, creating opportunities to generate surplus value through the production of overwhelming amounts of useable data. Out of this tension, I started to sketch out some of the new subjectivities that are emerging, facilitated by the ways in which users build and interact with each other’s virtual archives. Such active participation, which is extended by a user’s immaterial labour, produces a very particular manifestation of Brett Neilson and Ned Rossiter’s ‘cultural worker’: the prosumer. This subject implies a fundamental shift in the relationship between the producer and the consumer, a shift made possible within a backdrop of Web 2.0 technologies. Moreover, it is this subject that will enable a more detailed exploration of mechanisms, such as privacy policies, that facilitate the harvesting of every thought, preference, or idea. The political stakes are high, particularly for young people, who have grown up in a world in which their digital archive most likely began before they were even born, when their parents proudly uploaded a digital scan of their unborn child on Facebook for all their friends to see, share, and comment upon. Privacy, for this demographic in particular, has always been rather complicated.

On the surface, privacy policies appear to protect users, particularly those who are under the age of 13; yet we are seeing a new struggle over every keystroke, alongside every movement that gets tracked through ubiquitous geolocation platforms. According to Catherine Becker, “big data is the [new] lifeblood” of the advertising trade, which allows this industry “to draw together a picture of what consumers are doing, where they are, their likes and habits, and—many would argue—what they might do next” (“Big Data”). There are contradictions marking the struggle over the ownership of a user’s own data, namely the compulsion by users to create their own digital archives, and that action’s simultaneous production of surplus value for sites like Facebook. In short, who owns those digital archives that users produce?

Already in France, the struggle over user-generated content has become highly contested in the policy realm. François Hollande’s Socialist government is strategizing ways in which they can tax companies like Facebook or Google based on the amount of data they accumulate from users. Edouard Geffray, the Secretary General of the French Data Protection Agency (CNIL), stated clearly: “Personal data are the fuel of the digital economy...given that, it would seem like a natural idea to envision taxing the use of them” (Pfanner, “French Tax”). Hollande, however, has not expressed this concern to protect the well being of users or even to draw attention to the potentially exploitative conditions they might find themselves within. Instead, he is raising concerns that governments around the world have no means of taxing any of the profits that are being generated by these online corporations. Thus, while digital archives are key sites of revenue, we are only now realizing the extent of their value.

The political economic relations that are deeply embedded in social networking sites should not be ignored. Without user-generated content, sites like Facebook

would never have become so profitable and hence, be considered as key conduits of advertising to marketers. A symbiotic relationship between a user and the social network is embedded in the digital archive, in which control has already been relinquished to the platform owner. Therefore, the second aim of this chapter is to focus on the free/immaterial labour of those young people who have become ‘prosumers,’ simultaneously producing and consuming content that will ultimately be exploited by advertisers.

To theorize the complexity of how archives capture immaterial labour, I will focus on how corporations have attempted to seamlessly integrate themselves, not only into social networking sites, but also into the everyday lived experience of users. What is important, then, is to establish the relationship between the prosumer and the digital archive by foregrounding those economic relations that build and sustain the attention of users who produce more and more data. This part of this discussion needs to include the role of privacy policies found on social networking sites because these are the documents that create the architectural framework for the harvesting of a user’s data.

Finally, I will highlight the relationship between the prosumer and the digital archive by concluding with a more specific example, namely of Coca-Cola, the most successful corporation on Facebook, which presently boasts nearly 37 million friends (Coca Cola Facebook). This example both reinforces Linda McFall's assertion that advertising has “disrupted the ‘spheres’ of culture and the economy” (61) and takes it one step further by helping me to account for the immaterial labour of users. As I will be arguing, the various ways in which users directly participate and interact with

brands further confounds those social and economic relations, which in many respects become indistinguishable.

The Prosumer – A Culture of Participation

Marketers realize the inherent value of Web 2.0 participation. A plethora of techniques and practices have emerged, predicated on what is now being referred to as “participatory marketing” (Manzerolle 455). As one critic describes, these new forms can best be understood as “marketing based not on passive consumption, but on active audience participation” (Marsden “Participatory Marketing”). As a result, the capacity to harness user-generated content (UGC) is critical if a corporation’s brand is to circulate amongst consumers.

There are countless examples of harnessing user-generated participation, such as the case of Honda asking people in 2007 to submit their own “Flow Honda” commercial video for a small prize. Starbucks is another corporation that was able to tap into the public’s desire to participate with its “My Starbucks Idea” campaign. Here they asked their patrons to go online and provide feedback and share their ideas about their company. This campaign was considered a massive success, not only because it generated a rich pool of free and useable data, but also because it engaged consumers and created brand awareness. Similarly, Google was able to profit from audience participation following its ‘Search Story Campaign,’ launched in 2010 during the Super Bowl in the United States. The ad depicted the Google ‘search’ screen and a user who ‘shared’ his story of how he met his wife in Paris. It begins with the search: “Study abroad in Paris,” which leads the protagonist to ask which cafés he might find near the Louvre, which leads him to ask how you would translate:

“you are very cute.” After a series of searches, we know he is now living and working in Paris and dating a girl. Next the protagonist searches for churches and finally, to conclude this 52 second ad, he asks Google “how to assemble a crib?” (Google). The commercial was considered a huge success and the company’s stocks rose instantly as the ad went viral, being shared and viewed all over the Internet (McColgan, “Best Social Media Campaigns”). As a result, Google started “Search Stories,” a site on YouTube in which people could publish their own stories. In 2011, there were 21,218,663 videos that had been uploaded (YouTube “Search Stories”). Such techniques are taken up by Facebook, in which companies gauge participation in the number of comments and “likes” a post receives from its ‘Fans.’¹⁵

Not surprisingly, there are a number of marketing consultants who seek to capitalize on this new participatory, information-based economic model and offer advice on how to engage users of Web 2.0 platforms. For example, according to John Haydon:

Getting fans to comment on your Facebook Page can take a lot of time and effort. And it can sometimes be painful seeing other Facebook Pages who make engagement look easy. But even the most active Facebook Page walls began from a standing start. And many of them got to where they are today by making it easier for fans to comment on their Page. (“Get More Comments on Facebook”)

¹⁵ According to Brian Carter, author of *The Like Economy: How Businesses Make Money with Facebook*, it is critical that fans keep providing feedback to a fan pages posts, otherwise it is an indicator that users are not engaged with the company’s ideas or products. There are actually a number of strategies available to make posts more engaging to elicit more comments, some examples include: asking questions or giving prompts, and providing links that people can click on (Carter).

Haydon offers 16 different tips on how to increase interaction with consumers, all of which are based on how to ask different kinds of “timely,” “edgy,” or “true or false” type questions (“Get More Comments on Facebook”). Corporations, in this context, are no longer concerned with marketing *at* people; instead, they are far more interested in marketing *with* people. From this perspective, the relationship between production and consumption is in the midst of being rearticulated based on the immaterial labour of a very specific manifestation of the cultural worker, that is, the prosumer.

In 1980, Alvin Toffler first used the term prosumer in his seminal techno-market utopian text, *Third Wave*, to describe the integration of the consumer and the producer (Ritzer and Jurgenson 16). He outlined how technological shifts have enabled different social, economic and political compositions. The first wave, which defined pre-industrial societies, was the initial manifestation of the prosumer.¹⁶ However, as Ritzer and Jurgenson explain, in the second wave of marketization, consumption and production were driven apart and became effectively separate with the rise of the industrial society. The ‘third wave,’ which is meant to describes our contemporary society, signals that there has been a reintegration of these two discrete sites with yet another ‘rise of the prosumer’ (Toffler qtd. in Ritzer and Jurgenson 17). For Detlev Zwick, Samuel Bonsu, and Aron Darmody, the consumer and producer have become reintegrated within this historical moment due to the “consumer’s need for

¹⁶ Toffler argues that the first wave of ‘prosumers’ can be found in pre-industrial agrarian societies, where there was no meaningful distinction between practices production and consumption. During the industrial revolution, the prosumer became fragmented due to new production practices that facilitated the rise of mass consumption, mass production and the mass circulation of goods. No longer did people simultaneously produce and consume goods, instead society become more compartmentalized, with discrete roles which brought about the rise of ‘consumer society’ (Ritzer and Jurgenson 17).

recognition, freedom and agency” (185). Social networking has only served to magnify and extend such needs, given the very architecture of participation facilitates the political and economic viability of every popular platform (Van Dijck and Nieborg).

The prosumer is a subject who assists in the production process of commodities that s/he consumes, one who is born into an economic system that values ‘participation,’ or, as Mark Coté and I have argued elsewhere, into immaterial labour 2.0. The concept of immaterial labour is important because it can help us understand how elements of biopower and biopolitical production can come together to produce new subjectivities. According to Maurizio Lazzarato, immaterial labour can be defined as that which produces the informationalization and cultural content of the commodity (Lazzarato, “Biopower” 9). Such labour accounts for the production of the subjective qualities that are infused within any particular brand. These qualities, however, do not solely emanate from a marketer who wants to sell a commodity, but also from the individual subject who is interacting within these sites of cultural production. As such, there are two distinct dynamics that make up immaterial labour. The first, which directly impacts the labouring practices of marketers, involves the actual “informational content of the commodity” (10). More specifically, the concept of immaterial labour makes reference to the cyberneticization of the workplace and accounts for the general shift towards the tertiary sector of services as skills which have become increasingly digitized. Here, production is no longer centered on the creation of material goods but rather on the immaterial circulation of more intangible products, such as the movement of ideas or brands. This general re-articulation has had a significant effect on the way in which labour practices are organized, and should

be understood as yet another expression of late capitalism within the information society.

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri pick up on this reorganization, which is evidenced in their tripartite theorization of immaterial labour. The first component they put forward refers to the cerebral or the conceptual forms of labour such as problem solving, symbolic, and/or analytical tasks (“Empire” 290-291). Typically, jobs affiliated with this kind of production would be found in the technological sector or the culture industry, including marketing, public relations, media production, web design etc. This shift towards information and ideas based employment signals how production is changing within the information society, moving away¹⁷ (although not exclusively) from the material realm of the factory to the symbolic production of ideas.

Secondly, immaterial labour involves the production of affect, which we have already seen in the previous chapter. Here, Hardt and Negri call upon the work of feminist and critical race scholars such as Maria Rosa Della Costa or Selma James, who argued that the social reproduction of those ‘waged’ factory earners would never have been possible had it not been for all the *unwaged* labour that occurred within the home. As Nick Dyer-Witford succinctly argues:

Without the—to the male theorists—invisible labor process of child-bearing, child-raising, cooking, shopping, education, cleaning, caring

¹⁷ It is important to note that the production cycles that Hardt and Negri put forward in their work does not exclude industrial modes of production. Rather, they are pointing to a shift brought about by globalization in which production of ideas becomes paramount to maximizing corporate surplus value. From this perspective, the dialectical tension between use and exchange value is near eclipsed. All value is placed in the symbolic/immaterial realm of producing affective ideas that are meant to facilitate consumption.

for the sick, emotional sustenance, in short, ‘housework,’ labor power would not be ready for work each morning! (67)

Affective labour thus does not refer directly to the production of emotion but rather to that which produces “a feeling of ease, well, being, satisfaction, excitement or passion” (Hardt and Negri, “Multitude” 108). In other words, many of these jobs are highly gendered and fall within the stereotypical realm of ‘women’s work’. Some examples would include nursing or support healthcare workers; members of the service sector; or call centre operators. On the other end of the spectrum there are those who are employed to literally create affect such as advertisers and marketers. Finally, the third element of immaterial labour, according to Hardt and Negri, theorizes how communicative technologies have been incorporated and have transformed original industrial production, referring to the way in which jobs have become increasingly mechanized and computerized (293).

Lazzarato expands on Hardt and Negri’s second articulation of Immaterial Labour and is most concerned with the how the ‘cultural content’ of any given product is produced (Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labour”). Some examples of this might include: “the fixing of cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion” (“Immaterial Labour”). Cultural workers, like marketer, have a clear understanding that in order to produce an affective product that will resonate with their target markets they will have to involve their consumers in the production process. In other words, they harbour a deep understanding that by increasing the involvement of their targeted consumers, the status of their brands can be augmented and thus perceived as being more authentic and hence more saleable. On Facebook or Google, two sites that use forms of Ad

sense advertising—generating ads in the side bar based on key words that are typed in by users—they explicitly rely on users to produce the content, which in turn will be used to sell advertising. Another way to understand this articulation of immaterial labour is that users are actually providing the ideas, which are in turn being appropriated to more effectively sell them commodities. Without their content, their ideas, or their preferences, Facebook or Google would cease being profitable. Thus, Hardt and Negri, as well as Lazzarato, want to draw our attention towards this new economic paradigm that is predicated on labour that is unpaid, unaccounted for, and immaterial.

The successful harnessing of the immaterial labour of users is built into the economic logic that reproduces social networking sites. This ability can be observed on some of the earliest platforms that targeted tweens, such as on Neopets, which was purchased by Viacom for \$160 million in 2005. What differentiated this site was the ‘immersive marketing strategy’ that it pioneered—a form of seamless, interactive online product placement (Pybus; Grimes; Neopets). Corporations such as Disney, General Mills Cereal, McDonalds, Procter and Gamble or Bell Canada (to name but a few) all paid to gain access to a site would not only allow them to advertise but actually be a part of a young person’s branded ‘experience’. What appealed to these sponsors was not only the amount of traffic and attention that Neopets generated, but also by the innovative approach to advertising that allowed these corporations to instantiate themselves into the imaginary of young people.

In order to operationalize Neopets’ immersive strategy, Viacom designed video games that developed affective relationships between users and a particular product. Kids could then go into the “cereal adventure” hut and play games such as “lucky

charms” —a branded-version of Pac-man—or watch “webisodes” to give clues on how to help Lucky Charms win back his rainbow power and save the leprechauns. General Mills described its relationship with Neopets as a ‘synergistic integration’ that facilitated an interactive and successful relationship with young people (Grimes 187). Another example was the Disney Theatre that allowed users to watch previews for upcoming films or play games that use their familiar movie characters such a racing ‘Cars’ game. There was also the McDonalds hut where users could try to get as many Chicken McNuggets as possible.

Today, in 2013, immersive advertising strategies remain incredibly effective. As Rozendaal and her colleagues in the Netherlands proved in their study on children and advertising, these sophisticated techniques and practices deployed by social networks and advertisers, which expose young people to brands in spaces of ‘play’, increase the consumption of those displayed products. The advertising strategies can be theorized as a modality of immaterial labour for those tweens, given that if they did not play those games over and over again and form positive associations within that online environment, then they would equally not form a relationship with those advertised products. The success of immersive advertising campaigns therefore become apparent when children repeatedly interact with brands, building up a relational history. Playing a game that has Lucky Charms characters on Neopets is, from this perspective, a form of immaterial labour that children perform for the company who is advertising and is subsequently exploited by Neopets as they generate advertising revenue. Such an experience is active, allowing a positive experience to accumulate every time a user hits the play button and wins more money to take care of their little Neopet.

A more recent example can be found in Habbo Hotel, a virtual world and social network aimed at teens, which now has over 200 million active users world wide. This website has become even more sophisticated in how it intends to harness the immaterial labour of its users. By so doing, it has introduced Habble: a software program that measures brand names, slogans or key phrases that are discussed by those who are logged in. The program organizes and displays this data into charts that can be analysed and used to map peaks of activity (Brightman, “Habbo Hotel”).

Habble is a more innovative tool compared, to what we saw on Neopets, for while it still relies on immersive strategies, it has the ability to see if these are actually having the desired resonance with intended target audiences. As Rozendaal et. al. show in their study on Habbo Hotel, increasingly, what corporations are doing is not only displaying advertising in the various rooms of the hotel but creating unique opportunities for young people to engage directly with their brands. In one example, Nintendo wanted to run a focus group with users so they decided to throw a ‘dance party’ on Habbo Hotel. Here they hung billboards all over the dance hall and users who wanted to join were allowed if they filled out a survey about Nintendo’s products before they entered. Such direct access to a target market is clearly valuable; moreover, as kids dance and have fun they are directly engaging with the brand, building a positive and affective relationship with the product. For the executives at Nintendo, this translates into more sales (Rozendaal et. al.). Habbo Hotel enables a more direct and sophisticated form of immaterial labour via the surveys that kids *must* fill out. Moreover, once they leave the dance space and begin to have ‘normal’ conversations with their peers, if they mention ‘Nintendo’, Habbo Hotel via Habble can report back to the company and provide the data that details the context in which

their brand was raised. At Nintendo, they understand the value of directly engaging their target markets and incorporating their ideas and thoughts into the production process that will facilitate consumption later.

The Hubble system has revolutionized the ways in which marketers are targeting kids online. For the Habbo research team, this approach has been key, given that 75 percent of their users accept advertising promotions on the site and 56 percent tell their friends about the promotions they have seen (Brightman). Such immersive strategies highlight the symbiotic relationship between the user and the commodified social network— for, without the user to integrate this branded information into their digital archives or pass it on and share it with their friends, corporate methodologies, such as Hubble, would quickly prove unsuccessful.

Marketers understand that they need to engage their young target audiences. According to Tamara Littleton, marketing CEO for eModeration, there are certain ‘rules’ that must be followed if the company is to reach the coveted youth market. Alloy Marketing Media, outlines such rules in five important principles that marketers need to adhere to:

1. Be sensitive: Marketers must respect social network user's feelings of ownership and emotional attachment to their profile pages.
2. Be useful: Marketers will be welcomed if they help kids reach their online goals—kids want useful content and tools, parents want skillset-building and educational activities.
3. Be fun: Marketers must appeal to young social network users' need to be entertained with music, games, and video.
4. Be interested: Marketers should treat young people as their partners to benefit from their ideas and gain valuable information.
5. Be innovative: Marketers must help supply kids with new tools that make kids stand out among their peers. (Allow Marketing and Media)

The relationship that marketers want to foster begins with the immaterial labour of their target market, who must agree to upload personal information or engage in commodified activities in exchange for free games or fun ways to interact with their friends.

Such marketing practices that garner the immaterial labour of users have only become more sophisticated, particularly with the rise of social networks. The relationship between young people who frequent these sites and the platform owners is, arguably, mutually beneficial. Social networks like Facebook are able to procure useable data for marketers, while those who frequent these sites provide a free service/immaterial labor in exchange for various forms of social and cognitive capital.

A marketing campaign's success, therefore, lies in the ability to harness a young person's creative insight through the voluntary and hence active desire to become "involved." In turn, such user-generated participation is translated into the substrate of consumable objects, creating a feedback loop that fuels the successful ascent of any brand. From one perspective, we are witnessing a form of immaterial theft. That is to say, marketers actively harness the digital archives of users that are navigating social networks to extend themselves, as opposed to those corporate interests that are dependent on the likes and interests of users to maximize their profitability. Regardless, what cannot be ignored is the active desire to participate, which is garnered when young people are treated as equals or rather as 'partners'.

Innovation does not come from the marketer alone, but from the consumer, that is, from any demographic that enters into these constitutively 'partnered' relations. Here, subjectivity becomes something that is negotiated amidst the apparatuses that corporations employ to capture valuable insights about their potential consumers. What needs to be accounted for are the practices that facilitate the convergence of those relations of production and consumption. Without people who contribute, there would be no data, no archives, and no surplus value. To understand how the prosumer is constituted within the framework of social networks and digital archives, let us take a step back to consider how these sites facilitate the sharing of user-generated data. I will now turn to those 'Terms and Conditions' and privacy policies that make up social networks and that subsequently facilitate the immaterial labour of the prosumer.

How Do Privacy Policies Work, and What Do They Allow to be Archived?

The success of social networking sites cannot only be attributed to the immersive advertising strategies. What must also be considered is the architectural composition of platforms like Facebook, which have been set up and designed to accumulate user-generated data. How do social networks aggregate user-generated information and render it into surplus value? Such policies take on different forms and offer very little by way of protection to individual users (Fernback and Papacharissi 715). Issues around privacy and what Christian Fuchs calls ‘Web 2.0 surveillance’ (134) arise particularly from increasing concern over how information is being mined and exploited, as users are given little control over how their digital footprint is regulated and shared. Often times, on Facebook, data collection devices such as ‘cookies’ are placed on users’ profiles so that information can be gathered about their preferences both on the site and when they are logged off and browsing online. The site’s privacy statement on third party access explains how to avoid these data collecting devices (Cubrilovic). However, unless everyone adheres to the maximum privacy settings, it becomes almost impossible to prevent at least some data from being collected. Such concerns are noted in studies like the Pew Internet and American Life Project, which found that, given the chance, 86 percent of people would prefer to have policies that allow them to ‘opt-in’ to the ways in which information is accumulated and used, as opposed to Facebook who forces users to opt-out of their terms and conditions (Fernback and Papacharissi 717). In other words, the default of all of these privacy agreements is always set to maximize the accumulation of data from users. The specificity of these agreements and the ways in which they are written to maximize the amount of ‘useable’ data suggests that social networks like

Facebook are not ‘absolute’ databases, but sophisticated archives that can deploy algorithms to transform random data into valuable assets.

