

D. Nicole Farris · Mary Ann Davis
D'Lane R. Compton *Editors*

Illuminating How Identities, Stereotypes and Inequalities Matter through Gender Studies

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Foreword: Illuminating How Identities Stereotypes and Inequalities Matter through Gender Studies

Gender studies as an academic pursuit has made tremendous strides since the 1970s when women's studies first shoved its way into college curricula, transforming itself and the university as it did so. Gender Studies programs are now common on college campuses, even as they are on the front lines of attacks seeking to cut programs perceived as unmarketable and hence disposable by budget cutting administrators. These political battles inside the university mirror battles happening outside the institution where women, gender and sexual minorities, and people of color are forced to bear the brunt of the shrinking social safety net that puts all of us at risk. Gender studies is fertile terrain for cultivating new ways of framing problems and solutions both inside and outside institutions. This volume highlights current work at the intersection of gender studies and sociology that both demonstrates the current reach of this work and opens new avenues for young scholars in gender studies, sociology, and related disciplines such as history, anthropology and psychology.

The volume's editors have drawn together work from a wide range of methodologies that offers a global coverage of issues in gender studies today. This aspect makes this a particularly useful volume for professors and students looking for an introduction to contemporary issues in the field and the breadth of approaches scholars are taking in their work in this new millennium. The volume's authors use quantitative as well as qualitative methods to ask questions in such disparate subfields as literature, media and cultural studies, demography, political science, and more. Readers are taken from New Orleans' 9th Ward to Taiwan, from 19th Century Kansas to contemporary online worlds. Writings are grouped loosely under three main sections: Identities and Perceptions; Culture, Stereotypes, and Stigma; and Social Problems and Applications. Readers are encouraged to move freely in a nonlinear fashion through the book, exploring the varied routes through gender studies according to interest, classroom need, or simply for examples of how to apply different methodologies to different questions. The volume is meant to be flexibly read and used, just as gender studies must be in the increasingly austere world of the academy.

The first section of the book, "Identities and Perceptions," foregrounds questions about the content and making of identities in various "worlds," both on and off line. Jenny Davis and Nathalie Delise both examine how identities form in online

communities. Using an autobiographical approach, Davis explores the effects of blogging on the production of academic identities in gender and women's studies while Delise telescopes out to examine the role of Facebook in making gender both on and offline. Brandi Woodell's work takes readers to church to ask how people negotiate the intersection of LGBT and Christian identities in a world that often assumes one must choose one or the other. Departing from these more conventionally sociological inquiries, Emily Knox brings sociological insights to bear on her reading of tomboy identities in the work of Carson McCullers. The divergent issues brought up in this section are indicative of the range of the volume more generally.

The second section, "Culture, Stereotypes, and Stigma," is similarly broad, using quantitative and qualitative methods to bear on a variety of historical and contemporary problems. Lisa Bunkowski and Amanda Hedstrom take readers to nineteenth century Kansas to explore the experiences of women on the frontier. Ashly Patterson and Nicole Farris both use content analysis to explore, respectively, gender stereotypes and social construction of gendered identities in the feminine hygiene industry and advertising more generally. Echoing the literary approach of Knox's earlier essay, Manuel Medrano explores the groundbreaking writing of Carmen Tafolla and the ways in which she challenged stereotypes of Chicana/o identity to offer a more complex picture of those identities as well as American identity more generally.

The third section of the book, "Social Problems and Applications," is most explicitly concerned with the question of "now what?" Diane Mitrano's essay closely reads the Ms. Magazine blog to see how feminists are theorizing issues in child custody in order to explore what solutions are imaginable in this time and place. Using the limited data set provided by the National Survey of Family Growth, Mary Ann Davis looks at the use of foster families to expand the possibilities of LGBT family more generally. Davis also helpfully addresses the methodological problem of doing research with limited data, a persistent problem for gender studies scholars asking new kinds of questions. Yu Ting Chang's essay takes up a similar data set, but this time from Taiwan in addition to the United States, to ask how gender differences affect life chances in both places. This is a useful comparative study that addresses the methodological problem of working across global difference. Jenny Savely's piece shifts to the qualitative to explore how gendered expectations shape behaviors and attachments to place in New Orleans' 9th Ward. Savely's piece, like the others in this section, not only frames a problematic, but demonstrates how a gender studies lens can illuminate new possible answers and interventions. Taken in sum, the articles in this volume provide readers insights into current problems and questions in gender studies as an interdiscipline while encouraging readers to blaze their own trails that we can travel into the future.

