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"PETER IS A DUMB NUT": STATUS UPDATES AND REACTIONS TO THEM AS 'ACTS OF POSITIONING' IN FACEBOOK

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Abstract

This paper applies the theoretical concept of 'acts of positioning' (Davis & Harré 1990) to a qualitative and quantitative analysis of 474 status updates (SUs) taken from the Facebook Walls of twenty individuals living in Switzerland and the UK. Our aim is to analyze how individuals construct their identities through the use of language. The results show that individuals position themselves in five central ways, i.e., they stress aspects of their personality, pastime endeavors, sense of humor, work and relationship. Through a subsequent analysis of 228 reactions to status updates (RSUs), we also address how these acts are responded to, and thereby demonstrate that individuals predominantly support identity claims made in the SUs. Our paper contributes to existing research on language and identity in social network sites (SNSs), and demonstrates the fruitful application of the concept of 'acts of positioning'.

Keywords: Relational work; Linguistic identity construction; Positioning; Facebook; Microblogging.

1. Introduction

In this paper we explore identity construction through language in status updates (SUs) and reactions to status updates (RSUs) in the social network site (SNS) Facebook. To do so we apply the theoretical concept of 'acts of positioning' (Davies & Harré 1990). The paper outlines a means of studying identity construction online via both a qualitative and quantitative approach, while adopting a post-structuralist view of identity construction. Central to our approach is the study of identity construction as a process which emerges interpersonally and dialogically. This necessitates analyzing multiple entries produced by the same interlocutors, and calls for a study of the relationship between the identity claims made in the SUs and RSUs.

The following examples illustrate our point of interest. "Peter is a dumb nut" is a status update written by one of the participants (N=132) in our study (all names are pseudonyms). In order to understand this sentence, we need to know that it is a literal translation from the German expression *dumme Nuss*, and an idiom referring to being dumb or void. Peter uses his bilingual competence of English and German to position himself as a humorous individual, who can make fun of himself, at this particular point in time. If Peter regularly positions himself as a humorous individual, it is fair to argue that humor emerges as an important part of his identity, and further that it is likely that his friends will perceive him as being a humorous individual.

Through other status updates, readers, or Facebook 'friends', learn more about Peter. In Examples 1 and 2, Peter positions himself as a traveler:

(1) Peter has lived miami to the fullest.[1] (8 Dec. 2008, 16:03)
(2) Peter packs. (8 Dec. 2008, 16:53)

In Example (1), Peter refers to Miami. Coupled with in-group knowledge that Peter lives in Basel, Switzerland, and our viewing of previous SUs in which he has shared impressions of his holidays in the U.S., his SU underlines his status as a traveler at this point in time; in Example (2) his positioning of himself as a traveler is indexed via the verb 'to pack'.

Information about Peter can also be obtained from his personal profile, a site within Facebook which allows individuals to self-label themselves by choosing from a set of pre-determined options, such as 'relationship status' (e.g., 'married', 'single', 'engaged' and 'it's complicated'). In Peter's case, his personal profile tells us that he is a married man. We further learn his birthday, residence, where he goes to university and who his employer is, and Peter shares information on hobbies, music, TV and book favorites. He also positions himself virtually by listing the 64 Facebook groups he has joined and 49 Internet sites he favors. As Peter's life changes and evolves, his self-labeling practices may, too. Yet compared with the types of positioning Peter (and others) engage in via SUs, these labels are reflective of more static identity categories. They can provide useful sources of additional information to the researcher studying identity construction in Facebook.

In this paper we present the results of our analysis of 474 status updates (SUs) produced by 10 individuals living in Switzerland and 10 residing in the UK, and 228 reactions to these status updates (RSUs). We do not present results of our analysis of the personal profile pages, but, as stated above, drew on this information where it was useful as background to interpreting the SUs and RSUs (see Bolander & Locher 2010). The aim of the analysis is to answer the following research question: How does creative language use in the status updates and in the reactions to these status updates contribute to identity construction? This research question is itself anchored in our interest in interpersonal pragmatics (cf. Locher & Graham 2010), which explores the relational side of language in use and its connection to identity construction. Our focus on creative language use stems from the format of SUs. Unlike in the personal profile pages where self-labeling practices are steered by lists of pre-selected options (cf. Bolander & Locher 2010), the writing of SUs is unrestricted save for the system message prompt "What are you doing right now?".[2] The RSUs, too, can be classified as creative language use, since they are not prompted by a system message at all, although we claim that they are likely to be coherent with the SU to which they respond[3] (cf. sections 6.2. and 7.2). The term creative language use thus denotes the relatively unprompted use

[1] All examples are rendered as they are in the original, keeping non-standard spelling and typographical mistakes.

[2] This was the system prompt at the time the data was collected (December 2008 to January 2009). In the interim the prompt has changed to "What's on your mind?".

[3] RSUs do not always respond directly to SUs. An RSU can either constitute a response to an SU, or to a further RSU, in which case it is likely to be coherent with the RSU to which it responds and not necessarily to the SU. As pointed out in the section 6.2., however, we only focus on the first reaction to each SU. Hence, it is fair to claim that these first reactions constitute responses to SUs and are thus likely to relate to these SUs, as is shown in the discussion of our results.

of language on Facebook. Specifically, in a first step, we address how this creative language use in the SUs is used by participants to perform acts of positioning and therefore identity work. While not disregarding explicit identity labels that the posters use themselves (i.e. member's categories), we study acts of positioning from a second-order perspective, in that we classify identity work predominantly with labels developed by the researchers. As a next step we focus on how reactions to status updates respond to identity claims. It is of interest to see whether a response challenges or confirms identity claims made in the SUs, or whether the responses do different identity work entirely. We hope that these qualitative and quantitative methodological steps (outlined in sections 6.1 and 7.1) proposed for the study of identity construction in Facebook SUs and RSUs can also serve research on identity construction in other text-based environments.

