Am I Too Branded? Fame Labour and Microcelebrity Culture

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Abstract

The visual social media application 'Instagram' has normalised microcelebrity culture to a point where young people are in the habit of producing branded personas designed for public consumption. Research to date has identified modes of visibility labour such as self-branding techniques and offers insight into the strategies social media users employ. However, more needs to be known about the work done behind the scenes to create and maintain branded identities and manage the potential dissonance between online social media identities and life offline.

This thesis explores the questions 'How is emotional labour involved in creating personal brands on Instagram for microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities?' and 'Why are microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities enacting these forms of labour? What kinds of selves are constructed in the process?' I achieved the status of Instagram celebrity during this project with a following of over 30,000. As such the thesis constitutes an analytic autoethnography detailing my own lived experience as an internet celebrity, the experiences of others who have achieved celebrity status and everyday users. I conducted participant interviews, field observations, and surveyed over 500 non-microcelebrities and the results of these are presented alongside documentation of and reflection on my own experiences.

I identify a range of emotionally laborious processes involved in performing branded personas on social media. I analyse self-branding practices such as creating sexualised content and body modifications through exploring diverse performances of aesthetic and sexualised labour. I argue that 'fame labour' or emotion work involved in managing tensions between competing online and offline performances of self, characterise and transform online and offline identities. Maintaining celebrified online brands alongside offline personas has become a normalised aspect of identity work for both social media celebrities and the everyday user.

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Declaration

This thesis contains no material that has been accepted for the award to the candidate of any other degree or diploma, except where prior permission to do so has been received by the ADRD, and with due reference made about this in the text of the examinable outcome; 2. to the best of the candidate's knowledge contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text of the examinable outcome, and with permission received to republish the work in the thesis; and, 3. where the work is based on joint research or publications, discloses the relative contributions of the respective creators or authors using the Authorship Declaration Form.

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Chapter One: Introduction

"In the future, everyone will be famous for fifteen minutes – Andy Warhol"
(Cited in Momus, 1991)

In 2015 I became an Instagram celebrity. This thesis explores how and why I did it, tracing my experiences and the experiences of others as we navigated our online lives. I began this research as an outsider, new to Instagram, at a time when the platform was still emerging. I knew I wanted to have a 'good profile' that resembled popular Instagram celebrities I idolized at the time, but had no idea how I would achieve it or what achieving it would involve. I realised that I would need to morph myself into a brand not only to fit in with the people I saw on my screen but also to attract the attention of the people I wanted to interview for this project. This motivated me to spend considerable amounts of time using the platforms tools to their full extent to craft my brand.

To an outsider Instagram could appear to be nothing more than an 'app' used to share photos. To the people who use it, it is far more than that. It is on their minds every time they look in a mirror or decide where to go on the weekend. It is the last thing they do before they go to sleep and the first thing they check when they wake. It infiltrates almost every aspect of their lives, changing the way they present themselves, understand themselves and relate to others. This thesis answers the research questions 'How is emotional labour involved in creating personal brands on Instagram for microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities?' and 'Why are microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities enacting these forms of labour? What kinds of selves are constructed in the process?' I argue that maintaining celebrified online brands alongside offline personas has become a normalised aspect of identity composition for both social media celebrities and the everyday user.

The term 'microcelebrity' was coined by Theresa Senft in 2008. She argued that through social media the discourse of 'brand me' has been normalised. Whether or not users choose to go against the norm and privatise their online activity, social media affordances encourage users to publicise their updates, interests and 'likes', monitor the activities of others and at the very least, parades those who are excelling at microcelebrity culture as something to be aspired to (Cirucci, 2018a; Papacharissi, 2011). Social media affordances refer to technological capabilities that enable particular actions to potentially take place (Faraj & Azad, 2012). Affordances can be understood by examining the entangled relationship between the capability of a technology and the actions people take within a particular social context (Majchrzak et al., 2013). Microcelebrity is understood as a mindset where social media users conduct themselves as celebrities or as if they could soon become

celebrities, regardless of who is watching. To examine emotional processes involved in managing a branded, celebrified identity on Instagram, this research engages with a body of work on Symbolic Interactionism and digital identity work. Drawing from Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective along with contemporary theories about celebrity, microcelebrity, labour and identity this thesis explores how young people are conducting themselves online and offline at a time where fame is socialised, encouraged and more accessible than ever. The following section contextualises the theoretical lens through which identity is understood in this thesis.

Roles and performances

A defining characteristic of the late 21st century is the significance of an online presence. People are now in the habit of constructing a sense of self within virtual environments (Ching & Foley, 2012) where identity is negotiated through online performances. Erving Goffman (1959) in his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* argued that Individuals tailor their performances to accommodate those of the people around them who also constitute their audience. This theoretical framework departs from the enlightenment perception of identity as emanating from an inner essence and expressed through behaviours (Covers, 2016). Robert Park (1950) also understood our everyday presentations of self or performances through a dramaturgical lens.

> Everyone is always and everywhere, more or less consciously playing a role... It is these roles that we know each other; it is in these roles that we know ourselves... This mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality (249-250).

Park's argument is that ordinary social situations function as a scene through the exchange of dramatically inflated actions. Almost anyone can deliver a scripted performance as life is a dramatically enacted thing (Goffman, 1959). While this dramaturgical analysis of self presentation predates the online world, a dramaturgical perspective remains a useful lens through which we can analyse online behaviours (Robinson, 2018; Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Mavroudis & Milne, 2016; Marshall, 2010; Jacobsen, 2010; Hogan, 2010; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010; Quan-Hasse & Collins, 2008; Menchik & Tian, 2008; boyd, 2007; Schroeder, 2002).

A performative perspective on identities dismisses the view that there are separate online and offline identities that function independently. Online performances consist of multiple, interwoven facets that makeup an individual's overall sense of self; online and offline identities that continue to evolve (Mead, 1934; Stone, 1996; Turkle, 1995, 1984; Hall, 1994; Haraway, 1985, 1996). This thesis is

underpinned by the notion that identity as a performance of self is fluid, multifaceted, fragmented, contradictory and constructed through complex interactions (Butler, 2016, 1993; Benwell & Stokoe, 2006; Weston, 1991) that is an evolving product of culture rather than a finished product (Butler, 2016, 1993).

Through social media, performances of self are designed and manipulated behind the scenes and become manifested in online profiles (Marwick, 2013; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010). In Goffman's (1959) discussion of performances he identified an element of a person's performance, their 'front'. A front is the general social scenery that serves as a prop that accommodates a person's performance. Fronts also refer to personal characteristics that help the audience identify the performer by features such as sex, age, ethnic characterises, body type, speech patterns, facial expressions and bodily gestures. Individuals tailor their self presentations to present particular selves for different audiences (Goffman, 1959). Mead (1934) shared the view that social actors enact multiple performances of self explaining that 'I' and the 'me' are parts of the same self that are constantly in dialogue with each other (p. 178). Social networking sites can be seen as a way of presenting a self that draws on a celebrified discourse.

Like the television celebrity, the celebrified front social media users present may not be completely representational of their offline self in that their online interests may conflict with their offline interests (Marshall, 2010). On social media, people consciously construct portrayals of self through photographs and videos to participate in microcelebrity culture. The information they reveal is carefully designed behind the scenes to create online personas or brands. Users can alter their front to suit their audience and purpose when participating in online society. It is through these performances that users negotiate the claims they make about themselves. Our tendency to alter our fronts demonstrates how a performance is "socialized, modified and moulded" to suit the cultural expectations of the society to which an individual belongs to (Goffman, 1959, pg. 44).

The art of photography has changed in the wake of the online performances enabled by social media. As Ari Schwartz argued, "We are witnessing a shift from photographing others for self-consumption to documentation of the self for consumption of others" (2010, pg. 165). Since the mid 1800s photography primarily served to preserve biographical memories and to share stories with family and friends within a person's physical social network (Chalfern, 1987). The introduction of personal cameras allowed people to create their own photographs where they could present their lives in an idealised manner (Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010). Online outlets like Instagram serve as

an instrument of self presentation where users create an idealised online visual autobiography, designed for public consumption on a scale not seen before. Although the biographical nature of personal photography seems to have prevailed, the public presentation of it for widespread consumption is a very recent phenomenon representative of a cultural shift towards public performativity.

Visual content performed on social media documents the self (Winston, 2013) to a potentially enormous audience rather than limited, physical social networks (Marwick, 2015). Online profiles are designed for public visibility on a much wider scale than was possible when Goffman (1959) published his theory of the self as a dramaturgical performance. Individuals' performances are now potentially put on show for not only those in their physical vicinity but for anyone in almost any part of the world. The terms 'digital influencer', 'microcelebrity' and 'non-microcelebrity' are defined in the context of this thesis in the following section. Background information about Instagram and ephemeral social media is also provided to contextualise discussions of social media platforms throughout the thesis. It is important to note that Instagram users are not usually platform exclusive. They often use other social media outlets such as *YouTube*. Instagram however is used as a primary platform by participants. It is for this reason that Instagram was the chosen site of analysis.

Defining microcelebrity and digital influence

In previous academic work the terms 'microcelebrity' and 'digital influencer' have been used interchangeably. In this section I define the two terms and argue that that although they are closely related, they describe two distinct constructs. As mentioned, the term 'microcelebrity' was coined by Theresa Senft in 2008. She argued that through social media the discourse of 'brand me' has been normalised demonstrated through simply choosing to share particular online content and withhold other content. Social media architecture encourages users to publicise themselves, compete for visibility and monitor the activities of others (Cirucci, 2018a; Papacharissi, 2011). Even those who actively avoid it are exposed to this culture through broadcast media (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005).

Microcelebrity is both a process and a product. Microcelebrity as a process is understood as a cultural construct constituted by a mindset and a set of practices where a 'regular' person carefully constructs their self presentation so that it can be easily consumed by an audience that is often seen as a fan base (Marwick, 2013a; Senft, 2008, 2013; Marwick & boyd, 2011). The microcelebrity

mindset characterises the culture of visual social media. Microcelebrity as a product, or an individual referred to as a microcelebrity, is understood to be a user with a significant following. In the context of this research a user with a following of approximately 10,000 or more is classed as a microcelebrity. A non-microcelebrity would therefore have fewer than 10,000 followers.

A 'digital influencer' can be viewed as a product and epitome of microcelebrity culture. Crystal Abidin (2015a) defines an influencer as:

> Everyday, ordinary Internet users who accumulate a relatively large following on blogs and social media through the textual and visual narration of their personal lives and lifestyles, engage with their following... and monetize their following by integrating "advertorials" into their blog or social media posts and making physical appearances at events (2015a).

In the direct quote above, Abidin (2015a) distinguishes an 'influencer' as someone who monetizes their following. In the same year she argued that transitioning to 'microcelebrity' is the result of users monetizing their following through brand deals (Abidin, 2015b). It becomes clear that there is no conclusive set of criteria in place to differentiate a 'digital influencer' from a 'microcelebrity' as the terms are often used interchangeably. I have therefore identified three factors from my research that can act as a framework to distinguish the two concepts and potentially measure digital influence. The three factors are Reach, Collaborative Networks and Brand Endorsement Status. **Reach** refers simply to the amount of followers a user has. The greater their following, the greater reach they posses. **Collaborative networks** are the professional and/or personal ties a user has with fellow users on Instagram. Within each genre of digital influence (travel, fashion, beauty, comedy, etc) there are identifiable major players. Affiliation or proximity to these people will boost an Instagram user's following and status. Influencers are linked to others either by following each other, interacting frequently, appearing in each other's content and by being listed as 'similar' by Instagram in the suggestions box. Users can also posses 'proximate fame' (Abidin, 2015b; Marwick, 2015) by being linked to traditional media celebrities such as TV personalities, however from my fieldwork I have found that proximity to digital influencers or "proximate microcelebrification" (Abidin, 2015b, pg. 1) is more valuable within Instagram's economy. For example two participants in this study are friends with the Kardashian family, the Hilton sisters and several actors and musicians however they believe that their ties to other social media influencers are more beneficial to their reach.

The third factor, **brand endorsement status**, is closely related to reach. The greater their reach, the greater their value is to advertisers in regards to selling potential (Booth & Matic, 2011; Yung Ming, Ching-Yang & Ching Wen, 2011; Marwick, 2013; Abidin, 2014; Abidin & Ots, 2015; Ots & Abidin, 2015; Khamis, Ang & Welling, 2016) and therefore, the higher their brand endorsement status. This value can be quantified by the monetary value of a brand endorsement an influencer receives. These values can vary enormously according to the reach and collaborative networks a user possesses. For example, one of the male influencers consulted in this study received a brand offer worth in excess of $20,000, where as for the same brand deal, I was offered $500.

In the quote above Abidin (2015a) distinguished digital influencers from microcelebrities purely based on their ability to monetize their following. However, it is common for digital influencers to reject brand endorsement offers. Simply being approached by a company satisfies the criteria of brand endorsement status. It signifies the power a user holds in regards to their ability to potentially shape audience attitudes in some capacity. Digital influencers can influence others through disseminating taste preferences such as a hairstyle, or slang terms without receiving monetary compensation. This kind of influence is noticed by companies who use social media as a marketing platform. Influencer's content can also appear in mainstream broadcast media and has the power to influence mainstream media itself (Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005). Digital influence is ultimately about status and power that can potentially result in monetisation. There is of course cross over between microcelebrities and digital influencers in regards to reach and collaborate networks as both posses the two to differing degrees that fluctuate over time. It is brand endorsement status that signifies the transition from microcelebrity to digital influencer. These factors provide a framework to distinguish and measure digital influence. In the following section I provide background information about the chosen site of analysis, Instagram and ephemeral social media.

Instagram

Instagram is the focus when investigating the nuances of microcelebrity culture in this thesis as it has been the most widely used visual social media application in recent years (Statista, 2018; Instagram, 2015). The platform launched in 2010 grew quickly. By 2014 Instagram's user base was estimated to be around 150 million (Marwick, 2015) and in June 2018 Instagram reached one billion active users (Statista, 2018). Instagram is unique due to its focus on visual content. People create their profiles and craft a persona based on the photos and videos they share. With each post the user negotiates their performance of self with their followers. The significance of a person's

presence can be judged by the number of followers that 'like' and 'comment' on their posts. More followers results in more likes and comments on user's content and ultimately greater public exposure. Content shared with a user's audience is a form of identity expression achieved through enacting identity work. Instagram accounts can be public or private however they are public by default. Achieving fame or 'Insta-fame' as it is commonly referred to, is being achieved by many young people to varying degrees as the extremely popular site continues to grow (Marwick, 2015).

Snapchat and Instagram Stories

Snapchat prides itself on being different to other social media platforms. In their first blog after the application was launched in 2011 they explained how they distinguish themselves:

> Snapchat isn't about capturing the traditional Kodak moment. It's about communicating with the full range of human emotion, not just what appears to be pretty or perfect... We're building a photo app that doesn't conform to unrealistic notions of beauty or perfection but rather creates a space to be funny, honest or whatever else you might feel like at the moment you take and share a snap (Snapchat, 2012).

Snapchat is different to Instagram as posting must be spontaneous. Any photo or short video must be posted almost immediately after it is taken, it does not afford the user much opportunity to carefully consider or manipulate their post. Snapchat posts or 'snaps' are temporary, with each snap remaining online for no longer than 24 hours. Posted content therefore does not manifest into a permanent profile like Instagram posts. Snaps allow a brief yet intimate insight into a person's life. Snapchat claims that the ephemeral nature of their content alleviates the stresses associated with the longevity of personal information on social media (Snapchat, 2012). The spontaneity and temporary nature of Snapchat challenges current literature in this field which is based on the assumption that online identity formation is about crafting a performance through permanent digital traces that constitute online profiles (Robards et al., 2018).

Snapchat remains a kind of undercover application where the most common way to find a user's account is through referral from their Instagram profile. It is convention that people post their Snapchat name on their Instagram page either by listing it in their description or mentioning it in a post. It is therefore used as an extension to Instagram. Snapchat allows for behind the scenes access, giving followers a deeper, real-time insight in to their lives. On August 3, 2016 Instagram introduced 'Instagram Stories' which functions almost identically to Snapchat except it runs through the

Instagram app. Users could now post both permanent and temporary content through one application. Instagram explained that this feature allows users to share "highlights and everything in-between, too" (Instagram, 2016). Throughout this thesis both Snapchat and Instagram Stories are collectively referred to as 'ephemeral' or 'temporary' social media. The application name 'Instagram Stories' is also used to describe both platforms as they are both used as annexes to Instagram and function in a similar way. The following section explains this thesis' contribution to scholarship.

Contribution to scholarship

Becoming a digital influencer granted me insider access to other digital influencers and enabled me to recruit a large sample of non-microcelebrities (521 social media users in total). Several participants explained how they have been approached by academics in the past wishing to include them in their research however, they did not feel comfortable opening up to someone who was not 'one of them.' Studying internet celebrities themselves is an under researched area (Marshall et. al, 2015). Contemporary research on microcelebrity typically analyses the secondary content that manifests on online profiles. Instead, this research goes behind the screen to report on findings from an analytic autoethnography. The analytic autoethnography comprised of direct consultation with internet celebrities, survey data of non-microcelebrities and analyses of my own experiences.

The large sample of 522 young people (including myself) are not representative of any specific subgroup of internet users such as Silicon Valley technology experts (Marwick, 2013), Singaporean business women (Abidin, 2016), cam girls (Senft, 2008), female influencers (Drenten & Gurrieri, 2019) or gay YouTubers (Lovelock, 2017; Abidin, 2017). The internet celebrities were chosen from my explore screen. The non-microcelebrities were followers (of myself and the other internet celebrities) who chose to follow the public link and take the survey. The male and female Instagram users in this study are from Australia, North America, South America, Europe, Asia, Africa and the Middle East and are only connected in that they all use Instagram and are aged between 18 and 35 (the majority of the young people that make up this sample are aged between 18 and 29). This sample provides a larger and more diverse sample than those seen in previous studies researching microcelebrity culture.

Previous research has identified modes of visibility labour such as self-branding techniques and offers insight into the strategies social media users employ. This research explores the emotion work done behind the scenes to create and maintain branded identities and manage the potential

dissonance between online social media identities and life offline. In doing this I analyse self-branding practices such as creating sexualised content and body modifications through exploring diverse performances of aesthetic and sexualised labour. I offer an alternative understanding of authenticity, and detail the emotion work associated with managing public relationships. Through examining both the work of profile curation and audience management, I emphasise the empirical significance of emotion work in studies on identity work on visual social media.

I argue that 'fame labour' or emotion work involved in managing tensions between competing online and offline conceptualisations of self, characterise and transform online and offline identities. Maintaining celebrified online brands alongside offline personas has become a normalised aspect of identity work for both social media celebrities and the everyday user. Fame labour is distinguished from other labour concepts as it describes the emotion work specifically related to negotiating dissonance between online and offline performances of self. The following section outlines the structure of this thesis, the function of each chapter and traces how the argument is built.

Thesis structure

This thesis is structured into seven chapters. Chapter two 'Identity work in the age of microcelebrity' provides a critical review of the literature. The evolution of celebrity over time is discussed to trace how we have evolved from traditional media characterised by consumption to production based social media that is highly participatory. The literature demonstrates how the shift in celebrity culture towards microcelebrity is characterised by labour, highlighting the need to understand the emotion work specifically involved in building and maintaining a branded self. In chapter three 'Researching microcelebrity' I discuss how I went about this research, including my journey to becoming a digital influencer. An explanation of analytic autoethnography as a method is provided. Recruitment procedures are detailed along with the research procedures. I consider the challenges and ethical dilemmas inherent with conducting analytic autoethnographies and outline benefits to using this method. Chapter three closes by introducing the digital influencers through individual biographies.

Chapter four 'Performing branded identities' focuses on the work involved in forming and maintaining personal brands on Instagram. I argue that users are experiencing dissonance in relation to their online and offline personas and that managing this kind of dissonance changes how people understand themselves and relate to others. I explain how assessing identity dissonance has become

a normalised part of getting-to-know each other discourse. I explain the affordances of visual social media that enable users to perform a branded version of self in accordance to a celebrified discourse. Brand categories and emotive registers on Instagram are discussed and the work involved in creating a version of self according to pre determined brand categories. I introduce the concept 'personal authenticity' to extend previous discussions of authenticity in the context of online identity work and contextualise my discussion of identity dissonance. 'Re-branding: The new identity crises' explains the difficult process of changing an established singular online brand and the implications this has in relation to personal authenticity.

Chapter five 'The work of content creation' details the labour specifically involved in creating Instagram content. 'Planning an insta-worthy life' explains the work users put into planning their day-to-day lives around their social media presence. 'Creating content' reveals the emotion work involved in creating on brand, celebrified content. 'Shirtless selfies: A case study of branded sexualised content' explore how participants practise diverse forms of sexualised and aesthetic labour to modify and regulate their bodies according to branded celebrified ideals. I explain the emotional toll of managing dissonance associated with online and offline constructions of body image. 'Surface acting Insta-photoshoots' provides personal examples of surface and deep acting that extend beyond sexualised labour and body work.

The focus of chapter six is the emotional labour associated with managing an online public audience. 'Publicly documenting the self' looks at the pressure participants feel to document themselves according to a celebrified discourse that often clashes with offline sociality. 'Life streaming brands and ephemeral social media' explains how Instagram Stories have transformed the way users perform both online and offline identity work. 'Audience feedback: Responses and strategies' explains the reciprocal identity work involved in managing audience responses. 'The Instagram black market: User's expectations and aspirations' illuminates the reality that not everyone can become a microcelebrity. Users employ a range performance tactics as well as help from third parties to aid audience engagement. The implications of this in terms of identity dissonance, is explored. 'Social media detox' explores the emotion work involved in refraining from publicly documenting moments in an attempt to restore a sense of personal authenticity and in effect alleviate feelings of dissonance between online and offline identities. The phenomenon of social media detoxes highlights the long term emotional toll of managing this kind of dissonance. 'The new normal: Branded relationships' explores how identity work performed on social media has changed how participants approach offline relationships. Results chapters intersect with each other

as each are concerned with different forms of emotion work involved in self branding. All three results chapters relate to the underlying theme of managing identity dissonance.

Chapters four, five and six answer the research questions 'How is emotional labour involved in creating personal brands on Instagram for microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities?' and 'Why are microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities enacting these forms of labour? What kinds of selves are constructed in the process?' I argue that 'fame labour' or emotion work involved in managing tensions between competing online and offline performances of self, characterise and transform online and offline identities. Chapter seven summarises the argument of fame labour and points to the wider implications of this form of identity work. I explain how the branded self that exists as a result of microcelebrity culture alters the trajectory of a user's of self presentation both online and offline. Part one focuses on the work of profile/brand curation while part two focuses on the work of audience management. Chapter seven concludes by offering suggestions for future research.

Chapter Two: Identity work in the age of microcelebrity

Theories of celebrity, identity and labour are the three broad theoretical perspectives that inform this research. This chapter opens by mapping the shift from consumption based media to the production of self through social media. Throughout this chapter it becomes evident that identity construction and performing for a public audience is occurring simultaneously within microcelebrity culture. Literature on microcelebrity frames the cultural construct as immaterial labour. The literature traces how users engage in self branding often referred to as visibility labour and other forms of identity work such as aesthetic and sexualised labour to maintain their brands. By analysing these concepts I identify gaps in existing literature that need to be addressed. Hochschild's (1979; 1983) 'emotional labour' is framed as the foundation to understanding the emotion work specifically related to performing and managing a branded version of self on social media. I argue that we need to gain a more nuanced insight into the emotion work enacted both online and offline as a result of microcelebrity culture.