Kate Drabinski

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Part I
Identities and Perceptions

“Blogging my Academic Self”

Jenny L. Davis

My Master’s thesis was an ethnography of MySpace, focusing on identity processes within social media. My dissertation was a formal theoretical experiment that examined the relationship between power and identity verification. In between and in conjunction, I have studied online deviant subcultures, families with children who have disabilities, women with medically defined excess body weight, and attitudes of feedlot farmers towards antibiotics and disease response. In short, my research interests and scholarly pursuits are highly eclectic. Although I certainly have threads weaving these lines of research together (e.g. culturally embedded identity), these threads are loosely twined.

This broad approach to the study of social life may *seem* desirable. As a young scholar, it certainly appeals to me. The structure and culture of the Academy, however, beg to disagree. This chapter is about the negotiated journey of my Academic Self, a highly developed work, yet one very much still in progress. In particular, I focus on the role of blogging within this journey, and the ways in which public writing, with and for a loosely defined community, has shaped who I am today, and continues to shape the places I will go.

What do you want to study? What are your areas? With whom do you work? These are the prime questions that academics ask one another at varying stages of their careers. The expectation is that one will have answers to these questions readily available, and that the answers will be concise, consistent, and clearly carved out. Such answers are the crux of who one is professionally, where one’s passions lie, and how one goes about examining social life.

In my early years as a graduate student, these questions from colleagues and faculty members were a source of anxiety. *What do you mean who did I come here to work with? I came to study Sociology.* To answer these questions was to define myself as a scholar, situating myself within a network. To be honest, I was rather unsure about who I was and who I wanted to be. My answers to these questions changed frequently, usually with the ebbs and flows of my coursework, as exciting professors revealed an array of rich writings to which I had never previously been

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exposed. One week I was a food scholar, the next a social psychologist, and the following an aspiring queer theorist. As a woman scholar, this was problematic. On the one hand, I feared that others would see me as the wavering and indecisive lady, the floundering girl in need of paternal guidance. On the other hand, I feared the confining boxes of explicit scholarly self-definition. Certainly, I did not want to find myself trapped by my own designations.

Finding that nebulous space between over-specialization and pin-ball-style academic identity hopping required an array of resources. These included close mentorship and guidance by a few highly accepting and knowledgeable women scholars with mutual respect for work with which they were not always familiar; student-led collaborations in which my colleagues invited me into their academic worlds and helped me integrate my interests; and, above all, blogging. It is this last component—blogging—that I will discuss for the remainder of this piece.

Today, as I prepare to enter my first tenure-track faculty position, I am able to answer these questions of academic identity with a greater degree of confidence. *I study identity and community from a variety of perspectives, often with a focus on human-technology augmentation. I am also a strong proponent of public sociology.* I have found a self-definition broad enough to encompass disparate lines of empirical and theoretical research, and yet cohesive enough to satisfactorily convey an academic agenda. My work as a blogger has been instrumental in getting here.

In late October 2010, through happenstance e-mail exchanges with blog editor Nathan Jurgenson, I was invited to write a guest post for the then fledgling blog Cyborgology, a site dedicated to social theory and technology. After a few more guest posts, Jurgenson and co-editor PJ Rey invited me to become a regular contributor. I excitedly accepted. Since then, I have been part of a small team contributing weekly posts and collectively constructing theoretical perspectives on the role of technology in society.