As the title of the paper and the research question suggest, we draw on theories of identity and positioning, notably on Davies and Harré (1990) and Bucholtz and Hall (2005). These post-structuralist approaches to the relationship between language use (or more broadly discourse) and the construction of selves and identities lend themselves well to an analysis of the SNS Facebook. On Facebook we can witness how individuals use profile pages and posts on walls (including status updates and reactions to them) as "pages where one can 'type oneself into being' (Sundén 2003)" (as cited in boyd and Ellison 2007). Zappavigna (2012) and Lee (2011) refer to tweets or status updates as instances of micro-blogging, i.e. "short messages on the web designed for self-reporting about what one is doing, thinking, or feeling at any moment" (Lee 2011: 111). These acts contribute to "an ongoing performance of identity" (Zappavinga 2012: 38; cf. also Jones, Schieffelin & Smith 2011: 2012). West and Trester (2013: 142) discuss these acts in light of 'self-presentation' on Facebook. Our exploration of both SUs and RSUs means that we not only address identity construction as a process performed by an individual, but also as the interpersonal, dialogic construction of selves and identities. The paper shows the successful application of these theories to our corpus of SUs and RSUs and underlines how quantitative and qualitative research can be fruitfully combined in the analysis of acts of positioning and identity work in this particular computer-mediated environment. We thus foreground the user and his/her creative use of language for the performance of identities (cf. Androutsopolous 2006 on different research approaches).

We begin by introducing the two theoretical frameworks, first, positioning theory, as advocated by Davies and Harré (1990) and secondly Bucholtz and Hall's (2005) post-structuralist approach to identity (section 2). We then turn to the social network site 'Facebook' (section 3), and after describing the site, to a brief review of relevant literature on language use and identity construction on SNSs (section 4). As a next step, we present the data, comment on the data collection process and ethics underlying our study, and outline the quantitative and qualitative methodologies we made use of when coding and analyzing the SUs and RSUs (section 5). The results on our analysis of the SUs (section 6) and RSUs (section 7) are presented after further comments on methodology for each of our research interests. Finally, the paper ends with a summary of key points and findings and an outlook to further research we intend to conduct (section 8).

2. Identity and 'acts of positioning'

Identity is defined by the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* as follows:

> b. Who or what a person or thing is; a distinct impression of a single person or thing presented to or perceived by others; a set of characteristics or a description that distinguishes a person or thing from others. (*Oxford English Dictionary Online*, sense 2b)

Tackling questions of identity is thus a question of ontology, since addressing who one 'is' is coupled with questions of 'being' and 'existence'. Whereas structuralist approaches to identity generally viewed this 'is' as a static and coherent pre-given entity, post-structuralist approaches underline that identity is emergent and constructed when individuals engage in social behavior, including communication.[4]

Davies and Harré's (1990) socio-psychological theory discusses identity in light of the key concept 'positioning'. They argue that positioning is

> […] the discursive process whereby selves are located in conversations as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines. (Davies & Harré 1990: 46)

The fact that positioning is discursive and involves story lines which are fabricated by more than one party underlines that it is an intersubjective process. Since positioning ensues when individuals interact with one another, its emergence is contingent upon the interaction. Analogously, then, selves, too, are emergent in interaction, as pointed out by Davies and Harré:

> [a]n individual emerges through the processes of social interaction, not as a relatively fixed end product but as one who is constituted and reconstituted through the various discursive practices in which they participate. (Davies & Harré 1990: 45)

Thus, when individuals construct identities in interaction, they are performing acts of positioning, and underlining the existence of a particular self which can be observed by others at a particular moment in time. The more particular acts of positioning are performed by the same individual, the more central this attribute is to his/her own construction of identity. Thus, an individual who, for example, consistently positions him/herself as a humorous individual in the status updates, is more likely to perceive him/herself as funny, and to be perceived as *being* a funny person by others.

Since the construction of identity is intersubjective, positioning needs to be studied both from the perspective of the self and the other. The terms used by Davies and Harré (1990: 46) are reflexive and interactive positioning.[5] While they can be separated for analytical purposes, the two overlap. This is illustrated in Example 3, taken from our corpus:

(3) Sarah is engaged to [NAME]! yay!

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[4] Post-structuralist approaches do not, however, argue that individuals reinvent themselves afresh every time they engage in interaction; certain characteristics are likely to be more pervasive than others and their importance is built up over time.

[5] It should be noted that this does not mean positioning is necessarily intentional (Davies and Harré 1990: 46).

By positioning herself as NAME's fiancée (reflexive positioning), Sarah also positions NAME as her fiancé (interactive positioning).

When individuals engage in positioning acts, they are involved in the construction and co-construction of identities. Identity is thus understood from a post-structuralist perspective, as proposed, for example, by Bucholtz and Hall (2005), Joseph (2004) or Mendoza-Denton (2002). Bucholtz and Hall (2005: 586) define identity as "the social positioning of self and other", and argue that this social positioning does not take place in a social vacuum, but is rather intersubjective and emergent. Thus, identity is "intersubjectively rather than individually produced and interactionally emergent rather than assigned in an a priori fashion" (Bucholtz & Hall 2005: 587). When individuals interact with one another, they construct their own identities and make assumptions about the identities of others. This process is fundamentally relational in that ties between interactants are created and recreated, shaped, challenged and confirmed (for the connection between relational work and identity construction see Locher 2008). Important for this construction are numerous variables, such as age, ethnicity, socio-economic background, sex, schooling and appearance. Clearly, language, while not the only means of identity construction, is central to this process. Further, as underlined by Wilbur (1996: 6, as quoted in Crystal 2006: 9) "[w]hatever else Internet culture may be, it is still largely a text-based affair." This particularly applies to the SUs and RSUs which are predominantly text-based. Before turning to our study and results from the analysis of the SUs and RSUs, we would like to position our own study within an existing research tradition and underline the importance of exploring identity work in social networks sites.