Given how concerned many parents are about their children’s online engagements, a number of sites have appeared in the last few years to act as “safe social network platforms where kids can be themselves without all the risks” (Thomas, “Social Networks for Kids”). As such, over the past several years we have seen a number of platforms emerge, as it has become increasingly inevitable for children to be participating in at least one social network. As a corollary, there are more debates around Internet privacy, particularly as “much of what is accessible about a young person via [a] search was put into digital format by someone else, and much of the information in a Digital Native dossier is contributed by her peers, both in the offline and online world” (Palfrey and Gasser 57). While social networks provide incentives for young people to reveal more and more information about themselves, what is lacking is the ability to gauge the consequences that may result from the public circulation of digital archives. As such, there is a pedagogical imperative to teach children the skills that they will require once they enter a more adult-oriented site like Facebook, a topic I will come back to later in the chapter. There are, however, different laws and degrees of privacy protection that govern the data collection and circulation on sites aimed at children compared to adults. For now, I want to explore the privacy laws that oversee the ways in which data can be collected and used on social networks aimed at young people.

To begin, it is of value to review a selection of the social networking platforms that parents are encouraging their children under 13 to use. Imbee is a platform that touts itself as the “world’s first social networking ‘mega-platform’ for kids.” It allows

kids to join “fanzones” for celebrities and athletes, create groups with their own friends, share video and pictures, or write their own blog. The site has re-opened and subsequently rebranded itself after a lawsuit in 2008 in which they were found guilty of collecting personal information from children under the age of 13 without notifying and obtaining consent from their parents. After paying a \$130,000 civil penalty and deleting all of the information they had accumulated, the site was allowed to re-open (Free Trade Commission Imbee.com). It now promises it will adhere to COPPA and offers a step-by-step guide for caregiver to navigate the site’s security settings (Target ages: tweens 8-14).

Another social network that was aimed at tweens is Everloop, launched in October 2011. The site markets itself as a “social looping platform’ that effectively creates a ‘privacy loop’ around kids’ online connections” (Everloop). Kids can, therefore, ‘friend’ and engage with other kids via SMS or posting on profiles, while parents have the ability to restrict certain features and make use of the first moderation which filters out words, phrases and content deemed to be dangerous. Some examples of censored digital content might include foreign URLs, someone's email address, profanity, or any words that would condone negative, hateful behaviors, or reveal the location of one of the user (Target age: tweens 8-13).

Togetherville (“the safe social network”) is an online neighbourhood that was founded by Disney to compete with Imbee and Everloop. According to their website, they view themselves as a safe “space for families whose kids are too young for Facebook® [sic] where kids get the experience of adult social networking in a fun, age-appropriate environment and parents and other trusted adults get in on the act”

(Togetherville).¹⁸ On the site, kids can play online games, make art, or watch video clips. Moreover, they can send texts messages called ‘quips’ or give gifts to one another, which they earn from the ‘allowance’ they are given to play all of the various games on the site. In order to sign up their children on Togetherville, parents must use their own Facebook account. The site then automatically searches the parent’s friends on Facebook to see if anyone else is using Togetherville to connect their children’s friends with their own (Target age: 6-10).

Club Penguin is the final example that I will put forward, mostly due to its popularity amongst younger users (Alexa). While this site is not a straightforward social network, and resembles more of a virtual gaming world compared to Facebook, it still incorporates many social networking features. For example, the avatars that kids build on this site can interact with one another, not only by playing virtual games but also in chat rooms or via SMS. Many children who play this game interact with their own friends; however, there are many other opportunities to encounter new kids and in the words of one user “haz lots of buddy” (“Poll Results”)¹⁹ Similar to Togetheville, Club Penguin is an online community, carrying with it an entire culture and a capitalist pedagogy. In order to succeed in this virtual playground, kids come to appreciate the value of money. Without capital they cannot create the perfect virtual home for their perfectly dressed personal avatar. In Club Penguin, this means that users need to keep playing and win games to earn enough ‘gold’ (Club Penguin

¹⁸ In 2012 Togetherville has actually been shut down and Imbee has become Fanlala. There is no clear explanation as to why Disney has closed Togetherville, although it has been speculated that with not enough traffic for a viable business venture, they decided to not take away or risk bad branding from their other tween virtual sites (Anatole).

¹⁹ Taken from one the various Club Penguin user poll results.

currency), which in turn allows them to purchase the right clothes and the right ‘décor’ for the igloos that they will build for their avatars. Both popular media critics and scholars working on Club Penguin have accused it of normalising the values of consumerism (Marsh; Montgomery; Talamasca; and Lieberman); Disney’s response has been to argue that it is teaching children about the value of money and helping them become better at arithmetic (Frank 47). To stave off criticism, Club Penguin engaged members in a ‘global citizenship’ campaign to ‘change the world’ by participating in their ‘coins for change’ drive (Club Penguin “News Media”). The campaign asked users to donate the ‘money’ they earn on the site to the ‘lighthouse’ to fundraise for children around the world so that they can have a safe place to ‘live, learn and play’ (“New Media”). All the while, parents are allowed to monitor both the friendship and their child’s engagement on the site. Moreover, as more young children become comfortable navigating Web 2.0 and smartphone technology, the site’s popularity and significance grows too. This can be seen in the hundreds of fan pages that Club Penguin members have created on Facebook, alongside the number of apps that are being downloaded for mobile and iPad devices.

The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (COPPA)

The common thread that links each of these socially networked spaces together is the privacy policy with which they are all bound to comply: the Children’s Online Privacy Policy Act or COPPA. The United States’ Federal Trade Commission’s (FTC) law that produced COPPA was first enacted in 1998 and offers a small beacon of hope to those who are concerned about the various ways in which information is gathered and exchanged for surplus value on social networks. The policy’s primary

purpose is to give parents control over all the information that gets accumulated about their children online. The importance of COPPA, in relation to the digital archive, is to create architectural restraints. Its primary directive is to give more agency and credence to the construction of a personal digital archive, as opposed to the larger private archive that is gathered by corporations like Facebook. Or, to put it another way, what COPPA reduces is a kind of ‘economic surveillance,’ which enables targeted advertising that “cannot be deactivated in the account and privacy settings.” As a consequence, the profits for companies like Facebook, are tied up in how they can legally store, assess, and sell user data (Fuchs 12). Under COPPA, however, there is an attempt to provide the user with more ownership and control of their data. The user’s content, under this policy, is meant to be protected from corporations that seek to collect, use, or disclose personal information about them to advertisers.

The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act is predicated on six rules for any site that wishes to engage children under 13. These are:

1. Post a clear and comprehensive privacy policy on their website describing their information practices for children's personal information;
2. Provide direct notice to parents and obtain verifiable parental consent, with limited exceptions, before collecting personal information from children;
3. Give parents the choice of consenting to the operator's collection and internal use of a child's information, but prohibiting the operator from disclosing that information to third parties;
4. Provide parents access to their child's personal information to review and/or have the information deleted;
5. Give parents the opportunity to prevent further use or online collection of a child's personal information;
6. Maintain the confidentiality, security, and integrity of information they collect from children. (Federal Trade Commission "Frequently Asked Questions")

The value of COPPA is that it seeks to control the amount of personal information that can be shared with the corporate bodies that want to use data to produce more relevant advertising. Any site that encourages the participation of children under 13 years of age, must adhere to this privacy policy. To remain in accordance with this law, the website is required to clearly display what information they intend to store about their users and how it will be used. Moreover, unlike most privacy policies, those which adhere to COPPA must provide an opportunity to parents to 'opt out' or agree to the accumulation of their child's personal details.

For example, the portion of Imbee’s privacy policy aimed at kids states that: “Once we have your parent's approval, it is up to you and your parent how your personal creations and information are shared” (Imbee “Privacy Policy”). Similarly, the Everloop privacy policy states that: “The Children’s Online Privacy Protection Act (“COPPA”) requires that we inform parents and legal guardians about how we collect, use, and disclose personal information from children under 13 years of age; and that we obtain the consent of parents and guardians in order for children under 13 years of age to use certain features of our Web site (Everloop, “Kids Privacy Policy”). While it is difficult for children’s online privacy laws to ensure that no information about children is collected, these sites at least harvest considerably less data compared to a platform like Facebook, which accumulates everything that users post on its network.

Privacy agreements, like COPPA, link back to questions around access to the content that is produced in a user’s digital archive. In both instances, we see similar wording, highlighting how users are meant to maintain control over the content they produce. Children, and, more importantly, their parents, are granted a small amount of agency by companies which promise to restrict access to, and inform them about how they will ‘share’ their children’s data. Again, the tension between the user and the site’s proprietor comes to the surface. This struggle over agency is a struggle over those symbolic practices that render subjects productive. While COPPA tries to limit the immaterial labour of younger users, youth-oriented websites’ archives still remain productive. The policy tries to ensure that the power of consignment—the regulatory power over the archive—remains with the user as opposed to the owner.

As Foucault reminds us: “Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to

power” (95). This way of conceiving of power as always already contested is not necessarily taken up by Foucault’s interlocutors. Often the Foucauldian paradigm is deployed merely as power being a manifestation of domination. Lazzarato, however, emphasizes the contested nature of power, arguing that it should be understood as a “multiplicity of forces” (4). He argues, “power is not a unilateral relation, a totalitarian domination over individuals, such as the one exercised by the structure such as the Panopticon, but a strategic relation” (4). In other words, power acts as something that “comes from below,” emanating out of the subject (5). What then “coheres and flows through compositions of bodies to maximize particular capacities to live” is life itself—the object of biopower (Coté and Pybus, “MySpace” 8). Lazzarato’s unique understanding of biopower, which operates as both a modality of domination and conversely as a means for resistance (1), is a useful entry point for understanding the role of COPPA within the struggle over the digital archive.

The digital profiles of users on social networks are not necessarily made up in advance by those external controls. Subsequently, Lazzarato places more emphasis on the individual subject and its possibility of *freedom*, as opposed to the inherent dynamics of institutional power (5). From this perspective, the production of digital archives in relation to the prosumer’s immaterial labour can best be understood as a “creative process” based on innovation and differentiation built out of those constitutive relations. Building digital profiles therefore relies upon the immaterial labour of users, which is always already anticipated by social networking sites. Evidence of this anticipation is built into those privacy agreements which enable social networks to accumulate data from users and then use this mass of information to forge relationships with marketers. Policies such as COPPA seek to limit and

protect younger users from being completely exploited. However, as more and younger users log on to social networks without these controls, they become more directly implicated in generating surplus value for corporations—producers of the immaterial content, which they will in turn consume. The success of the digital profile archive is therefore predicated on the degree of interactivity that young people have within this complex and shifting interplay of social and economic forces.

One of the regulatory functions of COPPA is to provide some autonomy to users by trying to ensure that their digital archives remain their own. In part, this is done by seeking to ensure that social networks delete the data that they have stored about users once it is no longer required. If a user discontinues their account, all of the personal information that the site may have stored about this individual must be permanently removed. Such a condition is important, particularly because social networks like Facebook hang onto and circulate data long after a user has terminated their profile. One report that was released in 2012 by the reputable digital innovation news source Mashable, stated that while people may delete certain photographs on Facebook, the pictures may continue to circulate for months or perhaps even years after they cease to exist in one's user profile (Pan, "Facebook Pictures"). This demonstrates that the rules established in the privacy policies governing socially networked spaces are critical to the kind of information that gets accumulated, how it gets used, who uses it, and how long it will continue to circulate.

What COPPA recognizes is the inherent struggle over the hermeneutic and economic function of the digital archive. In other words, the policy attempts to inscribe its own archontic principle into the archive to ensure that the power of consignment may reside more with the user than with the proprietor of the social

networking site. The legislation recognizes that there is a fundamental struggle over how the digital archive is going to be located to determine who will have the power to order and use its contents. This struggle over the archontic power of the archive is evident, particularly when we look at some of the instances in which social networks have tried to circumvent COPPA's rules.

As mentioned previously, in 2008, the social network Imbee was found in contravention of COPPA because Industrious Kid Inc. and its owner Jeanette Symons, who promoted this site as a “free, secure, social networking and blogging destination specifically designed for kids ages 8 to 14” as well as a site that was “purposely designed to ensure the greatest level of safety and satisfaction for young members,” had simply lied. The Federal Telecommunications Committee fined and threatened to shut down Imbee because it was in fact profiting from and surreptitiously “maintaining personal information from children under the age of 13 without first notifying parents and obtaining their consent” (FTC).

Another instance in which we can see struggles over the archontic function of the archive is the case of Echomatrix, a ‘parent control’ software company that was marketed to ‘protect’ children from data mining software. In fact, installing this on one’s computer did the exact opposite. Its software actually monitored every single minute that a user spent on social media outlets such as chat and chat rooms, blogs, forums, instant messaging, and other websites (EPIC).

There are of course other examples of virtual platforms for children that have been found in contravention of COPPA. Nevertheless, while this law has been criticized for not doing enough, it still remains one of the only laws in the United

States²⁰ that protects children on the Internet. Indeed, to highlight some of COPPA's deficiencies. In December 2011, the Electronic Privacy and Information Centre (EPIC), a public interest research center in Washington that is committed to maintaining and strengthening the protection of children online, submitted a case to the FTC to expand COPPA so that it includes several new categories that govern the regulation of personal information particularly. EPIC wanted COPPA to regulate identifiers, that is, software that links the activities of the child across the different sites that they access online. This regulatory body wants children to be protected when they are on social networking sites, but equally, and more importantly, when they log off and begin browsing. The Electronic Privacy and Information Centre has lobbied that a child's user name is included in privacy agreements, given that children who log in with a pseudonym often use these repeatedly, making them subject to datamining. Secondly, EPIC wants COPPA to include photographs, videos, and/or audio files as well as geolocation information, the latter being particularly critical in this historical moment given the increased rise of and ubiquity of smartphone technologies. Finally, EPIC has proposed regulatory amendments to integrate 'cookies' into COPPA. This final amendment is arguably the most important, as it is cookies that enable the richest archives of useable data. Instead of actively gathering information, such as asking users to enter their name or date of birth on a site, cookies accumulate 'identifying' data passively, often staying with users long after they have

²⁰ In Canada the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) exists; however, this is not a direct equivalent to COPPA. It specifies the rules that govern data collection and disclosure; however, it is far more general and does not address big data collection on social networks. In May 2013, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada did, however, release a position paper, putting forward a case to reform the existing Act (PIPEDA Review). In Europe there remains no children's on-line protection policy act. In Australia, there was an on-line privacy act passed in 1988, which has clauses that pertain to children, however, there is no specific policy like COPPA in place ("Commonwealth").

left that particular virtual world or community to gain a broader understanding of a user's every day experiences online (EPIC). In the end, EPIC was not successful, highlighting the challenges in upholding robust legislation for children's online protection.

While public bodies such as EPIC are trying to actively strengthen COPPA, corporate agencies are, not surprisingly, trying to weaken this legislation. Zuckerberg has been an active opponent and lobbyist, seeking to increase his market share and legally allow children under 13 on Facebook. In May 2011, he presented at the New Schools Venture Fund's Summit in Burlingame, California, stating clearly his intentions to fight COPPA's restrictive privacy laws. In an interview with Forbes magazine Zuckerberg affirmed that he "wanted younger kids to be allowed on social networking" (Lev-Ram, "Zuckerberg"). While it is estimated that in 2011 there were 7,500 kids who were already signed on, this was clearly not enough, and, according to Emily Bazelon from the New York Times, Zuckerberg "tripled [Facebook's] spending on lobbying, formed a political action committee and hired former Bush and Obama officials to push for its agenda" ("Why Facebook").

In December 2012, the Free Trade Commission announced that COPPA's policies did not reflect our current historical moment. Since many of the policies were written before the age of social media, they needed to be updated. The most significant change that was implemented had to do with parental consent. In the older policy, the compliant site was required to inform parents if any information about their children was going to be shared with a third party, in the new version this consent is no longer required. While not any piece of data produced by a child can be

shared, the new COPPA guidelines stated that parental consent was no longer required if the site is:

Supporting the website or online service’s internal operations, such as *contextual advertising*, frequency capping, legal compliance, site analysis, and network communications. (“FTC Strengthens Privacy,” my emphasis)

What should be retained from this definition is the term “contextual advertising”. The implication here, is that while children under 13 can still not go on Facebook, Zuckerberg is one step closer to legalizing his social network for this demographic. On COPPA sites now, advertising can be generated, intensifying the productivity of a young person’s user-profile archive. As a result, while the FTC claims that the newest version of COPPA has actually strengthened the policy, it has effectively allowed corporations to now mine the data of whole new and lucrative demographic.

The Conflation of Play and Labour: Immaterial Labour 2.0

The synergy that Facebook facilitates between corporation and user—between the public and the private archives that are produced and circulated within its vast networks—raises a number of concerns: a) how young is too young to participate in an unprotected virtual sphere; and, b) what are the implications of engaging users to participate within commodified economic relations at an increasingly younger age? How privacy debates are framed is important. When anyone, and not just a child, enters into a virtual community there are different layers of information that get generated. On the one hand, data is actively produced by users who disclose and circulate information about themselves. On the other hand, data is passively captured through cookies that follow and document a user’s online habits. If we think of these

sites as archives, social networks have a dual function, predicated both on what an individual user both wants to produce/circulate (which I will discuss in a moment) and on what the site appropriates in order to generate surplus value.

Fuchs points out that we need to be careful when we begin talking about privacy as an issue that is *solely* related to security. Such a frame appears repeatedly in the news media, as indicated in the following headlines: “New Facebook Feature Prompts Complaints about Privacy” (CBC) or “Facebook Privacy Update: You Know Who Your Friends Are?” (CRN) or “Fake Facebook Friends Steal Personal Info” (Forbes). Each of these headlines facilitates what Fuchs calls a ‘victimization discourse’ (146). These headlines blame the user for not taking the proper precautions online and suggests that the problem within these virtual worlds and communities lies entirely in how they are regulated. This technologically deterministic position, which focuses on the threats posed by new media, “makes users potential victims of individual criminals, such as the case of cyberstalking, sexual harassment, threats by mentally ill persons, data theft, data fraud, etc” (7). Moreover, such discourses imply that users or their parents are to blame for allowing too much information to circulate or be uploaded on a site.

Largely obfuscated in these discussions, however, are questions around how surplus value is being generated on social networking sites that rely on the accumulation of user-generated content. In other words, by focusing on individual and/or parental responsibility for security, it is easy to forget that the intent behind privacy agreements is to set clear terms and conditions for the mining of personal data. Facebook has made important steps forward to clarify its privacy agreement, but this has not hindered its data mining capabilities. Rather, the policy agreement has

only continued to increase the opportunities to collect information from its users. According to their privacy policy, Facebook has the legal right to appropriate data every time a user goes online. The architectural parameters which are set by these policies facilitate how the digital archive continues accumulate. Such agreements are binding, and accepted amongst users because they allow them access to a ‘free’ resource that allows them to connect with their friends. As boyd argues: "People seek privacy so that they can make themselves vulnerable in order to gain something: personal support, knowledge, friendship" ("Privacy"). Yet, as more and more people come to accept these uneven parameters of data exchange, what are the consequences? Or rather, how much data are users now handing over to sites such as Facebook?

In 2012, a 24-year-old law student, Max Schrems, made a freedom of information request to Facebook, demanding a copy of all the information that had been collected about him since he had logged on to the site. The material archive that he received was no small document. In fact, the tome he was given was 1,222 pages long. His archive showed every wall post he had ever made or deleted, old messages that revealed a friend’s troubled state of mind, as well as data surveillance that he had never even entered about his physical whereabouts (O’Brian “Austrian Law Student”). For today’s youth, who have long since begun making their digital footprints, expressing themselves online is a way of life. According to the research conducted by Palfrey and Gasser, most young people believe that their conversations online are actually more than intimate and feel a strong need to post about a wide variety of personal issues. Moreover, according to these interviews, the more information that young teens post, the more friends and followers they gain (54). Young people are rewarded for keeping their archives current. Their participation is producing a pool of

the most intimately available data in history (James et. al.). And while we may be taken aback by the sheer amount of information that today's 'digital natives' are willing to post about themselves, this is their reality (Palfrey and Gasser; Rossen, Carrier and Cheever; James et. al.). For this younger demographic in particular, digital archives are already normalized; however, as the digital footprints of tweens and teenagers continue to grow exponentially, repercussions with respect to the increased amount of data being generated become apparent. As I will address in my final chapter, discussions on privacy should be recalibrated to provide young people with data literacy skills to help them cope with the permanence and replicability of the information they are always already in the midst circulating.