Consumption to production: The evolution of celebrity

Celebrity is a cultural construct that is often difficult to define (Warwick & boyd, 2011). Graham Turner (2004) outlined three primary definitions of celebrity. The first has to do with the way an individual is represented and viewed by others, the second is as a process where a person transitions from a regular person to a commodity and the third as an ever evolving aspect of culture. Celebrity culture is a discourse that focuses on individualism, public transformation and identity as constituted by a "real or imagined audience" (Marshall, 2006, pg. 635). Turner (2004) argues that celebrity, as a cultural formation, has an important social function that we should better understand.

For much of the twentieth century, celebrities reflected and endorsed particular trends through film, radio, popular music and television (Marshall, 2010). For instance, popular women's hairstyles in the 1920s to the 1940s were determined by Hollywood icons of that time and James Dean's role in *Rebel Without a Cause* evoked a generalised fear of youth culture in the 1950s (Marshall, 2010). More recently, *Sex and the City* empowered a generation of women by encouraging them to tell sexual stories from their perspective. More broadly media celebrities have taught the public narratives of relationships and violence (Marshall, 2010). These examples demonstrate the power and influence celebrity discourse holds. Marshall (2010) argued that television and film still produce structure for our society but that this influence is now less profound as it is being remediated through social media. In 2008 Internet usage in Australia surpassed television viewing time (Nielson,

2008) highlighting the prominence of virtual social spaces. We need to gain a better understanding of how social media narratives are shaping cultural trends.

Celebrities have taught people how to use consumer culture to create oneself. Marshall (2010) argued that studies of consumer culture have missed that this transformation of an individual into consumer was really a shift to a widespread and pervasive production of the self. Digital technologies facilitate the rise of consumers as workers and in effect, prosumption practices (Buscher & Igoe, 2013; Dujarier, 2016; Gabriel, Korczynski, & Rieder, 2015). The 'prosumer' bridges the divide between consumption and production (Ritzer & Jurgenson, 2010). In the context of social media, practitioners behave as both consumers and producers of online content. Prosumers strive for visibility which functions as a form of capital that can be measured and monetised by themselves or third parties (Terranova, 2012). The influencer market is now a multi-billion-dollar industry (MediaKix, 2018) that relies on labour exerted by prosumers. Platforms like Instagram coincide with the rise of the attention economy. Cirucci (2018a) explains that social media users are competing for visibility or attention that is a valuable and scarce commodity.

Social network sites are very much connected to the desire to produce, they allow users to easily construct a website and generate an audience through delivering performances of the self. This behaviour is a new form of public engagement and exchange. Social media sites such as Instagram are connected to the notion of celebrity as they are about producing a public version of self as much as they are about social exchange. This kind of self production is at the core of how celebrities conduct their lives and has through social media become a template for the production of the online self. The production of the online self is now a vital part of how people develop their identity (Marshall, 2010). Through Instagram, the insta-famous are the latest version of celebrity who reflect and endorse a cultural movement that is transforming how young people present themselves. Identity construction and performing for a public audience are occurring simultaneously through visual social media and this is bound to have implications in regards to identity composition and labour.

How broadcast media celebrities perform in public is critical to their identity. Their performances outside of their professional careers are constantly under surveillance (Marshall, 2010). The contemporary shift from broadcast to participatory media means that celebrities now use social media to forge a more direct or unmediated relationship with their fans. For instance, TV stars can take control of their own image through sharing snapshots on social media and effectively

bypass managers and tabloid magazines and other modes of publicity (Marwick, 2015). For the everyday user, Instagram has enabled users with even a small audience to conduct themselves in the same way a celebrity does. Just as celebrities no longer need broadcast media to broadcast themselves, neither does the everyday person. Celebrity has become a set of practices that can be performed by anyone with access to the internet.

Marshall (2010) argued that something has changed in the era of social media and presentational culture that has to do with the widening of the public sphere referred to as the 'demotic turn' (Turner, 2010). The demotic turn refers to a shift where the media is inclined to see every day, ordinary discourse as extraordinary discourse, with fame becoming accessible to ordinary persons (Couldry, 2002). People using social media are staging the self as both a character and a performance. The posts people share act as props on a stage, a character is created that produces a portrayal of self while also being highly conscious of a potential audience (Marshall, 2010). Before social media it seemed that constructing a public self was not something most people thought was worth producing (Marshall, 2010).

Reality television introduced the everyday, accessible celebrity (Marshall, 2006). People who would not usually have the opportunity or means to experience fame could achieve public visibility with the advent of reality television (Gamson, 1994). A preoccupation with fame has been endorsed through reality television shows (Uhls & Greenfield, 2012). Social media appears to be the next frontier as it makes fame more accessible to more people as online technologies act as tools for the socialisation of fame as a behaviour and cultural value (Uhls & Greenfield, 2012). David Marshall (2010) argued that celebrity discourse of the self is now a fundamental part of new media culture. It was once enough to receive attention and recognition from parents, peers and teachers however this is no longer enough as young people are seeking visibility on a much wider scale. Social media appears to be the latest method used to achieve social mobility through fame (Uhls & Greenfield, 2012; Sternheimer, 2011; Halpern, 2006).

The concept of social mobility is intertwined with the presentation of idealised performances (Goffman, 1959). In most societies there is a general system of stratification where there is an idealization of those placed higher on the social hierarchy and a sense of aspiration among those lower in the strata to climb higher (Goffman, 1959). The significance of this in terms of social media is whether people are displaying an idealised version of themselves to achieve some sort of social mobility through their online performance. Goffman argued that our pursuit of social mobility is not

only motivated by a desire for prestige, but also a desire for a place "close to the sacred centre of the common values of the society" (1959, pg. 45). Fame appears to be a common goal or value among the online, get famous at any cost, generation (Uhls & Greenfield, 2012) with celebrity and fame being a hallmark of twenty-first century western culture (Sternheimer, 2011). Influencers and microcelebrities exemplify how social capital can be acquired through different performances (Marwick, 2015, Abidin, 2014, 2016a, 2016b). Dobson, Carah & Robards suggest that performances of self including gendered performances that affect people's ability to acquire social capital are "constituted, judged, evaluated, and struggled over" in online contexts (2018, pg. 13). Dobson, Carah & Robards (2018) argue that digital cultures research needs to study social capital and labour as intertwined concepts. Instagram and our use of the application, reveals something profound about our social climate in relation to identity work and how it can be mobilised into status.

Uhls and Greenfield (2012) conducted research to examine how relevant fame is in the lives of children living in the United States. They defined fame as "motive or behaviour to seek either positive or negative public recognition above one's immediate network of friends, community and family" (pg. 316). They found that amongst their sample of socioeconomically diverse children aged between ten and twelve 'fame' was selected as being the most important aspect of their future goals. The majority of the young people in their study had used the internet to seek an audience beyond their physical community. They also found that young people absorb messages in their media environment that encourage both the value of fame and its expression in the public display of self. Uhls and Greenfield (2012) argued that the way young people are interpreting media messages that encourage the value and expression of fame highlights how important public visibility is in the lives of young people from an early age.

The relationship between media and a desire for fame has been found to be consistent cross culturally among developed nations (Uhls & Greenfield, 2012; Giddons & Stiles, 2009). Gibbons and Stiles (2009) found that for young boys in the United States, the Netherlands, Norway and Switzerland, media celebrities were their heroes whereas boys from developing countries like Sri Lanka idealised men with 'adult responsibilities' such as work and providing for a family. Research by Halpern (2006) further highlights an idealization of fame among young people in wealthier countries. In his book *Fame Junkies* he surveyed over 650 teenagers from the Unites States and found that the majority of his sample would prefer to be a celebrity's personal assistant rather than a US senator, the president of an Ivy League university or a CEO of a major company.

The phenomenon of interest is the pertinence of fame as a goal, how it is socialised through current social media sites and the implications of this in relation to labour and identity. Marwick and boyd (2011) argued that as a result of the trend of microcelebrity "celebrity has become a set of circulated strategies and practices that place fame on a continuum, rather than a bright line that separates individuals" (2011, pg. 140). Fame is no longer seen as a dream only possible to a select few, it is perceived to be available to all, and possible to experience to some degree in online spaces. Joshua Gamson (2011) explained that "celebrity culture is increasingly populated by unexceptional people who have become famous and by stars who have been made ordinary" (pg. 1062). Gamson (2011) argued that although celebrity is more accessible than ever before, online fame holds little value when compared to that of television and film in regards to material success. Marwick (2015) added that the success of internet stars is typically "limited, fleeting, and unaccompanied by the financial resources available to the traditionally famous" (pg. 140).

Online fame may be the ultimate goal for many young people as it continues to become more accessible (Marwick & boyd, 2011). If this is the case, there are bound to be implications relating to young people's experiences and expectations in regards to their online performances. We need to gain a more nuanced understanding of how the microcelebrity mindset that characterises online identity construction impacts young people in regards to identity work and emotional labour. Instagram and technologies that will inevitably be developed from it will remain a permanent fixture within our increasingly online society. It is therefore imperative to study the experiences of young people living their lives in virtual social spaces that are encouraging them to perform a highly visible version of self that adheres to a celebrified template. Our use of Instagram reveals something profound about our social climate in relation to fame, labour and identity composition. The following section reviews literature relating to online identity work.

Identity work in virtual spaces

What constitutes identity is highly subjective (Marwick, 2013a). It can be representational as it can depend on how facets of our identity are depicted in culture and media. It can also be reliant on self presentation which refers to how we choose to present ourselves to others (Butler, 2016; Marwick, 2013a; Marwick & boyd, 2011; Marshall, 2010; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2010). When studying identity in virtual social spaces much of the literature focuses on self-presentation (Abidin 2015b; Marshall, Moor & Barbour, 2015; Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Senft, 2012, 2008; Warwick, 2013; boyd, 2010; Baym, 2010; Marshall, 2010; Butler, 2008; Papacharissi, 2002; Wynn &

Katz, 1997). On social media users craft virtual depictions of themselves through performative acts that constitute that users online identity (Cover, 2016; Marwick, 2013a; Senft, 2012; Marshall, 2011). Performativity departs from the notion that identity is already formed and media adds or subtracts to it (Wood, 2010).

As discussed in the previous section of this chapter, we have moved from consumption based media to a pervasive production of the self through social media (Marshall, 2011). Online profiles are a series of performative behaviours that form the online self over time (Livingstone, 2008). Participatory media in way of visual social media is now a central platform in which people construct the self through negotiations with others (Wood, 2010; Lazzarato, 2004, 2012). Symbolic performances play a significant role in the construction of identity that is mediated by technology (Thompson, 1995). Just like people present themselves differently in telephone conversations compared to email conversations, social media is characterised by particular self presentation processes.

Judith Butler's (2008) poststructualist, antifoundationalist perspective of performative identity asserts that the uses and affordances of social media are in themselves performative acts. Butler (1990) understands identity as an ongoing process of becoming rather an ontological state of being. This perspective contextualises social networking within broader cultural practices of identity and selfhood and destabilizes the dichotomy of a 'real' identity offline, and a false online identity (Covers, 2016). Adopting a symbolic interactionist perspective allows online identity to be theorised as fluid self-narration within multiple versions of selfhood. In online spaces identity formation occurs within culturally given discourses where the self is made up from a matrix of existing identity categories (Butler, 1990) that through repetition becomes a core, real, aspect of a person's overall identity, just as important as any other "real life" performance that constitutes the self (Butler 1993, pg. 12). Online identity formation just like offline identity construction, is a continuous process constantly under construction (Kennedy, 2006). We need to better understand how online identities expressed through social media function alongside offline versions of selfhood.

There are four nodes of Butler's (1993) theories of performative identity that are significant in the study of online identities; (1) Extending the work of Foucault and Nietzsche, she argued that there is no one core self of which all behaviours emanate from, only a set of performances that produce an illusion of an inner identity core. The actor's identity is therefore a product of these performances. (2) Repeating predetermined norms, identity categories and labels become

performances of self-hood. Examples include gender, sexual orientation and aesthetic taste preferences. (3) Versions of selves that have been created through discourse can be reconfigured according to cultural norms. (4) Performing identity is never complete, it is an ongoing process that strives to meet cultural demand to allow "social participation and a sense of belonging" (Butler 1997, pg. 7). On Instagram, identity is performed to adapt to the norms of microcelebrity culture. It is important that we better understand how identity work is moulded by the cultures and affordances that dictate customization.

Customization is one way people express their identity on social media. Early social media such as HTML homepages and MySpace afforded users a great deal of customization (Marwick, 2013) by allowing them to select individualised font, music, background, colour scheme and layout of their profiles (Papacharissi, 2002), allowing for a sense of freedom over identity construction (Marwick, 2013). However slow communication speeds and content being displayed through non-mobile computers produced a culture where online identities were seen as a playful entity that were separate to offline identities (Covers, 2016). The non-mobile nature of computers and the internet meant that users could only use early forms of social media in allocated times. The shift from text based web 1.0 to social networking web 2.0 characterised by participation in visual outlets led to the advent of Facebook and Instagram.

Visual social media sites Facebook and Instagram enabled a culture of participation, performativity and freedom to produce content and share day-to-day moments at any time. However, users also became more restricted in relation to how they could customise their online selves (Marwick, 2013b). Symbolic markers such as profile layouts became confined to and only allowed within predetermined templates. Although Instagram appears to allow significant customization on the surface through filtering and other editing tools, the degree of customization in regards to how that content is displayed seems more limited than ever before. Marwick (2013a) argued that there are now fewer identity cues available on social media than face to face implying that it is easier to decipher a person's overall identity when you encounter them offline.

In the mid 1990s online communication was primarily textual. People interacted on platforms like Internet Relay Chat (IRC) without seeing visual depictions of each other. During this time it was argued that this 'disembodied' communication could allow people to create alternative identities and fundamentally change the way people understand identity (Marwick, 2013a). For example, in 1995 Sherry Turkle wrote about gender switching on virtual reality games, interviewing users who

performed genders online that did not correspond to their offline performances. This disembodied theory did not gain momentum. Baym (2010) argued that people did not create radically different selves on these early platforms instead their online personas were similar to their offline selves. Modern commercial social online spaces such as Facebook requires that users provide a real name rather than an obscure username like 'BalletGirl92', present in early textual online platforms. This encourages some sort of correspondence to offline identity and therefore does not correspond to the early idea of disembodied online identities through textual social media (Marwick, 2013a).

Identity has potential to become a personal crisis when it becomes uncertain or disjointed (Senft, 2012). Marwick (2013a) argued that the distinction between peoples online and offline identity is narrowing because in contrast to early textual internet communication people now use social media primarily to communicate with people they associate with offline. Visual social media platforms like Instagram appear to not be disembodied in so far as the aim appears to be about achieving popularity that somehow translates to user's offline lives. On Instagram, users are creating altered versions of self that comply with the microcelebrity mindset. Research is needed to understand the relationship between online and offline performances in the wake of microcelebrity culture through the lens of identity work.

Working with Butler's (1990, 1993) theory of performativity Rob Cover (2016) argued that online performances are produced in two ways. The first is through modifying your own profile through deciding on which personal information to share, for example age, gender, sexual orientation, making biographical statements and status updates. The second involves building identity in a relational sense through adding friends, accepting adds and making changes to a user's friend list. Both processes involve work. For Cover, these two aspects of social networking act as a framework for acts of identity performance however "the extent to which these two areas of social networking operate together toward a coherent, unified self needs to be explored" (2016, pg. 27). Lewis and West (2009) add that there is a degree of compatibility between the 'presentation of self' and the work of 'friending' and this view has been shared by others (Cover, 2016; Leis & West, 2009; Butler, 1993; Hall, 2004).

Covers (2016) argued that adding friends on Facebook and engaging with them are both performative acts of identity that facilitates belonging. Leis and West (2009) argued that friendship and connection are significant elements in the performance of identity. 'Friending' or building an audience appears to be a performance of identity expression that involves work however previous

research focused on Facebook (Cover, 2016; Lewis and West, 2009; Green, 2008) which has different affordances to Instagram. The concept of 'friending' does not seem to correspond to the 'following' discourse surrounding Instagram. Following practices, and how they relate to identity work on Instagram and Instagram stories, in an under researched area. The following section provides an overview of the different approaches to microcelebrity, framing it as a cultural process and a form of identity work. The predominant methods by which it has been investigated in previous research is discussed.

Microcelebrity culture

With microcelebrity being a difficult concept to define, scholars use a variety of conceptual frames to describe the distinctive and pervasive form of public engagement. Senft (2008) who coined the term in 2008, argued that almost anyone who uses social media behaves as a microcelebrity to some degree as it is a culture that encourages a pursuit for public visibility. She explained that simply choosing to share certain photos, withhold others, un-tag yourself from posts, check into one venue and not another or write happy birthday on one Facebook friends wall and not another, demonstrates that the discourse of 'brand me' has been normalised. Whether or not a user chooses to go against the norm and privatise their online activity, social media architecture encourages them to publicise their updates, interests and 'likes' and also monitor the activities of others resulting in some degree of public surveillance. Social media platforms are described as "celebrification utilities" whose affordances mould users into brands that can be consumed by advertisers (Cirucci, 2018a, pg. 34). Drawing its name from celebrity studies (Gamson, 1994; Marshall, 1997; Rojek, 2001; Turner, 2004), microcelebrity intersects with a number of disciplines including work on public identity, persona studies, labour and self branding.

The term 'microcelebrity' describes a range of practices and behaviours that are indicative of the increasing significance of public performance in everyday life. Microcelebrity is a relatively new form of identity that is linked almost exclusively to online spaces (Senft, 2008, 2012). Microcelebrity as a notion of self involves creating and maintaining an online identity that resembles a branded good in order to gain status (Marwick, 2013; Senft, 2012; Marwick & boyd, 2011). As discussed earlier, having a successful online profile has become a form of prestige with online fame being highly regarded within internet culture. Traditional media celebrities such as TV stars have been conducting themselves as brands since the emergence of celebrity culture, and now also use social media to maintain their popularity and be more accessible to their audience (Marwick & boyd,

2011). Microcelebrity, in regards to young people who are not mainstream celebrities is understood as being a mindset and a set of practices where a 'regular' person carefully constructs their self presentation so that it can be easily consumed by an audience. Popularity is maintained through negotiations with their following that is often seen as their fan base (Marwick & boyd, 2011; Marwick, 2013a). All curating decisions on social media sites like Instagram, involve identity work (Hogan, 2010).

Crystal Abidin (2015a) argued that microcelebrity is a complex media structure that requires further categorization. She has conducted fieldwork consisting of interviews and participant observation with young Singaporean women who have become influencers in their particular line of work. The term 'influencer' is a concept that she argues is an important aspect of internet culture and microcelebrity. She introduced the term 'geneses of microcelebrification' which can be either systemic or diffuse, which indentify two broad processes in which non-microcelebrities transition into internet celebrities. Systemic microcelebrification refers to a firm indication that someone has transitioned from an every-day internet user to microcelebrity. It is usually the result of appearing in broadcast media or becoming a brand ambassador. Diffuse microcelebrification is when a person gradually accumulates popularity and eventually becomes a microcelebrity for no immediately apparent reason. Under this category, Abidin (2015b) argues that this kind of celebrification is enacted by 'organic readers' or every-day social media users who have little desire to make money from their social media presence.

Microcelebrity is different to the inadvertent fame that often results from viral memes as the user views friends and followers as fans, acknowledges fame as a goal and actively constructs a consumable image (Marwick, 2013a; Marwick & boyd, 2011). Microcelebrity is understood as both a product and as a process. A user can identify as a microcelebrity, but microcelebrity is more often something people do (Marwick, 2013). People create an online identity that resembles a branded good with an expectation that others are doing the same (Senft, 2013). This "publicizable personality" is crafted for the microcelebrity market by using methods learnt from the celebrity world (Marwick, 2013a, pg. 117). Whether they are aware of it or not, young people who use visual social media are participating in or are at the very least, exposed to microcelebrity culture (Cirucci, 2018a). Cirucci argues that users who do not identity as microcelebrities or intend to self brand are "compelled by the site's inherent design to unintentionally brand" (2018a, pg. 33). Cirucci (2018a) argues for a more nuanced understanding of how microcelebrity culture shapes the self presentation of everyday users who are not necessarily motivated by a desire for public visibility.

A popular argument that is emerging in media studies is that users of commercially owned social network sites such as Instagram are unknowingly engaging in unpaid labour (Duffy 2017, 2016; Goldhaber, 2009). Senft (2012) argued that 'code-switching' which she defines as the act of switching interactions with different audiences including fans and friends, requires immaterial Labour. Marwick (2013b) explained that virtually everyone she interviewed in her work into microcelebrity was strategic about their social media use making an effort to either reveal or conceal aspects of themselves, implying that there is unpaid work involved in creating and monitoring a public branded identity within microcelebrity culture. Research is needed to explore how and why Instagram users negotiate different aspects of their online and offline selves and the emotion work involved.

Abidin (2015b) coined the term 'micro-microcelebrity' which is used to describe influencer mothers who share blog posts about their infants to attract sponsorships and utilise other types of digital media monetisation. This cohort of children is the first to inherit their own digital trace while lacking any control over its content. Abidin (2015b) warns of the implications ushered in by parents who "habitually underestimate or discount the privacy and long term effects of publicising information about their children" (pg. 74). In her 2013(b) book *Status Update* Marwick argued that online celebrities are not like traditional celebrities in that they do not have "teams of agents and managers to protect them from the public" (pg. 114). She asserted that although there are considerable rewards associated with microcelebrity status, the cost is often high. Both Abidin (2015b) and Marwick (2013b) are concerned with the wider implications associated with celebrified performances enacted on visual social media. Further research is needed to understand the effect branded portrayals of self have a person's overall identity composition. This section has demonstrated that there is similarity in the patterns of self presentation between broadcast media celebrities, microcelebrities and the millions of users who use social media (Marshall, 2010; Abidin, 2015a, 2015b, 2015c). These similarities relate to how users engage with a public audience on social media.

Microcelebrity and audience engagement

A major focus in recent research is the relationship between traditional notions of celebrity and microcelebrity together with the role played by audiences. Microcelebrity is changing our understanding of what constitutes a celebrity and a fan. As Alice Marwick and dana boyd have argued, fame does not possess an on/off switch, but instead is understood to operate along a

"continuum rather than as a bright line that separates individuals" (2011, p.140). In a study of Twitter usage by media celebrities, Marwick and boyd understand microcelebrity as a particular way of thinking about one's own friends online. As they explain, microcelebrity involves "viewing friends or followers as a fan base; acknowledging popularity as a goal; managing the fan base using a variety of affiliative techniques; and constructing an image of self that can be easily consumed by others" (2011, p.141).

Drawing from Goffman's dramaturgical perspective, Marwick and boyd (2011) investigated how celebrity is performed by famous Twitter users such as Mariah Carey and Ashton Kutcher to understand how they engage with their audiences. They found that presenting an authentic image of the self was one way these users performed celebrity on Twitter. For these world famous, celebrities their performance on Twitter is successful by providing the illusion of the 'backstage', uncensored glimpses into their personal lives through delivering content deemed authentic based on audience perceptions. However, Marwick and boyd (2011) recognize that it impossible to determine the legitimacy of their tweets and twitter photos as their sample have not been consulted directly.

Another way these users performed celebrity on Twitter was through striving to satisfy fan expectations and manage relationships. Marwick and boyd (2011) argued that a successful celebrity performance on Twitter is maintained when both the fan and the celebrity recognize the power differentials between them. For example, there is an assumption that Ashton Kutcher reads tweets from his fans yet it is accepted that he will only respond to other celebrities. This suggests that creating unequal status dynamics on social media is important to creating power differentials between celebrities and everyday users. Marwick and boyd's (2011) research suggests that celebrities on Twitter manage their audience through performed intimacy. Further research is needed to explore the emotion work involved in managing online relationships through Instagram and how this identity work corresponds to user's offline lives.