3. Social network sites and the rise of Facebook

Social network sites are aptly defined by boyd and Ellison (2007) as

> web-based services that allow individuals to
> (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system,
> (2) articulate a list of other users ['friends'] with whom they share a connection, and
> (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system. (boyd & Ellison 2007)

As the definition suggests, central to social network sites is the construction of personal profiles (of varied public visibility and accessibility) which are shared with others. The fact that profiles are an essential feature of SNSs illustrates that SNSs are people-driven. As stated by boyd and Ellison (2007), "[t]he rise of SNSs indicates a shift in the organization of online communities. While websites dedicated to communities of interest still exist and prosper, SNSs are primarily organized around people, not interests". Indeed, this is what sets them apart from computer-mediated environments predicated on shared interests, or topics. As boyd and Ellison (2007) go on to claim, "[e]arly public online communities such as Usenet and public discussion forums were structured by topics or according to topical hierarchies, but social network sites are structured as personal (or "egocentric") networks, with the individual at the center of

their own community." Each individual constructs such a personal site, which s/he shares with others, thereby erecting a personal network. The personal element of social network sites is nicely illustrated by the Facebook slogan which reads "Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life […]" (Facebook 2011).

boyd and Ellison (2007) report that social network sites are just over a decade old: The first, "SixDegrees.com", was launched in 1997 and followed by three more sites in 1999; while sites sporadically surfaced from 1997 on, it is in 2003 that we see rapid increase in the number of SNSs. This second phase of SNS emergence is the period in which Facebook was initiated, yet originally as a Harvard-only site. In other words, it was only available to students at the University of Harvard, a fact which is evidenced by the presence of a mask to fill in one's educational information on the personal profile page of Facebook. A year later, however, in 2005, Facebook was made accessible to high school networks, and in 2006 it was opened first to corporate networks and then to the general public. While Facebook has only existed since 2004, and its life span is thus just reaching a decade, in 2006 it was ranked the seventh most popular Internet site, as measured by number of page views (Cassidy 2006, as cited in Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe 2007), and by the end of 2007 it had over 50 million active users (Facebook Statistics 2011). Data from March 2011 totals the number of users worldwide at almost 630 million (Gonzalez 2011). A look at the two locations interesting for our study, Switzerland and the UK, shows the following. In March 2011, the total number of users in Switzerland is 2432680, which constitutes 42% of the online population, and in the UK the figure is at 29185480, which makes up 68% of the online population (Gonzalez 2011).[6] These figures illustrate the importance of Facebook for online users in both Switzerland and the UK.

In Herring's (2007, 2013), Lee's (2011) and West and Trester's (2013) terms, Facebook is multi-modal and offers both synchronous (e.g. chats) and asynchronous options for communication (e.g., writing on a friend's 'wall', posting status updates, uploading photos, commenting on them). The platform is constantly developing, adding new options for interaction and changing in appearance (Locher 2014). Yet status updates and reactions to status updates are still an integral part of the social practice of using Facebook. In our study, we focus on SUs and RSUs posted on the walls of our participants during two months, collected in 2009.[7] They are organized in such a way that the comments are listed below the status update to which they respond and appear in reverse chronological order. Users can scroll down a person's wall and see previously posted status updates and comments. The data is thus persistent – an important point for our later analysis of acts of positioning.[8] Herring (2007) also highlights the importance of many social/situational factors that, of course, also play an important role in the case of Facebook. In our study, participation structure (notably how public/private the space is, and whether communication is "one-to-one, one-to-many, many-to-many") and

[6] We have left the figures for 2011, as they better reflect the status of Facebook at the time the data was collected than current figures would.

[7] We keep the present tense for our description of the platform despite the fact that some features have changed since 2009 when we collected our data.

[8] Persistent here means that there is no in-built technological property which causes the text to disappear from the screen once it is produced. The text remains accessible so that even older SUs can be re-read by scrolling down. While we acknowledge that the duration of persistence can change when a platform develops and alters its settings, we consider the feature of persistency an important factor for our study of identity construction since Facebook users are aware that their contributions are more persistent than oral communication, and will remain accessible to others.

participant characteristics (especially the demographics of the participants) are particularly relevant (Herring 2007). We will give more details on our participants in the data section and will highlight relevant factors in our discussion.

4. Literature review: Language and identity online

While there is scant literature on how language is used for the construction of identity in social network sites (exceptions include boyd 2004; Donath & boyd 2004; Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008), the question of identity construction online is one which has attracted a lot of attention in the last couple of decades. Perspectives of identity online have clearly changed over time in the literature. This is unsurprising given the evolution from approaches to language use online which homogenized computer-mediated communication and over-emphasized the role played by the medium ('technological determinism'; cf. Androutsopolous 2006; Baym 1995a), to approaches which focus on the user and his/her performance of identities through language (cf. Androutsopolous 2006). Contemporary research underlines that individuals perform identities through their use of language, para- and extralinguistic means, and has moved away from arguments that the Internet is a democratic and egalitarian space in which one can 'be' whoever and whatever one wants to be. Instead, it is argued that identity construction online is multifaceted and interwoven with identity construction offline in complex ways (cf. for example, Donath 1999; Turkle 1995, 1996). Indeed, the distinction between 'real' or 'offline' and 'fake' or 'online' is inappropriate, a point which has been made by other researchers (cf. for example, Locher 2010).

The argument that the split between offline and online is not clear-cut is demonstrated by social network sites such as Facebook. According to Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008), Facebook relationships tend to be "anchored relationships", in that they are grounded in offline social realities. In other words, they are often "offline-based online relationships" (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008: 1818; cf. also Ellison, Steinfield & Lampe 2007; Mayer & Puller 2008; Lewis, Gonzalez, Wimmer & Christakis 2008; Lee 2011). Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin (2008: 1818) go on to describe that such relationships can be anchored offline in a variety of ways, e.g., "through institutions, residence, or mutual friends". This is important for our study, where relationships are anchored through mutual friends that individuals have offline. There are different degrees to which relationships can be anchored. Key for Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin's (2008) description is the extent to which an individual can be a) identified and b) located offline. This clearly depends on the degree to which s/he provides information about, for example, his/her name (relates to being identifiable) and where s/he lives, works and studies (relates to being located offline).

Research on identity construction in environments predicated on 'anchored relationships' is scant (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008). However, it is important to study how language is used for identity construction in such environments, since the type of relationship influences how such identity construction occurs. As Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008: 1818) state, "[u]nlike the anonymous setting in which individuals feel free to be whatever they want to, the nonymous [i.e., non-anonymous] environment places constraints on the freedom of identity claims". To take a hypothetical example from our corpus, this means that it is unlikely that an individual

known to other individuals as a student will claim that s/he is a police officer or a heart-surgeon, unless s/he actually has, or is training to have the named profession.