The concept of the digital archive is compelling because it provides a means of understanding both the data that is generated within social online environments and the inherent struggles over its ownership. As Somini Sengupta argues:

Personal data is the oil that greases the Internet. Each one of us sits on our own vast reserves. The data that we share every day — names, addresses, pictures, even our precise locations as measured by the geo-location sensor embedded in Internet-enabled smartphones — helps companies target advertising based not only on demographics but also on the personal opinions and desires we post online. Those advertising revenues, in turn, make hundreds of millions of dollars for companies like Facebook. (“Personal Data”)

To then return to how we want to frame discourse around privacy we should ask a simple question: if Max Shrems had been more *responsible* would he have still been given a document that was 1222 pages? Or would it have been much shorter?

Arguably, there would be no difference, given that corporate privacy policies do not protect users, instead, they protect the proprietors of the social networks and hence facilitate the accumulation of data (Fuchs; Papacharissi). What should not be lost in this discussion is the dynamic nature of the data archive. It is not simply a one way flow of information from user to corporation, but a recursive one, calibrated by the social media corporation in as profitable a manner as possible.

For example, Fanlala, the social networking site for tweens that superseded Togetherville, produces content for fans of famous young stars. The site is filled with two- to three-minute clips that feature famous tweens that can be found on the Disney channel, such as A.N.T.S., Hanna Montana, or Sonny with a Chance, and on Viacom, such as Naked Brothers Band, True Jackson VP, or iCarly. While Fanlala still needs to comply with COPPA, it has still managed to find a loophole. Users profiles are somewhat protected; however, any post they make about the video content on the site or comments they circulate can be shared with ‘third parties’. In fact, the owner of this site, Jeff Chester, has created this site with the purpose of: “providing youth focused websites as well as a selective extended network of publishers that together represent the ‘best of web’ content appealing to the wide ranging interests of young consumers” (“Children”). The products that they offer to corporation who are eager to reach this demographic include: “Homepage domination; custom video programs; sweepstakes and contests; advertorials, quizzes, editorial sponsorships, and polls; custom games; virtual world brand immersion programs; and finally, social media integration within Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube” (“Children”). The point of each of these services is not only to reach tweens but to *interact* with them. In other words, they are producing material that young people will ‘ideally’ engage with when they are

spending time on the web and ‘hanging out’ with their friends. Without the kids’ participation, the products put forward by Jeff Chester would be meaningless.

Here we can begin to see how marketers require more open privacy policies so that they can rely more heavily on users digital archive profile. Economic value is generated via a deeply symbiotic relationship which begins with the privacy policies of social networks and actualized as users continue to upload more and more content onto their profiles. The immaterial labour that young people provide as they directly participate within the networked circuits to ‘hang out’ with their friends (Ito) is precisely the moment in which they become apart of the production process—the moment of convergence between production and consumption that brings forward the prosumer. Marketers are therefore constantly seeking new ways to involve people by facilitating their desire to add value, be ‘helpful,’ and—most importantly when it comes to ‘immaterial labour’ 2.0—participate. In short, this conflation of play and labour provides a framework for the economic success of social networks. If young people did not enjoy going online and participating and if privacy policies did not facilitate the mining of their data, then value could never be generated from their digital archives. Given that sites such as Facebook acknowledge this symbiotic relationship, they have facilitated the means by which users become producers of their own marketing content.

A Case Study: Coke needs your help!

For the remainder of this chapter, I want to provide an example of the prosumer in action in order to explore how this subject is constituted via marketing practices on social networks. When ‘Facebook Ads’ were introduced, a confident Mark Zuckerberg announced that: “For the last hundred years media has been pushed out to people, but now marketers are going to be a part of the conversation. And they’re going to do this by using the social graph in the same way our users do” (Facebook, “Graph”). In other words, what Facebook had done was to create an environment where information could be directly circulated amongst users to facilitate more specific and targeted demographics for corporations and their marketers. Zuckerberg therefore created “a way for businesses to build pages on Facebook to connect with their audiences; an ad system that facilitates the spread of brand messages virally through Facebook Social Ads™; and an interface to gather insights into people’s activity on Facebook that marketers care about” (“Graph”). Moreover, they allowed corporations to build their own pages, to which individual users could then link. The goal of these corporate pages was to build what some marketers are referring to as “brand communities” (Muniz and O’Guinn 412), which are meant to foster a “series of connections and relationships among people who admire a brand” (Laroche et. al. 1755).

The rise of the ‘brand community’ is indicative of how marketing practices have been significantly altered, particularly by Web 2.0 technologies. According to Tracey Tuten, advertising should no longer be linked to any notion of ‘mass media.’ Previous practices that tied the circulation of products exclusively to broadcast media such as the television, radio, newspapers, or magazines have been eclipsed by those

that are able to micro target today's consumers. In short, those one-to-many practices that saw a singular message extended to a mass audience are being replaced by "one-to-one targeted advertising" (4). To be effective, marketers must serve the 'individual' as opposed to the mass. By so doing, the tactics have changed.

Online campaigns are highly responsive and driven by user-generated participation. The most highly effective forms of advertising, are, according to Tuten, driven by the users/consumers who choose to endorse a particular product amongst her/his friends (3-4). As a result, we see an entirely new language around marketing begin to emerge, predicated on the diverse ways in which users enable marketing campaigns. Some examples include "crowdsourcing", "digital dialogue", "citizen marketing", or "brand democratisation" (5). Each of these practices highlights how content no longer emanates from a singular source; instead, it is collectively produced and distributed.

For example, the 2013 Superbowl, Doritos held a "Crash the Superbowl Contest", which allowed anybody to record an ad and submit it to the company in an attempt to win one million dollars. According to Forbes Magazine, the winning ad usually ranks highly and the company benefits from all the 'buzz' that gets generated by the consumers who want to win. Such a mutually beneficial relationship between consumer and corporations illustrates how production and consumption become almost indistinguishable from one another. The free, immaterial production and circulation of user-generated ideas by the prosumer is precisely what is propelling an entirely new advertising paradigm. Within the context of Web 2.0, the prosumer therefore becomes a more pronounced subjectivity, particularly as advertisers seek to exploit user-generated content.

According to one study by Deloitte and Touche, 51 percent of adult users consume user-generated content (whether this be photos, articles, blogs etc.). While this percentage maybe appears high, the figure increases to 71 percent for younger users who are that much more adept at interacting online (Tuten 5). In other words, producing and circulating content is an everyday practice that is fully integrated into the way young people use the Internet. Social networks such as Facebook are acutely aware that users will trust their friends over a marketer, which is in part why they developed the “Social Graph”. Thus, social media are key conduits in which brands can be integrated into the everyday lives of consumers. If harnessed correctly, creating a positive space for people’s “need for belongingness and their need for cognition with those who have shared norms, values and interests,” then they can incorporate their feedback into the production of their commodities (Laroche et. al. 1760).

For a corporation looking to build long-term ties, social networks are ideal, given the way they can cultivate loyalty by inspiring and valorising the active participation of its existing and potential consumers, who want to ‘share’ and participate, creating the necessary conditions for the prosumer to emerge. We can see this applied in the way that Coke has used Facebook to launch its social media campaign. In a PowerPoint presentation prepared by Coke executives, the company spokesman makes a bold statement that their home page is no longer coke.com, instead, it is: google.com, twitter.com, youtube.com, hyves.com and of course facebook.com (Marsden, “Participatory Marketing”). Such a radical shift in how the company has come to perceive itself speaks to a “Fan First” perspective, which ultimately nurtures and creates as many opportunities for participation as possible (Gattiker, “Pepsi and Coca-Cola). Consumers are implicated in this process through

their affective interactions with the very commodities they produce/consume. The prosumer emerges within a realm of constant participation.

The prosumer therefore emerges as yet another manifestation of the cultural worker who comes of age amidst a “logic of informationalization” (Castells, “Communication Power” 59). Yet, how this subject participates is determined by those sites of contestation that exist within the circuits of Web 2.0. As producers, citizens, and critics of these archives, our task is not to try and separate out singular moments of extension or commodification but rather to understand the contradictions imbued in the impossibility of separating them. For Facebook, how does all the information that is captured get expressed within our individual archives? While we are only, just now beginning to appreciate the depth involved in answering this question, what should be emphasized is the ways in digital archives are facilitating a massive expansion of cultural industries and of cultural production, while simultaneously changing the landscape for personal and collective struggle over the control of our own data.

The rise of the prosumer represents “a specific form of digital enclosure” (Fuchs, “Prosumer” 298), one where user-generated data and hence participation becomes, as Fuchs argues, a form of digital exploitation. We can see this on Coke’s Facebook site. The crux of their marketing campaign can be summed up from this statement:

We will be everywhere our consumers are in an authentic ‘member of the community—NON Big Brand way.’ Our approach is designed to foster equitable engagement to earn sustainable relationships that are authentic, delightful and reciprocal. Being a Fan, Friend or Follower does not mean that they opted in to have advertising blasted at them...[Instead we will take a] less about us—more about them approach. (Gattiker, “Success”)

By trying to become more intimately involved in people’s everyday lives, Coke has learned to create strategic opportunities to maximize participation with its brand. This can be measured in the 90,000 comments they have received on Facebook, as well as in a number of videos that fans have made about their product and uploaded onto YouTube or in their new ‘Happiness’ campaign, which seeks to connect with consumers on the most individual and personal of levels. In short, Coke wants to become part of their lives, their communities, or, to put it another way, to become one of the ‘fans’ that make up a user’s ‘archive of feelings’ (Cvetkovich). To click on Coca-Cola’s Facebook ‘Like’ button marks an archival ‘event,’ a moment of selection that helps to build and distinguish someone’s digital identity. As the company becomes a part of a user’s digital profile, allowing that person to signify socially in a particular way, another archival event occurs; for, in “liking” Coca-Cola, a user grants the corporation access to their own profile. Coke becomes a part of our virtual identity, we become a part of theirs, and, it is precisely within this nexus that the prosumer is actualized.

Of course, the moment in which the prosumer is actualized carries a different significance for both the corporation and the user. Users associate themselves with a

brand they ‘like,’ while Coke acquires unfettered access to users’ profiles. Yet, what is of paramount interest about this ‘archival event’ and what presents an important area for further research, is the question of why the user wants to be publically associated with this brand. Jodi Dean begins this conversation in “Affective Networks,” where she specifically argues that:

Affect, or *jouissance* in Lacanian terms, is what accrues from reflexive communication, from communication for its own sake, from the endless circular movement of commenting, adding notes and links, bringing in new friends and followers, layering and interconnecting myriad communications platforms and devices. Every little tweet or comment, every forwarded image or petition, accrues a tiny affective nugget, a little surplus enjoyment, a smidgen of attention that attaches to it, making it stand out from the larger flow before it blends back in.

(21)

The ‘surplus of enjoyment’ that keeps accruing and affecting users is precisely why Ritzer argues that people “really *do* like [participating] and they are not simply being manipulated into such feelings by the capitalists” (my emphasis 25). The archive and more specifically the archive of feeling equally opens up another area of research which corresponds to those new approaches in marketing predicated on user-generated data. This new approach has been aptly named “sentiment analysis” (Cvijikj and Michahelles 175),²¹ and is predicated on using specialized algorithms to code how a user feels about certain products, events, or issues.

²¹ See also: Bermingham and Smeaton; Liu, Huang, An and Yu

Previously, most of the information that had been gathered about people's practices online have been based on the amalgamation of facts, that is, information retrieval, web searches, text classifications, or other textual kinds of mining (Liu, "Sentiment Analysis"). However, with the rise of Facebook and Twitter, marketers have realized that opinions cannot only be mined but that they are extremely valuable. The web has dramatically changed the ways in which people can now express their ideas and opinions. Already we have seen evidence of these changes in the way in which Coke gathers information about its followers based on how they interact directly on their Facebook page.

According to Bing Liu, in the United States alone there are already between 20 and 30 companies that are trying to capitalize on the opinions and feelings that users express online (1). Instead of relying on expensive and imperfect research studies based on consumer opinions, marketers can now go right to the source. As those practitioners would argue, why commission a study when you can have access to what people really think. Accordingly, as more and more users begin to post information, not just about themselves but about the products they value and are using, as we saw with the example of Habbo Hotel, the more valuable these spaces become as sources of people's consumer preferences or sentiments. The value of social networks, therefore, resides in the perceived authenticity and the continued flow of affective data that is produced by users. And while sentiment analysis techniques are still relatively crude, many marketers agree that this is the future (Bermingham and Smeaton 1833). The user and their valuable user-generated content and thereby are central to this configuration, without the constant flow of their opinions, or their ideas, such marketing strategies would cease to exist.

What the ‘archive’ and more specifically, the ‘*archive of feeling*,’ offers is the opportunity to examine the myriad ways in which “capital meets life” (Neilson and Rossiter 1). Here, at least for the user and producer of the personal digital archive, the constant uploading of data is not necessarily about a “will-to-possess” as described by Derrida, which would point towards a more absolute logic of accumulation, but as Kathy Ferguson argues, about a “will-to-participate” (“Shiny Things”). The prosumer is actualized as a direct result of this desire to partake in all the surprise enjoyments that come with uploading more and more personal data and forging linkages with those corporations that are keen to know them intimately. As such, while the growth of our collective digital footprint is inevitable, particularly for the cultural worker who increasingly finds her/himself imbued within the circuits of Web 2.0, the struggle over how this information will be captured and made into useable data is upon us. Understanding how our virtual archives and, more specifically, how our archives of feelings are rendered productive for corporations via their privacy agreements is paramount as we become further instantiated into a big data society.

Chapter 3: Youth, Citizenship, and Social Media

In my analysis, I have theorized how users produce affective digital archives as they engage with social media. In addition I have examined how social networks can facilitate and engage social and economic subjects, encouraging consumerism through affective strategies that rely on the immaterial labour power of users who are positioned as prosumers. In this chapter, I provide a background for understanding the impact of social media has on the circulation of political struggles. I will argue that the digital archive is not only a means for reproducing economic subjectivities or sociality, but is also a means for circulating political struggles. Digital archives, therefore, need to be extended in order to account for the active forms of citizenship that are being facilitated by these networked circuits.

In 2011, *Time* magazine announced that its person of the year was “the protester” (Anderson). From the Arab Spring to the Occupy Movement, the world saw a massive mobilization of young people and read about not just the pursuits of the protesters but about the social media that facilitated such a rapid and widespread organization. Here, networked platforms were not simply sites where sociality and connectivity were produced but were, equally, spaces for political subjectivization. As Clay Shirky argues: “Social media have become coordinating tools for nearly all of the world’s political movements” (3). Thus, he argues, “as the communication landscapes get denser, more complex, and more participatory, the networked population is gaining greater access to information, more opportunities to engage in public speech, and an enhanced ability to undertake collective action” (3). In addition

to the role social media are playing in the circulation of political struggles, I will discuss how networked platforms provide a new modality for civic engagement.

I see little value in dismissing these technologies. Instead, I argue that they offer useful implications for the ways in which we can recalibrate our understanding of citizenship, particularly through what scholars such as Jean Burgess, Marcus Foth and Helen Klaebe have called, “cultural citizenship” (“Creativity”). Specifically, this form of citizenship accounts for the myriad ways in which “everyday life [which includes all of those virtual experiences], affect, and pleasure” become a means of engagement (4); extending the political possibilities of digital archives through those intentional acts of consignment. Part of the aim of this chapter is to compare and contrast moments of political engagement, such as Occupy and Kony to draw out how social platforms can activate forms of cultural citizenship.

Secondly, following van Dijck, I am interested in whether social media transform or create a new public sphere. Of course, we must be careful to remember that the Internet is a tool; it is not the philosophical ideal presented by scholars such as Yochai Benkler or Don Tapscott, whose optimism often represents social media as a boundless site of cyberutopian hope and possibility. Thus, I ask: do these networked spaces create new or at least ameliorated public spheres and thereby new forms of “deliberative democracy” (Dalgren 2)? Or, following Jodi Dean, do they remain private spheres, thereby, never moving beyond a political economic critique, which refuses to see these new virtual manifestations as anything but an extension capitalist market relations?

This chapter argues that Dean’s subsumed cyberian dystopia, which views social networks as a site of *lack*, void of any meaningful social and political relations,

fails to acknowledge that in the age of Web 2.0 it is almost impossible to imagine any political moment outside of social media. Citizenship and networked sociality are becoming increasingly intertwined. As Isin points out, discourses about citizenship have moved away from narratives based on sovereignty towards those based on connectivity (ch.1). While the implications of this transition are unknown, given that discourses of citizenship are never outside of struggle, it is arguably useful to take seriously the vehicle that a large number of people are using to convey their discontent. There will always be critics such as Evgeny Morozov, who presents a scathing critique of the decentralized, participatory nature of networked platforms (“Social Movements”). Nevertheless, I argue that it is more important to “develop an image of citizenship based on what people do (acts) rather than making theoretical or practical and ostensibly normative proposals” (ch. 1). People *do* social media, so to deny its impact is neither productive nor useful.

As Isin correctly points out, and as we have seen already in chapter 2, the ideologies of virtual corporations such as Facebook, Google, or Yahoo, all of which have been able to successfully capture user-generated value, are indeed the “habitats of the sovereign beast” (ch. 3), continuously producing opportunities to maximize surplus value. It is not my intention to undermine the important argument that the Internet is becoming a privatized space; I will only put this on hold for a moment (see my ch. 2 for a discussion of this). Instead, I wish to consider how social media help us to understand citizenship within the current historical moment. In short, how do these technologies affect the various ways in which citizens act and hence participate? As more struggles over ownership, security, rights, knowledge, and privacy are played out online, the struggle over the political use and role of social media becomes more

urgent and central. To engage young people in this historical moment should not be about dismissing the tools that they are actively using. Thus, I begin with what citizenship means and how it is being affected by the increased use of social media.

Citizenship: Sovereignty vs. Connectivity

Debates about citizenship and the role of the nation-state have always been deeply contested, yet as Isin reminds us in *Citizens Without Frontiers*, citizenship remains a bounded concept. From this perspective, it is difficult to divorce the citizen from a closed, authoritative relationship with the nation-state. To define this subject outside of a bordered territory, would, in many respects, mean to devoid it of meaning. In fact, as Isin points out, not only does the citizen lose significance when removed from its borders, so does the nation-state (a construct which can only exist through defining its people as citizens)(ch. 1). The act of binding a citizen to a territory therefore becomes a critical juridico-political task to be carried out by any given country.

Most commonly, citizenship is acquired through birth and blood. To be born inside a territory is to become one of that territory's sons or daughters;²² that individual is thereby assigned legal status. Citizenship may also be acquired through formal immigration process; people come to a country from some other country and

²² Of course this is not always such a straightforward process for a number of reasons, as there are people who the nation-state does not necessarily want as its citizens, such those who are born to parents whose status is illegal. Peter Nyers has written extensively on this topic in his piece entitled "The Accidental Citizen: Acts of Sovereignty and (Un)making Citizenship." Within this exceptional framework, he argues that the implications of the "accidental citizen" are paramount, as this subject can potentially reveal the arbitrary nature of "birthright" as a birth accident, thereby exposing the contingent nature of citizenship.

undergo a process that binds them to the authority of the new nation-state. Whatever the way in which people become citizens, in the process they become bound; that “boundedness [is] the very condition for citizenship” (ch. 1). Yet, as many scholars observe, in the age of globalization and migration, the fixedness of the construct of citizenship seems to be unravelling. Ruth Lister argues that the impact globalization has had on the reshaping of national boundaries, the growing pressure some nation-states are having for regional autonomy, the increasingly multiethnic nature of several societies, the increased movements across borders, and claims for different kinds of representational rights have all affected how many scholars have tried to retheorize discourses of citizenship. At its most basic level, it can be understood as the “membership of a community (itself a contested concept) and about the relationship between individuals and the State and between individual citizens within that community” (Isin, “Theorising Acts” 3). However, to conceive of citizenship only in terms of a legal status negates the very practices subjects engage with, which in turn help to make up the polis. Equally, when citizenship is only conceived within a juridical framework, then the importance of struggles based on what Isin and Wood call *recognition*, that is, how different identities come together to negotiate particular issues about rights and social justice, can equally be elided (16).

