

Facebook-Infused Identities: Learners' Voices

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Abstract

The National Higher Education Strategic Plan of Malaysia focuses on graduates who are innovative and knowledgeable to meet the standards and challenges of 21st century. This paper, then, explores how an innovation practice has taken place in a course entitled "Gender Identities: Malaysian Perspectives" where students scrutinize gender across Facebook "texts," as opposed to using literary texts. By using Facebook as baseline data to analyze online gender construction, students have learned the ways in which cyberspace deconstructs certain parameters of identity construction. Following this premise, this article discloses how students analyze gender identities. They analyze Facebook accounts of a male educator in United States, a female Malaysian college instructor residing in United States, and a law/politics Malaysian undergraduate. Firstly, the students revealed that identity in Facebook spaces is shown through genuine names and profile pictures; rightfully so for job, networking, and relationship purposes. Secondly, by selecting specific audiences, negotiating identities of a friend, co-worker, lover and most importantly future employee in Facebook is a difficult task. Conflicts usually occur while "masking" certain information on Facebook as they go about connecting with friends, students, parents, and prospective partners. Thirdly, societal constraints limit opposite gender's approval of friend requests. Lastly, identity construction reveals that having voices and emotions on Facebook have both positive and negative implications. Pedagogical recommendations are also presented as a result of this inclusion of Facebook in literature classrooms.

Keywords: innovation, Facebook, higher education, gender identities, literature classrooms, action research

1. Introduction

One of the aims of higher education across the world is to innovate teaching and learning. In Malaysia, efforts are made to ensure graduates are innovative and knowledgeable to meet the standards and challenges for 21st century learners (Ministry of Higher Education, 2012). This paper, then, attempts to demonstrate how an innovative practice has taken place through an undergraduate course, "Gender Identities: Malaysian Perspectives" where students study gender across Facebook spaces. It has become a requirement to innovate the course since online spaces have dominated the higher education arena and in order to reveal to students the complexities and fluidity of gender constructed online, Facebook as a "text" is introduced. It is also our mission to study Facebook as the occurrence of gender issues is prominent within any text and context.

Internet, through Facebook, is a place to deconstruct communication in the contemporary world (Flichy, 2007). Flichy has described that initially, the internet allowed for "communication with people in different localities and, above all- as we are about to see- puts all interlocutors on the same footing behind a mask. (82)" Over time, Youngs (1999) has further argued that the internet and its network provide a "safe environment" for the users to confront "embedded male domination of technology and its social purposes." These indications hint at two assumptions- firstly, the internet advocates democracy and secondly, it provides a dependable outlet for women and men to feel less inhibitive about themselves. Thus, by developing the course through Facebook, students can compare the gender construction they read about online and in literary texts.

This innovation of the course is also the way forward to the faculty members. Firstly, having taught the course for the third time, they feel that the traditional ways of examining gender through literary texts in a literature classroom is too stilted, as if sex roles and gender politics are constant over time and space. Secondly, since

students have been taught the skills to analyze texts through plots, points of view, narrative styles, characterization, use of symbols and themes, it is felt that these critical analyses can be incorporated into the current contexts of virtual construction of gender. By incorporating online contexts, the recognition of the complexities involved in the cyberspace discourse and gender constructions can be revealed.

Looking ahead, the Literature program at the School of Language Studies and Linguistics, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia has now harnessed innovative methods of assessments and teaching tools, moving away from the concentrations of canonical works on postcolonial theories and texts. With the incorporation of Facebook, the course will benefit many students who have had two years of literature studies and who are familiar with the technicalities of literary appreciation in the form of short essays. Furthermore, this integration of virtual dimensions will complement the acquisition of writing skills and help them in their process of transitioning into higher level literature courses and technology know-how. Thus, this paper concentrates on how users reveal and construct their gender identities through Facebook.

2. Facebook and Gender Identities

2.1 Facebook

It is necessary to provide the background of Facebook in order to support the inclusion of Facebook in the literature course. Facebook, established in 2004, is a social network service and website. It is the sole property of Facebook and is privately operated. As of April 2012, 900 million users have signed up for Facebook accounts (Goldman, 2012). A user may register one account, add other users as friends, exchange messages, and can receive instant notifications when their profiles are updated. Various groups of all-things of all-genres can be found across Facebook owners sharing common interests. However, only individuals aged 13 years old and above are allowed to sign up for a Facebook account.