In an attempt to begin to fill this research gap, Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008) studied the Facebook accounts of 63 university students,[9] thereby focusing on identity construction. In their analysis, the authors explore different means of identity construction, differentiating thereby between implicit and explicit processes. Implicit modes of identity construction are visual, since they refer to the posting of pictures by the user him/herself on his/her profile page, or by users' friends (in which cases they were accompanied by a comment). Explicit modes are text-based and constituted by the text written by the user in the 'about me' section on his/her profile page. Between the two are what the researchers label 'enumerative' identity claims. These are lists of the users' hobbies and interests. Their analysis of these varying degrees of explicitness of identity construction shows that implicit means are favored over explicit ones. As stated by the authors,

> Facebook users predominantly claim their identities implicitly rather than explicitly; they 'show rather than tell' and stress group and consumer identities over personally narrated ones. (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008: abstract)

Thus, informants in their study opted to visually show, or highlight identity through the listing of interests and hobbies, rather than by means of narratives; over half of the 67% of users who wrote 'about me' narratives only wrote 1–2 short sentences (cf. Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008: 1825–1826). For Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008) this may relate to the medium, or what Herring (2007) refers to as the persistence of transcript:

> This tendency to 'show' rather than 'tell' may relate in part to the medium where it is more efficient to take the more passive 'upload option' than to compose a personal descriptive statement, one that might, incidentally, haunt the writer with the passage of time. (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008: 1826)

Indeed, as they go on to state, "[w]hat better way to personally convey 'kool, hot and smooth' than to signal it through 'kool, hot, and smooth' music. […] Moreover, a picture is worth more than a thousand words and positive remarks from others are more effective than self-praise" (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008: 1826). In addition to 'efficiency', Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin (2008) highlight that the purpose of Facebook, which is clearly social, also influences how identities are constructed. Indeed,

> the visual possibilities of Facebook mean that users offer a mediated interaction to their audience, one that requires the audience to pay equal attention to the social milieu of the individual. The appeal is as much to the likeability of my crowd, the desirability of my boyfriend or the magic of my music as it is to the personal qualities of the Facebook users themselves. (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008: 1831)

[9] Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008) included the profiles of 34 men and 29 women in their study and had participants from five different ethnic backgrounds (who were roughly equally distributed): White, Black, Latino, Indian and Vietnamese. For a full description of the selection process see Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008: 1821–1822).

The importance of positioning oneself within a group or community of like-minded individuals and the fact that this is made possible in a straightforward manner through the possibility of uploading photos and filling in one's hobbies and interests on the profile page also impacts how identity is constructed on Facebook.

In an earlier study (Bolander & Locher 2010), we took Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin's (2008) work as a starting point, and set out to explore identity construction in 10 personal profile pages and 227 status updates written by a network of students and young professionals living in Switzerland. On the basis of the research by Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008), we expected to find more implicit identity construction than explicit identity construction, and the results from our study confirm this. We did, however, modify Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin's (2008) study by also focusing on what we term 'self-labeling' and by including the SUs. In our study, self-labeling includes information about an individual's sex, birthday, relationship status, why s/he is on Facebook (e.g., looking for networking versus a relationship), what s/he is interested in (e.g., men), educational background and place of residence. We included this category since we believe it constitutes explicit self-labeling, as individuals respond to system prompts on the profile page (such as 'I am' which is followed by the options of 'male' or 'female'). This is more explicit than the other three categories used by Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008), visual (which refers to the practice of uploading pictures), enumerative (which refers to the listing of interests and hobbies) and narrative (which refers to the practice of writing a first person narrative in the 'about me' section on an individual's personal profile page). As our article shows, our results generally support those of Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008), as individuals tend to favor implicit means of constructing their identities over explicit ones. In Bolander and Locher (2010) we connected this tendency to participation structure, notably, to the fact the group of Facebook friends also know one another offline.

We also added to Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin's (2008) study by exploring language and identity in the status updates. We hypothesized that the 'creative language use' in the status updates would generally contain more implicit as opposed to explicit identity claims. In other words, we expected more status updates to imply an identity such as 'book-reader', through utterances such as 'NAME read another great book', than explicitly claim them, as in 'NAME is a book-reader'. We felt this analysis would be interesting because it would both add to existing research and allow us to test the results of earlier studies for a different component of Facebook (i.e., status updates); importantly, it would also focus more explicitly on language use, as status updates are text-based. For our analysis of the status updates we drew on Nastri, Peña and Hancock's (2006) study of 483 away messages in Instant Messaging (IM), written by 44 students at an American University. In their examination of the away messages the authors coded for humour and speech act type (drawing on Searle 1969, 1979). Since we report on humour in the results section of this study, it will not further be mentioned here.

Nastri, Peña and Hancock's (2006) speech act analysis showed that assertives (68%), expressives (14%) and commissives (12%) are the most prominent types of speech acts. Our analysis gave rise to similar results; these three types were also the most prominent in our data (59%, 26%, 9%). However, through our analysis we realised that SUs perform different functions than away messages in IM, which primarily show that one is not sitting at one's computer and/or is not available at that particular moment in time. We argued that SUs in Facebook are used for identity work, and for this reason

we decided to conduct a more detailed analysis of the speech acts in the SU corpus to see what individuals actually do when they utter an assertive, declarative, commissive, etc. This next step highlighted that SUs are predominantly used to refer to states of mind (25%, n=350), to actions in progress (17%) and to future actions (14%) (cf. Bolander & Locher 2010: 181 for a complete list).

In sum then, our use of Zhao, Grasmuck and Martin (2008), and Nastri, Peña and Hancock (2006) were useful starting points with which to analyse the personal profile pages and status updates of our 10 Facebook users. Our analysis showed similarities with both studies, in that identity claims tended to be implicit as opposed to explicit, and SUs realised as assertives, expressives and commissives. However, it also made us realise that in order to reach a more fine-grained appreciation of the identity work being performed in SUs, we would need to create a categorisation of acts of positioning. This paper thus leads on from the study and results presented in Bolander and Locher (2010).

5. Data

The data consist of the personal profile pages and status updates of two focus groups, and has thus been extended from our initial study. Focus group 1 is a group of 10 individuals living in Switzerland (referred to as S and FG-S below), who are predominantly students and young professionals, and Focus group 2 (abbreviated to FG-UK) is made up of 10 students who were studying in the UK at the time the data was collected. Our aim thereby is not to treat nationality as a variable (we will refrain from any generalizations). Instead, our initial selection of the two groups was motivated by both practical considerations (i.e., questions of access) and our desire to recruit students and young professionals, in order to have comparable data.