The question of who is a citizen and what constitutes the borders of this construct are worthwhile to consider. While we can think of citizenship in relation to sovereignty, as we have just discussed, this does not always ensure that social and political rights are respected. Thus for Isin, there is an inherent paradox related to the notion of citizenship. He argues that while we can have doctors without frontiers, teachers without frontiers, or any other professional without frontiers, we cannot have

citizens without frontiers. Even though within our highly mediated, connected, and globalized culture, where we see people coming together around particular issues regardless of their geopolitical locations, the notion of an unbound citizen, who exists outside the confines of the nation state, is highly paradoxical. As such, there is value in thinking about how social media practices are linked to new or at least rearticulated forms of civic engagement. And so, let us turn to two different notions of citizenship: social and cultural citizenship.

Social and cultural citizenship scholarship notes the diverse ways in which culture practices are accounted for and incorporated into citizenship discourses. Scholars such as Jean Burgess, Luke Goode, Mark Deuze, Nick Couldry, and Sonia Livingston are interested in the relationship between citizenship and Internet-based media. They “link studies of the Internet with the idea of citizenship” (Goode 528). In their view, all the distinct and/or ephemeral moments that transpire online (no matter how insignificant) have democratic consequences. Here, I outline the similarities and distinctions between social citizenship and cultural citizenship, in order to help account for the ways in which social media can enrich discourses related to citizenship.

Social Citizenship

If citizenship is social, as Isin et al. argue, there is dialectical tension between discourses that focus on citizenship as a legal status as opposed to discourses that focus on citizenship as a means of representing social and political rights. Social citizenship emphasizes justice in terms of the welfare state, and focuses on rights, privileging struggles for redistribution. However, towards the end of the 20th century,

social citizenship fell under attack (5). Subsequently, while we still see struggles in relation to social equity, entitlements, employment insurance, social assistance, and housing, to name but a few, they have been rearticulated within a global economic framework. The neoliberal subject has quickly become a responsible and autonomous agent, no longer guaranteed the social security of the nation state. Consequently, under neoliberalism, “social rights were reconsidered and the emphasis on social citizenship shifted from rights to obligation” (5). This shift brought about new forms of politics, centered around the recognition of inequalities and difference. Isin and Wood, therefore, emphasize how citizenship “*has never been expanded to all members of any polity*” (22, emphasis in the original), navigating identity and difference and thus theorizing new citizenships such as sexual citizenship, disability citizenship, multicultural citizenship, and even digital citizenship.

Social media form a key conduit for those who are politically engaged with various rights discourses. For example, a quick look at Facebook reveals thousands of pages dedicated to groups focused on various civic issues. A search on Gay Rights yields dozens of pages that are organized around this topic. One page in particular, “Gay Rights,” has 1,069,900 members with over 26,000 people who are actively contributing, engaging in debate, and discussing their ideas. One campaign on this page, which unfolded in February and March of 2013, was to put pressure on Canadian singer Carly Rae Jepsen. One post reads:

I just heard this, and this is crazy: the Boy Scouts just announced that “Call Me Maybe” singer Carly Rae Jepsen is headlining the 2013 National Scout Jamboree this July. Openly gay Eagle Scout Derek Nance has launched a petition asking Carly Rae, who has a huge LGBT fan base and has publicly supported gay rights, to reconsider her support of the BSA [Boy Scouts Association]. Sign it, maybe?
<http://change.org/carly> (Gay Rights, Facebook)

In the three days after this was posted, 1155 likes and 140 comments appeared. These comprised an interesting debate about why or why not this issue was worth pursuing.

Some people agreed very strongly and said that they had signed the petition.

One contributor wrote:

I’m an Eagle Scout. I don’t see how Boy Scouts can justify discrimination against gays. There are many virtues that are encouraged in Scouts but the ones most applicable here are respect and honesty. They can be expressed in anyone of any sexual orientation. On the flip side, you can be a weird jerk whether you’re straight or gay. So let people be honest about who they are and hold all to the same standard of conduct. Teach kids what’s really important. (Gay Rights, Facebook)

Others questioned the politics of the organizers, wondering if the decision by the Boy Scouts Association (BSA) was meant to show that they were indeed trying to address views of the BSA on LGBT youth. Another contributor wrote:

I like the idea of this . . . but I hate to punish the little scouts just because the BSA is antigay. (Gay Rights, Facebook)

The range of comments, which span from very politicized to extremely banal, demonstrates that there is in fact the possibility of a polity on social media sites such as Facebook. What's more, Eagle Scout Will Oliver, who is one of the key organizers trying to ban Ms. Jepsen from speaking out against the Scouts, has already been able to use Facebook to secure 120,000 votes urging the National Geographic Channel not to air her performance and to condemn the BSA's ban on gay Scouts and gay Scout leaders (the post about this received 7,794 likes and 528 comments).²³ What's interesting about this example is that it clearly shows a means by which those with similar ideas and civic identities can take up social media to engage around issues that are considered important by that community. These are not necessarily homogenous spaces in which everyone simply agrees, but rather are spaces for informed or at the very least engaged debate.

Social media are important conduits for sharing information and for inviting participation around political struggles. As users affiliated themselves with the "Gay Rights" Facebook page, they effectively linked their archives to circulate a particular discourse around gay rights. By liking this page, those young people extended their dissent about Ms. Jepsen singing for the NBA, while simultaneously initiating an archival event. The act of liking and hence affiliation, rendered this particular

²³ Since this was written, Carly Rae Jepsen decided not to perform for the BSA. This act indicates that there was indeed an impact made by the social media campaign. In a statement she issued to MTV, she said: "As an artist who believes in equality for all people, I will not be participating in the Boy Scouts of America Jamboree this summer. I always have and will continue to support the LGBT community on a global level and stay informed on the ever-changing landscape in the ongoing battle for gay rights in this country and across the globe" (Marino). Her statements echo those raised on the Facebook page and confirm the critical watchdog role such rights-orientated sites play with respect to circulating particular social and political discourses.

political struggle a part of those users' digital archives. The possible performativity of such an act will be discussed when we look to how Dean theorizes "Clicktivism", that is, a politics predicated on affiliation as opposed to action. Still, we should not overlook the intentionality embedded in such sticky acts of affiliation. These are precisely the everyday moments of social citizenship that do increasingly circulate through digital archives of younger users and need to be taken seriously.

Cultural Citizenship

Proponents of cultural citizenship are not as focused on identity politics and discourses that are based on difference as they are on the means by which every day culture effects emerging practices that are inherently built into the architectural design of social media (Rheingold 97). To study cultural citizenship is to be interested in the how relations of production and consumption have been reconfigured, enabling what Burgess, Foth, and Laebe call "episodic publics," ephemeral everyday online encounters in which citizens can negotiate and deliberate on matters of importance (7–8). By emphasizing the cultural practices of individuals, these scholars are not so concerned with moments in which people engage in "capital P politics" but rather in how we engage with everyday life, leisure, critical consumption, and popular entertainment (2).

According to Toby Miller, cultural citizenship should be understood as the "right to know and speak" as opposed to the right to "reside and vote" or the right to "work and prosper" (35). Similarly, William Uricchio argues that cultural citizenship is "based on a set of common values, aimed at establishing a material basis for societal membership" (145). Citing Renato Rosaldo's work, Uricchio goes on to argue

that cultural citizenship is above all else “the freedom to belong to an identity, to contribute to its definition or to withdraw from belonging in order to create new meaning” (146). What is central for cultural citizenship is the ability to actively participate. Without action, there is no cultural sphere, which is equally why Uricchio argues that the distinct forms of participatory culture that are seen online—in which user-generated content is produced by people who share, collaborate, and participate—can sometimes constitute forms of cultural citizenship (146).

A very real tension remains, between the small number of conglomerates who own a very large percentage of the media and those who stand in opposition, actively trying to contribute towards a more “participatory culture” (Rheingold; H. Jenkins). One may not be able to get away from privatization online, but this does not negate the possibility of “the process of bonding and community building, and reflection on that bonding, that is implied in partaking of the text-related practices of reading, consuming, celebrating, and criticizing offered in the realm of (popular) culture” (Burgess 9). Despite criticism of the already compromised spaces in which digital practices and forms of cultural citizenship take place, those practices and forms should not be overtly negated or discounted.

For Uricchio (and Burgess, Foth, and Laebe), contradictory demands are always made of citizens who must negotiate political and economic paradigms when they engage online as well as the participatory cultures that allow them to facilitate different forms of sociality. However, according to the research by Bachen et al., the Internet is becoming the most central vehicle for learning about how to participate in civic life. As a consequence, emerging citizens who are not “comfortable learning about and taking part in public life online will be disadvantaged” (291). Thus, instead

of separating citizenship from popular culture, those who discuss cultural citizenship note the ways in which young people actively try to bypass some of the more centralized and hierarchical forms of social practices, and use mainstream sites such as Facebook or Twitter instead.

Emphasizing the cultural elements of citizenship might be considered to be an uncritical approach; activism could appear within a context of consumer sovereignty. However, given that in this historical moment it is more common to be addressed as a consumer, agency is often linked with the ability to make choices. For example, buying organic, ethical, or locally produced items are all consumer choices that elide not just within economic structures but within political and social structures too. Given the widely fluid yet contested nature of the concept of citizenship, those everyday life practices should not be negated. Thus, in relation to social media, cultural citizenship must comprise all of the mundane behaviours that users carry out online. While liking a page or someone's post or making a comment may appear to be relatively unimportant, such ephemeral micromoments have the potential to undermine the "silence and homogeneity" of the majority (Couldry 322). To return to our previous example, users began a dialogue in relation to whether Carly Rae Jepsen should renounce or sing for the Boy Scouts. Such a dialogue may appear somewhat trivial, but it actually exemplifies those "experiential dimensions of citizenship" that ultimately link private action into the public sphere (323).

Cultivating a culture in which political dialogue has become radically more accessible creates possibilities as opposed to the necessary foreclosures due to the already compromised spaces discussed above. Some of these micromoments, in fact, are acts of citizenship and can potentially be carried out by those who wish to enter

into, shape, and/or transform political discourses. For young people who feel disaffected in and disconnected from wider political processes, herein lies an opportunity for engagement through those cultural practices that they have become accustomed to online. This is precisely the potential that Barak Obama was able to tap into and turn to his advantage to win the American elections of 2008 and 2012 (Martinez; Sanson). Thus, within a cultural citizenship frame, acts of citizenship can always be amplified via those networked circuits of connectivity, valorizing the role social networks play in (re)producing political relations.

Acts of Citizenship: Occupy 2011 vs. Kony 2012

We act all the time, but our actions do not always produce a meaningful rupture within any given order, defined as “an assemblage of relatively lasting and enduring ways of doing things” (Isin ch. 4). In this respect, social citizenship and cultural citizenship each facilitate a moving away from traditional constructs of citizenship that valorize the nation state. The former emphasizes the importance of individual rights and the latter focuses on the importance of cultural practices. However, each of these modalities of citizenship are similar, given the way they place emphasis on *acts* as opposed to structured political relations that constitute citizenship.

Traditionally, citizenship is determined through the act of being born in a particular country (*jus sanguinis*), which means that the child inherits this status from his or her parents. Equally, a child can inherit citizenship, regardless of his or her parent’s nationality, by the act of being born in a particular country (*jus soli*). Finally, a child can acquire citizenship into a country in which he or she is not otherwise from, by naturalization (*jus domicile*). In each of these cases, citizenship is part of a formal

political apparatus (Isin ch. 4). To act, however, does not necessarily require a status, particularly as not everyone has the same access to citizenship nor the same level of cultural capital, or rather the same “general cultural background, knowledge, disposition, and skills that are passed on from one generation to another” (McLaren 219). Acts that are carried out online, do have to be tied to a user’s nation state; however they still need to be contextualized with respect to the general capacities of young people—encompassing everything from their ability to talk, act or socialize; their values; or their ability to conduct themselves within society. In this sense, the amount of cultural capital possessed by a young person who is engaged online will likely impact their ability to circulate political discourses and ideologies.

For example, when considering how young people use social media, are they simply using these sites to have fun with their friends? Or perhaps play some video games? Or, are they going to use these spaces to exercise their civic capacity by writing letters, joining discussion groups, commencing blogs, or by sharing/tweeting political content? In accordance with Dalgren, while the Internet may not actually change political life, it might motivate people to participate, people who, according to Stromer and Galley, might otherwise find it difficult to engage politically. However, to facilitate the circulation of their ideas requires a certain level of cultural capital, calling into question discourses and practices relating to digital divide.

Often, debates relating to the uneven distribution of technologies have focused on who has the access and/or ability to go online; now, increasingly (more so for the West), according to Buckingham, it equally depends on how we “use technology” (9). Not every child or young person is a “technologically empowered cyberkid” (10). This means that, while every young person might be able to open a Facebook or a

Twitter account, not just anyone will be able to use these media platforms to empower themselves and become civically engaged. Nichole Pinkard, who helped to found YOUmedia, echoes this sentiment; she questions our understanding of literacy.²⁴

Traditionally, literacy is related to someone's ability to read. However, in this current historical moment, Pinkard asks in the documentary *Digital Media: New Learners of the 21st Century*, should someone be considered literate if they cannot use and critique media? Should kids be considered literate if they graduate from high school without basic technological skills and competencies? Such questions are at the core of the YOUmedia lab, which was formed in Chicago with the mandate of providing digital tools to disadvantaged youth. The confidence and cultural capital gained in this space allow the young participants to gain valuable technological skills and competencies. This growing need to become media literate represents a new manifestation of the digital divide, predicated not on access to the Internet but on the knowledge and ability to successfully negotiate social platforms. By helping those young people who have come to rely on the YOUmedia lab, Pinkard and her colleagues have facilitated an act of cultural citizenship. In this respect, while this pedagogical space may not enable all of these young people to transcend their social and economic conditions, as their technological competences advance, they become more competitive in relation to more privileged demographics ("Digital Media"). The young people at YOUmedia, therefore, can no longer be considered as an other, since they can no longer be situated outside the dominant discursive frameworks that place the media savvy, "digital native" at the centre.

²⁴ YOUmedia is "a public learning space that immerses high school students in the context of traditional media—books—to make and produce new media artifacts like music, videos, and virtual worlds" (Digital Youth Network).

The concept of citizenship that Isin describes is not one that is learned or inherited; rather, it is something that must be practised in relationship with others and, importantly, in relation to the Other (“Acts” 31). However, the intent behind such practices is not necessarily one of solidarity, embodying what some might describe as essentially positive qualities that aspire to improve/ameliorate the conditions of civil society. Acts can equally be understood as being either alienating or agonistic; thus, they hold the possibility of creating a community of either consensus or dissensus (38). The relational component of the act is critical, given that it is within these moments that the actors’ level of engaged responsibility and answerability to the Other can be discerned. When one therefore acts, s/he becomes an actor who will in turn produce an action. Within this framework, the actor is *responsible* for those *other* actors in which they are engaged with, and so this process needs to be considered as something that is both concrete and calculable, relying on the pre-existing practices and orders that have already been established (“Acts” 31-38). Conversely, answerability speaks to the way in which the actor is forced to engage with the Other (31). Through this interaction where the self comes into contact with itself, meaning can be produced, enabling a rupture. Acts therefore can constitute different conditions for the political, representing discrete moments of subjectivization that engage young people in political processes or forms of activism.

While the construct of the citizen remains open and complex, what I would like to retain here is the way in which Isin conceptualizes acts of citizenship and relates them to how young people engage online. Clearly, the virtual is anything but a bound structure. Young people can connect with and form groups about political issues in their own countries. However, what is more often seen are people with similar

interests, regardless of location, coming together about key issues on a global scale. Whether this is through a membership in organizations such as YOUMedia, Sierra Club or TakingItGlobal, or through key political issues such as in the case of the Occupy Movement, the Internet allows people to transcend their physical location and enter into rich dialogues with others who share their ideas. Kingsley Dennis argues:

Today's [electronic] forms of civil society suggest that lives are increasingly lived in fluid relations where electronic information flows, [where] material and virtual bodies and physical locations are intersecting and integrating in more prolific, engaging and interesting ways. . . . Social relations . . . [engulfed in civil society] are becoming increasingly informed through emerging technologies that allow for distributed connectivity and information sharing and cooperation. (32)

Here, networked connectivity seems to point to a different kind of political order, one that is predicated on the active participatory power of people that is cultivated within virtual spaces.

Social networks make it easy for young people to engage in something that has bothered them, and to disengage from the public world in which they live; but they also provide diverse opportunities for civic engagement. As Bachen et al. point out, youth and young adults are more likely to search for information on the Internet, which is positively associated with higher degree of civic participation. For them, “youth appear to both value the Internet as a civic tool and use it to boost their political knowledge and participation” (293). We can see evidence of this in the 2011 Occupy Movement, in which hundreds of thousands of people, around the entire globe, stood up and chanted the slogan “We Are the 99 Percent.” By so doing, they drew attention

to the vast, global economic divide and disparity of people everywhere, relying on the proliferation of social media, to circulate and draw attention to the hegemonic logic of neoliberalism.

Occupy 2011



Figure 3. The initial poster produced by Adbusters.

While the Occupy Movement of 2011 may not necessarily have changed the global economic order, it was momentarily able to punch through and rupture some assumptions about capitalist economic relations. What began as a call for action by Canadian activists Kalle Lasn and Micah White in June 2011 eventually led to over seven hundred and fifty Occupy demonstrations world-wide (Rogers). How, we might ask, could one call for action, erupt into such a large-scale global movement, inspiring millions of people to come out demonstrate? In July 2011, Lasn launched “Occupy Wall Street,” a blog attached to the Adbusters website; by September, an encampment had begun. Initially, people were encouraged to take over Zuccotti Park (see fig. 3) in New York City. Quickly, the 99 percent took hold of the popular imaginary, as people began to identify with this leaderless movement.

A Tumblr blog/Twitter hybrid was set up, entitled “We Are the 99 Percent,” to capture the lived experiences of those who were protesting, giving voice to the myriad struggles of all the people who took to the streets to speak out against the various economic injustices brought about by neoliberal economic policies. Many of the stories on this blog are visually represented; often we see a snapshot of the author holding a piece of paper so we can read his or her history, putting the human face to this movement. A few examples include the story of fifty-year-old Jack from Austin, Texas:

I got my first job mowing lawns when I was thirteen. I went to work for the federal government, laying fences, when I was fifteen. At seventeen, I left home and put myself through college and law school, without my parents' help. Yes, I had student loans, and yes, I paid them. I lost my job in 2009. Despite hundreds of phone calls, résumés, and few interviews, it seems I am now overqualified, at age fifty, to be employed. I am coming to grips with the fact that I will never earn what I took for granted, just a few years ago. I have run through my savings, my investments, and my retirement accounts. I lost my house. My wife left me a year ago, and cancelled my health insurance. My heart medication, insulin, and related supplies, not to mention my ADD meds for my teenager, total \$3500 a month. . . . Now I am facing eviction. My two children have never seen daddy without money. I am facing the grim fact that my life insurance policy and social security death benefits may provide my kids better financial security than I can. Like George Bailey, I am “worth more dead than alive.” I AM THE 99 PERCENT.

Another story reads:

I am a green card–carrying Chinese person with a family of four. Because my husband has worked so many years in a restaurant, he now has health issues because of his blood pressure. We are peaceful, law-abiding residents. Because of landlord harassment, who has threatened us with eviction, we are fighting gentrification. We need to protect the rights of tenants! Every year the rent increases. Sometimes the landlord doesn't turn on the heat or hot water. The landlord is trying to evict us, and we are currently in housing court. We have to work to save money for rent to pay the rent, to survive. It's really tough on us. We are the 99 percent!

The breadth of testimonials that have been uploaded onto this Tumblr is remarkable. Its cross section of demographics indicates how invested so many people were (and are) in “voicing to their governments and others about the world . . . that they had enough injustice and inequality” (Clark 19). While there are many facets to this social movement, the role social media played in circulating various struggles, as seen on the “We are the 99 percent” Tumblr are important. By foregrounding the role of social media within the Occupy movement, among other political struggles that have taken place since 2011, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of how young people may come to expect to engage politically as they get older.

