

Title: You've got you all wrong: Objecting to the narratives others tell about themselves online

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Abstract

When a person tells a biographical story communicating something about himself, he is making a presentation of what personality psychologists call "narrative identity." Much first-person online content, from professional publications, personal blogs, and of course social media, falls into this category of "stories of the self." Interestingly, people on the receiving end of these presentations don't always accept them. Examples abound on Web 2.0 publishing platforms of one person writing that another has his own story wrong: That he is drawing the wrong conclusions about his experiences, and laying claim to a mistaken identity as a result.

This paper explores people's investment in the narrative identity presentations of others, and how the discursive context of Web 2.0 publishing informs their response. I draw on interviews with two individuals about pieces they wrote objecting publicly to other people's stories. The first posted an essay in the reader-generated content section of the website *Jezebel* about a first-person piece from the *New York Observer*, in which a 22-year old woman who had purchased a Manhattan apartment described herself as a "normal 20-something," rather than a rich person. The interviewee objected to the writer's classification of herself as normal, and the implication of merit he believed that classification carried. The second interviewee is a conservative blogger who took issue with an essay by a "daddy blogger" about the guilt he feels when he ogles women. The daddy blogger believed his experiences with powerful women had turned him into a feminist; the conservative blogger wrote that they had turned him into a man ashamed of natural impulses.

I discussed with these writers 1) why they took an interest in the narrative identities of others; 2) what they hoped to accomplish with a public response, and 3) how the discursive context of the exchange influenced their behavior. I argue that when people dispute others' narrative identities, they may be using those identities as stand-ins for broader social values: Narrative identities are easily understandable and socially inflected, and thus make good proxies for social issues. Web 2.0 publishing platforms provide a discursive context conducive to the use

of narrative identities in public debates about such issues, because they encourage response, provide a sense of disconnect from the subject of discussion, and give responders access to a potential audience. In this sense, social media are helping to turn the personal into the political in very public ways.

Title: From Diaries to Profiles: The Rise of Public Intimacy

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Abstract

Social networking sites (SNSs) are powerful tools for interpersonal communication. Enabling both identity expression and community building, SNSs have dynamics dominated by concepts such as trust, reputation and visibility, and allow to maintain and develop an extensive network of strong and weak ties (Wellman et al., 2003). Pre-established personal relationships (family, friends, work colleagues) and Internet-originated relationships (romantic partners, hookups, new friends) are located in the context of one's identity online. Disclosing personal information to represent oneself online is a pre-condition to participate in the social media service. Self-disclosure is essential in order to foster and maintain ongoing relationships and to turn strangers into relational partners because it is a necessary part of getting to know one another and building trust (Baym, 2010). Increasingly, the extensive use of social media, according to Ito et al. (2009), is fostering that individuals define themselves by what they can show, and what others can see. The exhibition of one's intimacy online through social media is breaking the traditional private-public division of realms insofar people show their intimate lives in SNS which are public-by-default. Some scholars (Sibilia, 2008; Mateus, 2010) apply the Lacanian term of *extimacy* in order to explain this exhibition of intimacy in public through social media, contradicting the traditional concept of the necessity of privacy in order to build intimacy (Gerstein, 1984; Turkle, 2010). Also, some authors point out the potentiality for empowerment through *extimacy* practices (Koskela, 2010; Baym, 2010; Rubin, 2011). Koskela (2010) describes the practice of revealing one's personal life as empowering. She considers this practice as a tool to rebel against anonymity and as a refusal to be humble. Rubin (2011) identifies the potentialities of *extimacy* practices through social media (Neo-solidarity, new social responsibility, sense of community) but also negative implications (emotional numbing, commercialization of emotions, social indifference).

The main aim of this paper is to explore public intimacy mediated through SNS, and to question if intimacy online *really exists* (Baym, 2010; Ito et al., 2010; Jamieson, 2013; Lambert, 2013), if it is *redefined* (Sibilia, 2008; Turkle, 2010), or if it is *illusory* (van Manen, 2008; Taddicken and Jers, 2011). In particular this research is focus on adults (25-50 y-o), and Facebook was used as case study. In-depth semi-structured interviews and user profiles analysis were used to understand the nature of the intimacy practices people engage in through social media in front of the networked publics.