Some warn that blogging without tenure (or in my case, without a degree) is highly risky. Hurt and Yin (2006) go so far as to refer to untenured blogging as an “extreme sport” (1253). Indeed, the act of regular blogging is highly time-consuming. I spend hours each week researching for and constructing my posts, and none of this labor goes directly into the all-coveted peer-reviewed articles on which job applications and tenure decisions mostly rest. As a woman scholar, this is not an issue to take lightly. Women have a long history of over-laboring, often at the cost of personal success. And yet, women also have a history of relegation to the margins, snuffed voices struggling from the sidelines. As such, women in academia must take opportunities to enter the public arena, to be heard and present within scholarly discourses. I was the first woman to contribute regularly to Cyborology (there are four of us now) and the inclusion of my own and other diverse voices continues to be instrumental in constructing robust and complex theories.

On a personal level, blogging is one of the most rewarding academic activities in which I engage. It is through blogging that I have found community, explored my own voice, and prosumed an academic identity into being. This last point is of particular significance—through the production and consumption of content and comments on Cyborgology, I have simultaneously produced and consumed a par-

ticular way of seeing myself, related lines of action, and networks that support my academic identification.

Prosumption refers to the blurring of production and consumption. The term was introduced by Alvin Toffler (1980) to describe the enmeshment between production and consumption within the marketplace. In the last few years, the term has resurged as a useful way to understand the prevalence of user generated content in an increasingly connected era (Jurgenson and Ritzer 2011; Ritzer et al. 2012; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010). The notion of prosumption troubles the false dichotomy between producers and consumers, as participants in a connected era prosume entertainment through YouTube, social networks through Facebook, restaurant reviews through Yelp!, and DIY expertise through Pinterest.

Prosumed content, of course, does not exist in a vacuum. Rather, this content holds identity meanings for those who prosume it (Davis 2012a). If prosumption troubles the false dichotomy between production and consumption, identity prosumption troubles the false dichotomy between objects and subjects of prosumption. Just as early consumption theorists argued that goods and entertainment hold identity meanings for their consumers (Bauman 2005; Horkheimer and Adorno 1972), so too does prosumed content hold identity meanings for its prosumers.

This notion of identity prosumption is rooted in the social psychology of self and identity. Identity refers to the internalized set of meanings attached to personal characteristics, occupancy of a role and/or membership in a group (Burke and Stets 2009; Smith-Lovin 2007). Who one is and how one sees the self guides how the actor engages in and with the world. Social actors come to know and define themselves in two related ways: by seeing what they do, and taking in others' reactions to them (Burke 2004; Cooley 1902; Klein et al. 2007; Stryker and Burke 2000; Wilson and Dunn 2004). Prosumed goods and content, under some conditions, act as a mirror, reflecting the self back to the self. In particular, prosumed goods and content hold identity meanings when they can be connected back to the prosumer in a defining way, and when they encompass some form of interaction, be it with actual other(s), imagined other(s) or a reflexive self (Davis 2012a).

Because the self is multilayered, so too is identity prosumption. One can prosume individual identity meanings, prosume group membership, and/or prosume new identity categories into being (Davis 2012a). For a quick discussion of the layers of identity prosumption—and an explicit focus on new identity categories—see this short post on Cyborgology by Nathan Jurgenson and myself (Davis and Jurgenson 2011, <http://thesocietypages.org/cyborgology/2011/09/12/prosuming-identity-online/>).

Blogging is indeed a presumptive activity, and one which holds identity meanings for its prosumers. As a blog author, the content that I prosume reflects back on me in a defining way. Moreover, the act of blogging—especially for Cyborgology—is highly interactive. Each post receives comments from other bloggers, academics, technology enthusiasts, and, sometimes, trolls. The posts are shared via Facebook and Twitter, through which conversation surrounding the content continues. Each post is linked up with other posts within the blog and outside, connecting me, as a blogger and a scholar, to a particular community, carving out scholarly boundaries

and locating myself within them, and at times, reworking those boundaries as the content, conversation, and networks shift.

Each week when I hit “publish” I feel a mix of relief (Thank goodness I got my piece written this week), excitement (I can’t wait to see what people think!!) and anxiety (Will this be the week that ‘They’ finally call me out as an imposter?). With each emotionally fraught punch of the “publish” button, I write my Academic Self a little more into being. I began posting with a narrow focus on identity. This was (and still is) my comfort zone. Soon, however, I realized that identity theories alone were not enough to take me through weekly presumption of content. I needed more. As such, I got braver. I began to tread in less familiar territory, adding to the posts of my fellow bloggers, arguing with journalists, exploring issues of gender, race, art, power, sexuality, and the body.