2.2 Gender Constructions

Gender is referred to as the socially constructed roles while behavior refers to activities and attributes that a society deems appropriate for men and women. Gender constructions can be read through elements that includes user profiles, pictures, personal and music interests, liked websites, and sexual orientations. It also allows for instant messaging services through private or public messages. Organizations can advertise their products by creating “like” pages. Among the well-received applications of Facebook is the photo application, where users can update their albums and tag their friends. This feature of tagging allows another user to obtain the needed picture for his/her own record and safekeeping. With unlimited number of pictures, users can also hide their pictures from certain individuals they do not want to be associated with. The availability of these features is associated with the construction of gender and is based on the ways in which users show the sex of their respective gender. Lastly, online gender construction refers to how gender is revealed using applications such as avatars, pictures, blogs, and statuses. It can also be analyzed across many social sites, for example, MySpace, Friendster, and Facebook.

3. Higher Education and Gender Identities

Robards (2010) has voiced his concerns on identities and higher education. He recommends educators to be conscious of the complexities behind Facebook while engaging students because tensions may arise between students and educators. Through his ethnographic study of Australian users of Facebook, he asserts that one must ask for consistent self-narratives. Secondly, he argues that in an imagined audience of friends, educators need to be aware of performance of students who might share stories of last-minute essays, and last-minute exam cramming. Thirdly and conversely, he raises concerns of educators’ posts of alcohol and relationship statuses and to what extent students might perceive of their educators’ behaviors on Facebook.

Paluchette & Karl (2010) have examined Facebook image of students. By distributing surveys to 346 students at a Midwestern part of United States, students responded to 5-point Likert scale items on the images they portray on Facebook and their beliefs concerning who is or should be viewing social network profiles. They hypothesize that friendly, intelligent or hardworking users are less likely to post problematic profile information and friendly, intelligent or hardworking users are more likely to allow family or employers to view their profiles. Their results show that the identity of Facebook account whose posts portray inappropriate information show image that was “sexually appealing, wild, or offensive” whereas those who believed they were hardworking were unlikely to post inappropriate information. They concluded that issues of identity were related to conscious struggles to keeping up with posts that were acceptable to a general audience of employers and family. In addition, they pointed out to the importance of educators, counselors and university career placement centers to address issues of identity, critical to professional communication.

4. Students' Initial Understanding on Gender Identities

To ascertain students' initial understanding on gender, students' assumptions on gender through narrative essays and focus group interviews were firstly explored (Ruzy Suliza Hashim, 2010). The focus groups emphasize on learners' expressing their perceptions, attitudes, and point of view on gender while personal narratives were used to explore the acquisition of traits, attitudes, and behaviors consistent with gender identity. The study revealed that markers which include appearances, mannerisms, and ways of speaking are continuously being thought of as part of gender display. The students were still bound by these markers through parental instruction, peer pressure, religious beliefs, and societal norms although they were aware of gender stereotypes. Two factors support this finding; firstly, students may not have the flexibility in their approach due to their lack of sophistication to deploy gender into other dimensions. Secondly, the adoption of Western-derived theory can help explain the stereotypes and oppression of women and gender inequalities, relegating students' set of beliefs and values in their process of interpretation.

5. Methodology

The assignment comprised three parts and students worked in groups consisting of five members. The first part required them to analyze their own Facebook accounts and study the ways in which their friends showed gender online. After that, they chose three to four users that they would explore as examples in their narratives. The second part of the assignment consisted analyses of focus group interviews with four Facebook users. The third part included making a comparison between what they had found in the interview and a literary text. Through scrutinizing the types of "texts" – Facebook, body language and interview transcripts, the students would be familiar with three kinds of transcripts. The body language includes the positioning of the body structure, hair, eyes and hand gestures in their profile pictures and pictures (in general) that they have posted. This definition of body language also extends to the kinds of persons they take the picture with and in the contexts the pictures are taken. As a result, this assignment allows them to observe the continuum of gender behavior and identity.

Students were guided by a set of questions which they have been peer-reviewed in classrooms, before conducting the focus group interviews. The questions concerning the elicitation of responses from their subjects are listed below:

5.1 First Category-General

- 1) When did you create a Facebook account? How many accounts do you have? If you have more than one account, why do you need to create multiple accounts?
- 2) Are you using your real name on Facebook? If not, why have you chosen other than your real name? What kind of identity do you wish to portray?
- 3) Do you publish your own picture as profile picture? If not, why?
- 4) How many friends do you have? Usually, are you the one who request to be friends or do others request you to be their friend? Do you approve all of the friend requests? Explain acceptance/rejection of their requests.