Marwick's (2013b) ethnographic investigation of Silicon Valley, in her book *Status Update*, interviewed a diverse set of the technology community experts comprising those working in start ups, employees at Google, freelancers, social media "gurus", engineers, academics, designers and "fanboys" (people who follow the Silicon Valley industry closely without participating in it directly) (2013b, p.132). Her investigation is framed by the recognition that neoliberalism creates a climate

on social media where users enact celebrified performances fuelled by a desire for fame. She explained:

> ... 'far from the revolutionary and progressive participation flaunted by entrepreneurs and pundits, social media applications encourage people to compete for social benefits by gaining visibility and attention. To boost social status, young professionals adopt self-consciously constructed personas and market themselves, like brands or celebrities, to an audience or fan base.' (2013b, p.5)

Marwick (2013b) found that the people in her study were driven out of obligation in order to boost their popularity and consequently maintain their brand. They responded to fans through Twitter direct message and email to maintain engagement. Marwick (2013) argued that this interaction with fans breaks down the "traditional barriers between audience and performer, spectator and spectacle" (pg. 118). Abidin (2015) found that influencers in her sample engaged frequently with their audience by responding to all followers' comments. She argued that this a way social media users express intimacy with their audience. Of significance for these studies is Marwick's and Abidin's insight into how obligation functions in relation to reciprocal engagement between Instagram users and their followers and more broadly, how there is an obligation to put work into delivering celebrified performances in online social spaces.

Branding and microcelebrity has also been studied by Adam Arvidsson (2006) who has contributed to a rethinking of how brands operate within immaterial networks of labour through research on personal promotional strategies. In a recent Twitter study of Italian *One Direction* fans or 'Directioners' Arvidsson, et al. (2015) argued for a theory of microcelebrity that extends beyond ideas of individual charisma. Instead, they were interested in how crowd-based dynamics can build an audience rather than the curation of personal brands. Their analysis of over 116,000 tweets focused on *One Direction* fans based retweets and mentions. The data analysed tweets that indicated interactions through data visualisation software. Qualitative content analysis was performed on the top user profiles using thematic codes. They found that on Twitter, fans are tightly integrated and highly interactive and behave as a collective. This group identity was deemed more powerful than the brand pull of the profiles themselves (Arvidsson at al., 2015). Through using data network analytics this research highlights how microcelebrity is generated by negotiations with an audience. However this research underestimates the significance and power of self branding and underplays the co-dependent relationship between the microcelebrity and their audience.

In another study looking at Twitter, Bethany Usher (2015) focused on the reciprocal relationship between traditional media celebrities and their followers. She analysed the last 3,200 tweets of the top 20 celebrity Twitter accounts, measured by number of followers during June 2014. Usher used discourse analysis to explore how crowd sourced hashtags such as #askmeanything provide branding opportunities for the celebrity and increased visibility for the fans who adopt the role of interviewer. Usher argued that although these fan-interviewers co-construct the celebrity persona on the platform it is the celebrity that benefits most from this dialogue. The fans identity appeared to be dependent on their tie to a particular celebrity. For example, one of Khloe Kardashian's followers who refers to herself 'Yasmin Kardashian' is one of many Twitter users who devote their profile to promoting members of the Kardashian family. She tallies and displays like a badge of honour the amount of times she has been acknowledged by the Kardashian family through the platform. Ultimately Usher (2015) argues that Yasmin's identity and cultural capital is dependent on her proximity to the celebrity to the extent that "If she tried to separate her online self, it would vanish" (p. 316). This study also underestimates the significance of self branding in the curation of online identities.

Other studies have identified the labour fans engage in to benefit the content creator or microcelebrity through ultimately strengthening their brands (Carah & Shaul, 2016; Abidin, 2016; Usher, 2015; Arvidsson, et al., 2015; Abidin, 2014a, 2014b; Marwick, 2013b). Abidin's (2014a, 2014b, 2016) studies into Singaporean microcelebrities found that they encourage their followers to enact labour through creating content such as hashtags and circulating content created by the microcelebrity in order to attract significant publicity for the microcelebrities. Followers continue to do this without compensation or acknowledgement. Some followers do eventually gain cultural capital when their idols notice them and identify them as "elite followers" leading to possible microcelebrity status for the followers themselves (Abidin, 2016, pg. 97). In these studies, online branded identities of everyday social media users are believed to be dependent on ties to microcelebrities which again, underplays the power of profile curation and personal identity work.

David Marshall, Christopher Moore and Kim Barbour (2015) argue that agency is a key consideration when studying microcelebrity. At present, 'persona studies' best captures this area of identity formation by focusing on individual agency rather than a collectivist model in typical audience studies. Persona studies focuses on how the individual "publicises, presents and strategically enacts their persona" (290), rather than focusing on how identity is negotiated with an audience. Marshall et. al (2015) utilised interviews and discourse analysis to study how a group of

fringe artists use online presentational strategies to construct their personae. These artists are not microcelebrities, nor are they being studied in the context of visual social media however their approach allows for alternative approaches to studying online identity. The authors note that studying microcelebrities themselves and therefore understanding their experiences from their perspective is an under researched area (Marshall et. al., 2015). It is important that we examine the self presentation strategies social media users employ to build an online brand and maintain an audience in a culture that encourages a pursuit for visibility. We need to explore the relationship between notions of individual agency and a collectivist model of identity formation, and the link to emotion work enacted by both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities. The following sections discuss the concept of emotional labour and examines research and theories that link the concept to idealised identity work enacted on social media. This discussion contextualises discussions of emotion work in chapters four, five and six.

Emotional labour and online performances

Arlie Hochschild's theory of emotion management (1979) is grounded in theories of identity work from Symbolic Interactionism. Hochschild's (1979) work builds on Goffman's writings (1959) addressing its failure to theorize how people experience emotions that are not designed for public display. She argued that Goffman details the observable display of an impression however does not explore the processes involved in achieving that impression, therefore missing how emotional displays are experienced or felt by a social actor. In Hochschild's words "The problem is that the actor Goffman proposes does not seem to feel much… Goffman's actors actively manage outer impressions, but they do not actively manage inner feelings" (1979, p. 557). This research explores emotion management in relation to identity work enacted for social media performances.

Hochschild defined emotional labour as "the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (1983, pg.7). In her book *The Managed Heart* (1983) she discussed how people working in service industries are expected to regulate their emotional display and expression to adhere to pre-determined emotions that comply with the norms within a particular culture. Monetary payment is rewarded for people performing this kind of emotional labour within workplaces (Grandey & Brauburger, 2002; Zapf, 2002). Hochschild (1983) explained how employees are required to induce or suppress feeling in order to display a facade that will be received well by the public and also evoke an emotional response in their target audience. For example, a sales clerk in a high end clothing store must embody the overall image of the clothing

brand and appear to genuinely care for the customer through their mannerisms. Ultimately, workers create a "publicly observable facial and bodily display [which] is sold for a wage and therefore has exchange value" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7). A relevant question to the current study asked by Hochschild in 1983 is "how is the self eroded or alienated by commodification" (pg. 78). Hochschild was concerned that the commodification of worker's emotions can lead to alienation as private sphere feelings are consumed by the public as a commoditised service interaction. Hochschild (1979; 1983) argued that emotional labour can be alienating in the same way as the production of physical commodities.

Deborah Cameron (2000) studied call centre workers and found that they are required to smile with sincerity and confidence while on the phone to customers as employers believe it can be heard in their voice. It has been argued that most interactions in our society include emotional labour (Marwick, 2013; Pugliesi & Shook, 1997; Thoits, 1990). On visual social media emotional expression is required to follow the display rules of microcelebrity culture (Grandey & Brauburger, 2002; Zapf, 2002). These display rules are a function as societal norms (Ashforth & Humphreys, 1995). We need to examine the emotion work involved in producing an online persona to gain a nuanced understanding of the types of emotion work enacted on social media and the broader implications for identity composition.

Emotional labour in online spaces has been studied through the lens of digital intimacies. (Dobson, Carah & Robards, 2018; Illouz, 2007; Hearn, 2008; Jarret, 2016). The way social actors turn intimate life moments such as personal emotions into publicly consumable data is a useful lens through which we can understand immaterial labour enacted on social media. Jarret (2016) argues that forms of emotional labour associated with domestic work is "precisely the kind of labour involved in the economically significant social networks of digital media" (2016, p. 5). Dobson, Carah & Robards (2018) argue that practices of digital intimacy are mostly unpaid and stem from practices of care that has been predominately practised by women (Dempsey & Lindsay, 2014). In social media contexts, people are motivated by the desire "to affect and be affected" (Dobson, Carah & Robards, pg.17). It is important that we continue to study online behaviours through the lens of digital intimacies to understand the tensions that motivate these behaviours in regards to personal branding on Instagram.

Hochschild (1979, 1983) argued that emotional labour can be performed either as surface or deep acting. Surface acting is a careful performance of verbal and non verbal cues including facial

and body expression. It is a display of emotion that is not felt by the performer. Surface acting relates to the type of acting present in impression management (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) and converges with Goffman's dramaturgical analysis of daily encounters (Goffman, 1959, 1969). Deep acting occurs when the performer attempts to feel the emotions they are displaying to the public (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993) much like actors prepare themselves for roles by internally connecting to personal emotional events that evoke the desired displayed emotion. Deep acting requires greater effort which is believed to have better effects on a target audience (Hochschild, 1979). Surface and deep acting can be decribed as affective labour. Affective labour is the work enacted that is intended to modify or induce emotional experiences in others (Hardt, 1999). Through manipulating affects, it produces relationships and emotional responses (Hardt & Negri, 2000). It is important to examine the experience and affect of emotional labour in online contexts.

Whether or not money is made, microcelebrity can be seen as a form of immaterial labour (Lazzarato, 1996; Terranova, 2004) or labour that departs from the Fordist notion of the mass worker (Beverungen, 2011). Lazzarato defined immaterial labour as “the labour that produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity” (1996, pg. 133). The concept of immaterial labour, developed by Antonio Negri together with Michael Hardt, Maurizio Lazzarato and Paolo Virno in the early 1990s (Virno & Hardt, 1996; Beverungen, 2011) asserted that production is now characterised by technological innovation rather than mass production and mass consumption. Immaterial labour is often understood through the concept of emotional labour (Beverungen, 2011; Virno & Hardt, 1996) as the types of skills involved in immaterial labours are not physical. From this perspective, emotional labour produces culture and information using creativity and imagination, as well as entrepreneurial and managerial skills (Lazzarato, 1996). Immaterial labour challenges our conceptions of the types of skills operating in a capitalist society. More research is needed to better understand how the concept of emotional labour relates to the production and consumption of the online self within microcelebrity culture.

Marwick (2013) linked the concept of emotional labour to creating an entrepreneurial business oriented self brand. For Marwick (2013b) brand monitoring was a necessary component for brand maintenance. As mentioned earlier some of the people in her study used ‘Google Alerts’ that emails users when their name has been used somewhere on the internet. She argued that this policing of oneself becomes a form of labour that can be emotionally taxing. This self policing involves “continually imagining oneself through the eyes of others creating a dual-glaze of internalized surveillance” (pg. 191). She argued that it requires work to maintain this branded portrayal of self.

For the tech scene individuals in her sample, remaining business friendly while also trying to display transparency and openness with their online followers was labour intensive. When people self brand on social media they are encouraged to manage their image according to enterprise culture within a celebrified discourse, treating the self as a brand or business. Users are prepared to put as much time and effort into it as is required to reach their goal as public visibility through social media holds great significance in the lives of users (Robinson, 2018; Sternheimer, 2011; Marwick, 2013b).

Marwick's (2013b) participants revealed the emotional costs of self branding which included anxiety, information overload, lack of time and hurt feelings due to receiving negative comments from their audience. They also reported feeling exhausted from having to constantly monitor their brand and felt that giving it the time and energy it requires means "neglecting other aspects of their lives" (pg. 196). Self monitoring has become an expected and normative aspect of using social media (Marwick, 2013b). Marwick found that tech scene experts "engage in emotional labour to boost their popularity" (pg. 196). Laborious tasks included revealing personal information when doing so makes them feel uncomfortable, interacting with others and "creating a self that is simultaneously authentic and carefully edited" (pg. 196). By authentic, Marwick was concerned with audience perceptions, with audiences judging openness and transparency. Marwick (2013b) argued that in many online communities a small percentage of people create the majority of the content implying that most people are consumers. She argued that those in the tech scene are both content producers and consumers and achieve intimate ties with members of their audience which are from within their tech scene community. Their online and offline lives are "intrinsically interwoven" meaning that not participating fully has "real social costs" (pg. 213). It is important that we better understand the extent to which online brands and offline lives are interwoven for Instagram users and the emotion work involved in managing these identities.

Fear of missing out (FOMO) is experienced when social media users observe others who appear to be doing fun and exciting things that they are not a part of. Marwick (2013b) discussed how people use location based software like Foursquare, Dodgeball and BrightKite to 'check in' to locations broadcasting to their friends where they are at all times. She explained that if ten friends checked into a bar and the eleventh friend was not, the feeling the eleventh person would experience is FOMO. FOMO relates to feelings of exclusion that relate to branded portrayals of self. Research is needed that links FOMO to the pervasive need to document the self according to a celebrified discourse.

Brooke Duffy's (2017) concept 'aspirational labour' in her book *(Not) Getting Paid to do What You Love: Gender, Social Media and Aspirational Work* describes a culture where female bloggers and others in the online fashion and beauty industry, hold the belief that their efforts will result in social and economic capital. She explained that aspirational labourers "approach social media creation with strategy, purpose and aspirations of career success" (pg. 48) arguing that the reward system is uneven as only a few achieve their goal of doing what they love in creative industries where work and leisure seamlessly co-exist. Aspirational labour involves emotion work such as experiencing increased feelings of precarity and constant pressure to perform (Duffy, 2017). Further research is needed into the emotion work enacted by those who do not necessarily desire to make a career of their online brands. We need to better understand how the quest for online visibility through personal brands more broadly relates to identity composition for both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities, or the everyday user.

Robinson (2018) interviewed over 500 children in disadvantaged Californian schools and found that under-resourced youths, who do not have the means to regularly perform idealised identity work on social media, experience negative emotional consequences. Through the lens of Hochschild's (1979) theory of emotion management, she found that the negative emotions they experience include frustration, envy, shame and stigmatisation. The children performed an added layer of emotion work referred to as 'suppressive work', as they are suppressing these emotions when they are deemed inappropriate to both feel and express. According to Hochschild (1979), actors suppress emotions when they perceive emotions as negative. Robinson explained that the children in her sample, described as being "digitally invisible" manage these emotions in silence as they are "unseen by others, forcing under-resourced youths to carry a double burden in digital silence" (pg. 662- 674). This research highlights that constant connectivity "is the currency of social inclusion" (pg. 676) in our increasingly online society where "high connectivity is assumed to be normative" (pg. 677). It is imperative that we understand emotion work involved in managing omnipresent, vital online identities that are entangled with offline experiences. Robinson (2018) argues that emotion work is understudied in relation to social media cultures.

Van Dijck (2014) argues that on social media "Many aspects of social life were coded that had never been quantified before—friendships, interests, casual conversations, information searches, expressions of tastes, emotional responses, and so on' (2014, pg. 198). The process of quantifying and measuring everyday online sociality to extract value from it is known as datafication (Kennedy, 2016). Quantifying things that were once qualitative such as cultural exchange and friendships, have

become quantified aspects of life (Mayer-Schonberger & Cukier, 2013). Kennedy and Hill's (2017) research asserts that in order to fully understand online data driven social discourse, we need to gain a better understanding of the emotional process involved.

Visibility labour: Self branding strategies

Self branding within microcelebrity culture relies on visibility tactics. Visibility on visual social media has become synonymous with acquiring status and perceived influence with an attentive audience being seen as "the most potent status symbol of all" (Marwick, 2015, pg. 141). On Instagram, users are unknowingly engaging in unpaid labour and engaging in personal marketing to develop their brand and compete for visibility (Marwick, 2013a). Andrea Brighenti (2007) argues for visibility as a distinct sociological category, such as class, status and agency. Visibility as a social field is interested in how sites of visibility such as the media, influences the public. Brighenti (2007) argues that through media, people exist within a social world that is governed by its own logic and rules. People play their roles and influence each other through reciprocal visibility (Brighenti, 2007). On social media, users negotiate performances with others to produce online brands using visibility tactics that are labour intensive.

Self branding has become a ubiquitous self presentation strategy that is a by-product of microcelebrity culture (Marwick, 2015). It is a form of labour undertaken to achieve visibility. Morphing yourself into an online brand is now presented to social media users as a necessary component of internet participation (Marwick, 2013a). Self branding is essentially a series of marketing strategies made up of a set of practices and a mindset that views the self as a commodity (Marwick, 2015; Marwick, 2013b; Hearn, 2008; Lair, Sullivan & Cheney, 2005). Attention tactics previously used by consumer brands have "trickled down" to individuals who use them to advance their online popularity and in effect their public visibility (Marwick, 2015, pg. 138). It is about constructing identity as a product to be consumed by others (Cirucci, 2018a; Hearn, 2008). Microcelebrity in itself can be seen as a brand or a branding strategy. It is the state of being famous or thinking that you could be famous and therefore putting work into presenting yourself as a celebrity regardless of who is paying attention (Marwick, 2013).

The internet highlights the existence of networks of immaterial labour. Immaterial labour on the internet includes the work of writing, reading, managing and participating in mailing chat lines (Lazzarato, 1996). More recently, visibility labour is understood as creating content for social media

and the strategies people use to craft an online brand. Visibility labour relates to strategies that both microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities use on platforms like Instagram in order to increase their status or popularity. On Instagram, visibility affordances such as likes, comments and follows function as social currency and social reinforcement (Marwick, 2015; Cirucci, 2018a). Social media affordances create a culture where self promotion on a wide scale is possible (Cirucci, 2018a; Marwick, 2013a). Affordances of visual social media have granted people the ability to apply sophisticated branding strategies normally used by large corporations to themselves, and easily broadcast it to the world (Senft, 2013; Wood, 2010). These affordances reward attention. They make a person's reputation quantifiable by displaying status in metrics such as 'likes' (Marwick, 2013b). Compared to early platforms such as Twitter and blogs, self branding on Instagram is reliant on images of the self as social media becomes "increasingly a visual medium" (Marwick, 2015, pg. 138). Research is needed to better understand self branding processes on Instagram and Instagram Stories and how they are experienced as labour.

A technologically determinist perspective implies that the culture of striving for public visibility has come about as a result of social media dictating a branded self presentation. From this perspective, the affordances of the platform including its features and functions promote a commercialised view of the self. Marwick (2013a) argued against this perspective claiming that it ignores the context in which the technology is used. She argued that early social media such as Internet relay chat (textual sites such as MSN messenger) "allowed for similar interactions, but marketable self presentations were largely absent" (pg. 191). Marwick (2013a) argued that social media has many different self presentation strategies, people simply choose to self brand with a business orientated identity because of current social circumstances. She went on to argue that identity experimentation and play that characterised early textual social media is now disappearing as it is discouraged by the self branding culture on Facebook (Marwick, 2013a). For Marwick, sites likes Facebook discourage identity play by producing a single online identity linked to verifiable information relating to a user's offline life. More research is needed to understand how Instagram users engage with the platforms affordances and culture to negotiate their identities.

The labour associated with self branding on social media has evolved from other types of unpaid work on virtual spaces. The term 'fan labour' has been used to refer to the actions of devoted fans for films such as *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. The laborious tasks involved discussing episodes in online forums and organising conventions (Marwick, 2013a). Fan profiles are produced through processes of identifications, recognition and investment in a social reality that gives identity

significance and purpose (Wood, 2010). This perspective asserts that branded identities are constructed through relational interactions (Hall, 2000) within media technologies (Wood, 2010) again underplaying the significance of profile curation.

Our use of the internet since the advent of social media has externalized and materialized identity making it an object and ultimately a commodity (Poster, 2007; Hearn, 2008; Wood, 2010). The existence of identity theft is testament to this as a person does not steal a person's consciousness, they are stealing an embedded, tangible self that exists in algorithms within virtual databases. When Instagram users become digital influencers their accounts become commercial entities that are in some capacity controlled by corporations. The user's identity becomes a tangible entity that can be traded within the microcelebrity economy. Self branding is about "constructing a strategic self image to appeal to a particular audience and furthering that image through every online and offline action" (Marwick, 2013a, pg. 199). Marwick (2013a) asserts that online brands have the potential to become commodities that alter the trajectory of a person's online and offline life. More research is needed to explore exactly how online brands alter users online and offline performances of self.

A successful brand that achieves a high level of visibility brings status to a social media user. Status is a powerful tool that signifies a person's prominence and affords them privileges within the culture they are valued (Marwick, 2013b). Uhls and Greenfield (2009) found that the major reason undergraduate university students in the United States used Facebook was to be more popular and in effect gain social status. On Instagram, users formulate profiles to also build a following and improve their online status (Senft, 2013). Status differs from context to context (Marwick, 2013b) as someone might have a high status within social media and a low status within their professional offline work life or vice versa. Sociologists, anthropologists and economists agree that status is a fundamental part of social life (Marwick, 2013b). Higher status in linked to longevity, wealth, respect and influence which results in people from all walks of life spending a great deal of time and effort on "status-seeking activities" that are inherently labour intensive (Marwick, 2013b, pg. 74). For Marwick (2013b), aspirational producers use this status to portray themselves in a high status light that makes their lives resemble traditional celebrities. More research is needed into how Instagram users equate online visibility with status and the effect Instagram status has on offline lives.

Marwick (2013b) argued that "practically every online community has developed a way to mark social status" (pg. 75). She explained that popular social media sites at the time of writing (Twitter

and Facebook) have affordances that "signal" greater social status (pg. 75) through likes on Facebook and follows on Twitter. Microcelebrities may not be able to attend movie premiers where they can be photographed on a red carpet but they do attend exclusive events designed for internet celebrities where they can take photos in front of logo covered backdrops. Photographers line the entries and take photos that end up circling Instagram rather than gossip magazines. Orchestrating the right events and producing high quality branded content to signify status involves a great deal of work. What constitutes a high or low status, the work involved in status-seeking activities on Instagram and the implications of these status seeking activities for identity work practices requires further research.

Interacting with followers out of obligation to secure a user's popularity and status has been framed as a form of visibility labour (Marwick, 2013b). Marwick (2013b) found that most of the Silicon Valley technology workers in her sample did not make money from their popular online brands. It was more a way to advance their status in the industry. Self promotion was the "new stock trade" for software developers, journalists and academics as public visibility was seen as a "required part of securing and maintaining a job" (pg. 160-161). Marwick's research suggests that monetisation associated with influence on social media may not be the only signifier of status operating within microcelebrity culture.

Marwick (2013b) argued that a successful brand must entail a level of authenticity. Within social media authenticity has been discussed in relation to how open or transparent microcelebrities are with their followers. Authenticity as it has been studied in current scholarship, therefore refers to audience perceptions (Marwick & boyd, 2011). Displaying a person's hidden personal life through divulging sensitive and intimate information is said to create a bond between microcelebrities and their audience (Marwick, 2013b). Marwick (2013b) explained that another way authenticity is understood on the internet is by judging consistency. Audiences assess profiles over time and compare current actions to past actions. On visual social sites like Instagram that are permanent hosts to content, it is easy to view user's posts from the beginning of their social media presence. Audiences are looking for consistency in a brand that they can believe is true and trustworthy. This research suggests that a successful brand it is built on transparency and honesty, assessed through constancy of information. It appears that authenticity is understood through the lens of audience perception. Further research is needed to consider how users negotiate authenticity through the lens of profile curation.

When an online brand does not match who a person is offline, they have been deemed inauthentic by audiences which can lead to criticism and accusations about being “fake” (Marwick, 2013b, pg. 199). Marwick (2013b) found that the tech scene experts in her study had to maintain their technology business oriented brands in everyday offline interactions as well as online, naming ‘networking’ the most widely used tactic. Brand monitoring was considered necessary for maintaining brands and status with people in her study using ‘Google Alerts’ to inform them when their name has been used somewhere online. It is important that we understand the work involved in managing branded identities both online and offline in the context of Instagram. We need to gain a more nuanced understanding of the emotion work involved in managing potential dissonance between online and offline personas and the broader implications of this kind of identity work.