According to numerous articles that circulated in the popular press, “social media played a vital role in the Occupy Movement” (Preston). In an interview with the *New York Times*, Benkler argues that “the online component was critical—the ability to stream video, to capture the images and create records and narratives of sacrifice and resistance” (Preston). However, he is careful and qualifies this statement,

arguing that social media is most effective they are accompanied by on-the-ground, face-to-face actions. This sentiment is echoed in an article by Erik Clark, who interviewed a number of Occupy Movement activists. When asked what they thought about the value of social media, one person stated that it was vital; bringing in a “much larger group of people who maybe don’t self-identity as activists and probably don’t have a history of activism” (42). Consensus also was that social media allowed information to spread more quickly and easily; preventing certain hierarchies from forming; and enabling a “real-time, unedited reporting of the front line of all movements” (47).

The value of social media was demonstrated on October 6, 2011, when a peaceful march ended with more than 700 protesters being arrested on the Brooklyn Bridge. Many of the violent altercations that the police carried out against the demonstrators were recorded, and these recordings quickly went viral across an array of social media platforms. According to the *New York Times*, as of October 7, 2011, the average number of tweets about the Occupy Movement soared to somewhere between 400 thousand and 500 thousand a day (Preston). Furthermore, according to the Occupy Research Project, over the course of the entire Occupy Movement, more than 13 million tweets were sent.

The proliferation of information that was distributed by anyone who happened to have a smartphone, not by mainstream media, in part changed the ecology of protests. A little less than fifteen years ago, there was Indymedia, a global, participatory hub for independent journalists set up during the World Trade Organization protests in Seattle in 1999. It began as a platform for independent media producers on the left to facilitate the circulation of information and perspectives that

were not commonly reported in the mainstream media. These sites still exist today. However, they look more like blogs, blending into the sea of voices that now proliferate online. Part of the reason that a site like Indymedia does not take up the same prominent role in the social imaginary as it once did is in part due to the rise of social media, where, because of the architectural design of mediated platforms, people do not need to go to a singular, centralized site to obtain information.

The effect of what happened on the Brooklyn Bridge going viral meant that the message led to a swell of public support. The perspectives of those who were actually on that bridge were easily able to circulate within the social imaginary, as dozens of videos were uploaded on YouTube, dozens of Facebook pages were set up, thousands of pictures were uploaded onto Pinterest, and hundreds and thousands of tweets were uploaded onto Twitter. Even if mainstream media had wanted to ignore what had happened on that bridge, that was now impossible.

Clark argues: “social media can certainly be used to create and change and sway public opinion in a social movement” (52). Dorothy Kidd argues that we must recognize the role of these alternative media sources and their potential to democratize the top-down structures endemic to mainstream media. In short, the participatory nature of such technologies and the ease in which information can and does circulate has an undeniable impact. While one tweet might not mean anything, 400 thousand tweets make an undeniable civic contribution.

Social media enable different forms of interactive participation. Unlike Indymedia, where the contributor had to have some legitimacy or standing as a journalist, new participatory platforms thrive because they allow anyone to share and produce content. Mark Deuze calls these platforms *we media*. They “allow anyone to

post and upload files, information, and news without a formal editorial moderation or filtering process” (65). Here is where the ecology of participation is altered.

While there is nothing new about the desire to participate and share content, Deuze argues, this is “what humans have done since the dawn of man” (63). As industrialized societies become more and more influenced by and implicated in computerization, we become engulfed in a “new media revolution—the shift of all culture to computer-mediated forms of production, distribution, and communication” (63). The impact of this transition is absorbed in the means by which young people can participate online as they come to rely on and engage with social media. Such participatory social practices, which are reconfiguring sociality, are precisely what enhanced the flow of information in the Occupy Movements. In the words of one activist:

Were you to remove social media from the [social movement] you would instantly go back to my experience from the 1990s. Making flyers and paying to have them printed in large quantities . . . passing them out and putting them on the phone polls or bulletin boards, this is how communication of a social movement’s message worked. Who would waste their time with that now? With social media you don’t need to do that anymore. (Clark 43)

In other words, the networked design of social media facilitates connectivity by enhancing the flow and distribution of user-generated content. The users who circulate political discourses make an intentional decision to associate themselves with content that exists outside of their digital profiles, and by so doing, integrate this content into their own digital archives. Here the dissemination of content is far less

random, no longer left to the chance that someone might read a poster on the street and far more intentional.

Kony

While I do not wish to paint a utopian picture of social media, particularly as I am not positing these as the solution to hegemonic politics, such platforms still stand as valuable communication tools, which can facilitate the flow of information and enable acts of citizenship. Of course, there are other examples that we can point to, which could equally demonstrate the failure of such communicative networks to produce active and engaged citizens. One example is what some people refer to as either *slacktivists* or *clicktivists*.

Slactivism or clicktivism, according to Morozov, describes a cynical view of young people's online political engagement in trying to further a cause as "feel-good online activism that has zero political or social impact" ("Slactivism"). Slactivist acts, according Morozov, require very little emotional or material investment outside of the discrete moment of signing a petition, liking a Facebook page, sending a tweet, posting a picture, or sharing a video. He goes on to argue that such acts provide only the illusion of having a meaningful impact on the world and epitomize the "ideal type of activism for a lazy generation: why bother with sit-ins and the risk of arrest, police brutality, or torture if one can be as loud campaigning in virtual space?"

Proponents who argue that the Internet enables civic disengagement believe that participating online alleviates people's feelings that they should be doing something tangible, and thereby displace any meaningful possibility of concrete action. Dean argues:

Busy people can think they are active—the technology will act for them, alleviating their guilt while assuring them that nothing will change too much. . . . By sending an email, signing a petition, responding to an article on a blog, people can feel political. And that feeling feeds communicative capitalism insofar as it leaves behind the time-consuming, incremental and risky efforts of politics. . . . It is a refusal to take a stand, to venture into the dangerous terrain of politicization. (70)

One example that demonstrates this form of activism with action is the Kony 2012 campaign. In March 2012, Jason Russell brought the name Joseph Kony and his rebel army into mainstream public discourse. What began as a simple video that was uploaded on YouTube on March 5, 2012, within the first week had 100 million views, five million tweets,²⁵ and over 7.6 million Facebook shares (Holden; Kanczula). This mobilization of social media tried, according Jack Bratich, to capture some of the excitement left over from the Occupy Movements from the previous year. Russell wanted to produce change, share outrage, and circulate opinions, culminating in a day of action, planned for April 20, 2012.

During the early days of the campaign people seemed quite enthusiastic, as demonstrated by the number of posts that began to appear and the glut of information that began to circulate, primarily via mobile devices, which according to Chris Holden accounted for 58 percent of the information that was circulated, or via Facebook,

²⁵ With 66 percent of the conversation on Twitter between March 5 and 12, 2012 focusing on and supporting the anti-Kony campaign (Kanczula).

which accounted for 38 percent of it. Yet, despite the 100 million views the video had on YouTube or the 5 million tweets that were generated about Joseph Kony (77 percent favourable to Russell's cause), April 20th came and went, and no one took to the streets (Kanczula).

In many ways, Kony exemplifies both Dean and Morozov's view of today's lazy activists who are keen to alleviate their guilt. Bratich, conversely, calls Kony 2012 a so-called *flashpublic*, in that it had the power to virtually assemble a large number of people for an event. The so-called flash of the event "involves what Anna Gibbs calls an 'affective contagion,' tied to processes that early 20th-century social theorists associated with sympathy, suggestion, even mass hypnosis." Within this infectious state, Bratich believes that people can become more susceptible, caught up, in a feedback loop of sharing and consuming information. From this perspective, despite the proliferation of user-generated material that is circulated, those who are doing all the sending are doing very little in terms of actually shaping any of the messages. Bratich believes that instead of actually providing people a way to shape a movement's objectives, individuals who become involved were essentially recruited as free labourers in Kony's specific cause. Followers thereby became caught up in a prepackaged movement that required a few clicks followed by the rhetoric of an oversimplified hero and enemy.

The question therefore remains: do these technologies actually perpetuate and enable a more open and engaged public sphere? Do they disable meaningful dialogue because of the overwhelmingly strong political economic relations that are inherent within social media platforms? How should young people think about these sites in terms of the circulation of political discourse?

The Public Sphere

Many scholars and critics are extremely enthusiastic when it comes to theorizing the possibilities of social media. Tapscott states emphatically that young people, “having grown up digital, expect to collaborate with politicians—not just listen to their grandstanding speeches. They want to be involved directly: to interact with them, contribute ideas, scrutinize their actions, work to catalyze not just during elections but as they govern” (ch. 9). Benkler believes that “Web 2.0 offers a better medium for the creation of a public sphere in which a truly democratic form of political debate can take place (Benkler, qtd. in Roberts 1). Equally, Manuel Castells believes that “the global public sphere is built about the media communication system and Internet networks, particularly in the social spaces of Web 2.0, as exemplified by YouTube, MySpace, Facebook and the growing blogosphere that by mid-2007 counted 70 million blogs and was doubling in size every six months” (13). The possibilities that surround Web 2.0, as we have already seen in some of the previous examples, raise questions about the efficacy of these digital networks in augmenting or, as Coleman and Blumler argue, rejuvenating the public sphere. Can social media truly “open up opportunities for the greater visibility and community-building potential” or, following Dean, have politics simply become “a domain of financially mediated and professionalized practices centered on advertising, public relations and the means of mass communication” (8)?

While social media indeed form an undeniable economic and ideological structure, they equally represent—as we have just discussed—a site of possibility, which can augment personal expressions and actively promote citizen activity (Bell;

Kling; Negroponte; Rheingold; Papacharissi). As Papacharissi argues, all these new platforms can “provide information and tools that may extend the role of the public in the social and political arena” (10). If we look to movements like Occupy, or even Kony for that matter, we can see how participation has changed, enabled further by the architectural design of social media platforms that have effectively inverted the few-to-many model that existed in the broadcast age. The structure of that model ensured that only a very small number of people were able to influence and shape the perceptions and beliefs of many. Instead, now, we are dealing more with a “many-to-many environment of participatory media, where every desktop is a printing press, or a broadcasting station and/or a place of assembly” (Rheingold 272). Everyone is always already a journalist, able to contribute to political discourse, allowing the possibility of news making to be infinitely more collaborative and participatory.

On the one hand we can point to examples such as the Kony campaign, in which notions such as democracy or citizenship or participation might not necessarily be the most relevant concepts to describe what happened. On the other, the national survey performed by the Center for Social Impact at Georgetown University in 2010 argues the following: people who frequently engaged in promotional social activity were twice as likely to volunteer; twice as likely to take part in charity events; more than twice as likely to buy products or services from companies that support political causes; three times as likely to solicit donations on behalf of their cause; and finally more than four times as likely to encourage others to sign a petition or contact political representatives (Andresen).

How participation is fostered within Web 2.0 platforms is a defining feature of social media and should therefore not be underestimated. As people participate they

become “active agents in the process of meaning making” (66) which in turn, according to Deuze, produces new subjectivities that will ultimately shape or manipulate the political discourses that we interact with. The result is what he calls *bricolage*, a term describing how we reflexively put together our own understanding of the world about us. The ease by which we can participate online is in part what has made so many people excited by the possibility that all of these new technologies are truly nurturing a public sphere that has the ability to be extremely healthy and active, given the myriad ways in which people can now contribute to political discourse. Yet, is this newly networked public sphere truly that much more democratic? And as Papacharissi questions, do these platforms actually create a network public sphere or domains of public opinion? Do they produce “virtual spaces that enhance discussion . . . [or] a virtual sphere that enhances democracy” (4)?

Debate is extensive about whether invoking this notion of a *public sphere* (an idea initially theorized by Jürgen Habermas) is actually productive. In part, this is due to the way Habermas theorized this construct based on the way he saw privileged white men coming together: they would engage in a forum of rational, political debate. Thus, according to Nancy Fraser, the key contribution of this concept of Habermas’s lies in how he wanted to conceptualize a space in which political participation is “enacted through a medium of talk” (57). The public sphere was therefore meant to be an open forum of deliberation and discursive interactions, based on the everyday experiences of those who wanted to engage in political debate. Secondly, it was meant to be “conceptually distinct from the official economy,” safely outside of market relations that may compromise political debate (57). A clear distinction must therefore be made between the state apparatus, economic markets,

and democratic associations. Fraser critiques this initial bourgeois conception, arguing that it is severely outdated, carrying with it a great number of omissions, most notably gender: “masculinist gender constructs were built into the very conception of the republican public sphere, as was a logic that led, at the height of Jacobin rule, to the formal exclusion from political life of women” (58). While many scholars would agree that Habermas’s conceptualization is neither inclusive nor necessarily politically progressive, Fraser still contends that it is a useful starting point for understanding how interests can converge and effect civic agency and action.

When Habermas originally conceived of the public sphere, Calhoun argues that he was thinking about the “social conditions for rational-critical debate” (6). By examining early bourgeois segments of the European populations, he wanted to understand the democratic conditions for public debate and political discourse. His interest therefore lay in trying to theorize communicative spaces, which according to Dahlgren permitted that “circulation of information, ideas, debates—ideally in an unfettered matter—and also the formation of political will” (148). Habermas wanted to demarcate a clear distinction between the public and the private sphere, and described a space that existed outside of these two distinct domains. He positioned this realm as a space in which private people could engage in open debates outside of commercial encounters (van Dijck 162).

Thus, people (i.e., bourgeois men) who had a vested interest in the running of the nation-state could converge. By so doing, through a process of strong deliberation in which ideas were rationally represented, the public could come to some agreement on common affairs of national interest (Dean 2). The term *public* should, according to Habermas, not be conceptualized as a media audience, but rather a construct that

exists as discursive interactions and processes (Dahlgren 148). One of the main problems in trying to draw a comparison between Habermas's public sphere and the Internet lie in Isin's original critique, "We the Connected." Social networks are inherently compromised spaces, and are neither entirely outside of state authorities²⁶ nor economic interests. The totalizing elision between private and public spheres only serves to emphasize the fact that that there is no free space to forge collective ideas outside of capitalist market relations (van Dijck 163).

Here it is understandable to not necessarily negate networked participation but be wary of invoking a construct such as the public sphere, given that Habermas envisioned this as a forum for debate and not necessarily political action. However, still, there are civic possibilities that the social media can offer. Arguably you can still be critical of those networked protocols that dictate and modulate use and conduct online, while remaining cautiously optimistic about the contribution social media can make to opening up the public sphere. It is true that a small number of corporations controls a large percentage of the sites that young people frequent; thus, it is difficult not to be cynical or at least critical of any meaningful political impact that a site such as Facebook or Twitter has to offer.

The unique architectural design of social media has facilitated the ease by which users produce and share content, particularly for young people who are often barred from formal political processes. For Rheingold, this has meant that there are new forms of membership, for Good, this produced new tools to enable participation and civic discussion and for Deuze this meant an increase in participation. Most of these

²⁶ See the section on Edward Snowden in ch. 4.

scholars, follow Peter Dalgren who argues that the “Internet will have—or is already having—an impact on the public sphere” (156). Debates, within this framework focus on how to quantify and qualify the kinds of deliberations that are transpiring online. Yet, as discussed earlier, to have a virtual exchange requires a particular range of critical skills which are not necessarily forthcoming.

Still, what is relevant for young people according to Bennett is that there has been a global trend over the past several years in which they have become increasingly disconnected from the public sphere and have since turned to online social networking sites, gaming, and even consumer pursuits where they perceive that political engagement is occurring (1–2). Part of the reason for this is that this demographic is no longer interested in conventional politics, which require memberships, nor are based on hierarchies. Instead, there appears to be a trend towards more “peer initiated information sharing, organization, and action” (Bennett, Wells, and Freelon 14). We are therefore seeing the beginnings of new civic formations and engagement, as young people come to develop their political subjectivities through connectivity, as opposed to through more traditional forms of sovereignty (Isin ch.1). Yet, how do we qualify or even quantify these cultural practices? Bennett argues that there are two paradigms by which academics typically examine online civic participation: the engaged and disengaged youth models.

The “disengaged youth” paradigm tends to focus on the general decline of government participation while often pointing to the “personalization or privatization of the public sphere” (3). Within this framework, what should not be overlooked is the very real way in which corporations and their marketing teams have sought to privatize elements of the public sphere by creating spaces in which kids feel like their

voices are being heard and taken seriously. The majority of marketing literature that targets kids usually begins by emphasizing how technologically savvy and at ease they are within this age of informationalization.

On the other hand, the “engaged youth” paradigm emphasizes the growing importance of peer-to-peer relations and celebrates the possibilities of learning from the social networking that manifests online. Web 2.0, that is, web applications that facilitate the flow of information by making it easier to produce digital content and to share files, applications, music, videos etc. . . . are presenting new opportunities for participation and perhaps ultimately reformulating the way kids are coming to think about and imagine the public sphere. As Yochai Benkler has argued, “we are witnessing a fundamental change in how individuals can interact with their democracy and experience their role as citizens” (272). As such, the engaged youth paradigm, focuses on the possibilities that social networking platforms, such as blogging tools and even podcasting have to offer, allowing kids to feel more connected to political issues through the communities of young people that they are networking with online.

Kathryn Montgomery argues in “Youth and Digital Democracy: Intersections of Practice, Policy and the Marketplace,” that it is increasingly important to pay attention to the ways in which the Internet “shifts the nature of community from geographic interest-based and challenges traditional definitions of information gatekeepers and authoritative voices” (25). As a result, scholars are starting to document what is now being referred to as “youth civic culture,” which speaks to the way kids are engaging with mediated technologies in order to effect change, offline. Briefly, Montgomery’s case study on “TakingITGlobal” offers a number of online resources such as blogs, discussion boards, podcasts, and instant messaging that are combined within

collaborative action-planning tools to facilitate social connections between international organizations and other youth voices. As of 2013, there are over 130,000 members in over 200 countries. The goal of the site is to support learning, action, and collaborative dialogue on topics related to: Arts and media, culture and identity, human rights and equity, learning and education, environment and urbanization, work and economics, health and wellness, peace, conflict and governance and technology and innovation.

What is unique about “TakingITGlobal” lies in the way this organization has been able to harness all of the tools found in commercial social networking sites like Facebook or MySpace, as well as those found in online virtual communities, and deploy them to improve civic engagement among interested youth. Thus, what scholars are recognizing when they look at this organization is the distinct way it “embeds its social networking tools within the context of civic engagement and activism by providing relevant resources and information tools” (Raynes, Goldie, and Walker 164). Equally, what makes “TakingITGlobal” unique is the way it is able to mobilize and bring kids together to directly take up action on a number of social issues. While there is still very little research that links online to offline participation, Kate Raynes-Goldie and Luke Walker have studied this particular organization in order to put forward a methodology to evaluate the efficacy of online civic engagement sites. What their research did find was that “TakingITGlobal” has been successful at supporting and motivating the kids who use their resources. For example, 73.9 percent of members agreed that the organization changed their perception about their ability to affect change and 63.5 percent were inspired by a young person that they either read about or communicated with online (171).

The conclusions that Raynes-Goldie and Walker draw is that there is a growing movement of youth who are increasingly going on the Internet for information and to organize about civic issues. At the very least, this underlines why so many scholars are excited about the potential online civic engagements sites offer for young people who are keen to build their own networks and effect meaningful, political, social and economic change. The circuits of networked new media thereby provide different possibilities for becoming, by creating real opportunities for kids to exercise their agency. Scholars such as Bennett, McPherson, Montgomery, Jenkins, and others are keen to point to this new civic trend in which kids are increasingly turning to the Internet, learning new skills and participating in diverse international and political forums (Jenkins 4). While the full effects of these recent developments are still unclear, important questions can be raised in terms of how they will impact on a more traditional public sphere and more importantly on our understanding of politics.

The digitization of culture has profound implications for those who are interested in youth studies. Part of what should then be accounted for, are the different ways in which young people are using social media and performing acts of citizenship on their own accord. Perhaps van Dijck, offers the most concrete way forward in her analysis of the public sphere. For her, we need to move beyond any notion that social network represents a new public sphere. She agrees, along with Isin or Dean, that these networked spaces offer an undeniable extension of the private sphere, as we have just discussed in the previous chapter. However, despite this acknowledgment, van Dijck is dissatisfied. For her, the blurring of the lines between public and private is too simplistic and insufficient for theorizing what is actually happening on social networks.

By turning to the film the *Social Network*, van Dijck illustrates how a site like Facebook both shapes sociality while concurrently shapes sociopolitical factors, legal codes, and market forces (173). She therefore concludes by accepting the complexities and contradictions that reside in new mediated spaces of connectivity. For her, another analytic model is required to produce a synergy between participatory or rather civic public values; the legal constraints about privacy and intellectual property; alongside those economic instruments that accrue value (173). By accepting the complexities of how social media have impacted how we have traditionally conceptualized what we have historically deemed as private and/or public will allow us to move beyond these reductive, often times technologically determinist debates. To reiterate, if people are doing social media then it is imperative that as scholars we take this seriously.