5.2 Second Category-Privacy

- 1) Do you privatize all you photos biography, and wall posts? Why do you choose to privatize them? Who can view them?
- 2) What is your opinion on Facebook blocklist feature? If someone has caused discomfort because of their postings or comments, do you block them, set privacy, or delete them? Why have you taken such an action?
- 3) How would you feel or react if someone close to you set you as subject of privacy? Why do you react in such a way?

5.3 Third Category-Gender Identity

- 1) Do you have more male friends or female friends? Which group comments or responds to your status updates, responses, pictures, and posts?
- 2) What challenges have you faced in using Facebook?
- 3) Do the advertisements, products, and services appear on Facebook attract you? Why are you attracted to them?
- 4) How has Facebook changed your behavior?
- 5) When you post status updates about your emotions or personal troubles, do you feel that you get the support you expect from your Facebook friends?

These questions help in showing Facebook users' gender identity construction via their statuses, comments, responses, pictures, and avatars. Students have two sets of data in hands - first, from the Facebook and second, from the interviews. By doing so, they can corroborate the findings by establishing the connection between individuals' Facebook page content and their gender identities. The following sections describe one of the major findings of students' analyses of three Facebook accounts. The data they gained were from 20-30 minute interviews they conducted via three Facebook chats. Three Facebook owners were first contacted to elicit information on consent and authorization. After these were completed, they began interviewing their subjects using the three sets of questions on gender identities. Peer checks on transcripts were also conducted and the results of their analysis are given below.

6. Results

This section presents students analysis of interviews. Three Facebook users are presented as part of the major findings and are referred to as Matthew Roth, Zainon Ahmad, and Zahera Zainol as pseudonyms. Zahera and Matthew both reside in United States while Zainon lives in Malaysia. They are all daily users of Facebook. While Zahera and Matthew work as a public relation (PR) firm owner and an educational technologist respectively, Zainon is an undergraduate at a public institution in Malaysia, majoring in law and politics. Zahera and Zainon are 27 and 26 years old while Matthew is 25. The rationale behind choosing Facebook accounts across different geographical locations with diverse cultural beliefs and assumptions allow students to observe the fluidity of gender identity and the kinds of images people of various backgrounds project onto their identities. What follows are students' discussions surrounding preliminary information about Facebook and ends with how identity is portrayed across Facebook "texts." These were gained via Facebook chats after acquiring consent and authorization of the research subjects. Students report their findings via written communication with their instructors. Tables summarizing the results can be found at the end of each subsection.

6.1 *General Identity Portrayed on Facebook*

6.1.1 Matthew Roth

Matthew, an American citizen, had been a loyal user of one Facebook account since 2007. While using his full name and staying true to just one account, part of this move was to show his trueself in the eyes of his family. He reasoned because his family loved pictures of his playing piano, teaching, and mentoring students, and that his parents performed prayers on Sundays, he did not want to be that "other" person. That "other" person, according to him, did actions inappropriate in online settings. Moreover, as he genuinely put his name, he wanted to "reach people, looking at how CEOs and CFOs can reach my accounts, so they can see what my interests are and what school I went to." He elaborated that personality can be shown to prospective employers by establishing one's full name, interests, and credentials online. Currently, he had 233 friends whose friend requests he approved of. He cautioned that his way of approving friends is based upon his previous knowledge of friendships and students he knew very well. He also cautioned that his relationship with the students on Facebook were confined to supervisor-graduate student relationships and was based on its recency. Hence, he would deny a friend request coming from a student he taught in 2003, but approved of a student of 2011 class. It was unknown as to why his actions of approving of friend requests were based on latest acquaintanceship. In addition, he would also request friendship from his family members whom he had not seen for a long time or incidental to his being online.