Marwick (2015) used textual and visual analysis to explore how microcelebrity assumes the aesthetic template of traditional celebrity creation that conveys luxury and conspicuous consumption. Marwick (2015) argues that documenting luxury lifestyles or conspicuous consumption has become a dominant part of microcelebrity culture. She explains that users who successfully employ this strategy “reproduce conventional status hierarchies or luxury, celebrity and popularity that depend on the ability to emulate the visual iconography of mainstream celebrity culture” (pg. 139). Marwick (2015) assumes that all young users on Instagram aspire to emulate long-standing lifestyle ideals of the rich and famous. She went on to argue that the ability to emulate this branded persona calls into question the idea that social media is an accessible, egalitarian way for people to “access the currency of the attention economy” (pg. 139). For Marwick, Instagram branding strategies reinforce existing hierarchies of fame based on glamour, luxury, wealth, good looks and connection implying that Instagram restricts brand agency. Research needs to analyse branded personas being enacted on Instagram to gain a comprehensive understanding of self branding processes and their link to broader conceptualisations of identity.

Marwick (2013b) expressed that self branding “should not go uncriticised; rather it needs to be analysed on both an individual and community-based level” (pg. 169). She argued that we need to gain a better understanding of the effects of self branding on the practitioners themselves. Much of what has been written about self presentation in online spaces focuses on interactions with friends, family, co-workers or someone who is at least remotely relevant to a user’s offline life. What we do not know a great deal about is what happens when the audience is an assumed fan base and the user presents themselves as if they are or will soon be a celebrity. Celebrified self branding on

Instagram needs to be explored to understand how this performance of self challenges existing notions of social connection.

Ferris claimed that goal setting is an essential step in self branding arguing that every real self brand has specific and clear objectives (2010). Visibility or fame appears to be the cultural capital amongst Instagram users and therefore a goal that is aspired to. Bourdieu's (1993) concept of cultural capital referred to the valued symbolic elements or credentials within a culture. Fame appears to be valued within microcelebrity culture hence why young people are choosing to enact visibility labours. Fame as a goal however may not always involve specific or clear objectives in the context of Instagram. The aspirations of non-microcelebrities, microcelebrities and digital influencers on Instagram in relation to their self branding and visibility tactics is explored in the findings chapters.

Marwick (2013a) used the term 'life-streaming' to describe how social media users have constant access to the internet and therefore can document branded information about themselves as they happen. The 'always on' aspect of social media encourages users to share constant details of their lives (Mullen, 2010). The term was first coined by David Gelernter, a computer scientist at Yale University in 1994. He defined it as:

> Your "lifestream" captures your whole life, in terms of chunks of information: letters, documents, bills, bank statements, video footage of your son's first birthday party, a database, anything. Imagine a queue of documents laid out neatly on (say) the living room floor—only the queue might be tens of thousands of documents long, and it exists only as chunks floating in the void. (pg. 6)

In the following few years one of Gelernter's graduate students, Eric Freeman, developed software that organised files chronologically in the hope that it would one day enable people a space to organise their lives and memories (Marwick, 2013a). This dream has been realised in the advent of social media as life-streaming now involves people having a detailed digital footprint of personal information. Marwick (2013a) used this term in her work into the internet and in doing so re-defined it as "the ongoing sharing of personal information to a networked audience, the creation of a digital portrait of one's actions and thoughts... the always on aspect of social media, the constant pings and alerts that make smart phones so hard to ignore" (pg. 208). This results in the normalisation of constant social surveillance of each other as we monitor the movements and actions of our peers. People share little pieces of information constantly, and these little pieces of information create a

whole profile or branded entity, that is larger than the sum of its parts or individual posts (Marwick, 2013a).

Through documenting the mundane day-to-day, users are performing identity work where previously ephemeral moments become permanently archived and act as memory cues (Robards, et al., 2018, Robards, 2014; Allen, 2008; Barnet, 2010). Robards et al. (2018) explain that life-streaming through Snapchat challenges the idea that digital traces are permanent. Ephemeral social media such as Snapchat and Instagram Stories are believed to alleviate pressure in regards to impression management or self branding as audiences have access to content for only a limited amount of time. By affording users greater opportunity to archive more life moments, Snapchat content can act as memory cues in the future (Robards et al., 2018).

Marwick (2013a) discussed some disadvantages of life-streaming which include always being conscious of the "gaze of others" (pg. 207) and altering your behaviour to maintain the persona you are portraying. She speculated that constant monitoring creates anxiety and an environment where people compete for status and visibility. The constant monitoring of 'personal informatics' was discussed by Marwick (2013a) as another aspect of life-streaming. She was talking about the endless list of apps such as 'FitBit' that allow people to quantify themselves through monitoring their steps, mood, temperature and even sex lives. Life-streaming is not a new concept when we consider that people have kept diaries for centuries, chronicling their daily lives in extreme detail. Life-steaming through social media is different due to the branded information being documented and negotiated with a highly public audience. It has been argued in existing scholarship that sites like Facebook and Twitter encouraged constant streams of updates whereas on Instagram, posting is more selective (Keenan, 2015). Posting is believed to happen less frequently on Instagram as posting too often is frowned upon (Marwick, 2013a; Keenan, 2015). The findings chapters extend this discussion to analyse the life-streaming process on Instagram which was been transformed by the use of ephemeral social media.

Life-streaming in the context of social media, can be framed as immaterial labour (Lazzarato, 1996; Terranova, 2004) as it seems to be producing communication (Hardt, 1997) which is structured by patterns of both paid and unpaid compensation. For Maurizio Lazzarato (1996) Immaterial Labour can be an activity enacted in online spaces to produce cultural content. It is a form of labour practiced by "every productive subject within post-industrial societies" (Lazzarato, 1996, pg. 26). Immaterial labour or free labour, which for Terranova (2004) includes building online spaces, reading

and participating in online spaces, is a technical labour that relates to the effort it takes to build a webpage and engage with other peoples webpages. Marwick (2013) claimed that immaterial labour on Facebook and Twitter includes tagging photos and regularly posting status updates. For Maurizio Lazzarato (1996) Immaterial Labour is understood as an activity that produces cultural content. These activities which include defining cultural standards, fashions, tastes and also public opinion are not traditionally recognised as work.

In her work into Singaporean influencers Abidin (2014a; 2014b; 2016a) found that one way influencers become more visible is through improving the quality of the content they post. They do this by doing things like improving their photography and editing skills. Selfies are a popular visibility labour strategy social media users use to become more visible online and build their personal brand. As discussed in the previous chapter, the primary purpose of personal photography was once to create a memory. Most early personal photography featured people other than the persons taking the photograph (Marwick, 2015). Amparo Lasen and Egar Gomes-Cruz (2009) studied 100,000 family photos taken during the 1960s, less than 100 were self-portraits. In 2013 it was said that 92% of American teenagers who use Facebook upload self portraits or selfies (Madden, et.al 2013). Social media users spend considerable time and effort mastering poses, photo angles, facial expressions (Marwick, 2015) and then more time and effort "selecting, modifying, editing, storing, or uploading (Lee, 2010, pg. 270) to enhance their brand and ultimately gain visibility. Abidin added that social media users are selective about lighting and posturing, using photo-editing applications (Abidin, 2016a). The obligation users feel to engage in these visibility labours relates to the desire have a successful personal brand that adheres to the display rules of microcelebrity culture (Marwick, 2013b).

Another popular visibility strategy is 'coming out' on visual social media as gay, lesbian or transgender (Abidin, 2017; Lovelock, 2013). This is typically done through YouTube but tends to occur once a user has attained an audience on Instagram. Michael Lovelock (2013) argued that coming out to a public audience online signifies a transition to adulthood that is underpinned by neoliberal ideals of authenticity, self branding and individual enterprise. Lovelock (2013) analysed the coming out videos of two prominent YouTube stars to understand how they channelled their sexualities into lucrative celebrity brands and became role models in the mainstream media. In a similar study Crystal Abidin (2017) conducted a content analysis of three gay Australian influencers to understand how they used their microcelebrity status to further their careers. This genre of microcelebrity typically discuss other personal topics such as struggling with mental health issues

and in effect adopt a stance of responsibility, care and advocacy (Abidin, 2017). These examples suggest that there is labour involved in incorporating sexuality into personal brands. Further research is needed to better understand how sexuality as a branding strategy is negotiated on Instagram.

An alternative perspective of labour in concerned with how social software industries benefit from the unpaid labour people enact on social media (Marwick, 2013b). In this view the act of participation is framed as labour as the value of sites like Instagram is extracted in the form of user data and therefore user labour. The content users put effort into creating and the amount of times they view advertisements or click 'like' on any given post builds the popularity and success of these platforms. It is essentially user generated content and achieved visibility that is dependent on the success of these corporations. This exchange has been seen as uneven as participatory culture is framed as a form of exploitation by social software industries (Marwick, 2013b) who feed off the free labour exerted by users who perform idealised identity work.

Dobson, Carah & Robards (2018) warn of the power commercial social media platforms hold in their ability to monitor and control identities as well as store and use data user's post. They argue that social media platforms exploit the labour users perform as the data is used for their benefit. Online social platforms like Facebook privatise user's intimate labour or identity work, designed for public consumption. Therefore, the labour social media users publicly enact while building their online identities become the property of commercial platforms and amount to commercial value (Dobson, Carah & Robards, 2018). The authors argue that "public intimacies are not public enough in the sense that participants have little control over what platforms do with their intimate relationships." (pg. 22).

Sexualised and aesthetic labour

For social media users, selfies are often the result of work understood as sexualised labour (Drenten & Gurrieri, 2019). Sexualized labour has previously been discussed as work that becomes associated with sexuality and sexual desire in workplace settings (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009; Spiess & Waring, 2005; Tyler, 2012; Adkins, 1995; Filby, 1992) where practitioners are structured by organizational cultures and receive a salary/wage. In digital contexts, It has been argued that women are presenting a highly sexualized version of self online (Herring, 2015; Carrotte, Prichard, & Lim, 2017; Kapidzic & Ringrose, 2011). Conformance to heteronormative notions of attractiveness is

how some women on social media present themselves (Duffy, 2017; Drenten & Gurrieri, 2019). Displays of female sexuality through sexualised social media content, is a powerful means of gaining visibility (Daniels, 2016; Drenten & Gurrieri, 2019).

It has become normalised within western societies to display sexuality that reflects the aesthetics of commercial pornography (Tyler & Quek, 2016; Lynch, 2012; Drenten & Gurrieri, 2019). Pornographication is about portraying a heteronormative display of sexuality or 'porn chic' aesthetic oriented towards a male audience (Drenten & Gurrieri, 2019). Fontenelle (2015) argued that prosumption perpetuates existing power relationships as social media users create branded products that reinforce heteronormative advertising models. Pornographication or the merging of pornographic imagery into traditionally non-pornographic spaces is synonymous with the rise of social media identity work (McNair, 2013; Boyle, 2010, 2018; Paul, 2005). Sexualised labour has been linked to emotional labour as it is reliant on performed emotional displays such as surface acting sexualised mannerisms (Drenten & Gurrieri, 2019). Social media reproduces social relations that legitimise hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) and heteronormative ideals, normalising them to an online audience (Cirucci, 2018b; Jarrett, 2013, 2016; Marwick, 2013; Duffy & Hund, Drenton & Gurrieri, 2019; 2015).

Aesthetic labour has been described as being an aspect of sexualised labour (Mears, 2014; Drenten & Gurrieri, 2019). Aesthetic labour focuses on poses, accessories, props or superficial work on the body's surface rather than emotion work. In workplace settings, workers enact aesthetic labour by embodying attributes that will resonate with customers (Dean, 2005; Witz, Warhurst & Nickson, 2003) for commercial benefit (Warhurst & Nickson, 2001). It relates to work in which "individuals are compensated, indirectly or directly, for their own body's looks and affect as opposed to body work (unpaid work on one's own body) and bodily labour (paid work on others' bodies) (Mears, 2014, p. 1332). Mears (2014) highlighted that there is conceptual blurriness between aesthetic and sexualised labour. The concept of aesthetic labour has been argued to ignore the emotional effort required to keep up sexualised appearances (Entwistle & Wissinger, 2006; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007; Witz et al., 2003). Sexualised labour as a performance of self on Instagram involves body work that requires an interrelated dynamic of emotional and aesthetic labour. We need to better understand this complex, entangled relationship in relation to self branding on Instagram.

A 2019 study by Drenton and Gurrieri analysed visual and textual content of 172 female Instagram influencers to explore pornographication or the mainstreaming of 'porn chic' through the concept of sexualised labour. They argue that women monetize their sexuality through enacting aesthetic labour, emotional labour and 'porn chic' sexualisation simultaneously. These practices emphasize heteronormative standards of female beauty and sexuality. Sexual objectification was a prominent and powerful theme in Drenton and Gurrieri's study. They argue that female influencers positioned themselves as objects alongside the products they promote. The women consistently posed in ways that highlight body parts through gestures such as accentuating bodily curves. Their findings suggest that female influencers build a brand and maintain the attention of a public audience through the replication of 'porn chic' poses and gestures. Pornographication is a key element of the cultural background to contemporary practices of sexualised labour. How sexualised labour relates to self branding on visual social media remains underexplored. Existing literature is yet to explore how offline performances relate to online performances of sexuality.

A limitation of Drenton and Gurrieri's (2019) work is that their understanding of emotional labour in relation to performances of sexualised and aesthetic labour, are limited to coding assumed expressions of emotional labour in secondary content. They studied content influencers posted such as captions, emojis and publicly available conversations through comments. They did not consult their sample directly to understand the complexity and breadth of emotion work that is not observable on Instagram's interface. Furthermore, they assume that all influencers strive to gain affiliations with companies by implying that less visibility equates to non-monetisation while higher visibility equates to monetisation.

Conclusion

Celebrity has been transformed in the wake of social media. We need to better understand the latest frontier, microcelebrity culture, and the specific forms of emotion work that characterise it. This chapter began by mapping the shift from media characterised by consumption to a social media era characterised by the production of self. Users are now enacting celebrified performances to comply with the affordances of microcelebrity culture. Power, status and influence previously occupied by film and television has been remediated through social media with social mobility being linked to fame, with fame understood to be a hallmark of twenty-first century western culture. Identity construction and performing for a public audience is occurring simultaneously through visual social media.

We know that online technologies act as tools for the socialisation of fame as a behaviour and cultural value. We need to better understand how affordances and cultures of social media relate to the degree of agency social media practitioners have over their online performances. On visual social media, emotional expression is required to follow the display rules of microcelebrity culture. Display rules are understood to be a function of societal norms. What remains unclear is how users experience display rules on Instagram and the effect they have on both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities. The affordances of ephemeral social media complicate the concept of life-streaming and transform the way online identity construction including self branding practices has been understood in previous scholarship. Further research is needed to better understand how and why young people create branded displays of self, the emotional labour involved in managing personal brands, and the broader link to both online and offline conceptions of self-hood.

Marwick (2013b) expressed that self branding "should not go uncriticised; rather it needs to be analysed on both an individual and community-based level" (pg. 169). She argued that we need to gain a better understanding of the effects of self branding on the practitioners themselves. The literature illuminates that there is labour involved in self branding, pointing to branding techniques and observable behaviour such as fan labour. Further research is needed to understand the specific branding techniques and processes utilised by young people on Instagram and their lived experiences when exerting emotional labour for their online performances. Existing scholarship demonstrates that people engage in brand monitoring to maintain their personal brands in offline interactions as well as online. How digital influencers, microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities juggle online personal brands and offline personas is explored in this thesis through reconfiguring the concept of 'authenticity'. Research that consults both digital influencers and non-microcelebrities directly about their experiences of negotiating authenticity and the associated emotion work remains an under researched area.

Performed intimacy and connections between internet celebrities and their followers and also between non-microcelebrities and their followers on Instagram needs to be explored further. Marwick (2013b) found that the people in her study were driven out of obligation in order to boost their popularity. Of significance for this study is how obligation functions between digital influencers, microcelebrities and their followers. Obligation in relation to managing an audience, social connection, participation, affordances, branding and the emotional labour behind these processes of identity work is explored in this thesis. This thesis considers the co-dependent relationship between profile curation and reciprocal audience engagement to examine how identity in negotiated. For

Cover, (2016) these two aspects of social networking act as a framework for studying acts of identity performance however "the extent to which these two areas of social networking operate together toward a coherent, unified self needs to be explored" (pg.27). Previous scholarship that focuses on crowd-based dynamics rather than the curation of a personal brand underestimates the significance and power of self branding and profile curation and underplays the co-dependent relationship between the microcelebrity and their audience.

Literature on microcelebrity frames the cultural construct as immaterial labour. The literature demonstrates that users are engaging in unpaid labour referred to as visibility labour to maintain their brand. Although immaterial labour is often understood through the concept of emotional labour, the emotional labour specifically involved in the identity work enacted on social media needs to be explored further. We know that emotional expression is required to follow the display rules of microcelebrity culture but we need to gain a stronger understanding of how users engage with these display rules. Display rules are discussed as affordances and how following these affordances are experienced as labour. This thesis builds on Hochschild's (1979; 1983) theory by relating the concept of emotional labour to identity work specifically enacted on current social media platforms. FOMO or 'fear of missing out' is extended in regards to the pervasive need to document the self in line with a celebrified discourse that views day-to-day activities as branding opportunities. Findings explore emotional labour enacted for performances on visual social media and how users negotiate the commercialization of their personas. Furthermore, work is yet to be done into understanding the experiences of microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities who are not necessarily motivated by the desire to forge a career out of their online brand.

Studies on visibility labour offer insight into the strategies social media users engage in to maintain an online brand. Overall, this section has looked at emotionally laborious self branding practices including body work that involves performances of sexualised and aesthetic labour. Throughout the literature review, I argued that existing formulations of labour outlined in this chapter overlook the emotion work involved in managing a branded, celebrified version of self alongside offline identities. We need to understand the experiences of both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities that are exerting this kind of emotional labour, and consider the broader implications in relation to identity composition. Hence, the following research questions guide this study:

1. How is emotional labour involved in creating personal brands on Instagram for microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities?

2. Why are microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities enacting these forms of labour? What kinds of selves are constructed in the process?

Chapter Three – Researching microcelebrity

Gaining access to the closed group of Instagram celebrities or the 'insta-famous' was a journey that started with my own presence on the world's most used social media platform. After several unsuccessful attempts at contacting various internet celebrities I realised that I had two options at that point, I could either follow the path of academics before me, and study the secondary material that users post, or if I was very lucky, interview a handful of them in the hope that they will give me some insight into their worlds. I predicted that the only way to access prominent Instagram celebrities and truly understand their experiences would be to become one of them as they seemed to only engage with users who also had a large following. At this stage I had an Instagram account with approximately 200 followers. With my goal in mind, I begun to understand the culture of the platform and learnt what I would need to do to gain status and ultimately achieve Insta-fame. Through trial and error I crafted a branded depiction of myself that resembled those used by popular microcelebrities I followed at the time. This ambitious endeavour quickly became an obsession. By the time I reached approximately 10,000 followers it had become an integral part of my identity and as predicted, I received the attention of the internet celebrities I had been trying to contact. After achieving this status and level of access, I decided to conduct an autoethnography, but needed an approach that would allow me to include other participants in the research.

This thesis is researching the stories of 18 individuals (including myself) living their lives as digital influencers from their own perspective in a time where celebrity as a cultural construct is transforming dramatically. This research also consults 504 non-microcelebrities to explore how microcelebrity culture impacts the lives of both cohorts. This large scale survey provides a quantitative snapshot into widely held beliefs and commonly practiced behaviours. In total, I consulted 522 Instagram users between 2015 and 2018 between Australia and the United States. This project is an analytic autoethnography comprised of: Analysis of my own experiences, participant interviews, participant observation and an online survey.

Collecting rich qualitative data provided a foundation for 'discovery-oriented' analysis (Luker, 2008). The analysis relied on an inductive approach as I relied more on discovery through empirical data than on deduction from previous theoretical and conceptual work. After initially coding for self branding and emotion work in interview transcripts, fieldnotes, autoethnographic data and survey data I engaged in open coding where I identified patterns inductively. I coded to reveal potential linkages between emotion work and branded identities and the interactional strategies participants used to manage potential dissonance between online and offline identities. In this chapter, I explain

analytic autoethnography and detail the procedures and recruitment processes followed in this research. This is followed by a critical review of autoethnography as a method while situating my approach. I discuss ethical considerations focusing on relational ethics which are synonymous with this kind of research as well as the benefits of autoethnography. This chapter concludes by introducing the digital influencers consulted during this study.

Analytic autoethnography

Autoethnography systematically analyses personal experience to understand and describe cultural phenomena (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). It is a critical research method that combines elements of autobiography and ethnography. It is understood as being both a process and a product (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013; Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011) as it is characterised by sets of research practices that occur over time to create a tangible research outcome. Autoethnographic elements have always been found in qualitative sociological research. During the emergence of American sociology, Robert Park's interest in his graduate students biographies encouraged many of these University of Chicago students to sociologically study topics they were personally invested in (Anderson, 2006), resulting in autoethnographic experiences emerging from the research process (Deegan, 2001). For example, Nel Anderson's (1923) work on homelessness drew heavily on his personal experiences with homeless men. However despite Park's student's affiliations to the social world they studied they never engaged in explicit and reflexive self observation (Anderson, 2006). Researchers continued to utilise their personal afflictions in the following decades (Turner, 1947; Davis, 1959; Roy, 1960; Roth, 1963) but continued to downplay the researcher's role by not incorporating any formal self observation or self narratives in their texts other than what read as methodological footnotes or what Van Maanen (1988) called 'confessional tales'.

Autoethnography became a distinct sub-group of traditional ethnography once the researcher was acknowledged as being part of the research. Autoethnography allows social scientists to focus on stories as well as theories, and to be consciously value-centred instead of pretending to be value free (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011). Historically, it has challenged positivist ideas about what research is and how it should be done, both addressing and embracing human experience, rather than obsessing over objectivity and detachment (Bochner, 2011). Autoethnography places method alongside meaning to produce meaningful and accessible research (Bochner, 2011; Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011; Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). Anderson (2011) argued that autoethnographic

sensitivities, such as heightened engagement and vulnerability do not demonstrate a severing of ties from traditional ethnography but rather a refinement of method.

Autoethnographic research is appropriate when both the researcher and the participants are connected by embodied, lived experience (Liamputtong, 2009). Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2011) argue that embracing the researcher as part of a study improves the research when the researcher is a member of the social group they are studying. In autoethnographic research the author retroactively writes about past experiences assembling them in hindsight in order to study a culture's relational practices, values and beliefs (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). Autoethnography helps both insiders and outsiders better understand the culture being studied (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011). It illustrates the personal, hidden nuances often missed in traditional surveys and interviews typically conducted in sterile environments that induce distance between researcher and participant (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013).

Ellis and Ellington (2000) explained that an autoethnography should use the convention of storytelling such as character, scene and plot development to show some sort of story progression to produce thick descriptions of personal and interpersonal experience. It requires researchers to live their lives consciously and reflexively considering how and why we think, act and feel the way we do. Autoethnographers are required to engage in rigorous self-reflexivity by interrogating what they think and challenge their own assumptions about a particular aspect of life (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). By processing and constructing meaning from hidden, confusing or taboo experiences autoethnographers can make the lives of others better (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). This kind of research offers people equipment to better process and understand a particular lived experience (Burke, 1974) and leaves them with a story they can take on board and live with, rather than just read about (Coles, 1989).