In broadening my intellectual horizons, writing at the fringes of discomfort, I blogged myself into a more robust social media theorist. I saw myself writing on these topics, and saw that my work was (mostly) well-received, or if not, argued against in ways that at least took my ideas seriously. In presuming blogged content, I presumed personal identity meanings, and this propelled me into further exploration of new empirical arenas—from robots, to sex toys, to medicine—as well as into new theoretical perspectives—from queer theory, to critical analysis, to technology as materialized action (Schraube 2009).

These evolutions in personal academic identity meanings, of course, have been embedded within a supportive community: namely, the other Cyborgology bloggers and regular readers of the blog. These others act as a network or group within which I have come to define myself, and who grant me the shared “Cyborgologist” label. This mutual process of identification takes place through seemingly mundane but quite powerful mechanisms, such as a picture and bio on the “authors and editors” page of the blog, (hyper)links between my own work and other bloggers/affiliates, inclusion in Twitter threads (through @connects) that engage relevant news stories, debates, and lines of research, and collaborative projects—both within and outside of the blog—in which we communicate not only ideas, but also our networked connections.

Not only then, am I a person who theorizes technology, but I am a *Cyborgologist*, adhering to a particular perspective on human-technology interaction, and engaged in a particular intellectual community. Specifically, those of us who write for Cyborgology have taken on the joint project of writing from an augmented perspective—the view that physical and digital, though maintaining separate properties, cannot be understood outside of one another (e.g. (Banks 2013; Boesel 2012; Davis 2012b; Jurgenson 2012; Rey 2012; Wanenchak 2013). We explicitly integrate this perspective into our posts, scrutinize and adjust the augmented perspective, and critique popular and/or academic accounts that adhere instead to a “dualist” perspective—the idea that digital and physical are separate and/or zero-sum.

Our shared theorizing encompasses us as bloggers within a particular theoretical camp. Although each of us maintain quite distinct lines of research and a diversity of perspectives, we share in the group Cyborgologist identity, and think, act, and write in accordance. Not only then have I blogged *myself* into a Cyborgologist iden-

tity, but collectively, through interactions with other blogs, media outlets, and social media, we bloggers have prosumed “Cyborgologist” into a consumable academic identity category. Indeed, “Cyborgologist” is a strong part of my academic identity, and an identity category that increasingly holds meaning within the broader academic community as both a theoretical standpoint and an activity of public sociology.

Through blogging, I have had the opportunity to share ideas and engage with a broad audience in an accessible way. This is quite different from the closed off venues of academic peer-reviewed journals (although I certainly still contribute to those, both because of their intellectual value and for practical purposes of obtaining professional advancement). Cyborgology facilitates interactions with graduate students, undergraduate students, distinguished professors, independent scholars, journalists, mothers, fathers, technology enthusiasts, and interested publics. I have listened to and engaged with a broad array of voices, adding my own voice to the mix and writing myself out of the ivory tower. In so doing, I blogged myself into a Public Sociologist, an identity which I deem quite valuable.

And so here I am today. A blogger. A Cyborgologist. A public Sociologist. A theorist of technology with an augmented approach. A woman scholar with a voice inside and outside the academy. A member of a scholarly community. I have taken these identities and translated them into journal articles, conference presentations, and personal statements on job applications—the kinds of productions traditionally valued within the academic realm. I have, in short, blogged my Academic Self. Perhaps blogging without tenure is a risky endeavor, but it is certainly a rich one, the fruits of which I will continue to tend as I move onto the next professional stage.

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How Do You Facebook? The Gendered Characteristics of Online Interaction

Nathalie N. Delise

Introduction

Many social networking sites lost and gained popularity over the past decade, although Facebook continues to thrive. Facebook is a part of everyday discourse and highly salient to many people's social interactions and presentations of self. Due to its popularity, Facebook is an important place to study interaction especially since to date it is fairly under-explored within the social sciences. The purpose of this study is to examine how presentation and interaction on Facebook differs from face-to-face interaction and presentation. Specifically, the chapter will address gender similarities and differences.