6.1.2 Zahera Zainol

The second participant involved a Malaysian-American living in United States, Zahera, who created and had been a loyal user of her 2006 account. She was born in United States to Malaysian parents and pursued her career in the United States as part of her "American Dream." By using one account, she could broaden her networking circles and maintain family ties. She also had only one account with her own name because she did not want to be identified as a "stalker" in cyberspace. When asked of the probability of signing up for another account, she pointed out that it would be a waste of time considering her tough job as a firm owner. On putting up her personal photo and not others, Zahera felt that it gave her satisfaction in appreciating and embracing her beauty and confidence. As of November 28, 2012, she had 929 friends of whom she knew. She only requested friends of her childhood, college, and some from her firm. She would not approve of friend requests from persons she did not know because she felt that there were hidden personal and professional motives. These motives included requests on going out on dates from strangers and requests from them on possible employment opportunities. To this, she asked, "Why? I am not a job-hunting agency?"

6.1.3 Zainon Ahmad

Zainon's Facebook account was created in 2008. Unlike Matthew and Zahera, she had multiple accounts. With each of the account, her real name was being used. Because Zainon employed Facebook for casual and intimate relationships, she had her real names and picture in all of these accounts because she feared of the inconsistency of the information she gave while representing herself online. According to Zainon, "If we (Zainon and intimate partner) are traveling and they need my ID, I do not want them to know the different names on Facebook and my identification card because then they would be curious of my background." She based this response on her very fact of her frequent exchanges of intimate partners. Her reasoning on possessing multiple accounts is based upon the assumption that prospective intimate partners would have no knowledge with whom she went out on dates. Of concerns on friend requests and approvals, prospective intimate partners requested friendships and Zainon's approving of the requests was based on the kinds of properties he owned. Hence, for instance, if she saw evidence of an enormous house and a luxury car, she would hit the "approve" button and vice versa. Looks of possible partner on Facebook mattered too. Being attractive, to her, was an added advantage to properties the partner owned.

Table 1. Acquaintance with Facebook

	Matthew	Zahera	Zainon
Citizenship	American	Malaysian-American	Malaysian
Profession	Educational technologist	Community college instructor and a PR firm owner	Law and politics major
Facebook establishment	2007	2006	2008
Number of accounts	One	One	Multiple
Names	Genuine	Genuine	Genuine
Picture	Genuine	Genuine	Genuine
Number of friends	233	929	301
Requests friendship	Yes	Yes	Yes
Approval of friend requests	Yes with conditions	Yes with conditions	Yes with conditions

This research uncovers numerous important points. Firstly, Matthew's and Zahera's way of placing their own pictures and names on Facebook accounts seems to suggest that their identities are based on the image they want to portray. They probably wish to show images appropriate to students, possible intimate partners, prospective employers, and alumni. This identity portrayal seems to support findings of Ellis (2010) and Aleman & Wartman (2009) who have argued that identity across student-educator relationships is a multi-layered one where Facebook allows for the confluence of personal identity and how this identity is perceived socially. Ellis (2010) has further asserted that putting up a true picture of oneself is the first selection of identity, particularly as either a student or educator. Thus, Matthew might select certain audiences who could and could not view his pictures and friend requests in order to retain his career and status as a friend and a son. However, in the case of Zainon, she has the ability to weave intricately with her genuine intention to represent herself in order to become part of the social spaces at a university, although at the same time, she looks for casual intimate partners with whom she dates on frequent basis. Consistent with what Astin (1984) has argued for, Zainon attempts to project her identity both as a student or female casual intimate partner. According to Astin (1984), learning process at a university involves both academic and social aspects to support interaction. Therefore, in order for Zainon to accomplish her studies at the university, she projects her true identity in order to balance academic and social intimate circles.

The second important point concerning the number of accounts points to the question of authenticity a student has to learn. Zainon, for instance, is able to project her authenticity through showing genuine names and pictures in all her accounts. It is interesting to note that although she looks for casual intimate exchanges on Facebook, she also tries to keep up with her university studies. This evidence somehow negates Robards' (2010) arguments. Robards (2010) has asserted that when one has numerous accounts, educators must ask the authenticity of the accounts because educators place concerns on students' behavior in order to reach at informed decisions on

teaching and learning. In a way, Zainon perhaps is able to retain her personhood and defend her choices of owning several accounts without portraying information inconsistent with her backgrounds. Even though she has multiple accounts, they do not show her having multiple identities.