According to Anderson (2006) autoethnographies stand somewhere along the spectrum of 'evocative' and 'analytic'. Traditionally evocative autoethnographies rely heavily on self exploration and in effect focus on personal lived experience (Ellis, 1997; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The autoethnographic component of this study is considered 'analytic' as I have interviewed others and conducted a large scale survey in order to construct meaning from others alongside my own experiences. Becoming an Instagram influencer myself with a following of over 30,000, put me in a position where I could study my own experiences as someone who has been both a non-microcelebrity and an influencer over the course of this study. Methods comprised of fieldnotes in a

research diary, analysing personal artefacts, and conducting autoethnographic interviews. Each component of my methodology is detailed later in this chapter.

Forms of autoethnography differ in how much emphasis is placed on studying others (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011; Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2011). For this thesis, I analysed my own story in conjunction with the experiences of the people I consulted during the research process. In 1983 Charmaz referred to this style of autoethnography as a 'layered account'. Layered accounts analyse the author's experiences alongside participant data using reflexivity, multiple voices and introspection. Layered accounts allow data collection and analysis to occur simultaneously (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011). This layered approach to autoethnography has been seen as a sub-group within the discipline that defines 'analytic autoethnography' (Anderson, 2006). Carolyn Ellis (2004) understands autoethnography as a "back-and-forth movement between experiencing and examining a vulnerable self and observing and revealing the broader context of that experience" (2007, p.14). Interviewing others through the process of autoethnography helps establish a more comprehensive or 'layered' understanding (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011; Goodall, 2006; Didion, 2005). It is this layered insight that makes the autoethnographic component of this study analytic.

My status within Instagram is vital to the research methodology especially in regards to access. Methods used to explore the practices of microcelebrity are shaped by the social conventions, affordances and vernaculars of the platform, my insider status as 'one of them' means that I am situated within the world being studied. Traditionally, studying a closed group such as Goths for example, requires that the insider achieves some sort of affiliation with the group of interest (Hodkinson, 2002). By being insta-famous and complying with the conventions and culture of the insta-famous world, the analytic autoethnography was possible, and most importantly trust was established between myself and the participants. In my autoethnographic fieldwork, I became a participant observer within the culture and later reflected on my interactions with microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities.

While informally spending time with them I observed what internet celebrities do first hand in their daily life. They were not socialising with just a researcher, they were interacting with someone like them. Taking photos, deliberating over content, editing and posting was done on these occasions offering an insider, natural view into to their world that would not have been possible in the absence of my insider status. It is impossible to witness these things first hand, exactly how they happen in a sit down, formal interview, and as I came to realize, people do not always behave the way that say they do in interviews. This kind of unfiltered access is made possible by these research

methods and ultimately my level of access. Highlighting the closed group nature of microcelebrities, two of the microcelebrities interviewed explained that they had been approached by other academics from various universities in the United States who wanted to interview them about their experiences. They explained that they did not trust divulging their experiences with someone who "wouldn't really get it". They expressed that my insider status made them feel as though I would be able to relate to their experiences on a level that an outsider could not.

Once I completed the formal interviews I begun to analyse the experiences detailed in my research diary in light of what I was learning from both the participants and the literature. As Mitch Allen said, an autoethnographer must:

> Look at experience analytically. Otherwise [you're] telling [your] story – and that's nice but people do that on Oprah every day. Why is your story more valid than anyone else's? What makes your story more valid is that you are a researcher. You have a set of theoretical and methodological tools and research literature to use. That's your advantage. If you can't frame it around these tools and literature and just frame it as 'my story,' then why or how should I privilege your story over anyone else's I see 25 times a day on TV? (Personal interview, May 4, 2006 cited in Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011)

During the writing process it is common for autoethnographers to write about epiphanies or remembered moments perceived to have significantly impacted the course of their life (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011) as well as existential crises that forced them to critically analyse experiences that changed them as a person. Autoethnographers must use research literature, theoretical and methodological tools to not only examine their own experiences but to also consider the way others within a particular culture experience similar lived experiences. This is accomplished by contrasting personal experience against existing literature, interviewing other cultural actors and examining cultural artefacts (Boylorn 2008; Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011). With that said, many autoethnographers choose to solely focus on their own stories and perspectives (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). However, given the complexity and multi-faceted nature of microcelebrity culture I have chosen to include the voices and perspectives of others in the hope that it will relate to the lives of as many people as possible and help them better understand how microcelebrity culture impacts them from a labour perspective. The autoethnography and participant interviews provide insight into the personal stories of individual actors while the online questionnaire provides a quantitative snapshot of widely held beliefs, commonly practised behaviours and underlying cultural values (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013) of non-microcelebrities or the 'everyday' user.

Anderson (2006) argued that autoethnography that is too self-focused, evocative or emotional (Ellis 1997, 2004) can limit the potential of autoethnography and obscure the way in which the method fits within traditional notions of social enquiry. Anderson (2006) explained that evocative autoethnographers' primary goal is to create emotional resonance with the reader however this has led to them being marginalized in mainstream social science discourse due to their "rejection of traditional social science values" (pg. 377). Carolyn Ellis and Arthur Bochner (2000) argued that evocative autoethnography's resemblance to novels and biographies "fractures the boundaries that normally separate social science from literature" (pg. 744). Anderson identified five features that clarify an analytic approach to autoethnography that is compatible with traditional ethnographic practices and is "consistent with traditional symbolic interactionist epistemological assumptions and goals rather than rejecting them" (2006, pp. 377-378). Anderson's five key features that make autoethnographic analysis analytic include (1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) commitment to analytic agenda, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self and (5) visible and active researchers in the text. I detail each feature below.

CMR status

The first feature essential to analytic autoethnography is that the researcher possesses complete member researcher (CMR) status or is fully immersed within the social world they are studying (Anderson, 2006). In some CMR's the researcher is either born into a group or becomes part of a group by chance circumstance for example suffering an illness or acquiring familiarity through a job opportunity. Membership precedes the decision to conduct research (Anderson, 2006). Robert Murphy's (1987) analysis of his experience with spinal cord disease in *The Body Silent* is an example of a circumstantial CMR. The other type of CMR begins with data-orientated research interest in a particular social world. A researcher becomes a full member during the course of their research (Anderson, 2006). An example of this kind of CMR is Jennifer Lois's *Heroic Efforts* (2003) where she slowly accumulated status through her research, became a core member of search-and-rescue culture and later married a leader of the group. In another example Loic Wacquant signed up at a boxing ring in a south side Chicago neighbourhood in his book *Body and Soul* to study labour in an African American ghetto and ended up boxing in tournaments himself (2003). In this study, my microcelebrity status was acquired and developed after choosing to pursue this research.

Analytic reflexivity

Reflexivity is the researchers' "awareness of reciprocal influence between ethnographers and their settings and informants" (Davies 1999, pg.7). As discussed earlier in this chapter, it involves

self-conscious introspection directed at better understating the self and others in relation to cultural phenomena (Anderson, 2006) that goes beyond what Maanen (1988) called 'confessional tales' of the researchers position in footnote form. Analytic reflexivity is an essential feature of analytic autoethnography. It requires the researcher to be visible, active and reflexively engaged in the text (Anderson 2006). An example of analytic reflexivity is when the author's experiences are explicitly analysed alongside the experiences of participants making reference to the relationship between researcher, participant and literature.

Commitment to an analytic agenda

Using empirical data to gain insight into social phenomena is a defining characteristic of social science. For Anderson (2006) analytic autoethnography complies with this tradition of social enquiry by relying primarily on data and addressing theoretical issues in order to refine and extend theoretical understanding. Engaging with theoretical frameworks helps autoethnographers gain deeper understanding of the experiences they are studying (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2011). Committing to an analytic agenda means going beyond capturing individual life stories and in effect departing from evocative autobiographical works (Ellis, 2004; Bochner, 2011; Andrews, 1999) that reject their potential to generalize their experiences. For Karp, valuable sociology provides "theoretical illumination of the topic under investigation" (1996, pg. 16).

Dialogue with informants beyond the self

In autoethnographic research the researcher is constantly confronted with self related issues meaning that the risk of self absorption, losing sight of the larger cultural issue and therefore not being analytic is high (Anderson, 2006). Author saturation in autoethnographic texts tend to result from not adequately engaging with others in a field. To avoid this there should to be dialogue with external data or other subjects (Anderson, 2006). As Atkinson, Coffey and Dalamont (2003) put it, "no ethnographic work, not even autoethnography is a warrant to generalize from a N of one" (Pg. 57). Analytic autoethnography is grounded in self-experience but relies on the interrelationship between the researcher and other informants (Davies, 1999), it is "always disciplined by the data collected" (Karp, 1996, pg. 204).

Visible and active researchers in the text

In traditional ethnography, mainly classic anthropological work, the researcher is often hidden yet "seemingly omnipresent in text" (Anderson, 2006, pg. 383). Although autoethnography is about recounting personal experiences a major challenge for this mode of inquiry is that it can lead to self-

absorption (Anderson, 2006) or author saturated texts (Geertz, 1998). For Anderson, autoethnography "loses its sociological promise when it develops into self-absorption" (Anderson, 2006, pg. 383). He argues that the self-narrative found in evocative autoethnography, fiction, poetry and come classical texts communicates deeply felt emotions however it often lacks theoretical grounding. Analytic autoethnographies are different as the self-narrative is used to develop and refine generalized theoretical understandings of a social process, avoiding self-absorption in both self analysis and their engagement with data sources beyond the self (Anderson, 2006). As mentioned earlier in this chapter, studying my experiences involved analysing fieldnotes, personal artefacts and an autoethnographic interview. I now discuss the purpose and procedure of each research tool that comprised the self analysis or autoethnographic component of data collection.

Fieldnotes

Fieldnote writing is the signature form of data collection in ethnography and therefore a core method of enquiry in autoethnographic research (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2011). It involves representing the social reality of others and the researcher's at the same time (Van Maanen, 1988; Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2011). I recorded what I witnessed while spending time with internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities as well as my responses to what occurred in a research diary. As discussed earlier, I informally spent time with both internet celebrities and everyday users, seeing what they did first hand in their daily lives, by pools, parties and even in their homes. They were living their lives as they normally would, treating me as one of them rather than a researcher, allowing an invaluable insight into their lived experience. My fieldnotes added another dimension to understanding their lived experiences.

The interviews forced the microcelebrities to reflect on their experiences of social media in a way they never had before eliciting extremely valuable information, but as time went on I noticed inconsistencies between what people said they do and what they actually do. The fieldnotes helped me create a more complete account of their behaviours. I do not believe that they provided misleading information during interviews, many of the inconsistencies surrounded embarrassing and taboo topics that I knew would be difficult for them to talk about. As an Instagram user, I knew that I would find these questions tricky to answer and could feel the tension during interviews and was sensitive to that. Furthermore, it is important to remember that people are not always aware of their behaviour or at least why they behave the way they do. Ultimately, fieldnotes allowed me to 'fill in the blanks' by offering a different perspective beyond what participants said during formal interviewing.

Researchers vary in their fieldnote practices. Some write their fieldnotes during observations while others focus on immersing themselves in a situation and then engage in what Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (2011) call 'focused recollection' after they have left the field. Like most autoethnographers, I have used both styles but have predominately engaged with focused recollection. As most of the fieldwork was conducted while on the go, in restaurants, hotels, airports, nightclubs, on tight overseas schedules and even during formal interviews where there was almost never ample opportunity to write fieldnotes on the spot. Typically, I recorded dot points of what happened on my phone notepad closely after an interaction or experience took place and used these notes as memory cues that aided recollection and enabled reflexive engagement and analysis to occur at a later date.

I also found myself engaging in focused recollection after reading new literature. The new literature or theoretical perspective prompted me to write about past experiences that I did not recognize as being important, or worth writing about at the time. Laurel Richardson (1994) explained that "by writing in different ways, we discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it" (pg. 516). Fieldnote styles also vary in the amount of self-presence (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2011). Fieldnotes can be heavily laden with introspection and self reference, reading much like a personal diary while others are centred on descriptions of what the researcher has observed. My fieldnotes contain both introspection and descriptions however descriptions dominate my fieldnotes as introspection usually took place after the fact, while analysing and dissecting my descriptions.

Personal artefacts

In addition to fieldnotes, autoethnographers often use a wide range of personal documents to chronicle and examine the aspects of their lives under investigation (Smith-Shank & Keifer-Boyd, 2007; Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2011). 'Personal documents' can include anything from medical reports to paintings to photos. Dumitica and Gaden (2009) analyzed virtual depictions of people in the online game *Second Life*. In this thesis I use my own Instagram posts/photographs to help chronicle my use of the application and examine my experiences. The use of photographs or 'visual autoethnography' has become so common that it is now understood as a distinct genre and mode of analysis within the field (Smith-Shank & Keifer-Boyd, 2007). Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2011) argue that the value of artefacts used in autoethnographic research depends on its ability to evoke understanding in readers and to encourage the researcher to reflect more deeply on their experiences. Including my own Instagram posts in my analysis forced me to engage in confronting

autoethnographic introspection and then communicate how and why the social media content was created identifying hidden nuances.

Autoethnographic interview

Anderson and Glass-Coffin (2011) recognize that the term 'autoethnographic interview' seems like an oxymoron to outsiders, "If the purpose of an interview is to obtain new information or 'data', what possibly can I tell myself that I do not already know? The answer autoethnographers would reply, is, a lot" (pg. 69). Just as one on one interviews construct versions of reality interactionally, autoethnographic interviews construct meaning through dialogue between one's present and past selves (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2011). Autoethnographic interviews tend not to be conducted orally, the process is usually episodic and textual (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2011). In this research I did not answer the interview questions in the order they were asked or in the same sitting as they were presented to others, instead I considered and built my own responses to each question throughout the research process, over four years.

The document where I recorded my responses to the interview questions was an almost always open tab on my computer where I could readily add my thoughts about experiences. After interviewing another person, after a thought provoking conversation with someone connected to the study or after coming across a theoretical perspective that provided a new lens through which to think about a topic is when I would usually have something to add to my document. Autoethnographic excerpts where I analyse my own experiences are italicised and not indented within the results chapters to signal a shift in writing style. I now discuss the recruitment process and detail the interview procedure for both the internet celebrity and non-microcelebrity sample.

Recruiting and interviewing the influencers

Internet celebrity participants aged 18 to 35 who had a public Instagram account with a significant following (over 10,000) were contacted through the site. These users were selected from posts that appeared in Instagram's popular/explore screen. Accessing this sample required insider status as often the only way to get in contact with them is through direct message (DM). Users only receive a DM notification when the message is from an Instagram user that they follow. Possessing microcelebrity status enabled me to get in contact with prominent internet celebrities who I was able to message once they followed me back. Through DM, I befriended them and discussed my research interests. Once they showed interest in the research

they were briefly advised about the nature of the project. They were told that I was interested in how labour is experienced through Instagram and that I am interested in the wider implications microcelebrity culture may have for young people. They were asked to contact me via my Swinburne University email if they thought they might be interested in participating. Once contact was made, participants received an information and consent form (see Appendix A) through email. We then negotiated a suitable interview time and location. If a physical interview was not logistically possible, the interview was conducted electronically through email or telephone which included Facetime or other forms of video chat (see Appendix B for interview schedule).

Interviews with the microcelebrities were semi-structured. A reflexive dyadic interview style was employed. It is just like a traditional, standard interview where the interviewer asks questions and the interviewee answers them except with the added dimension of the interviewer participating in what resembles a conversation (Anderson & Glass-Coffin, 2011). This dialogue was possible as the participants and myself have shared experiences. During interviews there was a reciprocal desire to share personal experiences. After participants answered a question there was often a pause coupled with anticipating eyes seeking my thoughts on the issue raised. I was prepared for this as we both had experience with the topic and both knew this prior to the interview. Ellis and Berger (2002) explain that this interview style is more of a conversation between two equals than a hierarchical question-and-answer exchange.

Three of the physical interviews were conducted in a quiet hotel lounge in West Hollywood, California. One was conducted in a participant's home in Manhattan, New York. Two others took place in a quiet corner of a restaurant in Melbourne and one in a hotel room in Las Vegas. Each interview was digitally voice recorded. Locations were selected to ensure a comfortable and relaxed atmosphere as participants are more inclined to tell the researcher "how it is" (Dearnley, 2005, pg. 21) under these conditions, capturing their subjective experiences (Liamputtong, 2009). Interviews took approximately one hour. They were then transcribed so that the manuscripts could be manually coded using thematic analysis within a constructivist framework. All transcripts were coded according to key themes that emerged through the research process (see Appendix A for info and consent form and Appendix B for interview schedule).

One participant requested to remain anonymous prior to conducting their interview. For participants who elected to disclose their identity in publication, selected direct quotations and data that revealed sensitive information were anonymized. Direct quotations presented in this thesis were edited to correct grammatical errors that obscured meaning. Irrelevant information was omitted. Examples of irrelevant information include discussing food that was ordered when interviews were being conducted or a participant asking for an air-conditioner to be turned off. In direct quotations the use of abbreviated eclipses (..) signifies a long pause, while standard eclipses (...) signify a break, meaning that responses were given at different times and collated into one direct quotation. Responses that were collated into a single response related to a common theme or topic.

For the microcelebrities that granted permission for me to use their name in publication and analyse their Instagram content, I engaged in online ethnographic observation of the material they posted following the interviews. Given the relatively small body of research into young people's experiences of labour on Instagram, observation is an appropriate approach as this method is valuable for exploring social phenomena in digital contexts (Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey, 2016; Liamputtong, 2009). I observed their photos and videos, taking screenshots and keeping notes of what they did online to complement the data collected during interviews. Conducting fieldwork of this nature allows the researcher to experience the lived realities within a particular social context (Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey, 2016; Wolf, 1992) by exploring the world of the people the ethnographer wants to learn from (Liamputtong, 2009). This allows for deeper understanding of a phenomenon than can be obtained through interviews alone (Waller, Farquharson & Dempsey, 2016).

Recruiting the non-microcelebrities

Consulting a large number of people provides a quantitative snapshot into widely held beliefs, commonly practised behaviours and underlying cultural values (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). This data focuses on the macro trend of microcelebrity culture to complement the data attained from the internet celebrity interviews, observations and autoethnographic data that focused on the micro, particular experiences surrounding microcelebrity culture. The goal was to acquire a large data set to see whether themes that emerged in internet celebrity interviews resonated with their followers. Surveying non-microcelebrities provided opportunity to compare and contrast the experiences of internet celebrities and those who do not identity as internet celebrities.

Comparing these data sets allowed for a comparison of the types of emotion work exerted by both cohorts.

Some of the internet celebrities who have been interviewed were asked if they would like to post a link to the online questionnaire to their social media. The questionnaire invited participants aged between 18 and 35 who did not consider themselves microcelebrities or digital influencers and had under 1000 followers (see Appendix C for announcement and Appendix D for online questionnaire). This sampling was randomized in the sense that individual respondents were not scouted or selected. The announcements for the survey were shared to publicly available digital influencer profile pages. There was no way to control who would view or access the publicly available link. The link had potential to reach audiences beyond the digital influencers following or direct audience. Posts to the survey were released between February 2017 and July 2017.

Participant responses that appeared to relate to the research questions were invited to offer more in depth qualitative responses following the survey as some of the questions limited extended responses. These follow up announcements were posted to the Instagram profiles of internet celebrities who posted the original survey link. The post explained to participants that their responses have been extremely interesting and that they are invited to contact me through Instagram direct message or email if they would like to discuss further. There were a series of posts each relating to different topics/themes that arose from the survey responses. For example, one announcement invited people who are willing to further discuss their use of body enhancements, explaining that this has been identified as a prominent theme in many of the anonymous interviews. In total, fifty four survey respondents made contact and volunteered to offer further information on a nominated topic. The majority of these interviews were conducted through Instagram direct message. Others were conducted in email or in person. By contacting me directly, many of these participants revealed their identities. They were assured that their responses would remain anonymous in publication and that only I would be able to identify them.

In total, 504 respondents successfully completed the survey. Incomplete or incomprehensible data was omitted. The majority of questions were analysed quantitatively using frequencies. Short answer questions and extended responses were analysed qualitatively. They were manually coded using thematic analysis within a constructivist framework. Quotations presented throughout the thesis by internet celebrities are marked as (**celebrity**). Quotations from non-microcelebrities are marked as (**non-celebrity**) to make clear which sample the data was sourced from. As explained,

autoethnographic excerpts where I analyse my own experiences are italicised and not indented to signal a shift in writing style. I now turn to a discussion of relational ethics, a necessary consideration in research that relies on interpersonal bonds. I also discuss the benefits of doing analytic autoethnography in research of this nature.

Ethical considerations and benefits of analytic autoethnography

Autoethnographic relational ethics go beyond procedural ethics mandated by university ethic committees. Choosing which stories to share and how to share them is complicated, we can never be sure how those we write about will react to what has been said about them. There are no set rules to follow regarding relational ethics (Ellis, 2007). Ellis and Bochner's (2006) advice is to remember that autoethnographies are about people who are in the process of figuring out how to live and what their experiences mean. We must be sensitive to that, and think carefully about the stories we choose to tell especially when the researcher possesses insider status and develops close bonds with the participants.

Relational ethics refer to the ethical dilemmas that often arise when doing research with friends or people the researcher grows close to either prior to the project or during (Ellis, 2007). Researchers do not live in isolation, they live connected to a multitude of social networks that consequently implicate others in their research, even if it is as broad as including the values of the university an academic is affiliated with. Relational ethics are heightened for autoethnographers as using participant's personal experiences will inevitably implicate intimate others to some degree (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011). It is also important to remember that researchers and participants often continue to live in the same world in which the research is now embedded after a study is completed (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011). This is especially true for this project.

Many researchers have utilised their insider status to successfully conduct ethnographic studies. In the field of subcultural studies, Hodkinson's (2002) proximity granted him access into the mysterious lives of Goths, Malbon's (1999) allowed him to study dance club culture from within the circuit while Weinstein (2000) used her street credentials to study heavy metal culture from the inside. However the ethics of friendship and insider status remains an underdeveloped field (Ellis & Bochner, 2006; Taylor, 2011). The advantages include possessing prior knowledge allowing for deeper understanding, closer and more regular contact with the field and also better access to participants including easier recruitment, stronger rapport and a higher level of trust (Taylor, 2011).

There is also a deeper level of understanding afforded by knowing the lingo or being "empirically literate" (Roseneil, 1993, pg. 112). Specifically in relation to analytic autoethnography, Anderson (2006) explains that an advantage of the method is that the researcher has multiple reasons to participate in the social world under investigation and therefore multiple incentives to spend time in the field. Furthermore, in traditional ethnography, the researcher is often not able to withdraw from the field without ceasing the research project. Given that analytic autoethnography often relies on multiple methods from survey data to participant interviews studies have potential to continue even when researchers remove themselves from the field.

Insider status can be problematic. It can result in role confusion, conflict, feelings of betrayal and run the risk of compromised researcher objectivity (Taylor, 2011). It is important to be aware of these issues when conducting research of this nature. I held a privileged position within the closed group of internet celebrity by possessing a level of understanding, rapport, trust and access that only comes from building meaningful relationships with participants. My way of ensuring participants remained aware of my motives was by consistently asking questions relating to the research. There was not a day spent with digital influencers where I would not directly ask at least one question relating to the research project. However no matter the precautions taken, inevitably, there will be things witnessed in autoethnographic fieldwork that a researcher cannot report.

The researcher must carefully filter the interaction omitting information that if reported could compromise the participant's privacy and the relationship between the participants and researcher. It is important to respect the friendship and uphold a sense of trust as it is the friendship component of these relationships that makes this kind of research unique and allows it to continue. Ethical issues affiliated with friendship are an important part of both the research process and product (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011). It is ultimately the researcher's responsibility to find a balance between consolidating friendships and remaining focused on the research objectives. Achieving this kind of balance was an integral aim of this project and a crucial dimension of inquiry that was kept in mind throughout the research and writing process.