While there is always going to be debate about the kind of agency that social media can offer to young people, what remains certain, is that there needs to be a strong understanding of the possibilities (no matter how uneven) that go along with these technologies. Social media are tools that offer possibilities, however, if young people are going to use these tools productively then they need to understand some of the implications about data exploitation (Andrejevic), privacy, alongside some of the more utopian civic possibilities that they embody. Equally, coming back to a point that was raised earlier, there needs to be ways to bridge the gap in cultural capital that plays out in terms of individual levels of data literacy alongside their ability to act as political agents. With each passing election or protest, social media appears to be playing a more central role. To think about this, I now want to turn to my final chapter which will consider pedagogical strategies that have been deployed in primary and

secondary schools so that kids have the skills to both take advantage of and feel empowered when they engage with social media.

Chapter 4: Towards a New Data Literacy: Understanding Privacy in the Age of Big Data

In this final chapter, I move on to some of the more practical concerns about the use of social media in the lives of young people. As I discussed in Chapter 3, Web 2.0 provides an outlet for youth to congregate around relevant political issues. The digital archives they produce neither simply build and extend their sociality with peer groups, or are exploited. As young people grow and become more politically engaged, the digital archive can become a vehicle to facilitate the rapid circulation of discourses and ideas, as has just been illustrated. The movement and modulations of user-generated content provides opportunities for archives to link and/or break apart. Subsequently, the electronic tools now readily available are transforming or at the very least extending how we now come to understand the role of an active citizen in the twenty-first century. Young people who are only now just beginning to use social media need a clearer understanding of how corporations are trying to create opportunities to take advantage of their immaterial labour power. Understanding what privacy means and how it is compromised within the networks of social media becomes of paramount importance in this historical moment.

As we have seen, the myriad social networks that have been designed for the youngest users, from Neopets, to Club Penguin, or to Moshi Monster, are doubly-articulated pedagogical spaces. First, these sites reproduce capitalist ideologies where children learn to play games requiring them to earn money so they can take care of their respective pets, penguins and/or monsters. Put another way, many of these social networks that are geared at younger users are incredibly effective at producing

affective relations with avatars, which translate into a higher ‘sticky’ quotient on these sites. It should be emphasized that learning to care for a virtual pet also entails learning the intricacies of capitalism because the pet, penguin or monster can only reach its full potential when users earn huge sums of money.

Second, these social networking sites ascribe another pedagogical focus for its younger users which is more relevant to this chapter: learning how to use social networks. Revealing personal information and interacting with their friends becomes normalized online, creating a foundation for how they will build and refine their digital archives as they get older. Yet, as we have seen in Chapter 2, privacy is almost always compromised as corporations are learning more sophisticated techniques and practices for extracting the digital content that regularly gets uploaded online. Young people growing up in this hyper-mediated environment, in which their lives are increasingly revealed on social media, require a pedagogy that not only facilitates safe digital interactions, but also alerts them to that prosumer subjectivity through which they are already being interpellated.

Central to this chapter are the participatory possibilities that networked new media afford to young people. Children and their educators require the right tools so that they can begin to interpret the digital archives that they produce. Thus I will contextualize the need for a new digital literacy by outlining how the concept of privacy is being altered by the social, political and economic forces that collectively act upon social networks and their users. Part of my goal is to initiate a dialogue with scholars who uphold the participatory possibilities of social media, while impressing the importance of the skills that young people will need to become citizens in a networked, knowledge-based society.

In an article posted in Preambulation in July 2012, one blogger writes: “Big data is our generation’s civil rights issue, and we don’t even know it” (Alistair, “Big Data”). By drawing attention to how easy it has become to process large amounts of user-generated content, the aim of this blog post was to get people thinking about what it now means to log-on to social networks, while they in turn, log you. Understanding these privacy related issues and how they directly impact the very notion of what privacy means today is paramount for young people to understand. Children are at risk of having a significant number of moments of their lives extracted for surplus value and educators need a more adequate digital literacy approach to deal with the impending impact that big data will have on their everyday lives. Young people require digital literacy tools to learn the mechanics of Web 2.0 technologies, while also being taught how the sharing and distribution of content is increasingly central to civic engagement and public participation (Richards 516; Rheingold).

Another goal of this chapter is to examine a cross-section of the innovative techniques and practices through which educators have invoked Web 2.0 tools in their classrooms. While it would be impossible to document everything, I want to provide insight into this rich and growing body of literature. Here I would like to begin to establish what a new data literacy could look like by considering different exercises, applications and social networks being taken up to get young people to think about how their privacy is compromised online. If being a citizen today entails becoming a digital citizen, schools have a responsibility to prepare students “with the technological and communicative skills necessary to engage civic responsibility in a digital age” (Richards 520). Part of this discussion includes how young people conceptualize their virtual presence and growing digital footprint. Achieving the fine

balance between preparing students for becoming active and engaged while still being critically aware of the rich economic opportunities they represent to marketers will always remain a challenge. Still, it is incumbent on educators to begin this conversation in a way that meaningfully addresses those everyday lived experiences of their students.

Social media is rearticulating how privacy is being understood, particularly as the private and public sphere become slowly indistinguishable from one another (van Dijck; Papacharissi). From this perspective, it is critical to review the literature that conceptualizes how young people understand their own virtual interactions and perceived levels of agency while engaged on these platforms. To introduce technology responsibly into the classroom requires media literacy skills to prepare children for the various ways in which their privacy is inevitably, already compromised.

Towards an Understanding of Privacy

According to a study performed in 2010, Marwick, Diaz, and Palfrey, young people are often perceived as being unaware of the consequences of disclosing too much information about themselves. Yet, as we recall, Davis and James argue that while kids may have a hard time grasping the permanence of what they post, they are still very much aware of the need to safeguard their privacy. Moreover, how young people conceive of their virtual presence is not necessarily the same as adults. As Livingstone argues, privacy, particularly for teenagers, is not necessarily perceived as a singular or stable construct (10).

The means by which teenagers communicate online is based on a desire to share private experiences and to create “spaces of intimacy” amidst the “zones of privacy” that are set up to buffer them against unwanted lurkers (11). In other words, as Livingstone points out, having a virtual presence is complex: “teenagers are, of course, not primarily seeking to maintain their privacy from strangers (else they could simply turn off their computers).” They are at ease with the fact that their virtual lives are always, already compromised (12). This in part helps to explain the attitudes that young people have towards social media, which suggest that those who have grown up on sites such as Facebook already assume that their parents have joined these social networks to ‘spy’ on them (West, Lewis, and Currie 616). Consequently, teenagers in particular²⁷ have sought out strategies to curate their digital archives—finding a balance with the depth of detail they disclose—to keep the content they upload more private (617). For this networked generation, privacy is complex and we should not be searching for one singular reason that makes someone reveal (or not) information about themselves (De Souza and Dick 256).

The starting point for any discussion on privacy must begin with the assumption that young people have always devoted time and effort to presenting themselves favorably to their peers (Livingstone 4). What is different about social media is that sociality can now rapidly flow through an even larger circle of contacts. In addition, the convergence of technologies has facilitated the integration of separate activities such as email, messaging, website creation/curation, diaries, photo album, and music and video uploading and downloading (4) enabling the production and extension of

²⁷ There has not been enough research done on younger demographics, so it is hard to draw conclusions about younger demographics.

unique subjectivities. As Livingstone argues, “From a user’s viewpoint, more than ever before using media means creating as well as receiving, with user control extending far beyond selecting ready-made, mass produced content” (4). What social media then does effectively well, is provide young people with new communicative techniques and practices that can extend both their on and offline social relations. However, mediated practices, such as the uploading of personal information are becoming more firmly entrenched as normative modalities of identity production. Simultaneously, corporations are becoming more effective at extracting meaning from the petabytes of big data that are regularly being extracting from users. As a result, the need for a new politics of privacy is urgent, as is a new approach to media literacy that foregrounds the mining of data.

Privacy is a social construct, not a straightforward concept, making any universal or totalizing notion problematic. Moreover, given the diverse ways in which young people experience social networks, there is no singular way in which this notion is understood or experienced. Conceptualizing privacy becomes even more complex when scholars try to put forward a definition that represents a multi-generational approach. For adults, this construct is commonly understood as a closed, private space (boyd and Marwick 3), yet this concept is not shared by younger users.

According to the research performed by boyd and Marwick in 2012, teens reject the notion that the home is a ‘private space’, mainly since they are prohibited from exerting any meaningful agency (boyd and Marwick). For example, according to 14-year-old Leigh from Iowa: “home is not private, my mom comes and looks in my room and stuff;” or for 16-year-old Heather “my mom makes me feel like it’s not private. I can be taking a shower and she’ll come in, go to the bathroom, and leave.

She has no respect for my personal privacy” (qtd. in boyd and Marwick 3). For young people, privacy is less about the physical configuration of a space and more about who has access and under whose terms. For this younger generation, being online *is* a private experience, particularly for teenagers, who, according to boyd and Marwick, enjoy being outside the watchful eye of their parents. Social media therefore shifts the focus of privacy away from a physical space towards issues that are focused on agency and control over what users make visible inside their digital archives.

Similarly, Livingstone proposes that privacy is not tied to notions of disclosure; rather, it is tightly bound by the ability to exert agency over what is circulating and who can see this information online. Her work suggests that teenagers already have a number of thoughtful strategies in place to ensure that they do not inadvertently reveal something with someone to whom they do not wish to communicate. For example, one interviewee named Ellie states that:

I don't have anything too personal on [MySpace], like, I'm very happy to say I'm Jewish or have conservative political views and I'm happy to say my birthday or I'm from London. There's nothing too detailed that will give anyone too big a picture of me. (10)

And yet, while young people may have a number of ways of coping with revealing information about themselves (which I will discuss in the following section), and while they may increasingly be aware of the consequences that might await them if they do not control their data, there is still a strong push to disclose and post online. Intimacy, is, after all, still maintained by sharing personal details with friends.

We might recall one of boyd's key claims about young people, wherein she argues that they go online because they want to 'be' where their friends are. There is a paradox for this young generation growing up online. On the one hand, they are extremely savvy and knowledgeable about questions relating to privacy, which extend into topics such as sexting (sexual texting), cyber-bullying and other forms of cyber-safety. On the other hand, if they do not cultivate an active digital presence, they run the risk of social isolation (Livingstone 10). The tension between intimacy and privacy creates a contradictory dynamic as young people must contend with those social forces that drive them to both censor and disclose their personal information.

For educators, herein lies an important pedagogical opportunity. While in chapter 2 I spoke about the role privacy policies play in policing the boundaries in which young people upload their data, these do not address the growing need for the skills required to curate that which gets posted online. If the *Huffington Post* is accurate in reporting that 92 percent of children under the age of two already have a digital footprint, then it is no longer a question of *whether* young people will have a traceable digital mark. Instead, we should already assume this to be the case and be actively pursuing questions around how their growing digital presence can be managed. As one insightful blogger writes: "I can see a day in the not too distant future (if it's not already here) where your 'digital footprint' will carry far more weight than anything you might include in a resume or a CV" (Betcher, "Footsteps").

The forces at play in this historical moment dictates that anyone who goes online, via laptop, smartphone or tablet will leave a digital, searchable trace. This puts to task whether privacy is something that can be managed or is simply beyond anyone's control. This is complicated further when considering how should this

conversation be carried out with children? What remains certain is that our understanding of privacy must radically change, underscoring the need for the school system to provide adequate digital and data literacy tools for kids. The most recent Pew Research Foundation report released in May 2013 revealed that 95 percent of teenagers in the United States use social media. Moreover, of these, 42 percent of young people between the ages of 12 and 17 checked their Facebook page at least once a day and regularly upload information about themselves. What we are therefore seeing is an overall trend of personal disclosure as socially networked practices become further entrenched within the everyday life lives of young people. For schools, there is an increased urgency to integrate social media into learning. As a result, governments have begun calling for educational reforms (Leadbeater). These changes include the integration of Web 2.0 technologies in the classroom; however, the impact this will have on learners or how this will shape the education of young people is yet to be determined.

Mainstream voices such as those of Prensky and of Tapscott have painted a consistent picture of a savvy, new “i-Generation” of “i-kids” who remain, as Selwyn argues “plugged into portable, personalized devices such a mobile telephones, mp3 players and handheld game consoles” (365). Yet, even though they are almost always portrayed as knowing more about the Internet than the generations that preceded them, adults and educators fear the worst as young people come to spend more and more time online (Marwick, Diaz, and Palfrey; Turkle). Moreover, according to Rosen, Carrier and Cheever, one of the direct consequences of having such technologically literate young people is the production of a generation who now “hates school” (2). This “rewired” cohort who are used to multitasking and being over-stimulated by

media can no longer focus when presented with traditional approaches to learning. The problem is not curricula, but rather the traditional delivery method which, according to Rosen, Carrier and Cheever, undermines the “technological interests and skills” that young people are acquiring when the online outside the classroom (4). For these scholars, new media needs to play a much larger role in the education of young people to reflect the ways in which students are now learning. In this respect, instead of written assignments and pencils there should be “learning environments” and “avatars” (4-10). While this may be the case, what remains somewhat problematic about their framework is their uncritical approach to the adoption of new technologies in the classroom. Nevertheless, what I wish to retain from their argument is that the education system does need to reflect the media practices of young people.

Schools have an important responsibility to introduce social media, not simply to keep young people from being “bored,” (12) but to insure that equal opportunities are given to all students. According to Forzani and Leu, in 2012, lower income students were often found at a double disadvantage; primarily due to a lack of access to Internet based technologies, but also because they were given “fewer instructional opportunities” (422). Here we can see why educators should incorporate networked new media in the classroom; however, what also needs to be included in their instruction is a well-grounded and critical approach to the various ways in which the social media can compromise privacy. Inevitably, new technologies will be introduced in the classroom, putting more pressure on educators to take a critical approach to helping young people make more informed choices when they are online.

New Politics of Privacies

Taking a larger view, Solove and Schwartz argued in 2009, that there is a distinction to be made between the concept of “privacy”, perceived more as a social value, as opposed to the “right to privacy,” which is understood more within the context of a legal framework. By focusing more on the former, privacy refers to how information is individually valued and controlled,²⁸ predicated around a user’s ability to determine what will circulate in the public domain. And yet, given all we have discussed on the political economic realities of social media, how can we not question if this notion of “control over content” is simply an illusion? Just how much agency do young people actually exert in relation to the data they choose to post about themselves?

The European Convention on Human Rights reminds us that privacy is never something that is absolute and can always be outweighed by other interests such as national security and/or the rights and freedoms of others. All social networking sites like Facebook always have a clause that states that any information that is shared by users may be shared by third parties, which includes both corporate agencies and the state. Users, who agree to these terms and conditions, are, in turn, actively agreeing in advance to forgo ownership and control over the data they both produce and upload. This echoes a concern that I raised earlier: who controls the digital archive? To come

²⁸ Solove argues that privacy includes the following: the right to be left alone; limited access to the self, or the ability to shield oneself from unwanted access by others; secrecy, or the concealment of certain matters from others; control over personal information, or the ability to exercise control over information about oneself; personhood, or the protection of ones’ personality, individual and dignity; and, intimacy, which is to say control over, or limited access to, one’s intimate relationships or aspects of life (Solove qtd. Marwick, Diaz, and Palfrey 6-7).

back to my original argument, I want to raise the spectre of these political and economic issues around privacy precisely because if educators are going to introduce social media into the classroom, then they need to alert their students to privacy risks that young people will be, or are, already encountering.

In the 1990s, with the rise of the Internet, we saw different media literacies introduced into school curricula. According to Hoechsmann and Pointz, one of the goal educators had in delivering these programs to students was to help them establish “a set of competencies that might enable [them] to interpret media texts and institutions, to make media of [their] own, and to recognize and engage with social and political influence of media in everyday life” (1). In other words, there was a push to help students understand the technologies and enable them to become more active participatory users. Media education had a strong focus on representation and a critique of ‘texts’ that were being circulated by a privatized media industry (2). Although this approach is still important, as more and more companies come to rely upon the ‘big data’ that we both actively and passively produce, media literacy needs to be expanded to a ‘digital literacy’ that addresses the myriad ways in which privacy is compromised not just by the exploitation of a user’s immaterial labour, but equally by the passive accumulation of every digital trace that users leave behind, as they move from app to app or from website to website.

While Daniel Solove paints a broad understanding of privacy, Helen Nissenbaum focuses more specifically on digital privacy and divides this broad area into three separate concerns. These areas include: monitoring and tracking; dissemination and publication; and finally, aggregation and analysis (Nissenbaum;

Marwick, Diaz and Palfrey 11). Here I would like to build on these categories and tailor them more specific to social media.

Monitoring and tracking relates to surveillance technologies such as closed-circuit televisions systems (CCTV), RFID tags, tracking cookies and behavioral targeting and marketing. Andrejevic and Fuchs have each written extensively about these concerns, which I have already discussed in my previous chapter on the prosumer. Here, privacy, understood in relation to social media, is about the exploitation of users who constantly upload information about themselves, and in turn, have this taken from them and sold to marketers. More specifically, privacy that relates to forms of digital surveillance is concerned with the technologies which are deployed to track people, both on and offline.

In terms of social media, this first realm in which privacy is compromised by monitoring and tracking apparatuses, is actualized via the constant cultivation of content that users are uploading. Users agree to these practices every time they sign up for a platform that intends to share what they upload with “Third Parties,” a term that typically refers to either marketers or advertisers, although it can mean government organizations. The free access that social media corporations have to content has sparked a host of debates, raising questions around the ethics involved in gathering information about individuals. Kord Davis, co-author of *Ethics of Big Data*, notes in an interview with Forbes magazine that in the United States, there are already significant efforts to draft a “digital bill of rights for the acceptable use of big data.” How Davis defines acceptability, however, is somewhat unclear, although it appears he intends this notion to signify transparency, security and accountability (“Ethics”). The ethical concerns that Davis raises over the mining of user-generated content will,

however, always be challenged by the business interests that rely on data surveillance and the exploitation of the prosumer to maximize profit margins. Andrejevic characterizes this kind of paradox as an example of “digital enclosure” or rather a “second enclosure” devoted to the “enclosure of the intangible commons of the mind” (“Privacy”). More specifically, this is another way of understanding how social media increasingly privatize, control, capture, and commodify the intellectual property of users.

Conceptualizing Privacy: Agency over the Digital Archive?

Privacy can also relate to the proliferation of communicative technologies that enable the rapid deployment and circulation of content. The concerns that students have about safeguarding their privacy typically fall within this category. When privacy is compromised, it will have little to do with the technologies that are passively monitoring them online and everything to do with a networked architecture that facilitates the rapid dissemination of information. Young people want to maintain agency over the content that they generate; however, this is not always possible. Teens in particular try to demarcate boundaries to account for the personal information that they upload, asserting new social norms, predicated on how they interpret networked sociality (boyd and Marwick 16). Unfortunately, what complicates their attempt to rearticulate what they consider to be public and private, particularly as social networks become more widely adopted, are the number of networked publics that young people need to simultaneously manage.

Commonly, when children and teenagers go online, they are not only communicating with their friends, but with their relatives, with their parents, and in

some instances, with their teachers. In addition, not all young people have the same conception of what is deemed appropriate for circulation, making the management of their digital archives a challenge (17). Thus, in “trying to navigate privacy, teens must not only contend with what they choose to share, but what others choose to share about them” (14). When the social norms that govern the on-going maintenance of digital archives are respected, the stickiness that binds networked sociality is maintained. Conversely, when content slips—moving outside of the users capacity to control the message—a profile can become “stuck” and networked relations can externally attach undesired meaning.

Ahmed uses the analogy of becoming stuck to theorize how fear and anxiety cohere onto bodies, displacing or separating subjects through the establishment of affective borders (“Affective” 128). Affect, in this instance, is not actually situated inside particular objects or bodies but rather, as we recall, is “generated [on] the surfaces of collective bodies” (“Affective” 128). Similarly, when young people fail to establish agency over their content, anxiety and fear become magnified as their power over their own digital subjectivity moves outside of their digital archive, making them vulnerable. In this instance, those networked—collective bodies—that reside both inside and outside a user’s network have the power to produce meaning through the ongoing repetition of sticky words, photographs, videos or links. The threat of meaning becoming stuck is a constant concern, which has propelled a number of sophisticated techniques and practices to maximize control of what content a user chooses to represent themselves online.