FG-S was recruited from amongst our own Facebook friends, and FG-UK by means of a public post to a linguistic mailing list run by a university in Northern England. For ethical reasons, we obtained consent from our informants to download information from their personal profile pages and walls (cf. Herring 1996; Eysenbach & Till 2001; Ess & the AoIR ethics working committee 2002; Bolander & Locher 2014). We collected the data in 2009 (in February for FG-UK and in August for FG-S), but selected data that was previously posted over a period of two months (December 2008 and January 2009). This step allowed us to circumvent the observer's paradox since the contributors had already posted their message prior to knowing that they would take part in a linguistic study. This method also allowed the participants to decide whether they wanted to join the study with knowledge on what kind of data they had been providing.

For this paper, we concentrate on two groups of ten individuals chosen from the larger data set (S: 74, UK: 58). We selected these individuals by focusing on one anchor person from each broader group, who had many contacts within the group of participants, and then choosing nine of their friends. These nine friends, in turn, were picked according to how many mutual friends they had in common with the anchor person, so as to ensure a relative density of the two networks. The motivation to go for two focus groups rather than the entire corpus is that we wanted to increase the likelihood that the posters read each other's status updates and that they formed a (loose) community of practice rather than a random group of people without any ties.

The data is predominantly in English (but see Locher & Bolander 2014 for a discussion of multilingual SUs).

In what follows, we describe the activities taking place on the Walls in general. As Table 1 shows, 12 different action types were performed by individuals on their Walls.

Table 1: Action types in FG-S and FG-UK (expanded from Bolander & Locher 2010: 171)

Action type	**FG-S #**	**%**	**FG-UK #**	**%**
SU: status update	227	47	248	37
AP: application activity	87	18	89	13
AC: acceptance of a gift or similar thing	51	11	16	2
CO: a comment on something that is indicated as a 'comment' by the system	41	9	153	23
SQ: a source or quote (from a newspaper, magazine, blog, youtube, etc.)	20	4	4	1
PH: uploading of photo	14	3	19	3
FAN: becoming a fan	12	2	10	1
GR: creation of a group	10	2	12	2
SQ-CO: a comment on an SQ	11	2	2	0
EV: event	4	1	9	1
PH-CO: a comment on a photo	3	1	0	0
GA: game move indicated by system	1	0	111	16
Total	481	100	673	100

Overall, we tracked 1154 different activities. Individuals, for example, use their Walls to upload photos, comment on photos, create groups, become fans of people/books/movies, etc., signal which events they intend to attend, and more. The main action type, however, is the writing of status updates: 47% and 37% of the total actions performed by FG-S and FG-UK were status updates. Since these were the most popular and are text-based (rather than enhanced or accompanied by pictures), we decided to analyze the language used by individuals in these status updates to construct their identities.

Taking a closer look at the SUs, Table 2 shows that the average of words in FG-UK was slightly higher (n=13.7) than in FG-S (n=8.7). However, the standard deviations for both groups show that there was a broad range.

Table 2: Status updates statistics

	FG-S	**FG-UK**
Total # of SU	227	248
% of overall activity	47%	37%
Total # words in SU	1984	3395
Average # words in a SU	8.7	13.7
Max	29	32
Min	2	2
Standard deviation	4.6	7.3

It is also important to point out that not all 20 individuals participating in the study were equally active in writing status updates. In fact, there are two participants (both in FG-S), which, while being part of the close-knit group, did not write any status updates, and could be labeled as lurkers. We kept these individuals in our study because we gave the ties between the participants priority over their activities and because they are part of the 'audience' for whom the status updates are written.

6. Acts of positioning in the status updates (SUs)

6.1. *Methodology*

In order to establish the identity claims that occurred in our corpus, we worked in three steps. (1) Both authors first developed categories independently on a subset and then discussed a possible joint catalogue of categories. The adjectives and nouns on this list refer to claims that are *implied* in a status update. For example, "Peter is full of sunshine, euphoria and bliss. yay!" was interpreted as the projection of a 'happy' identity, while "Marina is dead tired..." was labeled as projecting exhaustion. Both labels were classified as indexing personality traits. Our rationale for interpreting these descriptions of mood and temporary states of being as personality traits is that, if they re-occur over time, they are likely to be translated into impressions of personality by the readers. Thus if Marina, for example, regularly refers to being exhausted, frustrated, or the like, over time she constructs her identity as that of a complainer (a personality trait). This labeling of 'acts of positioning' is clearly qualitative in nature. While the labels are second order, they are nevertheless data-driven and were often inspired by the lexical items used by the writers of the SUs. (2) After this, our student coder Lisa Domenghino was trained with the suggested list, but was also asked to add further categories where necessary. (3) The last step consisted of preparing a final list of broad categories that was then used by both authors to systematically go through the 474 SUs in the corpus once again. The inter-rater reliability rate was at 80 percent and any remaining problems were resolved after discussion. The list consists of five broader categories of acts of positioning: Humor, pastime, personality, relationship and work.

We treated 'humor' as a separate category since it seemed to play an important role and we wanted to show its multi-functionality. However, one could easily make an argument for humor to be subsumed in the 'personality' category, since displaying a sense of humor contributes to the construction of one's personality (Locher & Bolander 2015).[10]

Table 3 lists the five categories which we systematically analyzed and shows a set of possible (but not exhaustive) positioning acts that were contained in them. The latter are presented in alphabetical order and should give the reader an impression of what kind of acts led to the broad classification. The five positioning categories can occur individually and in combination with one another in the 474 SUs.

Table 3: Broad categories of 'acts of positioning' with a set of pointers in alphabetical order

Pastime	**Personality**	**Humor**	**Relationship**	**Work**
travel	*Positive:*	canned jokes	friend	boss
IT affinity	amazed	dialogic character	fiancé/e	employee
food	anticipating	humor at the expense of others	family	student
music	happy	humor used to bond with in-group	spouse	
night life	hopeful	hyperbole		
TV/movies		irony		
wedding	*Negative:*	personification		
	apprehensive	self-deprecation		
	bored	understatement		
	busy	word play		
	exhausted			
	frustrated			
	guilty			
	ill			
	impatient			
	lost/wondering			
	unhappy/sad			

'Pastime' refers to what might be subsumed under the more general heading of hobbies and interests. The noun 'shopping' in Example 4 indexes an activity that Claire engages in and she thus positions herself as a shopper.