With the relational ethical concerns and criticisms associated with the method, it is easy to understand why researchers would shy away from autoethnography. In *A Feminist Critique of Family Studies* (2009), Alexis Walker reflects on her experiences as the editor of the *Journal of Marriage and Family*. Walker explained that during her six year term she felt conflicted between publishing traditional, impersonal essays that often lacked insight and publishing papers that used real life,

personal accounts of women. Walker revealed issues she faced in her personal life while editing the journal and how it impacted the way she engaged with the research submitted to her.

> As a sister, daughter, partner, and individual, I was negotiating the daily family life experience of adult sibling relationships, life threatening health crises, aging parents, mental illness, income loss and chronic illness... Was I reading about these things in manuscripts submitted to the journal? No. Instead I was reading about the effects of cohabitation on children's math scores, the ways in which number and type of marital status transitions affect adolescent externalizing behaviour, and how fathers would be more involved with their children if mothers worked hard to foster their involvement (Walker, 2009, pg. 26)

Such life experiences often have no place in traditional social scientific research. It has been argued that lived experiences, have been largely absent in studying online culture (Kennedy, 2003; Kennedy & Hill, 2017). If a person suffering from a serious illness was doing research on that illness their personal experiences could not be disclosed without the research being deemed biased (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). Ronai (1995) argued that "traditional scientific research fails to account for the intuitive leaps, false starts, mistakes, loose ends and happy accidents that comprise the investigative experience" (pg. 421). Holman, Adams and Ellis (2013) add that "the assumption of objectivity is one of the most problematic notions of traditional social scientific research... objectivity obscures the twists and turns research projects often take" (pg. 33). Walker (2009) highlighted the importance of research that uses subjectivity to bring human experiences to life while also committing to social change. Autoethnography illustrates that personal experience is important in our pursuit to understand the social world and allows us to articulate the true complexity of the research process and lived experience (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). For Anderson (2006), autoethnography grants researchers the freedom to combine their research goals with a variety of interests including making a living, personal development, leisure or pursing goals.

Breaking the silences surrounding experiences within cultures is a purpose and advantage of autoethnography (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). Traditionally and historically research often adheres to hegemonically masculine traits including objectivity, control and objectivity. Traits that are often gendered as feminine such as subjectivity and emotionality are often deemed insufficient and irrational (Pelias, 2011; Walker, 2009; Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013; Keller, 1995). In privileging subjectivity, personal voice and emotional experience autoethnographic research embraces the complexity and fragility of scholarship rather than silence it (Tillmann, 2009) recognizing that humans are unpredictable, emotional beings rather than static machines (Ellis, 1991). It challenges masculine discourses engrained in academic research and embraces the fact that research is shaped

by our race, gender, age and sexuality. Bochner argues that autoethnography has become a "rallying point for those who believe that the human sciences need to become more human" (2011, pg. 53).

Providing autobiographic data in academic research retrieves silenced and marginalized voices that when done well, highlights the stories of ordinary people in an accessible way (Kennedy, 2003). Helen Kennedy's (2001) book *Cyborg Lives? Women's Technobiographies* offered autobiographic insights into women's everyday relationships with diverse technologies. The autobiographic accounts provided in first-person narrative, give the reader rich, meaningful, in-depth insights into lived experiences. Kennedy (2001) demonstrated how studying virtual identities in offline contexts enables a more comprehensive approach to studying online sociality. Kennedy's book also demonstrates that autobiographic research can be analytic given her analysis of theoretical perspectives alongside multiple voices.

As mentioned earlier, an important benefit to autoethnography is its ability to make academic work accessible. Academic work is often criticised for being inaccessible to those outside the realm of academia (Hermann, 2012; Tillmann, 2009; Fledderus, 2003; Pelias, 2000; Mykhalovskiy, 1996). Autoethnographic research penetrates this barrier by producing clear and engaging research that has potential to connect to multiple and diffuse audiences. Holman, Adams and Ellis (2013) go further, arguing that autoethnography is not only more accessible but more valuable, given its potential to directly reach people personally affected by a particular cultural experience. The following section outlines a brief biography of each digital influencer to provide background information regarding their online and offline profiles.

Meet the microcelebrities

I interviewed seventeen internet celebrities in total (my autoethnographic analysis excluded). On my first research trip to Los Angeles in July 2015 I interviewed the first three; Aaron Rhodes, Michael Turchin and Patrick Belaga. In December 2015 I interviewed 'Nick' in Las Vegas. During my third research trip to New York In June 2016, I interviewed Ezra Williams. I had planned five more interviews In New York over the summer however when I met these influencers in person they expressed that they would prefer to complete the interview electronically through email or through telephone. Although these interviews were not face to face I spent over a month socialising with them and collating observations that became data. These observations complemented data sourced from the online interviews and in some cases proved more valuable. The bonds formed prior to

completing the online interviews enriched the level of rapport of these long distance interactions. In June 2017 I interviewed Tasia and Gracia Seger in Melbourne, Australia. The remaining ten interviews were completed either through telephone or email. Telephone and email interviews comprised of the same interview schedule as the physical interviews (see Appendix B). I now introduce the internet celebrities:

Aaron Rhodes (449K followers, Los Angeles, United States)

Aaron became a microcelebrity known for posting selfies and travel adventures. Along with his twin brother Austin, Aaron transitioned from microcelebrity to digital influencer in the months following their viral YouTube video *Twins Come Out to Dad* posted on January 14 2015. After increasing pressure from their followers to disclose their sexuality they chose to come out to their father while making their YouTube video that was then used to come out to their followers. The highly emotional video showed the twins crying and struggling to speak to their confused yet supportive father on the phone while filming themselves in front of a self recording camera.

The video quickly raked in over 20 million views making them two of the most popular internet celebrities at that time attracting sit down interviews with Ellen Degeneres and NBC news. Aaron's video was designed to satisfy the demands of his followers and further his YouTube career. He did not expect the video to go as viral as it did nor did he expect the life changing opportunities that followed. The twins were soon cast into the Fox drama *Scream Queens* that same year alongside Jamie-Lee Curtis, John Stamos and Emma Roberts. With no acting experience they were cast primarily to lure their enormous online following of teenage girls to the teen oriented drama. Following their acting stint the 23 year old twins now make a living from their online presence which attracts lucrative brand endorsement contracts from companies like Reebok, American Eagle and M&Ms chocolate.

Michael Turchin (114K followers, Los Angeles, United States)

Known for selling his paintings through Instagram 29 year old Michael Turchin has used Instagram as a way to build a fan base that has translated to an increase in sales. Michael posts shirtless-selfies and content relating to beauty, travel and relationships. In October 2014 he went viral when his then boyfriend Lane Bass, a band member of 'NSYNC' scared him while he was in the shower and posted it to Instagram. His 'bum' was posted on several news outlets and he received a large following as a result of the attention received for his body.

The couple made history in the months before our interview when their wedding was aired on the E network. Lance Bass and Michael Turchin were the first same sex couple to get married on an American TV network. The event described as the wedding of the decade attracted guests like Kris Jenner, Carmen Electra and Lisa Vanderpump. Michael has appeared in reality television namely *Keeping Up With The Kardashians* and has acted in films such as *Alien Abduction.* Michael continues to post about his art, physique, travel expeditions, high profile relationships and charitable causes.

Patrick Belaga (17.3K followers, Los Angeles, United States).

Patrick is known for posting his music, fashion and evocative photography. As a cellist and composer of contemporary classic music he performs his art around the world. He has a niche following of people who appreciate his unique perspective. His photos showcase his photography skills and attention to unconventional details. 25 year old Patrick lives in West Hollywood, California yet spends a large portion of his time in Europe performing and taking photos. From busking on the streets of Los Angeles his music now appears in soundtracks for film and television. He has released a critically acclaimed album entitled *Groundswell* and has worked with three time Grammy winner and academy award winner Lady Gaga.

Ezra Williams (80.8K followers, New York, United States)

Known as one of the Rich Kids of Instagram (RKOI) (a site that documented Instagram users who post about their extravagant lifestyles of extreme wealth) 27 year old Ezra is famous for his luxury lifestyle brand that parades his iconic adrogynous sense of fashion. As heir to his parents billion dollar real estate empire he often posts about luxurious hotels, private jets, high end designer clothing, accessories and jewellery. When interviewing Ezra at his Manhattan townhouse I learnt about his New York 'Snap pack', a group of 20 something rich kids from Manhattan who the *New York Times* (2016) call the new 'Rat Pack', reminiscent of the wealthy young people in Las Vegas in the 1980s.

New York's Snap Pack are a young, wealthy and itinerant group who revolve their lives around social media. Other members include Tiffany Trump (daughter of Donald Trump), Kyra Kennedy (daughter of Robert F. Kennedy Jr.), Gaia Matisse (Great granddaughter of Henri Matisse) and Barron Hilton (Grandson of the founder of Hilton Hotels). Aside from spending time with the Snap pack socialites Ezra often shares photos socialising with other high profile digital influencers. Ezra has had his own segment on a British reality show called *Rich Kids of Instagram* which chronicled the stories of six young digital influencers who document their lavish lifestyles on Instagram. More recently he

starred in four seasons for the American reality series *Rich Kids of Beverly Hills.* This show is about wealthy young people living in Los Angeles who used their Insta-fame to create their TV show. Ezra has used his Instagram brand to launch his own fashion blog which he later closed as Instagram became the only platform needed to document his fashion endeavours which include brand deals with companies like Dior, Gucci and Bulgari.

Tasia Seger (13.6K followers) and Gracia Seger (13.6k followers, Melbourne, Australia)

Tasia and Garcia's Instagram account is devoted to cooking and food photography and has maintained a loyal fan base. The women are meticulous when it comes to engaging with their Instagram followers. Being born in Indonesia, growing up in India with their chef grandmother and then moving to Australia to complete their schooling, the pair acquired a taste for exotic fusion cuisine. It was no surprise when the then 24 and 26 year old sisters were cast into the 2016 season of *My Kitchen Rules*, Australia's highest rating television program in that year. They won over the hearts of Australia with their fun loving warm personalities and innovative culinary skills. They went on to win the show and have since made food their full time career often posting their brand collaborations on Instagram with various cooking industry brands. They now run a sauce business, selling satay sauces in major supermarkets. In July 2018 the pair opened modern Indonesian cuisine restaurant *Makan* in Melbourne's CBD.

Victoria Baker-Harber (237k followers, London, England)

Victoria is a 29 year old socialite and fashion designer from Chelsea London whose Instagram page is devoted to fashion, beauty regimes and travel. The now TV star often referred to as 'euro royalty' in tabloids was cast in season two of the UK reality series *Made in Chelsea* and American spin off *Made in Chelsea NYC* where she is often seen using social media to document her fashion and extravagant vacations.

Benji Condie (73.9K followers, Sydney, Australia)

24 year old Benji is known for his shirtless selfies. He posts content relating to fashion, beauty and travel as his following continues to grow at a rapid rate. In 2015 Benji appeared in the SBS documentary *Instafamous: How do people make money from Instagram*. In his segment he explained how he is scouted by companies who's audience demographic matches Benji's following demographic. These companies offer him lucrative brand endorsements with swimwear labels and holiday resorts. Much like Ezra Williams, Benji also had a fashion blog in previous years but discontinued it as Instagram became the only platform he needed to showcase his brand. It became

easier to use the one platform, and it made more sense to use the platform that started his microcelebrity career.

Maxwell Haddadin (MVX) (115K followers, Laguna Beach, United States)

Maxwell's Instagram brand is dramatic selfies and art photography. He often photographs dream like images that have been edited to depict a kind of alternative universe. Most of his photos however are vacation selfies that showcase his distinctive appearance and beach lifestyle. Maxwell is an international model who was scouted from his Instagram. He now combines his digital influencer status with his modelling career to post sponsored content on his profile that are in partnership with labels like Tommy Hilfiger.

Yassine Serrar (21.3K followers, Morocco)

Yassine is 18 years old and lives in Morocco. Selfies and landscape photos in unique Moroccan backdrops have allowed for a distinctive photo aesthetic. In 2017 Yassine's Instagram account was hacked resulting in the majority of his posts being deleted. He lost a large portion of followers because of this. In the months following he pleaded with followers to stick by him as he rebuilds his online brand explaining how devastating this attack has been to his life. Many of his followers and digital influencers who he had never met posted supportive comments. The emotional outpour of support during this event signified the magnitude of this attack and thus the importance of online profiles in the lives of young people. He received comments like "So sorry for what's happened, hope you're doing ok" and "You will move on from this, stay strong". Yassine has since rebuilt his Instagram attracting the same brand deals he had before and has regained his following.

Sam Mcdougall (116K followers, Sydney, Australia)

Sam is a 27 year old influencer from Sydney who much like Benji, is known for his shirtless selfies and proximity to other gay male Australian influencers. His following of primarily gay men follow him for his fitness regimes, selfies and holiday snaps. He has recently signed brand deals with gay holiday resorts and swimwear labels.

Jack Wade (152K followers, Gold Coast, Australia)

Jack is known for fashion, beauty, travel and posts relating to his relationships. He has created a fun beach brand that depicts the 23 year old as constantly being at the beach in what appears to be a never-ending summer on the Gold Coast. Jack is very active on Instagram story sharing more of his day to day movements than any of the other microcelebrities consulted. Along with his daily

routines and chores he shares his moods and emotional responses to almost anything he encounters in a day. His fastidious posting habits have attracted a loyal and rapidly increasing following.

Sia Kir (30.3K followers, Athens, Greece)

Sia is 19 years old and lives in Athens, Greece. Her brand is beauty as she predominantly posts about makeup and hair. She is a part of a tight group of Greek influencers who have caught the attention of beauty brands in the United States. These international labels have incorporated these Greek influencer's Mediterranean brands into their companies marketing strategies making their labels attractive to European audiences.

Domenico Gilbado (33.5K Rome, Italy)

Domenic's display of artistic photography that showcases his sense of fashion granted him his microcelebrity status that quickly became influencer status. Growing up in Rome he is heavily inspired by Italian fashion houses such as Gucci and Versace and often incorporates their designs into his outfits. Domenic's most recent brand deal was with British watch brand Daniel Wellington who built their companies popularity and reputation through influencers like Domenico, Jack Wade, Sam McDougall, Benji Condie and Maxwell Haddadin.

'Nick' who asked to remain anonymous (825K followers, New York, United States).

Nick lives in New York. His Instagram brand is relationships, fashion and travel as he posts photos of vacations with his partner and immediate family. Nick transitioned from microcelebrity to influencer when he reached approximately 200,000 followers and was offered brand deals from American swimwear labels. These swimwear labels scouted him from his shirtless selfies. Nick later on went on to do sponsored posts for swimwear and dress shirt brands from Europe. He has appeared on the cover for major fashion magazines across Europe and the United States.

Dion Visser (144K followers, Amsterdam, Netherlands)

Dion lives between Amsterdam and Los Angeles. His Instagram brand is a combination of beauty, travel and art. Dion is a musician who posts his work to YouTube. He has also used YouTube to collaborate with other Instagram influencers posting on the topic of hair and beauty. Dion has done brand deals with *Foot locker* and *Chimi Eyewear*.

Andrea Carrey (14.8K followers, Paris, France)

Andrea's brand is made up of landscape photography, travel stories and selfies. Andrea explained that he did not used Snapchat stories when he was interviewed. The fact they he did not share stories or include information about his offline life meant that he was known for his enigmatic persona. Andrea has since decided to post stories through Instagram sharing political causes he is an advocate for and personal struggles he has had with a skin condition. Despite Andrea being more open with his followers by complying with the affordances of stories, he still maintains a sense of mystery through selectively withholding information about his offline life.

All the microcelebrities are connected in that they have all commoditized aspects of their identity and have therefore commercialised aspects of their identities in their pursuit for increased visibility on visual social media. The microcelebrities are also connected in that they can all be described as being influencers as they have all been approached by at least one company offering them a product endorsement. Seven of the influencers (Aaron Rhodes, Michael Turchin, Ezra Williams, Victoria Baker Harber, Benji Condie, Tasia Seger and Gracia Seger) have transitioned from internet celebrity to mainstream celebrity at some point by appearing on a commercial television network.

It is important to consider that class and economic capital shapes opportunity in relation to the kinds of brands Instagram users are able to create. Many of the participants introduced above appear to have the means to travel, engage in body modifications and display symbols of wealth that as will become evident in subsequent chapters, places them at a clear advantage within microcelebrity culture. Although this sample is not representative of all Instagram users I argue that the lifestyle and beauty ideals that these users portray online, has become a dominant discourse that modulates visibility within the Instagram economy. The following chapters detail the emotion work being performed by both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities and how it directly relates to the aesthetic templates that modulate online visibility.

Conclusion

This thesis is researching the stories of 18 individuals living their lives as digital influencers from their own perspective. This research also consults over 500 non-microcelebrities to explore how microcelebrity culture impacts the lives of both cohorts. This project is an analytic autoethnography comprised of analyses of my own experiences, participant interviews, participant

observation and an online survey. The research is underpinned by two research questions; 'How is emotional labour involved in creating personal brands on Instagram for microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities?' and 'Why are microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities enacting these forms of labour? What kinds of selves are constructed in the process?' Gaining access to the closed group of the 'insta-famous' was a journey that started with my own presence on Instagram. I crafting a branded depiction of myself that resembled those used by popular microcelebrities to become a microcelebrity myself. After getting the attention of the microcelebrities I was trying to get in contact with, I was able to conduct an analytic autoethnography. According to Anderson (2006) autoethnographies stand somewhere along the spectrum of 'evocative' and 'analytic'. The autoethnographic component of this study is considered 'analytic' as I have consulted other internet celebrities and conducted a large scale survey in order to construct meaning from others (522 Instagram users in total) alongside my own experiences. The autoethnographic component comprised of fieldnotes, analysing personal artefacts, and conducting autoethnographic interviews.

Autoethnography helps both insiders and outsiders better understand the culture being studied (Ellis, Adam & Bochner, 2011). It illustrates the personal, hidden nuances often missed in traditional surveys and interviews (Holman, Adams & Ellis, 2013). This kind of research offers people equipment to better process and understand a particular lived experience (Burke, 1974) and leaves them with a story they can take on board and live with, rather than just read about (Coles, 1989). Anderson identified five key features that clarify an analytic approach to autoethnography that is deemed more compatible with traditional ethnographic practices and "consistent with traditional symbolic interactionist epistemological assumptions and goals rather than rejecting them" (2006, pp. 377-378). For Anderson there are five key features that make autoethnographic analysis 'analytic'; (1) complete member researcher (CMR) status, (2) analytic reflexivity, (3) narrative visibility of the researcher's self, (4) dialogue with informants beyond the self, and (5) commitment to theoretical analysis.

This chapter described the recruitment process and interview procedure for the internet celebrity and non-microcelebrity sample. I also provided a discussion of relational ethics and advantages of analytic autoethnography. Autoethnography is argued to be a valuable research tool that can be "rigorous, theoretical, emotional, evocative and creative all while being inclusive of both personal and social cultural phenomena" (Ellis, Adam & Bochner 2011, pg. 283). The ultimate goal, according to Holman Jones' is "to produce analytical, accessible texts that change us and the world we live in for the better" (2005, p. 764). In the following chapters, through discussion of the

autoethnography, participant interviews, observations and survey, I describe the work of performing a branded version of self on Instagram and negotiating dissonance between online and offline conceptualisations of self. I demonstrate the tensions between often competing online and offline versions of self and how managing this tension has become a normalised part of online identity work. Chapter four 'Performing branded identities' focuses on the work involved in forming and maintaining personal brands. Chapter five 'The work of content creation' explains the labour specifically involved in content creation. Chapter six focuses on managing a public audience.

Chapter Four: Performing branded identities

Should I post photos relating to travelling, food or fashion? This was the question I asked myself before I began my Instagram profile. Convincing myself that photos about my life are worth sharing with a public audience, initially felt narcissistic. I normalised this behaviour after realising that it is what people do on visual social media and therefore a part of microcelebrity culture. I decided that I would post photos from my travels but realised that it was not that simple. I needed to decide on which photos to share and how to share them. I needed to choose an angle in which to take my vacation lifestyle persona. Do I share photos at beaches for a relaxed vibe or at monuments for a more cultured aesthetic? Should I appear in every photo or should I focus more on landscapes? How should my captions read? Do I share personal stories with my followers or do I omit personal details and preserve some privacy? Should I try to be funny or adopt a more serious tone?

I began my Instagram page in January of 2013. I had decided to post about my travels however I was conflicted about the culture surrounding Instagram. I was struggling to understand the broader purpose and function of my new profile. I had observed mundane photos of Instagram users cooking, eating, relaxing, exercising and so on. Photos were more spontaneous than they are now in 2019 given the limited editing tools and culture present at that time however I quickly learned that despite the more 'in the moment' trend of Instagram in 2013, there were subtle signs of deliberate self branding. I knew this because friends were being selective in that they only posted highlights from their day. The unflattering aspects of their lives existed only through private conversations, hidden from the public gaze. The friends I was seeing on Instagram were idealised and polished to a point where I often scrolled past their photos mistaking them for strangers.

Being exposed to hashtags for the first time alerted me to the highly public nature of Instagram. I realised the potential my photos have to reach almost anyone in any part of the world. It was at this time I knew that I would need to create an idealised branded impression for when people (people I know and an imagined audience) scroll through my feed that will eventually become my public profile. I developed an awareness of a public gaze that I was about to become subject to and started to take my Instagram use very seriously. I realised that my brand would need to adhere to this level of public visibility in order to be accepted by the Instagram community and attract an audience. Once people became aware of my online brand and got to know me through it, I noticed that there was an element of permanency associated with my brand. My Instagram profile had become an important facet of my overall identity and it seemed as though it was likely to remain that way. I

remember thinking about how I would maintain this persona in the long term and how it would correspond to my offline life.

As previously discussed, part of my motivation for joining Instagram was to gain access to the closed group of Instagram celebrities or the 'insta-famous' in order to conduct this project. After figuring out what I would need to do to achieve insta-fame in order to gain access, I continued to learn about the culture of the platform so that I could participate in it appropriately. As Judith Butler (1993, 1998) argued, performances must adhere to the culture an individual is a part of. Deciding that my travel persona needed to be idealised and branded did not mean that I had the game of microcelebrity figured out. Through trial and error I continued to negotiate a consumable branded depiction of myself that resembled those used by the popular microcelebrities I admired. I strived to take similar photos to those who had a similar brand to me, mirroring their poses, outfits, captions and editing choices. There was always someone new and upcoming so I needed to continuously refine my persona to improve my overall aesthetic and keep up with who became both my peers and competition.

The highly public nature of Instagram profiles and the celebrified personal brands being enacted by not only influencers, but everyday user continued to stand out to me. Developing this identity involved a variety of self branding strategies and techniques and in effect an overwhelming amount of identity work. The personal brand I chose was based on categories that already existed within Instagram. I felt a sense of freedom as there were a plethora of categories and subcategories to choose from but at the same time I felt restricted, as my brand needed to fit within predetermined category templates that mould appropriate expressions of identity set by Instagram's affordances and more broadly, microcelebrity culture.

The shift towards digitised identities highlights the significance of personal online brands for social media users. This phenomenon entails a unique set of practices used to construct and manage a branded performance of self. This chapter opens by explaining the affordances of visual social media from the perspectives of both Instagram celebrities and non-microcelebrities. These affordances enable and encourage users to self brand. I then discuss brand categories and emotive registers to explain the process of selecting and creating a branded version of self. The rest of this chapter is devoted to introducing the concept of 'identity dissonance' in the context of social media identities that is built upon in chapters five and six to form my argument.