According to Davis and James, younger users between the ages of nine and fourteen already take their privacy management seriously. These are the four most

common techniques that they observed in their 2013 study: withholding strategies; proactive strategies; interactions with others; and finally, reflection. Briefly, withholding strategies, mirror discerning practices related to disclosure that were also observed by other scholars²⁹ who have studied slightly older demographics. Many of the children that Davis and James interviewed spoke about “inappropriate” and “appropriate” categories of content, such as Lindsay, age 11, who states “I don’t like giving information about me because I think it’s going to be embarrassing, so I just keep it to myself” (qtd. in Davis and James 16). Here we see evidence of this girl’s clear awareness about how her information might circulate. By asserting control over her posts, Lindsay is trying to preempt certain meanings from becoming stuck onto her digital archive.

Second, proactive strategies relate to how young people adjust the privacy settings on their social networks to “friends-only” (16). Other practices include untagging themselves from photographs; monitoring comments when they have been tagged and in some instances; using the diverse media channels so that can have more private discussions with their friends (i.e. SMS or chatrooms), as well as using deceptive tactics, such as a false name or the circulating false information. This last tactic raises several questions around the ethical considerations of directly misleading friends. For educators, this is perhaps an area for student engagement, that is, to consider how a young person’s decision to intentionally mislead their peers might have unintended social consequences. Equally of interest, as Davis and James point

²⁹ See Marwick, Diaz and Palfrey (2010) and boyd and Marwick (2011).

out in their research, it is often parents who are encouraging their children to adopt false identities so that their children will remain safer when they are online (16).

Third, interactions with others is a strategy seen more in the social media habits of younger demographics who are still close enough with their parents and seek out their advice for making decisions about how to manage online content. In Davis and James study, 79 percent of their sample conferred with close relations and 64 percent sought out the advice of their parents. Moreover, most of these interactions were voluntary, meaning that young people actively wanted guidance when they were unsure about what to post or about when something was posted about them, making them uncomfortable. Newer digital practices of young people become more apparent here, as Davis and James observed, with some even seeking the permission of friends before tagging pictures of them. These kinds of conversations will also need to be taken seriously by educators, who must facilitate safer and respectful practices for their students.

Finally, Davis and James put forward the practice of reflection, in which students are now learning to “think before you post” (18), capturing some of the decision making that goes into uploading content online. In the words of one 12-year-old that they interviewed “you have to think before you put stuff up. Because when you put something on the Internet, it stays there...So anybody can always find you and your stuff” (18). Young people, however, do not simply learn these privacy strategies. Indeed, there are a number of organizations that are dedicated to helping them learn how to safely use social media.

Common Sense Media, which is a not-for-profit American organization, has taken a leading role in creating and disseminating free tools and materials for teachers

and parents, to raise awareness about these various reflective techniques and practices.

For example, their workshop on the production of digital footprints is exemplary.

This module is geared towards students between the ages of 11 and 14 years old and is meant to raise awareness about the permanence of the information they upload or is posted about them by their peers. The educator running the digital footprint workshop divides the students into groups of approximately four members and explains that they are the producers for a game show. The students are then told that the show is hiring a new host and that they have to decide between the two preselected candidates. Two dossiers are presented which include several pieces of information that have been ‘dug up’ by a secret investigator. Some of the information provided includes Facebook pages, old newspaper clips, and blog posts that the two imaginary candidates had made available online. The job the students have is to sift through all of the material and determine which of the two possible candidates appears to be the most trustworthy and which of them is best at working with others. They are then given about ten minutes to examine the two digital dossiers and make their decision.

Ultimately, both candidates have inherently flawed profiles. The information that they provide in their interview packages stands in contradiction to what the students are meant to find out about each of the applicants. For example, the female candidate appears ‘normal’ in the picture she submits for the interview; however in her Facebook profile she has pink hair and looks unprofessional. She also claims to be a chef; however, in a blog post she admits to passing someone else’s recipe off as her own. The male candidate states that he is married in his application; however, his Facebook status clearly shows that he is single. The students are also given an old

newspaper clipping that showed he had been found for using steroids in high school and was subsequently disqualified from the wrestling team.

The point of this participatory exercise on digital footprints is two-fold. Primarily, the activity aims to get young people to think reflectively about the information they post online. According to a 2007 article on CNet:

Employers are increasingly checking out online personal information about candidates when making recruitment decisions. Net reputations ...can have a significant effect when applying for a job...one in five employers finds information about candidates on the Internet, and 59 percent of those said it influences recruitment decisions. (Ferguson “Employers”)

Given that one of the challenges for young people is in thinking about how the information they upload both circulates and remains permanent (boyd), it is useful to have them play the role of the employer. Moreover, according to Seale, in 2009 already 85 percent of employers were doing Internet background checks before hiring employees. Today, as social media use only continues to increase, we can assume that these figures will become even higher.

Common Sense Media’s activity also emphasizes how easy it is to start making assumptions about someone based on their Internet profile. To go back to the exercise, one might assume that the male candidate was a substance abuser, based on his consumption of steroids that was outlined in his profile. For this imaginary young man, it is going to be challenging to move away from his past. These actions will follow him wherever he goes, and, like the students who performed this activity, the mistakes he made when he was young might always hinder his future prospects if

people make negative assumptions about his character. For young people, this part of the exercise is critical as it allows them to begin to think about the permanence of the information that might circulate about them in the public domain. Common Sense Media's activity concludes by presenting everyone with a picture of a footprint. Students are told to fill this diagram with the information they *want* people to find about them online and to think about what they consider as private and therefore not for wider circulation. Such activities, however basic, are a starting point for a larger dialogue on social media habits and, more importantly, on how young people make sense of their own practices when they are online.

If young people are increasingly living their lives within the circuits of social media, there needs to be strategies put into place that facilitate more reflexive use of these technologies, which, in this case, involves thinking about the permanence and circulation of what they post. Activities such as the one prepared by Common Sense Media empower students with a sense of agency, encouraging them to take control over what they choose to post about both themselves and their peers. Privacy, in this sense, is predicated on the information that circulates about young people within the public domain. However, what about the information that is more passively gathered—that is, the traces that children leave as they move around the Internet?

Conceptualizing Privacy: Big Data, Algorithms and a New Aggregated Subject

We have just examined privacy in terms of surveillance as well as with respect to the circulation of content by users who want to maintain agency over what they post. The final category of digital privacy that is relevant in our discussion relates to the surveillance of user-generated content; however, this needs to be extended to include an emphasis on the increasing computational power of sites such as Google or Facebook. This other realm of privacy, which is only in its infancy, encompasses the processing of “big data.”

The significance of big data lies not in the amount of data that social networking sites have been able to accrue about users. What has changed, as we have already discussed elsewhere, is the ability to synthesize all of this information into useable patterns. In this sense, big data is not even the right term, as what data scientists have really succeeded in doing, is turning that big data into something small that can be accessed on a desktop. As Alistair Croll points out, with the advent of cloud computing and new platforms such as Hadoop, analyzing massive amounts of data has suddenly become inexpensive. In turn, “when things become so cheap that they’re practically free, big changes happen...Abundance replaces scarcity, and we invent new business models” (Croll, “Big Data”).

According to Edd Dumbill from the O’Reilly Radar: no one has the “technological infrastructure to manage privacy” (Havens, “Big Data”). In other words, there are many questions and concerns with regard to big data analytics, mainly due to some of the complicated agreements that sites are beginning to undertake. One example cited by Croll relates to someone who had his line of credit lowered based on his purchasing history. When this person confronted American

Express as asked why he was being penalized, despite his good credit standing, he was told that: “Other customers who have used their card at establishments where you recently shopped have a poor repayment history with American Express” (“Big Data”). In other words, what American express can now do is easily track what its customers are buying, and use an algorithm to determine who will be the most likely to repay their credit card bills. The computational power that would have been required before would have made this too expensive, and hence impossible. Now, as databases can quickly calculate a high volume and variety of data, what we will increasingly see are tailor made credit card limits. As a result, we should already be imagining new discourses on data discrimination that will erupt, not only around financial issues, but around medical insurance/histories, education, employment, etc.

Facebook has been an important pioneer in the exploitation of big data, and since 2012 has undergone a number of strategic mergers with companies in order to ascertain a more complex understanding of their users’ everyday practices, likes, and habits. For example, in early 2013, Facebook partnered with BlueKai, Acxiom, Epsilon and Datalogix, four companies that specialize in analytic marketing (Edwards, “Facebook”). In addition, in May 2013 they acquired Atlas Advertising Suite, an online server and measurement company that was originally owned by Microsoft (Constine, “Facebook”). For Facebook, this has meant they will now be able to track users’ Internet habits in a much more comprehensive manner, whether they are on their site or purchasing an item somewhere else. They will be able to do this because the marketing sites that they have partnered with already have access to different user-generated databases that exist outside of Facebook. By making these strategic

alliances, a much richer body of information can now be made available about users, making the site an even more valuable commodity.

The future for users who are on social media, whether this be Facebook or even Yahoo which bought Tumblr in May 2013 for 1.1 billion dollars, is the comprehensive syntheses of every digital trace that is left behind as people make their way through cyberspace (Lunden, “Yahoo”). When Facebook was first conceived, user-generated data was contained on the actual site in which it originated. Just a few years later, as of 2013, Facebook has acquired Atlas, making them one of the largest ad server online, second only to Google, but, more importantly, it has allowed them to form a much more comprehensive and *intimate* understanding of its users. By so doing, they will be able to further specialize and target advertising for the marketers who helped the company generate six billion dollars in profit in 2013. Or rather, more accurately: “Facebook's users are on pace to make the company \$6 billion this year without a penny in return” (Oremus, “Digital Robber Barons”)!

To put this in perspective, let us consider why Facebook’s stock fell when it went public. When the company first put its shares on the market, they were listed at \$38.00 in May 2012, by August they had fallen to \$18.75. Part of the reason for this initial drop was the company’s inability to make money off of its mobile users, specifically since Facebook initial smartphone application did not display any ads.

Since the time when Facebook’s stock crashed, the company developed a number of ways to target smartphone users, putting forward more useful tools to marketers. In late 2012, the ‘Custom Audience’ algorithm was launched. This specialized program has enabled marketers to easily gain access to Facebook data, allowing corporations to now extend what they already know about the pre-

established markets (Constine, “Facebook”). They do so by imputing the email addresses or user IDs that they already have from their own research into Facebook’s algorithm, in turn, marketers can access more information about their known targeted demographics. By so doing, they are able to gain very specific access to user profile pages on Facebook. In other words, marketers can now examine the Facebook data of the audiences they have already identified. Advertisers can therefore take a measured approach to learn more about their consumer markets while simultaneously becoming more efficient at targeting demographics they have already identified via their own market research.

Vastly superior algorithms such as ‘Custom Audience’ have enabled marketers to regain confidence in Facebook, resulting in a significant increase in their stock prices, which, as of July 2013 are at \$34.01 (NASDAQ, “Facebook”). As newer algorithms are developed to sift through the terabytes of user-generated data, more specific patterns will be found, raising the question about what the ‘real’ function of Facebook actually is (Greenfield). The regulations around big data are still in their infancy and while it may be a challenge to teach this to students, awareness needs to be raised about the extent to which every digital trace can be easily rendered into useable information. Young people need to be aware that privacy is not a singular construct. It is not only about maintaining agency over content, it is equally about becoming aware of those algorithms that usher in new ontological positions, particularly as they become more active and sentient. Without a clear understanding of computational power, how can young people meaningfully take precautionary steps when they are interacting online?

Developing a much more comprehensive understanding of what is driving the profit motivations and the overall big data project that social media giants like Facebook have undertaken will allow educators to integrate these privacy concerns into their classroom teaching. For young people and particularly for children who will grow up in this environment, it means that more and more of their lives, tastes, ideas, and preferences will potentially be mapped out for profit. One young Masters student, Federico Zannier, at New York University, has decided to take matters into his own hands. Being acutely aware of the ways in which he has been turned into a prosumer, Zannier has dedicated his project to making a profit on his own data.

In May 2013, Zannier launched a Kickstarter campaign to raise awareness about the exploitation of people's data.³⁰ How is he doing this? By “violating his own privacy.” Starting in February 2013, Zannier extracted all the personal data he produced, online, in 50 days. He gathered everything from every web page he visited, as well as all his emails, chat logs, location data, browser history, photographs, screenshots, and even his mouse pointer movements. To document the data he gathered about himself, Zannier put together an extremely clever website³¹ that resembles an old fashion animation flipbook, activated when a site visitor scrolls down to examine his content. He begins by telling his audience that he has gathered the entire HTML, CSS and Java Script of every website he has ever visited, which

³⁰ This is a fundraising website that allows the user to crowd source funding from potential donors. Typically, whoever wants to raise money will establish a their goal and timeline. If they do not receive the amount of money by the date they set out then all of the donors will not have their donations debited from their accounts (The website Gawker used this approach to raise \$200,000 to purchase an alleged video of Toronto's mayor Rob Ford smoking crack cocaine).

³¹ Zannier's website can be accessed here: <http://myprivacy.info/>

includes 44,964 files that he has placed in 71 folders. He then provides a more visual understanding of exactly how much information that actually includes, stating that it equates to 2,800,855 lines of text, which would fill 1500 books. As you scroll down the site, he continues to list and detail everything he has extracted about himself.

Zannier's intention is to bring awareness to the massive amount of data that is regularly taken from users. By so doing, he is attempting to take control and profit from his own data.

Zannier's simple, yet significant act of reclaiming his data and selling it for two dollars per day draws awareness to what is taken from users without consent or recognition. On his Kickstarter page, he writes that people who give him this nominal fee will receive: "around 70 websites [he] visited; 500 screenshots; 500 webcam images; a recording of all of [his] mouse cursor movements; [his] GPS location; and an application log" (Zannier, "Bite of Me"). His argument culminates in an effective point that corporations have been mining personal data from users for years, in order to make a profit. On his website he states that in 2012, the amount of advertising revenue that was generated in the United States was over 30 billion dollars, up 4.8 billion from 2011. In 2013, this revenue could possibly exceed 40 billion (Zannier, "my privacy"; IAB). The Interactive Advertising Bureau (IAB) echoes the 'excitement' over the amount of revenue that is now being generated. On their website they write: "Internet advertising revenue continues to exhibit double-digit growth, even as the business matures...This is an accomplishment that can be attributed to growing recognition by marketers that digital advertising is a critical part of all marketing in today's world." (IAB 2013, "Internet Revenue"). Zannier concludes by telling his audience that, while these revenues are higher than ever, *his* income in

2012 amounted to nothing. His final statement is therefore: “2013 has to be different. Data is a hot commodity. I start by selling my personal data for \$2 a day” (“my privacy”).

While, ironically enough, Zannier’s project may inadvertently compromise the privacy of others, particularly if he is giving up all of his personal emails and photographs, it raises key issues around ownership and privacy with regards to the circulation of personal information. By drawing attention to the amount of information that one person regularly produces, and then by asking for donations for what individuals passively generate, Zannier’s performative project draws attention to the kinds of data that are processed by algorithms and draws our attention to the economic value imbedded in the passive habits of users. This project therefore alerts us to the free labour of the prosumer, and tries to capitalize on an economic relationship that almost always favors the exploitation of the user. Introducing examples like Zannier’s into the classroom can impress upon students the extent to which their digital habits are being exploited. This, in turn, introduce the next discussion point of explaining how all of these discrete moments in which data is produced online are now being synthesized as algorithms become more sophisticated.

The stakes that are involved with big data are becoming more apparent. In June 2013, both the *Guardian* and the *Washington Post* received documents from Edward Snowden, a 29-year-old technical assistant working with the National Security Agency (NSA) in the United States. According to these sources, after leaking a 42 page PowerPoint presentation that outlined a surveillance program known as PRISM, Snowden is being heralded as one of “America’s most consequential whistle-blowers” (Greenwald, MacAskill and Poitras, “Snowden”). Allegedly, this program will allow

the NSA to examine, collate, monitor and cross-check data that that they are gathering from various Internet companies which include: Microsoft, Yahoo, Facebook, Google, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube and Apple (McCarthy “NSA Tool”). Not surprisingly, all of the companies that were named by the Guardian website denied the existence of this program or of their involvement with the NSA. In a statement made by Mark Zuckerberg, he wrote: “Facebook is not and has never been part of any program to give the U.S. or any other government direct access to our servers” (qtd. in Franceschi-Bicchierai, “Prism”). Moreover, Google wrote that they equally had “not joined any program that would give the U.S. government—or any other government—direct access to [their] servers” (qtd. in “Prism”). Although some speculate that Prism does not require direct but rather “side door” access to these sites, Snowden felt strongly enough that the privacy of American citizens has been significantly compromised. In an interview with the *Guardian* he said: “I don’t see myself as a hero...because what I’m doing is self-interested: I don’t want to live in a world where there’s no privacy and therefore no room for intellectual exploration and creativity” (Greenwald, MacAskill, and Poitras, “Snowden”).

The point of raising this example is not to become consumed with all of the fearful possibilities of using social media, but again to underline the stakes that are involved in the increasing use of these technologies. The extent to which privacy is or can be violated is only just now being understood; therefore, if we are going to encourage teachers to take up these practices in the classroom, we need to be aware of the potential pitfalls that may be attached and move towards a data literacy that can be taught to younger demographics.

While one instinct may be to shy away from the use of all of these media platforms out of fear, arguably a better approach is to acknowledge that the percentage of young people using social media is increasing. As such, tools are required to facilitate safer uses of these technologies. This sentiment is echoed by Craig Watkins, who argues that young people's use of social media needs to be integrated into the curricula. He thereby emphasizes that the mediated practices of children are "forcing" educators to rethink the use of social media within curriculum design (28). In the words of one elementary school teacher he interviewed:

The technology is here and it's not going away...if we don't teach our children about using technology responsibly, then we are failing an important part of our mission as educators...Just like we teach them how to read and write, we need to teach them how to use MySpace and other digital tools more responsibly (29).

The importance of integrating digital practices into the classroom is echoed even more strongly by those who are concerned with socio-economic disparities among students. The growing consensus here is that students who lack in cultural and economic capital run a higher risk of making poor choices as they embrace social media (29). Schools there have a responsibility to introduce digital tools and literacies to students.

With this in mind, we still need to remain aware of the larger political and ideological agendas that remain at play with respect to discourses that position children as both "digital natives" and "digitally naïve."³² Here, Neil Selwyn's work is useful, offering an important analysis that criticizes totalizing discursive frames. Too often, there is a perceived generational divide which ascribes almost mythological

³² See the work of Marc Prensky; Don Tapscott and/or John Palfrey and Urs Gasser.

characteristics onto children, setting them apart from older generations or “the digital immigrants” according Palfrey and Urs. As Selwyn argues: “some commentators are now portraying the children and young people of the 2000s in specific terms of “generation M” (media), “generation V” (virtual) or “generation C” (referring to characteristics such as connected, creative and click)” (365).³³ The mythology for the “digital native” culminates in a subject who is “innately hardwired” and has a natural affinity with digital media (365). Conversely, the literature also depicts this new generation, as naïve and in need of protection. Within this discursive realm, the ‘child’ is never fully outside of the metaphor that stands in for larger agendas in society. Too often, when this construct is taken up, it occurs externally as either a utopian site of renewal and becoming or by apparatuses that seek to reproduce hegemonic ideologies. In both instances, the material subject of the child is elided. The complexity that is attached to this discursive body is always actualized somewhere in the middle of forces that seek to render it productive.

In the case of social media technologies, we cannot overlook the high levels of public anxiety felt around the rapidly increasing use of these digital platforms, particularly in relations to privacy. We must therefore be careful that the “digital native” nor the “digitally naïve” do not, as Selwyn argues “become a rhetorical device for the expression of adult concerns over developments in digital technology” (376). In other words, in formulating those anxieties, which for parents stem from feelings of helplessness and a lack of control over their children’s increasing media habits (Kaiser Family Foundation), we must be careful not to have these feelings obfuscate what is

³³ See also Veen and Vrakking; Rideout, Roberts and Foehr.

actually happening when young people go online. A digital literacy tool kit must therefore, already assume that kids are active participants, as opposed to figurative constructs that stand in as a receptacle for larger social concerns.