(4) Claire has very very very nearly finished her Christmas shopping!! :D

The category 'personality' relates to personal characteristics and primarily emotional, but also physical (cf. 'ill' and 'exhausted') states. Again, as argued above, we maintain that if particular physical states are regularly referred to by writers of SUs, over time these emerge as important attributes which tell the person's Facebook friends something about his/her personality. In Example 5, it is the word 'screwed' and the use of the unhappy emoticon that justifies the categorization of this SU as belonging to 'personality'.

(5) Lauren's computer has just deleted her essay ... it's gone .. She's screwed :(.

[10] The category of humour was the starting point of our interest in the Facebook SUs and identity construction. For this reason we have retained this as a separate category. Since we allow for multiple labeling with the other categories, the stylistic nature of humour is taken into account.

'Humor' is tricky to define both generally (cf. Schnurr 2010) and in CMC (cf. Baym 1995b). In this study we worked with Mullany's (2004) definition of humor, which reads as follows:

> Instances where participants signal amusement to one another, based on the analyst's assessment of paralinguistic, prosodic and discoursal clues. These instances can be classified as either successful or unsuccessful according to addressee's reactions. Humour can be a result of either intentional or unintentional humorous behaviour from participants. (Mullany 2004: 21)

For Schnurr (2010: 308) this definition is advantageous, since it takes into account that humor can be both intentional and unintentional, and allows for the inclusion of successful and failed attempts at humor. In the context of our research on Facebook where half the SUs receive no reaction (cf. section 'Results: 6.2.), this definition is particularly apt, since it allows us to classify humor even when there is no uptake. In such cases, we rely on the clues inherent in the status update in combination with our knowledge of the data and the participants. Nonetheless, we would like to stress that we were conservative when labeling humor types (Locher & Bolander 2015).

Example 6, which constitutes part of the title of this paper, is from the broader category of humor.

(6) Peter is a dumb nut.

It specifically involves three types of humor: Self-deprecation, humor used to bond with the in-group and irony. As stated in the introduction, 'dumb nut' is a literal translation from the German *dumme nuss*, which means 'silly person'. Only those with knowledge of German will appreciate the humor in this update. Hence, the humor is used to bond with an in-group. Since Peter is clearly not literally a dumb nut, irony is also present, as is self-deprecation as Peter is putting himself down by calling himself silly.

The final two categories 'relationship' and 'work' are more straightforward. The category of 'relationship' entails labels which denote the various types of relationship claims made by participants of the two focus groups, e.g., friend, fiancé/e and family. In Example 7, the noun phrase 'her family' serves to illustrate Sophie's bond with her family at this point in time.

(7) Sophie is loving being with her family

Finally, the category of 'work' includes three sub-types: Boss, employee and student. It subsumes cases where individuals stress either employment or their status as a student at university. Example 8 shows an example of Lauren positioning herself as a student, since she reflects upon having completed the first semester.

(8) Lauren has finally finished semester one ... woop wooop!

What should be noted here is that there is often more than one act of positioning performed in a single SU. A look at Examples 4 to 8 nicely illustrates this point. In Example 4, for example, the pastime of shopping is mentioned in connection with personality claims: She is in an emotional state of anticipation, realized through the tri-

fold repetition of the degree adverb 'very', and, connected to this anticipation, joy or happiness, as illustrated through the emoticon which prototypically means a big grin, or smile. Similarly, in Example 8, Lauren's positioning as a student is also connected with the personality claim of being happy, made manifest through the use of the exclamation 'woop wooop' added at the end of the update. Since updates often entail more than one type of positioning, we have allowed for multiple labeling.

We argue that the methodological steps outlined here demonstrate one means of studying the process of identity construction both qualitatively and quantitatively in Facebook, which could be adapted for studies on identity construction in other text-based environments. The results are reported in the next section.

6.2. *Results*

The results from our qualitative and subsequent quantification of the acts of positioning in the 474 SUs allow us to answer the following research question: What labels for acts of positioning can we find, i.e. what identities are evoked? Five types of acts of positioning, as illustrated in the previous section on methodology, could be found, with varying frequencies of occurrence. Personality was the positioning type which most often surfaced in both groups, followed by pastime, and then humor, work and relationship. Table 4 illustrates that we found a total of 1100 acts of positioning, just under 50% of which were of the personality kind. Pastime accounted for roughly 25% and humor, work and relationship all accounted for approximately 10%. The same order of frequency stands true when we look at the two focus groups individually.

Table 4: The five categories of positioning in order of their frequency of occurrence

Category	Personality	Pastime	Humor	Work	Relationship	Total
FG-S: #	204	123	47	37	40	451
%	45	27	10	8	9	99
FG-UK: #	298	163	67	65	56	649
%	46	25	10	10	9	100
Total #	502	286	114	102	96	1100
%	46	26	10	9	9	

The extent to which the distribution of the frequencies of the five types of acts of positioning overlap between the two groups is striking. This suggests that identity construction in the SUs is primarily predicated on displaying personality traits (e.g., claims in which one constructs one's identity as that of a happy or sad person by indexing a feeling or emotional state) and through highlighting pastime activities. The two networks do not elaborate on their relationships much, nor on their work status. This may be because we are dealing with "anchored relationships" (Zhao, Grasmuck & Martin 2008) in which individuals do not need to establish or reinforce identity claims that are already well known by their addressees.

While Table 4 suggests a uniform distribution of acts of positioning, we can of course detect differences on an individual level. Indeed, it is here that the creative use of language for identity construction becomes most apparent. We have chosen four individuals in order to demonstrate this point. Table 5 shows that their distribution of positioning claims differs somewhat from each other. For each of them, we will highlight some particular idiosyncrasies.