Display rules of visual social media

For the Instagram users consulted in this study, possessing a personal brand is seen as being required in order to participate fully in microcelebrity culture. The public nature of Instagram constituted by microcelebrity culture has resulted in self branding for widespread public consumption occurring on a mass scale. Angela Cirucci (2015) argued that affordances of visual social media "compel users, who have no desire to become microcelebrities, to craft the self through a celebrified identification template" (pg. 23). It became apparent early on in my pursuit for Insta-fame that the platform itself enables and encourages users to strive for fame through a branded performance of self. In my study, 96 percent of the 504 non-microcelebrity survey respondents believe that Instagram and related visual social media encourage users to strive for fame. I found that both non-microcelebrities and internet celebrities share this perception. In the following quotes, digital influencer interviewees explain how the platform's interface and culture encourages a pursuit for attention from a public audience.

> Even with likes, and how you can see right away exactly how many people you're reaching, you get hungry for more and more, and then also with automatic filters and everything you're kind of forced to portray a character right away because it's not exactly what you look like so you're putting something out there that's deceiving to people and then people just strive for more and more and they want more likes and more followers, it kind of pushes you to without even really knowing you're into this fame thing.. that you don't.. you're not really expecting. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

> It does really encourage you.. it just kinda happens and grows to be a game of fame... I've seen people who, like, buy fake Instagram followers just because they think it might be cooler to have more followers on Instagram. (Ezra William, 2016, **celebrity**)

> I guess having all of the numbers and statistics associated with your account public makes people want attention. On Instagram people can see who you follow, who follows you, how many photos you've posted and then whatever other information you put in your profile.. it's just a very voyeuristic and exhibitionistic app. And quantifying someone's social influence in that way I think can cause people to be competitive for sure. If those numbers were taken away I don't think Instagram would be the same community that it is right now, it would definitely change. (Patrick Belaga, 2015, **celebrity**)

> It's definitely designed as a promotion tool and because of that people want to promote themselves. I mean if Instagram took away the following bar so no one could see how many followers you have.. like, if someone follows me and I see that they have a lot followers I'll follow them back based on that, and if someone follows me and they have like 100 followers, It's less likely I'll want to follow them back. If you see someone with 100,000 followers you think people must be looking at them for a reason so I'm going to look at them too. (Michael Turchin, 2015, **celebrity**)

The quotations above demonstrate that Instagram affordances are perceived to encourage users to strive for visibility. Aaron and Patrick discussed how enticing it is to get instant gratification

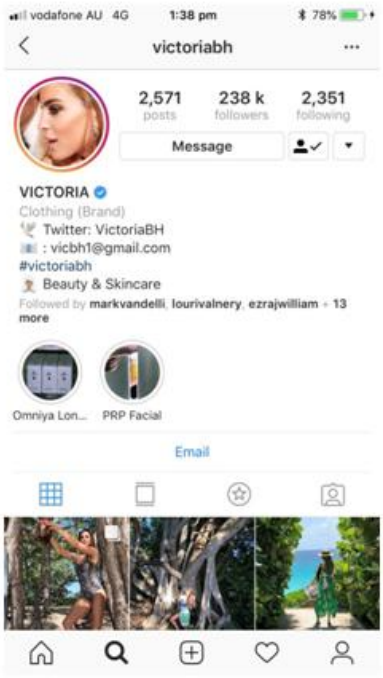
through likes, follows and being able to see content reach a public audience. Quantifying a person's social status is engrained within microcelebrity culture and is essential to Instagram's operation. Statistics become an important part of a users brand and as Michael explained, changes the way people engage with each other. Higher value is placed upon users with more likes and follows meaning that following statistics have become synonymous with perceived status. Ezra alerted me to the fact that some users feel compelled to buy followers in order to boost their following statistics. Aaron explained how Instagram's features "force" users to construct a brand that is by default, different to a user's offline identity. Simply participating in microcelebrity culture requires users to craft a branded identity that is enabled through the platforms architecture. Users learn that it is the quality of this personal brand that is likely to determine how it is received by an audience.

If you take a step back and observe the interface of the application you notice that profiles revolve around statistics of popularity. Directly in the centre of a person's profile is the amount of followers they have. Each photo, located below this tally, is measured by a highly visible score of likes and comments. Photos receiving a high number of likes are often rewarded by being automatically advertised on the popular page designed to advertise the post to prospective new followers. Even message 'request' inboxes are by default, organised by the amount of followers a sender has. Messages from senders with the most followers appear on top of inboxes and those with lower amounts of followers at the bottom making them less visible. How Instagram displays and organises content directly affects the content users create and the way they use the platform. As Ezra stated, it "kinda happens and grows to be a game of fame" organically. Aaron explained that without users intending to acquire greater public visibility, Instagram's design "pushes you to" enact a celebrified performance "without even really knowing you're into this fame thing."

The screenshots on the following page of two internet celebrity participant accounts demonstrate the layout of Instagram profiles. The amount of followers a user has is central to the amount of posts that user has to the right and how many people they are following to the left. Below the profile picture there is a short description the usually includes contact information and referrals to related social media outlets or websites. Scrolling down reveals a user's past posts and eventually, their whole profile. Clicking on the magnifying glass icon that is highlighted on the bottom of the screen directs users to the popular page where recent posts by random users that have attracted a high number of likes are advertised. The heart icon on the bottom of the screen reveals a user's notifications including recent likes, comments, follows and other engagement notifications. The home button on the far left directs users to their newsfeed, where new content

posted by the people they follow appears. Pressing the square in the centre of the bottom bar is where users can select photos from their phone's photo library to post.

Figures One and Two: Examples of Instagram profiles (Aaron Rhodes & Victoria Baker-Harber)



Once a photo is selected, Instagram automatically directs that photo to the editing screens. Posts must go through the editing screens in order to be posted. Here users can choose from thirty four filters. Each filter adds different tones and lighting effects to a photo. The strength of each filter can be adjusted, for example a five percent strength will lightly filter the photo making the effect of the filter weak where as 95% will make for a dramatic filter effect. There are fourteen further editing options under the 'edit' button. Here users can manipulate fourteen properties of a photo including its brightness, contrast, shadows, structure and saturation. Once these edits have been chosen the user presses next which brings them to the final screen before posting. Here captions are chosen and the option to tag friends and the location is presented. Photos can be posted at this stage, but participants often save it as a draft and then upload it to external photo editing apps like Afterlight, Snapseed, VSCO, Enlight, TouchRetouch, Photofox, 1967 or HUJI to edit it further. Instagram edits are often seen as no longer being sufficient within the competitive app where photo quality is revered. Image manipulation has become normalised (Marwick, 2015) as users use the hashtag #nofilter to mark the rare occasion where minimal editing has taken place.

Below Victoria's name in figure two you notice a faint text that says 'Clothing(Brand)'. In 2016 Instagram introduced the business feature that allows users to choose a business category that represents their profile. Many people who do not run a 'business' in the traditional sense, simply choose 'just for fun' or 'public figure' in order to grant them access to the feature. The business feature allows any user to view statistics relating to their following including the amount of traffic they have had to their profile. This is measured through profile visits, website clicks, emails sent, how many people have viewed a post without physically liking it and audience demographics including their locations, age ranges and gender composition. Users can monitor their follower's behaviours in relation to which days and times they are most active. This feature gives users the opportunity to schedule their posts so that they can be posted at times that will maximise their visibility. Furthermore, this feature encourages users to pay a premium for Instagram to advertise their posts the same way Instagram would previously promote products for large companies or prominent celebrities. After a user has posted a photo, Instagram often notifies them reminding them that their photo could reach more people if they elect to pay for the promotion service.

As influencers who use this feature to run legitimate businesses through their online persona, Aaron Rhodes, Tasia Seger and Michael Turchin demonstrate the heightened pressure to comply with the culture of the platform and consequently, maintain a branded performance of self when their social media brands are their source of income.

> Isn't that what we're all doing? It's what people want so you just keep doing it... When I started like two and half years ago.. it was not really anyone's job to be on Instagram. I post things now because I have to, not because I want to anymore. Like, I used to love doing it and now it's just a chore and a job.. It's not really about "hey mom did you see what I was doing" it's more like I'm contracted to post this so I have to get it done and just make everybody happy... I didn't know anything about the behind the scenes stuff before I got into it. And it's definitely a big huge illusion. I'd say fame is like that too, one huge illusion, like you're on the couch posting a photo of this crazy event making your life look more exciting than it actually is, so it's just something that you don't really discuss with people because you want them to believe that it's all very real so you don't really discuss the ins and outs of it. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

> You have to stay relevant.. It's like work (referring to working in a service industry), just like you can't work one day and then take a couple weeks off, you can't post once every few weeks, you have to maintain and keep it up. People can forget you if you're not always there, if you're not consistent. One month you can be on top of the town and the next month it can be like, she's gone. This is upsetting for anyone, but more for people who run a business insta. (Tasia Seger, 2017, **celebrity**)

> Instagram for so many people has become a part-time job, people put effort to become famous, it is definitively encouraging fame... My whole day could be taken up by selfies, it's very time consuming. You're supposed to get your face out there if you're building a business or brand and I think Instagram is a new outlet for that. (Michael Turchin, 2015, **celebrity**)

Having spent considerable amounts of time with influencers who use their Instagram profile as their sole source of income, it became clear that these users feel heightened pressure to comply with the affordances of the platform. I am an influencer who chooses not to engage in brand endorsements or advertise a business entity. When I haven't posted anything to either my profile or Stories in a couple of weeks, I have lost followers. This was upsetting as my online brand is an important facet of my identity however, I was able to quickly recover from it with subsequent posts. Spending time with influencers whose primary source of incomes is from their social media I witnessed two occasions where failing to maintain their social media significantly impacted their lives in the long term. In the first example, the influencer posted a photo that was drastically different to the quality of the content they normally post. It looked like it had not been edited and was not related to the content this user is known for. It also revealed as aspect of their offline lives that had previously been concealed to uphold their business persona. As Aaron explained, influencers create online brands that differ from their offline realities and masking this dissonance from followers is important if they are to maintain brand solidarity and evoke a sense of authenticity. In the second incident, the influencer posted a product made by a competitor of a company that sponsors them.

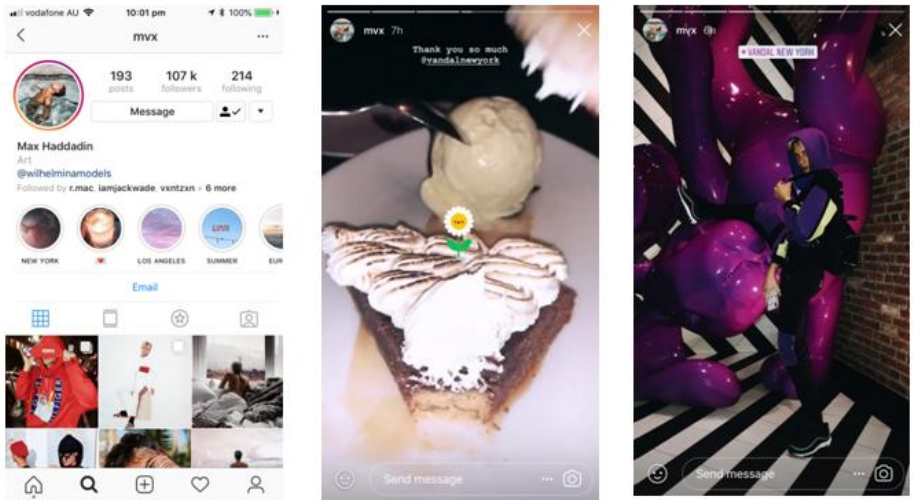
In both situations, the influencers lost followers and brand deals which for both of them were a sizeable portion of their incomes. It took both of them well over a year to scout new brand deals that recovered their income losses. Posting a competitor brand resulted in backlash from other influencers who are brand ambassadors of the company the participant betrayed. Several participants explained to me that there is an expectation of brand loyalty both from companies and from followers who want to believe that influencers really do use and endorse the products they promote. Now rival influencers began a campaign against the participant where they asked their followers to unfollow the user for 'lying to them' and being 'inauthentic'. I learned that whether influencers make money or not, seeing a brand regress is hurtful as their online brands have become indispensable aspects of their identities. However, for influencers who make a living from their brand, there is heightened pressure to adhere to the norms of microcelebrity culture as their income as well as their reputation is at stake.

Stories

The social media outlet Snapchat and the 2016 addition to Instagram, Instagram Story, collectively referred to as 'Stories' have become an important facet of microcelebrity culture. Users are now able to post both permanent and temporary content. Figures three, four and five on the following page from influencer participant Maxwell Haddadin's profile demonstrate how Instagram

Stories function. In the screenshot on the left, you will notice a pink/purple/orange ring around the profile picture which indicates that a user has posted a story that will be available for the next 24 hours. This same icon appears on the newsfeed and occasionally on the popular page. If a user has not posted a story, there is a blue circle icon that appears next to the user's profile photo signalling the absence of a story. Figures four and five are the temporary posts themselves, showing details from Max's night that his followers would not have otherwise seen.

Figures Three, Four and Five: Examples of Instagram stories.



Throughout the course of my research almost every microcelebrity and non-microcelebrity encountered had said the phrase, or something similar to "I'd love to post that but it wouldn't suit my profile". As microcelebrities we have become so attuned to our personal brands that we automatically recognize when we cannot post something due to it conflicting with our branded persona. Brands are more about the overall profile which is the impression viewers get when they scroll through a profile page, more so than individual photos. Off-brand photos may be personally significant to a user but not posting these ill-fitting posts is understood by the microcelebrities as an act of brand-preservation.

Each time I have had the 'will it suit my profile?' dilemma, it almost always ended up on my Snapchat or Instagram story where I know the post will disappear after 24 hours. Snapchat stories and Instagram Story are a way we can more fully communicate aspects of our identities. We can post content that is not completely consistent with our profiles without tarnishing our branded persona that persists primarily through permanent digital traces. Posting less polished content

allows for a behind the scenes display of authenticity. In this example authenticity is discussed in relation to how genuine an influencer's lifestyle, sentiments are considered to be based on audience perceptions (Abidin, 2017; Marwick, 2013). The following influencer participants explained how they use Stories.

> Insta-stories, I do use often, that is because they are more unfiltered, unedited and realistic. They can be anything from ideas to interesting things you have seen in the day.. but do not quite make the cut for a post. A post is always an edited or filtered version. Whereas on a story, it is more raw. Followers enjoy seeing glimpses of these moments. (Victoria Baker-Harber, 2017, **celebrity**)

> I use Snapchat because it's not a permanent host to content. You can share more content freely without needing to care about making everything look totally perfect. It also is more interesting as you see a more intimate side of people's real life. (Sam McDougall, 2017, **celebrity**)

> It allows followers to get a better idea of who I am behind the scenes, behind the pictures. (Benji Condie, 2016, **celebrity**)

> Well, I guess Snapchat is to me a fun platform that is less serious than Instagram. Less intense, more playful, you know you upload things and they're gone in 24 hours if you don't like it. I mean, Instagram has grown so much it's become expected that you showcase your life, you have all these pressures in your head that you should upload better quality photos.. so many pressures.. you need to put in a lot more effort to look a certain way. Snapchat is more personal in what you want to post, people are able to see closer, more of you if they wish. The more frequently you post the more accurately it shows what your everyday life actually is like.. I think Snapchat is a little more of a closer look into who these people really are. (Ezra Williams, 2016, **celebrity**)

Having a public presence on social media has become the norm. Users have normalised microcelebrity culture and the labour intensive nature of Instagram's affordances. The interview data in this section suggests that social media has become a visibility tool where users produce a branded celebrified version of self that is used to communicate with the world on public stage. Users take their online performances seriously. Users consistently put work into it because online brands have become an indispensable part of life in our increasingly digitised society. This section explained the pressure felt to comply with the affordances and rules of microcelebrity culture and perform a branded self. The following section explains how users go about producing an online brand.

Brand categories

What are Instagram brands and how do users know what they are? There are eighteen broad 'content' brand categories that have been identified in my fieldwork. These include: fashion, beauty & sexuality, fitness, travel, food, relationships, social commentary (memes, re-posts), comedy, children/parenting, animals/pets, art, sports, locomotive, architecture, political/social movement,

trolls, subcultures and lifestyle. Lifestyle refers to brands that adhere to two or more of the aforementioned content categories. These broad categories are easily observable from a superficial glance at an Instagram profile. Each content category has multiple subcategories that help shape a user's persona. For example, travel can be dedicated to five star resorts or backpacking. A food brand can be about fast food, veganism or a paleo lifestyle. Art can be images of landscapes or of people expressing their bodies in an artistic manner. The brand beauty and sexuality can include makeup, hair or shirtless/bikini selfies and these categories can form further subcategories for example the types of makeup tutorials people post.

These categories and subcategories are usually mixed. For example, a users brand may post content relating to different aspects of food, travel and fashion. Therefore most Instagram brands can be described as being 'lifestyle' brands that are made up of two or more content categories. It is important to note that these brand categories are not an exhaustive typology. These are the categories that were identified in the course of this research. Brand categories play a role in moulding the celebrified performances users enact on Instagram. Participants became aware of brand categories from observing content in their newsfeeds and the explore screen.

A superficial glance reveals content brand categories and subcategories but it often requires a more in depth look at users overall profiles and individual posts to further categorise Instagram brands. I introduce the term 'emotive register' to point to brand subcategories that give Instagram brands personality, tone and individuality. For example, a user could have a food brand, specialising in veganism with a confessional emotive register where they share their health battles and how their diet improves their condition. Another user's food brand may be dedicated to sampling large fast food burgers making light of an unhealthy diet. The following subheadings list the three emotive registers found to be incorporated into Instagram personal brands. I have identified these registers after observing the content participants have posted and their behaviour while spending time with them. A description and example is provided for each to demonstrate how emotive registers function and reveal the identity work involved in forming and maintaining them.

Emotive registers

Confessional/intimate stories

Through sharing personal stories and intimate details of their lives internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities typically develop a loyal and engaged audience of likeminded people who share

their experiences or interests. Aaron Rhodes and his brother Austin Rhodes were one of the first to start the trend of 'coming out' through social media. Since they shared this milestone with the public, there are now thousands of young people who have chosen to follow their footsteps and also publicly come out to their parents and followers on social media. Nearly 40% of the non-microcelebrities surveyed named coming out as a strategy they would use to increase their following. In his interview, Aaron explained that this aspect of his brand attracts fans that look up to him and his brother and follow them for motivation and inspiration to come out to their families and live their lives openly. For Aaron, sharing intimate stories has resulted in a sense of responsibility to his followers. This responsibility involves maintaining a tone of advocacy and care that microcelebrities who possess this brand tend to adopt. This tone is a crucial aspect of this emotive register and is what followers have come to expect. Aaron described the pressure he feels to maintain this emotive register.

> I feel like I'm obligated to make them feel good even if I'm not feeling good, it's like they look at me for happiness, they look at me for inspiration, and some of them look at me as their hero in a way because of the coming out video so I feel like I always have to have a smile on my face or doing something to help them through a certain situation. Like in my videos, I might not feel happy or giddy that day but when I'm on camera I have to be energetic because that's the character or persona I'm playing, you get what I mean. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

Motivated by a responsibility to his followers and being under a continual public gaze, Aaron is required to act out of obligation and police his own behaviours in order to uphold the brand his followers subscribe to. Aaron maintains his emotive register through surface acting which is a form of emotional labour. Arlie Hochschild defined "emotional labour as the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (1983, pg.7). Despite not always feeling "happy or giddy" when engaging with his followers, Aaron performs as though he is, to evoke positive responses from his audience and remain on brand through performing a narrative of care. He feels obliged to mask the dissonance he is experiencing in order to maintain the integrity of this brand.

Hochschild (1983) discussed how people working in service industries are obliged to regulate their emotional display to adhere to pre-determined emotions that comply with the norms within a particular culture. Monetary payment is rewarded for workers performing this kind of emotion work (Grandey & Brauburger, 2002). Aaron receives monetary payment from brands who endorse his online profile. In this sense this kind of surface acting enacted by digital influencers is performed in exchange for income much like those is service industries. However, unlike workers in service

industries, this form of labour is exerted both to serve audience expectations and build an indispensable aspect of identity that transcends the workplace. Prior to becoming a digital influencer, Aaron was building his online brand without receiving monetary payment. He was doing it purely to build an online persona.

Observations of participants who have adopted an intimate stories register revealed that they continue to share new personal stories with their audience. Participants revealed that they do this to keep their audience engaged. These new stories/ personal dilemmas are often different topics to the first story they shared but share some commonality. For example, in the years following his coming out video, Aaron posted about his dating life and difficulties associated with his relationship to another Instagram influencer. Figure six shows Aaron expressing that he was in a positive place after taking a mental health break from his demanding life in Los Angeles with the caption reading "I've been home for a month now and haven't felt this happy in a long time". The common thread between these posts and Aaron's original coming out narrative is mental health and wellness that fits firmly within his intimate stories emotive register.

Figure Six: Aaron Rhodes' confessional/intimate stories brand

Even though Aaron has shared with his audience that he was struggling emotionally he continued to uphold the motivational, positive and caring tone typically associated with the emotive register that constitutes his brand. Other than coming out, users who embody this emotive register tend to post about topics relating to mental and physical health, minority groups, relationship breakups, family conflict and addiction.

Light hearted and humorous

Incorporating humour and a fun, informal style of communicating with followers is another emotive register used. It involves the same kind of surface acting discussed earlier however participants who adopted this emotive register believe that in some respects it can be less emotionally taxing than a confessional register. Sharing light hearted content free of complicated personal dilemmas alleviates any responsibility influencers feel to maintain a tone of advocacy and care. In this sense, this emotive register is lower maintenance in terms of the emotional investment posts require. Audience engagement is also lower maintenance as content is easily consumed and requires little deliberation and next to no further explanation. It typically attracts a more diverse audience when compared to intimate stories as intimate story registers tend to have a niche following that are interested in a specific topic or issue.

The following quotes from digital influencers with a light hearted and humorous emotive register explain the surface acting required to maintain this register at times where the influencer's offline mood contradicts their emotive register. These users are masking the dissonance between their online and offline moods to maintain the tone of their brands. They express that performing this kind of surface acting is emotionally taxing. One of these participants receives paid endorsements. These participants have chosen to remain anonymous for these particular quotes.

> It's really hard to get on camera, jump around and be silly while pulling epic one liners when you're feeling down. It's kind of like short term pain for long term gain... I mean it's hard in that moment, but once its done, and you see the content go out there and you get a good response, it's satisfying, then you can go cry on your friends shoulder and be real for a minute. Followers have no idea that sometimes you have to do that act like 20 times, on a good day, before you get it right, if your eyes look sad or tired.. or you're too slouchy followers will be able to tell something's off, you can't hide anything online, god love them, these followers watch these videos over and over and over and miss literally nothing. (Anonymous, 2018, **celebrity**)

> I posted that video about (removed for anonymity) and in it I looked truly euphoric, I deserved an academy award because on that day, I didn't care at all about what I was saying nor did I give a shit about how my followers felt about it... I'm definitely not looking for sympathy, yeah it is hard but I do it to myself, for myself, it is to build my brand, build rep in this online world. We're all in the same boat at the end of the day. (Anonymous, 2019, **celebrity**)

Figure Seven: Jack Wade's light-hearted and humorous emotive register

Enigmatic

Adopting an enigmatic emotive register creates mystery around a user's identity. It maintains distance between an internet celebrity and their followers while fostering a level of intrigue. Much like traditional celebrities have done for decades (Marshall, 2010), this persona creates anticipation that evokes interest in that individual. Its distinctiveness and adaptation to traditional celebrity discourse is a part of the appeal of this emotive register. The surface acting required for this register involves mirroring celebrified performances of traditional media celebrities of film and the music industry. Users who adopt this brand tend to live their lives more privately that those who adopt the two previously mentioned emotive registers. These users usually share less content with their followers and therefore tend to grow their following at a slower pace. There are fewer branding opportunities and opportunities to appear on the popular page. Choosing an enigmatic register goes against the norms of microcelebrity culture that encourages users to publicise themselves and be transparent as much as possible. In this sense, an enigmatic register rebels against the affordances of Instagram.