In addition to projecting image and authenticity, identity among students is formed through selections of friends across online spaces. In all three participants' interviews, identity across the academia involves critical selection of friends. The ability of students, Zahera- as a case in point, to select audiences relative to their principles of living in a complex network may suggest that the participants are on the understanding that there exists a substantial call to be wary of possible Facebook threats. New trends in higher education, according to Cain (2008), has called for educators to establish e-professionalism that pertains educating on the selection of friends, in order for us, as educators to draw a line between professional and student lives. In all three participants, identity through selections of friends is made evident through Matthew's specific confinement of student-supervisory ties and Zahera's cautiousness of strangers.

6.2 Higher Education and Identity on Facebook

6.2.1 Matthew Roth

Matthew had more male friends who would comment on his wallposts. He did not want to be portrayed across online spaces as a "playboy" if he added more female friends to his list. On the comparison between male and female Facebook friends, he mentioned, "Yeah, I do not like flirty girls because I know they are going to send all messages to ask for dates and subsequent intimate meetings. I think my girlfriend will be mad at me." However, Matthew rarely posted status updates. In support of this, he highlighted that his conscious mind was not open for Facebook friends' interpretations. In addition to sporadic Facebook statuses, the pictures he posted were published with a disabled comment-section. On whether clicking on Amazon advertisements on Facebook would change his identity, Matthew responded, "I do Amazon a lot. If I see offers on Facebook, I would click on them. I would get amazing discount on books and indirectly, I would know of their products." This information on purchasing items through Amazon on Facebook is important to acknowledge because Amazon is able to identify possible buyers and penetrate their products through Facebook and Twitter's "clickers," as part of their social media marketing strategies (Evans, 2010). Asked if identity of being an educator on Facebook was an issue and a challenge, Matthew admitted that he was quite well-adjusted to the complex web of online spaces.

6.2.2 Zahera Zainol

Most of Zahera's pictures were commented by her male friends. At times, her boyfriend would be skeptical towards the photos, especially where they commented, "You are hot" or "Are you free tonight?" According to her, she accepted these comments as normal because the feature of Facebook allowed people to comment on the pictures she put up, but arguments with her boyfriend would escalate in the following situation:

Last summer when we went to Philly, he was like shouting to my ear asking me to give him my password. I mean, that's not like trusting me to have Facebook, right? Then we move on to he said-she said arguments where he thinks they are my boyfriends or friends with benefits. I mean, he needs to relax.

In addition to individuals of opposite gender commenting on her pictures, Zahera found it hard to trust individuals online. Sometimes, she would receive invitations of events stating that she was invited for a book launch, but a few days closer to the launch, she received numerous phone calls stating that she had won a scholarship from agencies she had not applied to before. To these suspicions, she had called and filed a police report on violation of privacy. She would not also trust any advertisements, even if she would shop online; she would shop on Coach.com or go to factory outlets for the latest designer handbags. Asked if she thought that Facebook had changed her identity, she responded to the question in the following way:

For one, Facebook cannot stop me from saying what I want. Second, since I'm in US, I can complain and write my frustrations because I know my friends would feel the same way. I can be happy and mad at the same time ☺ (emoticon).

6.2.3 Zainon Ahmad

Identity as a student is rather complex for Zainon in cyberspace. As her Facebook account purported at extending social, casual, and intimate relationships, her friends' list encompassed more male than female friends. Her male friends would populate comments on her status updates, wallposts, and pictures. By looking at commercial businesses online, she would click on Facebook advertisements for the latest deals. She had the following to say:

Yes, I click on them. I do a lot of shopping if I see a chance. Because being a student, again, we do not have much time. So if the moment arrives for me to shop either online or offline, I would grab it.

In addition, if she posted problems or rants on sadness, she would get overwhelming responses. Her prospective partner would respond, "I'd help you out" or "I can give all you want." Of interests on whether her identity would change and learning would be affected by communicating on Facebook, she replied that at times, she did get emotional if prospective partner of hers refused to respond to her messages online. Of challenges, she stated that no responses to her Facebook statuses, wallposts, and comments would result in disappointments as she relied upon the prospective casual partners' comments.