Facebook has strong implications for our lives and livelihood. For example, admissions offices, hiring personnel, and lawyers use information that they find on individuals' Facebook profiles to either benefit or discredit them (Hamilton and Akbar 2010). Facebook is also a practical way for individuals to network and share job related information. Facebook is a common medium for socialization in general. People are able to keep in touch with one another (and the rest of their friends) through Facebook. This simple feature has major outcomes that are addressed in the background and findings. All of these highlight the importance of the presentation of self and the perception of one's identity on Facebook.

Facebook's popularity began when it swept across college campuses after creator Mark Zuckerberg first introduced the site in 2004. The distinctiveness that Facebook originally held was that users had to have a '.edu' email address; this college only appeal was what set Facebook apart from other major social networking sites at the time such as Myspace and Friendster. Facebook grew rapidly after repealing

This chapter is an adaptation from a larger work, "Me, Myself, & Identity Online: Identity Salience on Facebook vs. Non-Virtual Identity" (2012).

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the condition of requiring a ‘.edu’ email address. The site first opened to high school students in September 2005, and then to the general public in September of 2006.

Today there are over 800 million active Facebook accounts worldwide; and over 50% of these users log in each day (Facebook 2011). Every single one of these accounts may not represent an “actual” person, but this is still an important feature in regards to this research (i.e. difference in interaction, and control over presentation). For example, pets, Santa Claus, and deceased Presidents have Facebook profiles; some individuals maintain multiple personal profiles as well. There are more than 350 million active users currently accessing Facebook through their mobile devices; more than 475 mobile operators globally working to deploy and promote Facebook mobile products; and more than 7 million apps and websites are integrated with Facebook. More than 2 billion posts are liked and commented on per day, and on average, more than 250 million photos are uploaded per day (Facebook 2011). These numbers show how prevalent presenting ourselves on Facebook is in society today.

At this stage in the research social networking sites are defined as “web-based services that allow individuals to construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection and view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” (Papacharissi 2009, p. 201). The definition of Facebook according to Facebook (2011) is:

Facebook, the product, is made up of core site functions and applications. Fundamental features to the experience on Facebook are a person’s Home page and Profile. The Home page includes News Feed, a personalized feed of his or her friends updates. The Profile displays information about the individual he or she has chosen to share, including interests, education and work background and contact information. Facebook also includes core applications—Photos, Events, Videos, Groups, and Pages—that let people connect and share in rich and engaging ways. Additionally, people can communicate with one another through Chat, personal messages, Wall posts, Pokes, or Status Updates. (<http://www.facebook.com/press/info.php?statistics>)

Facebook is designed to connect people through a virtual network of “friends”. In doing so, each member participates in the presentation of self virtually—through profile creation, maintenance, and exchanges of content.

Background

This study takes a Symbolic Interactionist approach and primarily draws on Self and Identity theories, including Dramaturgical theory, Identity theory, and Social Identity theory. Context and reflexivity are fundamental features of these theories. Context refers to the time, location, and audience (i.e. who, what, when, where). Reflexivity is simply a back and forth process that occurs during social interactions—an actor projects an impression for an audience, the audience interprets that projection and responds accordingly, the actor interprets the feedback and then internalizes it. Hence, the actor is both the subject and object of his or her interactions.

The virtual setting of presentation and identity projection on Facebook is similar yet distinct from face-to-face interactions. According to Paik and Zerilli (2003), face-to-face interaction is the medium through which people physically enact their social roles, therefore the authority offered by a person's role only exists when it is applied in the presence of others. For example, male/female are not only identities, but sex role categories that must be enacted through physical interaction to become real and legitimate (Paik and Zerilli 2003). The lack of face-to-face interaction through social networking sites, however, challenges this view point. Therefore, such media initiates a new playing field for analyzing behavior and the presentation of self.