Towards a Data Literacy Toolkit

Media Smarts, a Canadian not-for-profit organization for digital and media literacy, has developed a number of online activities that provide educators with free and easily accessible models that they can be integrated into classroom learning or done at home. Most notable is Media Smarts' unit entitled "Privacy Pirates," which was launched in 2011. The purpose of this module is to help children between the ages of seven and nine learn about how valuable their personal information is and what is safe to share online. This unit offers the first step in bringing awareness to young people about their digital presence and more importantly about the presence of others who are interested in what they actively decide to circulate. If we are going to assume that young people have agency within the parameters of social media, we must equally not assume that building resilience in these spaces happens entirely autonomously. Given that the average age of children who started using the Internet in 2011 was just four years old, down from the age ten in 2009 (and perhaps now it is even lower with the increased use of tablets and smartphones), the active involvement of parents and educators in developing positive and healthy online behavior is clearly necessary (Media Smarts, "Privacy").

In a backgrounder provided to parents, Media Smarts notes that, in 2005, 95 percent of the top 20 websites that kids between the ages of eight and seventeen were visiting had significant commercial content. Moreover, given that most youth-

oriented sites actively solicit personal information through contests and surveys or that sites like Club Penguin, Minecraft, or Moshi Monster provide opportunities for kids to socialize with other people, a number of privacy concerns are immediately raised.

Media Smarts' 'Privacy Pirates' module begins with a simple premise: your information is valuable and should therefore be protected. To illustrate this point, the game begins with a wise looking old man who says:

Long ago, the map to the treasure of Internet Island was cut up into nine pieces. Now pirates who want your privacy have the pieces. If you can answer each pirate's question, you can put the map together and find the treasure! ("Privacy Pirates")

After answering his first five broadly questions on Internet privacy, students are allowed to set sail for Privacy Island where they meet nine pirates, who represent the nine areas of privacy that Media Smarts has identified. These areas include: Personal Identification, photos and videos, parental consent, passwords, privacy policies, digital footprint, sharing data, and data mining. Each of these areas, carry important learning opportunities for children, which I would like to discuss with some detail.

Briefly, the category of personal information gets children thinking about giving out their name, age, email addresses or other intimate details. Given the multiple ways in which privacy can be violated on-line, children need to think about to whom they should be giving out their personal information. According to one study performed by Livingstone and Haddon in 2009, disclosing personal details is the most common risky behavior observed in relation to young people in the United Kingdom. Thus to ensure that marketers do not receive additional information and to ensure children remain safe from strangers, being discerning is important.

Second, the site attempts to establish an etiquette around the circulation of photos and videos. Here, Media Smarts, teaches children how they can represent themselves without having to actually use photographs, as well as provide them with techniques on what to do if someone asks for their photographs. Of course, while such practices may work for younger children, once mobile phones are introduced, which, according to 2013 Pew Foundation study is happening at a younger and younger age,³⁴ this preliminary approach will not be enough. As we are seeing, social networks such as Instagram or Kik, which facilitate the circulation of photographs in particular, are becoming popular amongst young people between the ages of twelve and fourteen (Shamberg). Slightly more nuanced privacy practices, might be to alert children to the “geotags,” that is, location-based tags that are impregnated into all photographs that are taken with smart phones. There are easy ways in which these can be turned off; however, the ‘opt out’ nature of privacy agreements together with the fact that parents and their children may not necessarily be alert to the mechanisms that passively gather information, puts them at risk of disclosing more than intended.

The third area that Privacy Pirates addresses is parental consent, to impress on children the importance of having a trusted relationship with an adult who they can turn to when they are unsure about posting information online. Ideally, building trust will facilitate good decision-making and provide a safe place to turn, if young people ever find themselves in a challenging situation online. The fourth, area covered is passwords. The purpose of this section is two-fold. First, it provides kids with good strategies to make a strong password and secondly it impresses the importance of not

³⁴ According to the Pew Foundation, 78 percent of teens between the ages of 12 and 17 have a mobile phone. More precisely, 68 percent of girls and 65 percent of boys between the ages of 12 and 13 have mobile phones (Madden et. al. “Pew Technology 2013”).

sharing these passwords with any of their friends. According to the research performed by Sharples et. al. in 2009, because children often associate closeness with sharing, it is not uncommon for friends to share passwords with each other. This practice has potentially negative effects, particularly in there is a falling out.

Unlike other cybersafety games, such as PBS' Webonauts Internet Academy, Privacy Pirates also takes privacy policies seriously. In this fifth section, the site acknowledges how challenging these agreements are to read, but stresses the importance of reading them with an adult. While the average person does not read through these agreements, and according Vedantam it would take 250 hours to actually read through all the documentation that most people simply click through, understanding how and if data is going to solicited are good habits to establish ("Web Privacy Policies"). By so doing, children and their parents can gain a clearer understanding of what information can and cannot be taken from them by the website they are on.

The sixth area addressed by Privacy Pirates is the digital footprint to teach kids about the permanence of everything they post online. As we recall, while children possess increasingly sophisticated abilities about posting information on-line, grasping the permanence of their posts can still be challenging. Closely related are techniques around sharing data. This seventh section, which tries to help young people decide what to upload, how to keep certain things private and introduces an etiquette for considering other people's privacy. The final topic that Privacy Pirates addresses is data mining. Here Media Smarts what to draw attention to the number of quizzes and surveys that young people are often invited to fill out when they are online. Neopets often uses this tactic to gain more information about its users who are logged in. By

explaining the possible consequences that exist when young people agree to particular privacy agreements, this game begins a conversation about how children from a young age are already being interpellated as prosumers (Privacy Pirates, “Backgrounder”).

When children go to play Privacy Pirates and begin to answer questions, each of the pirates has a number of questions about their specific area of privacy that are randomly generated. Media Smarts purposely chose this format so that students could work alongside one another in the classroom and have a unique learning experience. Since each student would have a similar yet different questions, the discussion that could then take place in the classroom, once the game is over, would ideally be more comprehensive (based on all the different question everyone had to answer). ‘Privacy Pirates’ is useful not only in the way it provides a multifaceted approach to digital privacy but also because it seeks to empower kids by teaching them strategies on how to take control of their own information. Similar to the exercise on digital footprints found on Common Sense Media’s website, Media Smarts wants to facilitate a more informed approach that assumes that students’ use of networked environments will only increase and become more complex as they get older. Moreover, by incorporating a mentor throughout the game, they are equally trying to instill in children the importance of asking a parent or teacher questions when they are unsure about what to do. Through collaboration, children and adults can work together towards establishing safer practices.

While “Privacy Pirates” alerts us to the economic sources that value personal information, it does not show us how much personal data is being accumulated, nor circulating amongst those ‘Third Parties’ (as discussed in the privacy policies). Another category that needs to be added is the critical examination of the algorithms

being used to produce commodified subjectivities. How are users implicated within an economic framework that is predicated on procuring their digital traces? While in some respect it is impossible to control the data that is left behind, there are still some traces that can be tracked. A simple exercise such as Googling oneself is a powerful and effective way to find out what is readily and easily accessible by others. To then go back to the digital archive, the normative practices around the gathering of big data, creates a need for new digital techniques and practices to allow students to remain, at least in some way, in control of their digital traces by developing more sophisticated data modes of curation.

Despite the privacy concerns in relation to social media, the participatory architecture of Web 2.0 technologies should not be underestimated. Educators want to use social media in their classrooms, believing that if implemented correctly, it can have enormous pedagogical potential and impact. For example, the individualistic and collaborative architecture of weblogs have made them useful tools for improving literacy in the classroom through storytelling and dialogue (Huffaker, “Using Blogs”). According to David Huffaker, these virtual platforms can represent a “personal space to read and write alongside a communal one, where ideas are shared, questions are asked and answered, and social cohesion is developed” (“Using Weblogs”). Knowing how to use tools such as blogs is becoming even more important particularly as Bennett, Maton and Kervin have argued that young people often lack the skills to take advantage of the more collaborative and creative potential of social media. Partly, this is due to the uneven socio-economic backgrounds of students, which ultimately should put pressure on the education system to diminish this gap (779). From this perspective, while there must be a clear understanding of the concerns around privacy

that relate to social media, schools are equally put in a position to guide students—our future citizens—in their use of technology; the skills they develop; and, in thinking about socially responsible ways in which it can be used (Moll and Hengstler 2).

While Bennett points out that there are increasingly commercial activities that occur on social networks, he still invites us to consider the possibilities that these platforms afford, facilitating more connected and engaged youth. It is important to recall the civic opportunities impregnated in social media just as we need to consider issues around privacy. However, if we are going to take advantage of the civic opportunities, there needs to be support for educators. As Moll and Hengstler found in their study, while many teachers are starting to join social networks and want to incorporate them into their classrooms, many expressed a need for guidance and professional development and have expressed frustration about how school districts will often block access to the use of these tools in their classrooms (7). Since 2012, many educators have begun to join Edmodo, a social network for teachers and students who want to connect, collaborate and share best practices. What is appealing about this social network is that it incorporates all of the same features of Facebook, however, it is a closed circuit making the privacy of users far more secure.

Educators endorse Edmodo because it facilitates a means of continuing classroom discussion online, providing opportunities for both students and teachers to post information. It therefore promotes peer-based learning and at least aspires to create a peer-support environment taking advantage of those collaborative and participatory features of Web 2.0 technologies.³⁵ Within this platform, teachers have

³⁵ Of course the teacher who is using Edmodo will have the largest impact on how effectively it is deployed within the classroom.

most of the power. They can use it to circulate basic summaries about the material being covered, post homework, give out basic quizzes or conduct polls to assess if students grasp the content they are covering in class. Educators also interested in the ‘Teacher Connection’ component of Edmodo, which allows them to connect with other educators and share their best practices. Since its launch in 2011, there are 18 million people on this network (Empson).³⁶

One final example of a more secure social network that is now being used in the classroom and is worth noting is called “Celly.” Many teachers appear to be quite excited about this social network; the motto on their website is that “small messages change the world so we built a place where your will message will build movements, inspire learning, level playing fields and promote a free speech...we call this place a cell” (Jeffries, “Celly”). This social network is based on an app and thereby on mobile technology. Essentially it provides a means for students and teachers to set up a private communication network. Multiple groups can therefore be established linking teachers with students, teachers with parents, or the school with the wider community. Interestingly, the history of Celly began with the Occupy Wall Street Movement in 2011. At that time, protestors needed a secure way to communicate with one another in a private and effective way. The ‘Cells’ that Celly allowed users to create fulfilled this need, leading to over 4000 members joining with over a dozen groups (Jeffries,

³⁶ It should be stressed that technologies like Edmodo assume that all children have access to computers or laptops at home. Clearly this is not the case for everyone, particularly those at risk in lower socio-economic homes. This problem needs to be acknowledged to implement social networks in the classroom. Equally, given how new these social networks are, there may be other privacy issues which relate to teachers actually them. For example, will these social networks provide a means for upper administrations to monitor their staff’s performance in the classroom, creating unforeseen power imbalances?

“Celly”). Since then, it has been developed to use in the classroom and increasingly businesses and other government organizations are beginning to adopt this technology. Students can download the app and create closed group discussion. Instead of chatting online, they can keep information private between themselves. Schools like it because it can allow teachers and parents to set up closed discussions or it can be used by the administration to send messages/announcements home about students.

What examples like Edmodo and Celly point to is the inevitability that myriad technologies are finding their way into the classroom. A simple search on Twitter with the hashtags #social media and #classroom yields thousands of posts, the majority of which have been made by teachers who want to share their digital practices with others. In many respects, educators have not moved far away from John Dewey’s initial assertion, where he explained that “learners lived experiences and concerns about their own day-to-day environment are at the root of the meaning-making process” (Dewey qtd. in Hobbs and Jenson 2). Today, however, in order to reach young people, as Rosen, Carrier and Cheever argue, we must become immersed in their ‘day-to-day’ environment. Yet, before embracing all of these new technologies in the classroom, it is critical that educators help their students to understand the implications of what life online actual means. Digital literacy cannot simply be about learning new digital techniques and practices. Digital literacy needs to provide a foundation for a critical understanding of privacy so that educators can emphasize the myriad ways in which data is being captured. Moving towards a more comprehensive pedagogical approach can empower young people so they will not only carefully consider what goes into their digital archives, but just as importantly,

consider where that user-generated content might go. If the struggle over data is truly this generation's human rights issue, young people need to know what this means and how they are already implicated.

Conclusion: Towards a New Politics of the Digital Archive

Throughout the body of this work, I have provided a theoretical foundation for understanding the digital practices of children and youth. By conceptualizing the digital archive, I have laid out a comprehensive framework that accounts for the following pressing issues: i) economic concerns, foregrounded in how user-generated content has become an integral source of surplus value for the networked economy; ii) privacy concerns, which relate to the privacy agreements to which young people must consent when they join social networks, questions around the rearticulation of private and public spheres online, and, the growing importance placed on the computational power of algorithms required to process big data; iii) the extended and intensified sociality engendered by networked affective spaces which produce new ways for young people to engage with their peers and produce subjectivities; and, iv) the political possibilities circulating both discursively and as acts of civic engagement.

While I remain cautiously optimistic, there is a strong need to provide young people with digital tools, given the numbers of hours they spend on social media. As I have argued, increased connectivity may have somewhat ameliorated the digital divide, although issues of access remain, especially on a global scale. As importantly, however, more ubiquitous access does not necessarily equip young users to understand the myriad challenges accompanying a profoundly networked and mediated existence, which is precisely why more pedagogical techniques and practices are required. In response to that need, I have outlined why educators should integrate data literacy as opposed to media literacy in the

classroom. This pedagogical project needs to emphasize the various ways in which privacy can be violated or that user-generated content can be exploited. Moreover, it needs to provide ways to empower young people as they continue to use social media. Given the prevalent role these platforms play and will continue to play in their lives, educators and parents have a responsibility to not only help children and youth appreciate how their immaterial labour is being cultivated, but equally, to provide them with valuable skills that will facilitate new forms of sociality and civic engagement, such as the cultural citizen that I have already discussed.

Young people coming of age in this historical moment require a more nuanced critique of social media. However, if it is to be persuasive and efficacious, such a critical perspective needs to acknowledge the importance of how affect is produced and circulated as young users connect with their peers. By theorizing the profiles that users produce on social networks as archives of feeling, I have accounted for the intentionality that goes into every immaterial object that gets uploaded online. The statuses, links, photographs or videos are steeped in affective meaning and serve to extend online sociality, enabling users to produce new subjectivities through their respective digital archives. Subjectivities, from this perspective, are always produced in relation to others, particularly when archival artifacts stick onto the surfaces of profiles and propel those affective relations to circulate even more intensely.

As scholars, if we want to converse with youth, we cannot underestimate why social networks are desirable social spaces. Sociality is undeniably being extended on-line. As I have argued, this extension is not totalizing, nor is it

creating a new public sphere; rather, it is changing the ecology of how young people communicate. The “culture of disclosure” requires this generation to post information about themselves or about issues that are important to them.

Generating online content does not necessarily lead to a narcissistic subject, nor does it directly translate into the uncritical use of social media. What it certainly has resulted in are new consumer subjectivities, such as the prosumer, particularly as the disclosure of personal information can now be harnessed and turned into useable data. On the other hand, as we have seen, social media provides new modalities for social and political extension.

While I have cited Fuchs and Andrejevic as being too narrow in their political economic critique of social media, their contributions are relevant. Read together, they provide a rigorous framework for the diverse ways in which social networks gather and accumulate economic value. Andrejevic’s work on data exploitation foregrounds how corporations invoke surveillance strategies to capture what users upload onto social networks. His recent work has begun to focus on the rise of algorithms to emphasize the various ways in which users are effectively being exploited whenever they go on-line. In addition, his research highlights how economic relations are deeply entrenched within the architecture of social networks, creating a new generation of marketing practices. Similarly, Fuchs’ work focuses on the privacy policies of social networks, arguing that they never serve to protect the people who are actually using the technology. In other words, Facebook’s privacy does not protect users but rather it serves to protect Facebook. Any new iteration of their privacy policy makes user ‘opt-out’ as opposed to ‘opt-in.’ Thus, Andrejevic and Fuchs provide a framework for

understanding why users are not simply producers of content on these sites, nor are they simply consumers of information, rather they are ‘prosumers’—producer-consumers—who enable corporations like Facebook to accumulate surplus value based on the immaterial labour that goes into regularly uploading new material to their user profile archives.

The new marketing practices that I have highlighted throughout my dissertation point to a significant shift in the way that young people are increasingly implicated in the reproduction of an economic paradigm that puts them at the centre. As these practices become more targeted, such as with the Pepsi machine that gives out free soft drinks to those who like them on Facebook, young people will become more imbricated within those economic relations—economic relations that they ultimately help to produce and circulate by engaging with their digital archives. Moreover, given that advertising is predicated on the circulation of affect, it is reasonable to assume that the conflation between virtual play and the immaterial labour used to maximize surplus value will become indistinguishable. In the circuits of Web 2.0, capital always meets life (Neilson and Rossiter, “Precarity”) as the owners of social media and the marketers that exploit these circuits aspire for a seamless integration of sociality and economic relations.

The more young people want to share and circulate content, the more central their digital archive become in their lives, and, in turn, the more economic relations take advantage of user-generated content. The digital archive can allow young people to comprehend the complex interrelationship and the significant contradictions that exist within socially networked environments. Outlining

pedagogical strategies to enable young people come to terms with the value that they produce (recall the example of Federico Zannier who is still trying to sell his data for two dollars a day) is a proactive approach to addressing data exploitation. Nevertheless, any strategy would have to acknowledge that social media always already contains deep-seated constitutive but contradictory relations.

My contention with the work of Fuchs and Andrejevic has therefore resided in the way that they produce a foreclosure in their theorizing of the uses of social networks. The complexity of these networked spaces is difficult to quantify or qualify. While the prosumer is undoubtedly a subjectivity that opens up new market relations and points to the further subsumption of capitalist economic relations, such critiques consistently underestimate those affective relations that keep young people logged in. If scholars want to put forward a meaningful critique that is going to resonate with this demographic they need to begin by acknowledging why young people are spending more time and not less on these sites. Moreover, as we have seen, these scholars equally need to acknowledge, as we have discussed, the diverse ways in which digital archives can facilitate acts of citizenship through the rapid dissemination and circulation of information.

As we recall, in the case of Carley Rae Jepsen, users came together—joining archives—to protest her singing at a concert for Cub Scout Association (an association known for the dissemination of homophobic discourses). The importance of the issue was identified in the number comments and likes received on the Gay Rights Facebook page. While Facebook did not produce a new form of politics, it did provide a platform in which information could easily

be circulated and made public. Put another way, political subjects created a space on Facebook in which they could act. In this instance, by utilising a networked platform, the act could facilitate a critical mass of like-minded people who helped to stop Ms. Jepsen performance.

The rich explosion of innovative ways in which social media are being used within political movements is an exciting area of research. In the past few months, between May and July 2013, the world has witnessed protests in Brazil, Egypt and Istanbul where the hashtag “#direngezipark” was tweeted 1.8 million times in three days (Konrad “Victory”). While the work I have presented touches on some of these new techniques and practices, they are evolving daily, making it a challenge to stay abreast of all the different ways in which social media is facilitating political acts and new forms of civic dialogue. Electronic public spheres are extremely vibrant and need to be studied further. For example, a recent survey performed in 2013 on 3000 protestors in Turkey, found that 70 percent of these protestors had no political affiliation and the majority of which had never protested before. Given that the Turkish government was not allowing their mainstream media to accurately report on the events that were taking place at Gezi Park, people resorted to social media in order to access information. The political messages reached people via the myriad platforms of social media and apps that were produced (“Victory”). As Bennett, Wells and Freelong argued: digital technologies have enabled “peer initiated information sharing, organization, and action” (14), facilitating new civic practice as young people develop their political subjectivities through connectivity, instead of only through more traditional forms of sovereignty (Isin ch.1).

The new communicative ecology that social media has helped to usher in is only just being fully understood. Now more than ever, there is a need for scholars to come together and theorize the complexity that resides within these networked platforms. The conceptual framework for the digital archive is a unique way of theorizing the relationship that young people have with social media, and gets us away from the undiscerning analogy of the database. We need to account for the informed choices that young people make when they begin to fill their archives. Such choices allow multiple channels of interactive feedback, peer support and acceptance, and the reinforcement of group norms, alongside the production of both virtual and material subjectivities. Moreover, through the choices that bind and cohere digital archives, relationships are built, groups can be formed, and information can rapidly be mobilized and shared amongst young people who may come together around relevant social and political issues. While these networks undeniably operate as sites of capture, requiring the immaterial labour of users for these networked circuits to be sustained, the means by which young people interact and exercise their agency must be taken seriously. The networked architecture of participation afforded by social media cannot simply be considered as a site of lack; rather, there is power that flows through digital profiles, expanding the range of possibilities for young people to engage as they come to curate themselves into being.

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