Table 5: The five categories of positioning according to the distribution of four individuals

Category/ Person	**Personality**	**Pastime**	**Humor**	**Work**	**Relationship**	**Total**
Sarah	61	27	6	16	20	130
%	47	21	5	12	15	100
Peter	41	18	21	5	1	86
%	48	21	24	6	1	100
Claire	72	40	20	4	16	152
%	47	26	13	3	11	100
Lauren	67	28	11	25	11	142
%	47	20	8	18	8	101

In the case of Sarah, it is striking that she produces 15% acts of positioning (n=20) in the relationship category, which is more than the average 9%. Looking more closely at this category, we find that Sarah makes friendship and family claims. It also transpires that she got engaged during the time period of data collection. She announces this fact on January 5 and then writes five more status updates in which this new status is alluded to until January 29 (emphasis added in Examples 9 to 14):

(9) Sarah is *engaged* to [NAME]! yay!
(10) Sarah is going *ring shopping* tomorrow!!! AND, we have a juke box at our engagement party on Saturday... YESSS!!!
(11) Sarah wants to start here with thanking everyone for their wonderful wishes both for the *engagement* and my birthday!!!! You guys are just too good!
(12) Sarah is off to a Saturday night *'engagement congratulations dinner'* and cannot even drink a glass of wine... oooh, this will be difficult!
(13) Sarah is checking out *wedding locations*.... how crazy is that!!!!
(14) Sarah: holy cow it takes ages to load photos up here... have to divide pics into parts... sorry guys.. *ENGAGEMENT PARTY* PIX COMING SOON!!!

Sarah thus actively creates a new identity for herself by means of the status updates which allow her to share her news with her friends.

Peter's use of status updates for acts of positioning is interesting with regard to its distribution among the categories, which differs from the average (Table 5). He primarily uses personality, humor and pastime claims to construct his identity. Furthermore, he projects a diverse picture of himself. In the category 'pastime', for example, he mentions not just one hobby, but shares his interest in music, food, books, night life, and travel (as shown in Examples 15–19):

(15) Peter really loves zomby, tensnake, N.A.S.A., Ewan Pearson and Kid Cudi right now.
(16) Peter wants a strawberry-milkshake right now.
(17) Peter is on the road looking for dean moriarty.
(18) Peter is starstruck and hungover.
(19) Peter packs.

His use of humor is noteworthy for the same reason: Once again he uses a wide range of different humor categories and thus comes across as dynamic and diverse.

Claire's sense of humor is special in so far as she extensively uses humor to bond with her in-group (see Example 20). In addition, she is also one of the few people to use self-deprecating humor, as evidenced in Example 21:

(20) Claire is looking forward to her massages at the spa tomorrow!! and then completely counter-acting the experience with a long - awaited night out with the girlies!!!
(21) Claire is wondering whether 3 nights out in a week makes her a bad person!? :/

Finally, Lauren uses the category 'work' to 'write herself into being' as a student. 22 of her 25 acts of positioning belong to her student life. In particular, she keeps her friends updated on the progress of her essay writing:

(22) Lauren is clearly avoiding work. She is aware that she still has 900 words left to reach her target for the day. She just doesn't care enough to bother! [12/112008, 5:02pm]
(23) Lauren has only another 1500 words left and is rather glad that she had the amazing idea of splitting everything into sections. [12/17/2008, 1:14pm]
(24) Lauren has passed the 3,000 word mark meaning there's less than 1,000 words to go ... I think I'll call it a day to be honest! [12/17/2008, 7:07pm]
(25) Lauren is preparing herself for the final push but just needs a bit of time to settle into it .. honest. [12/18/2008, 11:16am]
(26) Lauren has just 500 words left... joy of joys :). [12/18/2008, 12:43pm]
(27) Lauren is as good as finished. [12/18/2008, 2:40pm]
(28) Lauren's computer has just deleted her essay ... it's gone .. she's screwed :(. [12/19/2008, 11:24pm]

In sum, the concept of acts of positioning helped us to develop identity categories and to find general tendencies with respect to their frequencies: Personality acts of positioning made up 50% of the total claims, pastime 25% and humor, work and relationships each 10%, both overall and for the two focus groups individually. In addition, our discussion of idiosyncratic uses of these acts of positioning showed the creative and dynamic ways in which interactants construct their different identities through SUs on Facebook. As stated in the Introduction, the more an individual performs similar acts of positioning over time, the more central they will become to the identity s/he constructs during a particular time period. Since the transcripts are persistent, as SUs remain visible on an individual's Wall,[11] the gradual construction of an individual's identity is visible to his/her Facebook friends. A combined study, which explores the overall frequencies of acts of positioning and idiosyncratic means of identity construction, enables us to gain insight into this process.

7. Acts of positioning in the reactions to status updates (RSUs)

7.1. *Methodology*

Our aim for the analysis of the RSUs was to explore the interactivity, i.e., the uptake of the acts of positioning, and in doing so to exemplify a means for studying identity

[11] When messages are no longer visible, an individual can click on 'older posts' and see previously written SUs and other types of activities.

construction in Facebook as an interpersonal process. We wondered whether RSUs challenged or confirmed identity claims made in the SUs, whether reactions did different things entirely, e.g., make other, new or further identity claims about the SU-writers, or were unclear. Attempting to answer this question proved challenging for three main reasons. Firstly, some SUs receive no comments at all (we will return to this later on). Secondly, some SUs trigger comments which lead to further rounds of interactions, or dialogues between users. Often the original writer of the SU contributes to these dialogues. Thirdly, sometimes the RSU writers commit acts of positioning which add further information to the claims made in the original SU. While each of these points is interesting, for now we decided to concentrate only on the first response that an SU received. For this reason our corpus of RSUs consists of 228 RSUs. We decided to do this since we believe that the first comment written as a response to an RSU is more likely to be linked to the original SU, whereas later comments may or may not be linked to the original SU. We coded the RSUs according to a tripartite division between a) challenges of an identity claim/s made in the SU; b) confirmations of an identity claim/s in an SU; and c) other/unclear. The same two authors and student rater coded the data, achieving an inter-rater reliability of 76 percent and resolving all open issues in discussion.

7.2. *Results*

Table 6 shows the results of the coding of the RSUs. For both focus groups, half the SUs received no reaction. When initially trying to find explanations for this result, we hypothesized that certain identity claims would be more likely to prompt reactions. For example, we assumed that personality acts of positioning of the type 'lost' or 'wondering' would prompt for reactions of support. However, a further look at the data revealed that there was no apparent correlation between the type of identity claim made and whether a response was triggered or not.