Title: New media and new practices of identity and citizenship of sexual minorities in post-Soviet space

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Abstract

Whilst the political changes following the fall of the Berlin Wall have been extensively explored, the socio-cultural ones have yet to receive a full assessment. Change in gender relations is one of these aspects. The emerging scholarship (Temkina and Rotkrich, 1997; Tereskinas, 2009; Pietilä, 2010; Kay, 2006) is somewhat one-dimensional (focus on Russia), fragmented and limited by their focus (patriarchal gender politics). The post-Soviet mediascape is characterised by nationalist-populist discourse (of a strong man *a la* Unknown Soldier, etc.) and explicit homophobia of mainstream mass media. As Martínez (2013) has pointed out, it seems that the post-communist gay community is being defied to speak on their own terms. In turn, an online sphere embraces wider range of voices and allows maximum flexibility of discourse. In this paper I propose to explore new practices of identity and citizenship of post-Soviet sexual minorities enabled by new media.

By looking at the post-Soviet Belarus and ‘European’ Lithuania the paper strives (i) to locate post-Soviet homosexuality at the 3-way intersection of its official and semi-official (new media) mediations, and individual identification practices, (ii) to problematize new media’s ability to transgress and transform the boundaries separating private from public space using the case of sexual post-Soviet minorities, (iii) illustrate how the new media’s technological architectures channel interaction between members of sexual minorities and a wider public. Drawing on official media texts, semi-structured interviews with sexual minorities and new media’s data (e.g. online forum discussions), the paper will explore the process by which the mediation of homosexuality enables new practices of identity and citizenship. On the one hand, by voicing their concerns online members of the sexual minorities can better cope with societal change and ensure group solidarity. On the other hand, they can become an easy target of grassroots homophobic currents. It shows that technological determinism (i.e. idealism about new media) should be placed within the context of existing power relations and their impact on

ICT-driven practices. Then, the paper illustrates the ways in which the new media offers a broader range of opportunities to engage in civic activism and problematizes their effectiveness for civic mobilization in the post-Soviet region. Finally, the new media's role in renegotiation of the relationship between a post-Soviet and a wider 'virtual electronic' community is questioned.

Title: Intimate social media cultures: Youth, intimacy and regimes of control in social networking sites

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Abstract

Starting from the observation that young people live their intimacies in everyday life as intertwined with digital media such as social networking sites, this paper interrogates the mediatization of intimacy. Arguing that digital media cultures have become primary resources in the social and cultural organization of intimacy, new regimes of control are introduced.

This contribution relies on the main conclusions of a four-year research project, exploring the social and cultural dynamics of young people's (14-18) intimate stories on social networking sites. Intimate stories are seen as everyday communicative interactions that give meaning to a diversity of genders, sexualities, relationships and desires. Within this presentation, intimate storytelling will be related to the use of popular social networking sites. Drawing on an 18 months participatory observation of young people's (N=200) intimate storytelling practices in a popular social networking site, and focus groups (N=8, 51 participants) research that inquired young people's intimate experiences related to the use of popular social networking sites; this presentation explores intimate storytelling as a popular media practice.

This contribution will argue how particular understandings of the intimate self and intimate identities in popular social networking sites, relate to strong claims about the existence of an authentic and real intimate self. These claims argue a coherent intimate self, instead of allowing diversity and fragmentation. It is shown how these claims are connected to particular media ideologies; people's ideas about social media that have the power to shape intimate interactions are broadly oriented towards digital networked media. These new regimes that are controlling intimacy draw on intensive peer control over communicative interactions in social networking sites, fear of imagined audiences, and eventually self-disciplining. These mediatized complexities have become increasingly important to understand young people's intimate citizenships, which are currently increasingly lived with ubiquitous digital media applications.