Table 2. Higher education and identity on Facebook

	Matthew	Zahera	Zainon
Gender count	More male friends	More female friends	More male friends
Picture comments	Disabled comments	By male friends	By male friends
Responses to advertisements	Yes	No	Yes
Status updates	No	Yes	Yes
Friend responses to statuses	No	Yes	Yes
Change of identity	No	No	Yes

On Facebook, intricacies on maintaining control of the relationship between being educators and students are fluid and in the state of in-flux. These difficulties are, in part, can be explained by Maldofsky (2009) who has found that social aspect of learning is about recognition as part of belonging to certain groups that possess certain characteristics. In this research, the identities are formed through reflexive project of the self and the attachment it has with the "society" of Facebook (Giddens, 1991). The participants, for instance, are seen to have been concerned with multiple negative social implications of the professional memberships and personal relationships. Inherent in the case of Zahera is the insecurity that her boyfriend displays to other men's appreciation of her sexual appeal. While the issue of trust is explicit in her discussion, her agency as an individual woman is affirmed in the way she deals with the conflict. In contrast to Zahera's illustration of issues of trust, Zainon is rather content with the many responses she has received from her male friends, indicating a positive connection of being a student and online Facebook member. This observation is not surprising because her action suggests of her easy weaving as an object to her male friends, indicating that her source of contentment lies among comments posted.

The results of the study also suggest that identities constructed online can be viewed in terms of voicing out opinions and emotions. While Matthew is not comfortable with posting statuses, Zahera and Zainon appear to be reaping the benefits of being public about certain aspects of their day-to-day realities. Zahera, for example, is seen to have the freedom to do so. She exercises caution because had she been in Malaysia, she should keep her frustrations to herself and not to announce them to the world. Zahera shows her American inclination towards openness of behavior, yet, she also subscribes to certain Malay prescriptions of identity construction. Such Malay prescriptions of identity projections include appropriate clothes (unrevealing ones) and decent behavior such as resistance to alcohol and excessive male-female socialization. Zainon, in addition, expects emotional support from her male friends by posting statuses and wallposts, convenient for her to balance her busy schedule as a student and casual intimate partner. Emotional breakdowns may result from these expectations put forth by Zainon. The results have implications for the ways in which we construe gender. While Matthew is more reserved with his emotions, the women seem to invite more engagement from their virtual friends.

7. Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

The research reported here provides evidence supporting the notion that gender identities can be learned from analyzing Facebook accounts. This study can be adopted by educators as a conceptual basis for understanding the multiplicity of learning issues of Facebook owners and their online identity construction. Students have learnt that gender construction is fluid, yet the three examples of Facebook users show how they have remained consistent in their depictions of themselves online and offline. Firstly, the students revealed that identity in Facebook spaces is shown through genuine names and profile pictures; rightfully so for job, networking, and relationship purposes. Secondly, by selecting specific audiences, negotiating identities of a friend, co-worker, lover and most importantly future employee in Facebook is a difficult task. Conflicts usually occur while "masking" certain information on Facebook as they go about connecting with friends, students, parents, and

prospective partners. Thirdly, societal constraints limit opposite gender's approval of friend requests. Lastly, identity construction reveals that having voices and emotions on Facebook have both positive and negative implications.

How has this Facebook assignment expanded on literature students' skills of inquiry? In dealing with literary texts, students have little option but to read closely the printed texts. In this exercise, students deal with two sets of texts – the narrative provided via status updates, pictures, emoticons, and the interview which they do in the second stage of investigation. This mode of probing is ethnographic in nature (virtual, rather than physical fieldwork) because these students are dealing with real people, not characters in novels. This exercise requires analytical skills that are quite different from textual analysis. By incorporating Facebook into the literature classroom, the educator is harnessing new tools for teaching and learning, allowing for opportunities to highlight a number of pedagogical implications. Firstly, educators need to step back and reflect upon the best ways to understand learners' interests and motivation based on their identity that they attempt to project. It is a space where people turn to a virtual community to express some of their most intimate stories, their difficulties as well as successes. Developments on lesson planning should include texts, videos, and audios that tap onto various learners' interests that may include knowing about Facebook. Secondly, reflections on teaching can be done in ways that educators consider issues of trust, risk, authenticity and privacy in their daily journals. These attitudes and knowledge towards online conversations outside of students' peer group can form a critical component of online literacy. These strategic dialogues offer insights into understanding identities constructed online. Thirdly, educators specializing in identity can focus on comparative literature that cuts across cultures. A faculty member can, for instance, open up discussions on Facebook features that allow students to reconstruct their identities online and compare their findings across cultures worldwide. By looking at how people perform identities, such discussions can shed lights on various parameters of individual - students' experiences, interests, priorities, educational statuses, age, socio-economic backgrounds, religious beliefs, and gender.

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