Table 6: Reactions to SUs and their identity claims with respect to the SUs

Category	**FG-S, N-SU=227***	**%**	**FG-UK, N-SU=247***	**%**
SUs with no reaction	122	51	124	49
Confirmation of an identity claim	79	33	98	38
Challenge of an identity claim	13	5	8	3
Other/unclear	24	10	25	10
Total	238	99	255	100

Key: * = more than one act of positioning can occur in a SU

Focusing on SUs which received a reaction, Table 6 shows that confirmations of identity claims made in the SUs occurred most often (33%; 38%), followed by cases where RSUs neither confirmed nor challenged assertions made in the SUs (10% in both groups), and finally cases where identity claims made in the SUs are challenged (5%; 3%). Example 29 shows a case where we find both a confirmation of the identity claim made by the SU writer, as well as a situation where the writer of the RSU adds something further to the interaction.

(29) SU: Marina is coughing like hell.
RSU: oh poverina! Ich bin auch so was von verpfnüselt. hass es. nase schon ganz rot vom schütze. bist am mi nachmittag in zb? gute besserung principessa!

'ahh poor little thing. I also have such a terrible cold. hate it. my nose is already totally red from blowing it. will you be at the university library on Wednesday afternoon? get well princess!'

Example 29 shows the SU and the first reaction to it. The act of positioning performed in the SU is coded as 'ill', one of the sub-types of personality acts of positioning, which we recall predominantly refers to emotional states, but also includes relevant physical ones including 'ill'. In the RSU this identity is confirmed, firstly, through the exclamative *oh poverina!*, and secondly, through the wish *gute besserung principessa!* ('get well princess').[12] Furthermore, the RSU writer aligns herself with the SU writer since she is also suffering from a cold.

Yet, the RSU writer also engages in further identity construction. The question *bist am mi nachmittag in zb?* ('will you be at the university library on Wednesday afternoon?') goes beyond the act of positioning made in the SU and the bulk of the response. It underlines instead that the respondent wonders whether the SU writer will be at the library on Wednesday afternoon, either because this will influence whether she will also go there (maybe they study there together), or because she otherwise would like to make plans with her for that afternoon. Regardless of the social meaning of the question, it serves to make a public friendship claim, since it shows that the two individuals are connected offline, too.

In Example 30 we can see a case in which the RSU writers challenges the act of positioning made in the SU.

(30) SU: hard-disk des MAC kaputt, Rettung kostet 3000.-!!! und jetzt?!!!!??
'hard-disk of MAC is broken, saving the disc costs 3000 !!! what now?!!!!!??'
RSU: sicherheitskopie hervornehmen und weiter arbeiten..
'take out the backup copy and keep on working ..'

The SU in (12) constitutes a clear request for help. The writer of the update is frustrated (underlined by the repetition of exclamation marks after *Rettung kostet 3000* [saving the disc costs 3000]) and lost (highlighted through the combined repetition of exclamation marks and question marks at the end of the update). In the response to this SU, the writer of the RSU tells her to take out her back up copy and keep on working. He thus challenges the act of positioning made in the SU, by questioning her frustration and her need to ask for help in the first place, and by implicitly positioning her as somebody who apparently did *not* think of the obvious steps in advance.

In sum then, our analysis of the RSUs according to the categories of confirmation, challenge and other/unclear was a helpful first step which allowed us to highlight the prominence of supportive relational work (Locher & Watts 2005, 2008) in RSUs. This is perhaps unsurprising given the nature of the ties on Facebook. However, it is only

[12] Note that this reaction contains both Italian and Standard German. We are hesitant to call this code-switching, since the writer of the RSU is not competent in Italian. Possibly it is rather a case of 'crossing' (Rampton 1995) into Italian. Italian is potentially selected as the language here, since the two individuals had been to Italy together in the summer preceding this data collection.

through empirical research of the kind presented here that such beliefs can be validated. As a next step, further work on the RSUs still needs to be done. This is outlined in our conclusion and outlook.

8. Conclusion and outlook

In this paper we explore identity construction in SUs and RSUs on the SNS Facebook. For our analysis of the 474 SUs and 228 RSUs, we adapted Davies and Harre's (1990) concept of positioning and explored 'acts of positioning' within these written texts. Our methodology was both qualitative and quantitative. Through our qualitative analysis we managed to shed light on the types of acts of positioning individuals of both focus groups perform on Facebook status updates: Humor, pastime, personality, relationship and work. Our in-depth treatment of the data also meant we could account for fine-grained differences between the groups and between individuals. The analysis of idiosyncratic differences further exemplifies what post-structuralist studies on identity have shown for face-to-face interactions, namely that identity is emergent. This is particularly visible in computer-mediated environments where transcripts are persistent. By studying both overall tendencies of the focus groups, as well as individual constructions of identity over time, we are able to trace the gradual construction of identity during the time period in question. Through our quantification of the results, we managed to go beyond showing what acts of positioning individuals perform. The study thus highlights the productive combination of qualitative and quantitative methodology for research on identity in these two communities of practice, while exemplifying that 'acts of positioning' can be applied as a helpful theoretical concept to linguistic analyses on Facebook. Most notably perhaps, it offers a way of combining qualitative with quantitative research on identity construction without falling prey to an essentialist understanding of identity, or thereby losing sight of the fact that identity construction is a process, which is constructed interpersonally. While much research remains to be done, our paper is a contribution to the study of language and identity on SNSs, a new and evolving research field.

Our own plan for further contributions to this field includes extending our corpus, so as to include more of the 74 FG-S and 58 FG-UK users who consented to participate in the project. We also wish to address further the concept that identity emerges over time and to tackle in more detail the complex interrelationship between more static and emergent parts of an individual's identity. This can be done, for example, by comparing the explicit identity claims made through the self-labeling on the personal profile pages with the acts of positioning performed in the SUs. We are also addressing code-switching both in the SUs and in RSUs, an interesting question in connection with identity work, particularly considering the multilingual competence of many of our participants (see Locher & Bolander 2014). As a next step, we also wish to analyze the RSUs in more detail. This would entail focusing on the mini-dialogues which occur in the RSUs and exploring how these dialogues are structured (West & Trester 2013). Finally, since we have also coded for other activities performed on an individual's Wall, it would be fruitful to include pictures, hyperlinks, videos and other multi-modal elements in our analysis (cf. Thurlow & Mroczek 2011 and Herring 2013, who call for more multi-modal analyses). This will allow us to zoom in further on the dynamic and interactive construction of identities online.

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