Facebook as Location

Goffman (1959) noted that sometimes the presentation of self, or performance, is directed at the location rather than the audience alone. For instance, when one goes to court there are certain guidelines that one follows because s/he is in a courtroom; the main factor guiding behavior is the location or setting. Similarly, Facebook is a location for presentation which guides behavior; users may be acting in certain ways for Facebook 'appropriateness', not necessarily for specific audience members.

According to Papacharissi (2009, p. 215), Facebook is "the architectural equivalent of a glass house, with a publicly open structure which may be manipulated (relatively, at this point) from within to create more or less private spaces". The merging of private and public boundaries on Facebook brings about behavioral consequences for those who must adjust their behavior to make it appropriate for a variety of different situations and audiences (Papacharissi 2009). Thus, people must adjust their behavior for Facebook specifically.

The setting of online interaction is a distanced front stage performance in comparison to interacting in person or face-to-face. Currently there are two primary trends in the research: Facebook enables the creation of an ideal or enhanced self (Bargh et al. 2002; Christofides et al. 2009; Farrell 2006; Gonzales and Hancock 2011; Marshall 2010; Mehdizadeh 2010; Papacharissi 2002, 2009; Subrahmanyam and Greenfield 2008; Wise et al. 2010) and people enact greater levels of disclosure on Facebook (Papacharissi 2009; Christofides et al. 2009; Subrahmanyam and Greenfield 2008; Mazer et al. 2007). In addition, Hinduja and Patchin (2007) found that it is easier to share information online compared to face-to-face interactions.

Usage

Prior research shows that there are differences in the way men and women use social networking sites such as Facebook. First, Armentor-Cota (2011) claims that men and women communicate using different language styles online. Pascoe (2011)

noted that young men like using social networking sites to interact with prospective dates because it is easier to talk to them there. Some researchers claim that the majority of people use Facebook to keep in touch with those whom they already know (Kujath 2011; Papacharissi 2009); although Tufekci (2008) found that men are more likely to branch out and meet new people through Facebook, while women are more inclined to interact with those whom they already know. Despite these differences, there are control facets that similarly affect men and women.

Control

On Facebook, individuals show rather than tell others about themselves, indirectly defining themselves through content (Christofides et al. 2009; Desmarais et al. 2009; Mehdizadeh 2010). Facebook users may manipulate identities depending on information that they decide to post or put forward. This includes: profile pictures, album pictures, status updates, wall posts, comments, and personal information such as name, birthday, school, relationship status, email address, favorite movies, favorite bands, favorite quotes, interests and the like. Users also have the ability to “tag” or “untag” themselves in others’ content; tagging refers to attaching a link from the information to one’s personal page. Thus, identities emerge via front stage projections as a result of selective self presentation (Gonzales and Hancock 2011).

While both men and women selectively self present information online, they do it in different ways. Women are more likely than men to use a nickname, pseudonym, or false name online (Armentor-Cota 2011). Men are associated with self promoting descriptions in the “about me” section and women self promote through pictures (Mehdizadeh 2010). This is not surprising considering gender stereotypes; women’s looks are associated with being their most salient identity characteristic, and status through education, career, humor, and the like are salient identity characteristics of men. Remember that roles influence one’s identity and behavior (i.e. gender roles).

According to Armentor-Cota (2011) gender identity is neutralized in some co-ed online settings, yet traditional gender norms are also reproduced online. This is blatant through pictures, posts, and comments where males enter a masculine discourse framing women as sexual objects on profiles (Pascoe 2011). The males display certain items to project a masculine image that they know will be viewed by others.

Although the individual is central on Facebook, people still expect to interact with others. Exchanges create content as well as individuals (Dalsgaard 2008; Marshall 2010; Papacharissi 2009; Wise et al. 2010; Mazer et al. 2007). According to Papacharissi (2009), inferences about one’s tastes, social habits and character can be made based on the company one keeps. Thus, what your friends post on your page reflects back on you. Who one’s friends are, as well how many friends one has, is tied to identity projection on Facebook. The display of friends on Facebook can also be seen as a public display of connection (Tufekci 2008).