This is the emotive register I adopted for my own Instagram profile. The enigmatic emotive register resonated most with who I am offline compared to the aforementioned emotive registers and time management wise, was more convenient as I knew I would not have the time to post as often as other users. A struggle for myself and other participants who share this emotive register is self restraint relating to resisting the affordances of microcelebrity culture. Experiencing this pressure and actively resisting it is emotionally laborious in itself. Succumbing to affordances of

microcelebrity culture and revealing more personal information than usual results in a decline in audience engagement and a loss in followers. This is an interesting tension and contradiction as the affordances of Instagram encourage users to share as much as possible, however, over sharing compromises the efficacy of this particular emotive register.

Figures eight, nine and ten demonstrate how three influencers use visual tactics to maintain the sense of emotional distance associated with an enigmatic register. With Ezra posting primarily about fashion, Patrick about art and myself about travel, each user has distinct content categories yet share the same emotive register. Sunglasses are commonly worn in posts to create distance through avoiding eye contact. Patrick often masks his face with objects to obscure his identity. Captions tend to not give away a great deal of information about what is happening. Ezra's caption in figure eight 'Guccified Me #Gucci #GucciPreFall18' indicate that he is wearing Gucci from head to toe but does not explain why he is dressed that way or what he was doing that day. My caption in figure 10 'Garden parties are so much fun' hints that I am at a garden party but whether I actually am is not made clear nor is the context of the party. Patrick's caption in figure nine 'Sheer Khan' offers minimal insight into what he is doing or what he wants to convey. When influencers from the other two emotive categories post they often make clear where they are, what they are doing and provide some sort of message that makes the context of their posts clear, either in their captions (see figures six and seven) or in their ephemeral social media.

Figure Eight: Ezra Williams' enigmatic emotive register

Figure Nine: Patrick Belaga's enigmatic emotive register

Figure 10: Jonathan Mavroudis' enigmatic emotive register

While striving to maintain a sense of emotional distance I have struggled with pressure from followers and the affordances of Instagram to post more content. It is a struggle because I am aware that over sharing is detrimental to the emotive register I have chosen. Ephemeral social media has helped me manage this tension. Before the advent of ephemeral social media exemplified by Snapchat and Instagram stories, I found it really hard to determine when I should post and how often would be too often. There were times I did not post for over a month and noticed a sharp decline in my following, There were other times I posted every day over a one week period and received messages telling me that I was 'draining the feed'. Draining the feed refers to posting too often and therefore being overly present in people's news feeds. This was also followed by a sharp decline in followers. I realised that finding a happy medium between not too often and not often enough is the key to upholding this emotive register.

I see ephemeral social media as a stabilising agent as I can post a temporary photo when flashing icons on my screen make me feel as though I should, when audiences demand, or when I want to share something personal without compromising the distinctiveness of my brand. This was a sentiment shared by users from all three emotive register categories as participants expressed that Stories are a space where it is easier to share content that conflicts with their online brands. Prior to the advent of Instagram Stories there were limited opportunities for internet celebrity participants to post content that did not completely align with their branded self. If I post too often or post content that gives too much away about myself, I know that those posts will remove themselves before they have the chance to have a damaging effect. In this context, the damaging effect refers to losing followers as a result of compromising the integrity of my emotive register. The engagement style of this emotive register is the way I feel most comfortable interacting with a public audience, so it is important that I uphold it.

When digital influencers are contracted by companies they are recruited because their brand is consistent with the company's agenda. There are usually few changes influencers are required to make to their brand category or emotive register as they are simply required to incorporate a product within their established personal brand. However, it is common for companies to suggest that digital influencers refine and tweak their brands to suit their brands direction. For example, an influencer participant who pursued a brand deal with a health food company was asked by that company to remove posts depicting themselves eating fast food.

Social media has evolved to a point where it is possible to create digitised brands that portray user's personalities. Microcelebrities and non microcelebrities take on content categories and emotive registers to add individuality and personality to their brands. Although it appears as though users are freely creating personas from a plethora of brand categories, social media dictates a branded performance of self according to a celebrified discourse. The affordances of Instagram enable and encourage users to self brand. The pressure users feel to self brand according to the display rules of Instagram stimulates a sense of obligation to perform emotion work. The following sections introduce the concept of identity dissonance in relation to online/offline performances, which is the central theme in this thesis.

Personal authenticity

It was NYE in a Las Vegas nightclub and I was invited to one of 12 booths that are so high in demand, they are near impossible to book. After a security pat down at the entrance I was escorted by our host through the VIP doorway. As I walked down the pathway guided by red ropes that segregated the path from general admission I could feel the eyes of the people on the other side of the ropes. They were looking at me in admiration and intrigue as it is known that only the rich and famous have access to these booths. When I finally arrived at the booth I was welcomed with a glass of Dom Perignon poured from an oversized bottle. Our personal hostess for the night was dressed in a leather gown. She introduced herself and explained the alcohol selection and DJ set. Directly opposite our elevated booth was where international performers were to lead the NYE countdown. I was in awe because I knew that all of this had been made possible by the online brand that I had created. The work I had put into forming my brand was paying off. I felt a sense of accomplishment realising that my luxury travel brand made up of carefully selected vacation shots had now granted me access into the world of luxury lifestyle Instagram celebrities. I would probably have never crossed paths with these individuals if my online persona did not exist or if I had decided to carve out a different brand for myself.

Mid way through my night in Las Vegas the bill for $119,000 US arrived and with it, a reality check. While immersing myself in the worlds of the billionaire heirs and heiresses with whom I share a brand category, I almost forgot just how different my offline lifestyle was to theirs. It seemed the time had come to reveal that although my Instagram brand was a lot like theirs, my offline life was different. My eyes darted across the room hoping that I would lock eyes with someone who was as unnerved as me but everyone continued to dance, and appeared to remain completely unfazed as they placed their credit cards onto the silver tray. As I turned to my brother in the hope that he had a solution or at the very least an exit plan one of the girls grabbed my arm while she was dancing and said "No no way, you're our guest, we've got this".

My luxury travel lifestyle brand was crafted well enough and to a high enough standard that these super rich kids, who dominate this brand category, had made assumptions about me based purely on my online brand. Interactions we had during and before this night made me feel as though they assumed I was as wealthy as them. In a sense I was proud of myself, as I had done exactly what other successful influencers had done, I created a branded portrayal of myself and in doing so, had established a sense of authenticity with my peers and followers as they seemed to believe that what they saw on my profile was 'real' or matched my offline life. At the same time, I realised that for an

internet celebrity or any user for that matter, an online brand makes perfect sense behind a screen, but it can lead to confusion regarding a person's offline identity and sense of personal authenticity.

This experience and similar experiences that followed demonstrated that both microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities are constantly needing to assess their own sense of 'personal authenticity' in respect of the brand they have created. They must navigate the possible tension between their online brand and their offline versions of self. This view on authenticity builds on previous notions of authenticity concerned with audience perceptions (Marwick, 2013; Marwick & boyd, 2011) by considering microcelebrities perceptions of their own identity performances both online and offline. This is an internal dialogue that involves anticipating how genuine a users own lifestyle and sentiments will appear to a public audience while simultaneously critiquing the dissonance and managing tensions between their online brand and offline performances. This is a form of emotion work that involves constant self surveillance.

When microcelebrities adopt a brand, they are adopting the overall persona of the thousands of other users who also carry that brand. This results in audiences making generalisations about those who adopt a luxury travel brand for example and making assumptions about other facets of their identity. Every internet celebrity I encountered in my research was managing an online brand that casts a cloud of ambiguity over who they are offline. The following quotes by influencer participants encapsulate this theme; "I feel like my Instagram sort of obscures like a concrete perception of who I am." (Patrick Belaga, 2015); "People can be quick to judge you and perceive you as someone who is shallow or materialistic." (Victoria Baker-Harber, 2017). Pursuing an online brand that was not completely representative of who they are offline was never discussed as a being a choice. Although it was something microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities detested at times, it is something that is engrained into the lives of those who achieve or seek fame through social media. Imagining living a life without an idealised, celebrified online brand is almost unfathomable to the young people consulted in this research.

Identity dissonance

In the months following that NYE in Las Vegas I paid closer attention to the online brands of my new influencer friends and how they corresponded to their offline personas. Upon closer inspection I noticed that much like myself, there were inconsistencies between online and offline performances of self. In SOHO, downtown New York City, I shopped with two of the women I met on NYE. We were in

a vintage luxury brand store that stocked pre-owned Louis Vuitton, Gucci, Hermes and other high end labels. One of the women posted a photo of herself holding an early 1990's Hermes handbag priced at just over $6000. The caption 'new love' insinuated that she had bought it. However after unsuccessfully trying to convince her father over the phone that it was a good deal, she reluctantly left it behind. At another store she tried on a pair of shoes, took a photo of them, posted it, again insinuating that she had purchased them although she also left them behind. She did the same thing on three other shopping trips that month. Her friend helped her take the photos and encouraged it in a way that appeared as though this kind of on-the-go staging is accepted. She owns similar Hermes handbags and designer shoes so these stories were not a total fabrication of her lifestyle but they were certainly an exaggeration.

To avoid asking participants directly about discrepancies I observed between online and offline behaviours, I opened up about how I had felt on NYE while strolling through the Whitney museum. I was hopeful that one of my influencer friends would open up about their feelings about this kind of dissonance. I revealed to them that I felt somewhat like a fraud when the bill arrived to make a point that online brands can obscure a person's offline identity. I explained that this dissonance can lead to false impressions where people make assumptions about a user's offline identity based on an online brand. I shared that I have experienced confusion in regards to managing my online brand alongside my offline performances. I was anxious that I would be met with judgement and that this would tarnish the relationships I had built. Much to my surprise and relief, they appeared completely unbothered by what I was saying and without hesitation one of them said "please, no one is their Instagram." This conversation took a sharp turn and became a gossip session in which stories were told of how 'friend's' online brands differ from their offline selves. There was the girl who posts about veganism and healthy living habits but spends every second weekend in a drug rehabilitation centre, a young man who posts photos of his luxury cars and private jets yet struggles to pay his rent and a woman who posts about her idyllic relationship with her fiancé, while failing to share that they have been in couples counselling for months. It seems there is a culture of providing an inflated and sometimes completely fabricated version of self on Instagram.

By the time we had reached the third level of the museum my companions felt comfortable enough to reveal their own stories. They explained that they have personally felt inauthentic when "twisting the truth" and "massively exaggerating" aspects of their lives and have felt insecure and at times confusion regarding their overall identity. At the same time, they have grown used to this feeling and accept it is a part of "the game" of Instagram. They explained that they do not know anyone whose

online brand is identical to their offline persona and it is no longer something people question or are fazed by.

As discussed earlier, Instagram's affordances result in users creating a persona that is by default, different to how that user presents offline. For both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities consulted, they have moved away from a dichotomous view of online identity (real vs. fake/online vs. offline) and accepted that online identities are another facet of a person's overall identity that by way of convention differ from offline performances. Participants have accepted identity dissonance as a part of identity composition.

After leaving New York and returning to Australia I observed my own behaviour and realised that I too have grown to normalise discrepancies between my online and offline performances. After becoming aware of this I noticed that I conduct myself differently when I meet someone who I know has seen my Instagram profile compared to when I meet someone who I know has not seen it. I thought about past interactions and realised that I often subconsciously engaged in surface acting when meeting people who had seen my Instagram profile in order to live up to their expectations or hide this dissonance. I anticipate things I could be asked to ensure that my responses are consistent with my online brand. When I meet people that I know would not have seen my Instagram profile I feel no pressure to behave in any particular way. When I guest lectured in an undergraduate media studies unit and took tutorials in sociology units I would put my Instagram profile on private. My lectures discussed microcelebrity culture and my autoethnographic research as an Instagram celebrity so naturally students have searched for my profile during classes. I would make it public again right after and accepted students who had requested to follow me.

I noticed a difference in the way students approached me throughout the rest of the semester, and a change in the way I engaged with them. Once students had seen my profile I felt that they were more engaged with what I had to say. Given the high value placed upon microcelebrity culture I had instantly acquired a new found status within the classroom. I noticed myself being cautious to uphold an offline performance that resonated with my online brand to maintain their intrigue. When questions were raised regarding my research I often caught myself engaging in surface acting to perform the demeanour of my online brand. When people who know me extremely well see my Instagram for the first time, they often seem confused because they have seen a side of me that they had no idea existed. When people I have known my whole life look at me as though they are unsure

about who I am, I question whether I have taken my online brand too far, whether I am too entangled within the pursuit for fame that characterises microcelebrity culture. Am I too branded?

For those accustomed to microcelebrity culture, accepting and analysing identity dissonance has become a normalised part of getting-to-know each other discourse for both microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities. After meeting someone new or before going on a first date, it has become second nature for participants to seek out online profiles and make assessments based on people's brands. For microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities, using the term 'insta stalk' to describe the act of making judgements about a person based on their online brand, was second nature. Instagram users have accepted that online brands differ from a person's offline brand but that does not make it any less real or any less significant to that person's overall identity. As mentioned earlier, participants have departed from a dichotomous view of identity where online and offline versions of selves are seen as separate, and understand online identity as a valuable facet of a person's overall identity whether it is consistent with their offline personas or not. When I insta stalk someone before I meet them, I understand that the brand that person has chosen and the way they have chosen to craft it, says a lot about them.

This was a sentiment shared by participants. Even when a person's offline identity did not match their online brand at all, that online brand was still seen as an important facet of who they are. It has a real audience, it is used to interact with others, can amount to social status and lead to offline opportunities. Online brands materialise into tangible outcomes. Patrick Belaga explained how online brands are an important part of getting-to-know each other discourse and an indispensable aspect of young people's identities despite them differing from offline performances.

> It's a more effective way of meeting people because, well, when you're you know, at a bar, in public, you begin to talk to someone and you begin to form an initial relationship with them and you don't know anything about them and you are relying solely on what they're saying to you in that moment in time which is being affected by tons of variables like.. where they are in life, what the weather is like, whether they got enough sleep, all these different things are determining their reaction to you in that certain point in time. And it's unclear as to how consistent that is going to be.. but when you get to look at someone online and you see their Instagram, you get to see 100s and sometimes even 1000s of photos both of them and potentially their friends and of things that they like and things that they enjoy and activities that they partake in. You sort of get this stationary and relatively reliable view of what someone cares about from their social media representation. And obviously you can exaggerate yourself on social media but I feel like now that social media has been around for long enough, if you are an analytical person, you can sort of suss out how someone is exaggerating their life using social media and what that is saying. (Patrick Belaga, 2015, **celebrity**)

Patrick was talking about how Instagram users are so attuned to the nuances of self branding that acknowledging identity dissonance and analysing the discrepancies present has become a part of getting-to-know each other. This was a sentiment shared by nearly all the internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities. Patrick asserted that online profiles might actually be a better avenue to assess who a person is as there are more information cues available than there are in offline situations. Analysing a person holistically now means considering both their online and offline performances, accepting dissonance and assessing the meaning of it. The following quotation from a non-microcelebrity survey respondent explains how users assess dissonance between online and offline identities.

> I had met him a few times at a few different places. He is tall, well built and has pretty eyes, I saw him as shy, polite and thought he was kinda cute, I heard from his friend that he was attracted to me so I was thinking I would go out with him if he asked me... Then me and my sister had a look at his Instagram and it was all over for me, like completely. After some digging we found that he posts these weird photos to his stories of models wearing demeaning clothes that he clearly thinks is sexy or cool, really, really, bad music to go with it and acts super cocky and subtly elitist in his captions. After scrolling down pretty far I also got to see who he was friends with in high school... I was disappointed but more relieved because I had seen everything now. Imagine being friends with someone and not ever knowing that they are that sort of person. (Female, 24, Sydney, **non-celebrity**)

For this participant, it was not until identity dissonance became apparent that she was able to make a complete evaluation of her potential love interest. This example again suggests that Instagram brands and their correspondence to offline presentations are more valuable when it comes to getting-to-know someone than offline identity cues alone. Participants are assessing the meaning of the dissonance they observe in others and different discrepancies will have different meanings. For example, participants decided that the woman who posts about her idyllic relationship while failing to share that they have been in couples counselling is a hopeless romantic who desires a particular model of marriage while the pretty eyed man, was believed to be either masking undesirable personality traits in offline interactions or projecting an online image that does not reflect his offline self in an attempt to fit in with his friends. Re-branding is discussed next to reveal another dimension of the emotional labour associated with managing identity dissonance while self branding within microcelebrity culture.

Re-branding: The new identity crisis

As demonstrated earlier in this chapter, users are relatively free to choose from a plethora of brand categories when beginning their Instagram accounts. However any agency associated with

brand composition is reduced by the fact that online performances must in themselves be branded according to a celebrified discourse. Social media encourages a branded presentation of self through its affordances, restricting user's online performances to a branded template. Participants explained the difficult process of changing an established online brand. This section explains how the rigidity of online brands exemplified by the difficult process of re-branding, contributes to identity dissonance experienced by users.

Microcelebrities need to create visual and verbal cues for their public performance that are consistent with their online brand in order to appear authentic in the eyes of their followers. As previously discussed, when documenting the self online there can be perceived pressure to perform in a way that conflicts with a user's offline mood or feelings to portray an idealised version of self. Aaron Rhodes explained the pressure he feels to share content that adheres to his brand even when it conflicts with his personal desires.

> I remember there was a point where I wanted to post more thoughtful videos cause I love making that content and I love making videos.. but I see that our audience really likes me and Austin just sitting down in front of the camera, and for me, that's not really the stuff I like to do anymore, so sometimes I'd love to take the camera and show people something with more meaning and like interview people, do something fun, as opposed to it all being about myself but it seems like right now that's all people want so it's definitely hard sometimes... Sometimes I wanna take a picture of the beach or something really pretty and post it, and I think it looks cool, but I know people won't like it as much so I don't post it. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

In order to appear authentic to his audience Aaron must maintain a brand that is at times not representative of his changing offline interests. His online brand is an important facet of his overall identity, it is his occupation and source of income so it is not surprising that upholding it often takes precedence over his offline wants and needs. Aaron's story exemplifies the ease with which the Instafamous become prisoners to their brand. He expressed a desire to break free from it or change it, but felt unable to do so. This raises questions of agency regarding identity work on visual social media. The difficulty Aaron experiences when trying to create correspondence between his online and offline desires hinders his ability to reduce feelings of identity dissonance and therefore achieve feelings of personal authenticity. Tasia and Gracia Seger similarly explained how restrictive an Instagram brand can be for influencers with paid endorsements.

Tasia and Gracia expressed that they would like to regain a sense of play regarding their online selves. What used to be a fun outlet where they had freedom to share personally significant content has become purely about work. To try to circumvent this, the girls tried something that none of the

other participants have done. They created two accounts, each with different brands. They had their personal accounts dedicated to travel, art and family their joint business profile dedicated to their professional endeavours. They tried to create two branded personas on Instagram in the hope that they will have greater agency over the content they post. In the following quotations Tasia and Gracia explain the rationale behind this venture.

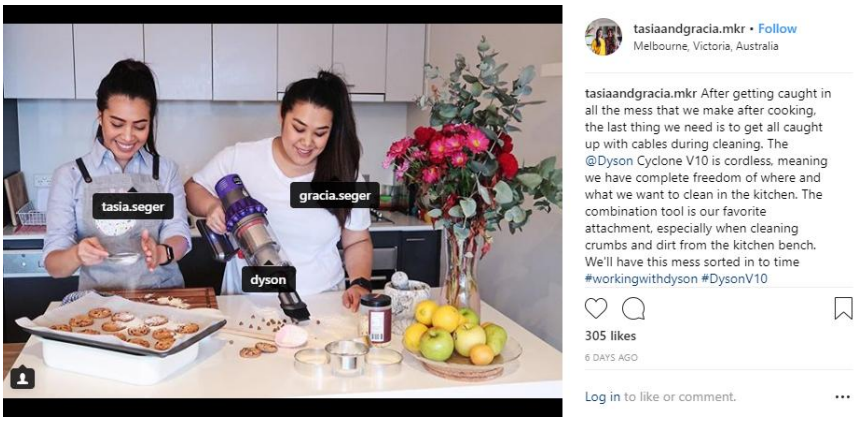
> It comes back to more freedom, just having more freedom on our personal one as it is not tied up with brand deals.. I can kind of you know, take pictures of my pets.. Scofield (their dog), or what I'm doing with my family on the weekends. I wouldn't put that day-to-day on my work account... We try to not sell products through our personal account, we feel that should be through our joint work account whereas personal, we'd like to keep it business free. (Gracia Seger, 2017, **celebrity**)

> It's more personal in that it is day to day stuff, it's more personal information. It's the things I'm doing today.. It's more free, the photos that we choose are more free. Because it's our personal account we have a little more freedom of speech than the joint account, that one tends to be more professional. (Tasia Seger, 2017, **celebrity**)

Since their interview Tasia and Gracia have succumbed to the pressure to post content that adheres to their business branded identity on their personal page. Their attempt at creating two separate branded personas to regain a sense of agency and reduce dissonance between online and offline conceptualisations of self did not work. It appears that once users craft a branded online persona encouraged by microcelebrity culture, it is difficult to depart from a celebrified identity. Figures eleven and twelve show sponsored posts for Dyson on both Gracia's personal Instagram page and Gracia and Tasia's joint business account:

Figure 11: Sponsored post on Gracia's personal profile.

Figure 12: Sponsored post on Tasia and Gracia's business profile



Influencers and non-microcelebrities have altered or refined aspects of their celebrified brands over time but only one has attempted to completely change categories despite most expressing that they might like to at some stage. There appears to be some agency when creating a brand initially, there is a plethora of categories to choose from and choice regarding emotive registers, but little agency thereafter especially for those whose brand is owned by a commercial entity.

Brand agency is limited for all users regardless of their brand endorsement status. While internet celebrities are explicitly restricted in that they will lose their source of income and reputation amongst influencer agents and followers, non-microcelebrities are restricted in that they run the risk of compromising their authenticity or credibility as judged by audience perceptions. Therefore non-microcelebrities who do not receive paid endorsements are restricted in regards to brand agency more symbolically. As explained in chapter one, it is common for influencers to decline brand offers. Some influencers have rejected brand deals because they did not resonate with the brands that have approached them. Others simply do not want external bodies controlling their brand. As a once non-microcelebrity and now influencer who has no desire to make money from brand deals I understand the pressure unpaid users feel to maintain their brand even without pressure from external parties. I put work into maintaining my brand because of the social status that results from having a successful online brand. Having a successful online brand is an indispensable aspect of my identity, whether I make money from it or not. It is often the first point of contact from which I engage with others, my online performance makes a statement to the world about who I am. The followings survey response from a non-microcelebrity exemplifies the desire users feel to maintain a consistent online brand purely for social standing.

> If I was ever asked to do a paid ad for a brand on my Instagram, I probably wouldn't.. The reason being that I am just so busy with my work, my career, that I wouldn't be willing to take that on, also being in the field I'm in I don't feel it would be a great look for me to be an influencer... I do put effort into my Instagram yes, I try to make it look a certain way because, I liken it to personal maintenance. I think most people would agree that having an aesthetically pleasing, on brand Instagram is just as important nowadays as let's say, dressing appropriately for work, styling your hair.. just being presentable in everyday life. A disregard for your online presence in itself, says a lot about a person I say, in this world now we can't really afford to (Male, 34, London, **non-celebrity**)

For the participant quoted above, he captured the fundamental importance of online brands explaining how it is a vital aspect of a person's overall identity. Interestingly, choosing not to post sponsored content is a way of avoiding pursuing a brand that would contradict with this career, in this sense he is limiting identity dissonance by refraining from sponsored partnerships.

It was common for participants to refine their brand. One strategy is to perform "cleanses", which involve scrolling back to the beginning of their profile and deleting pictures that no longer suit the direction their brand is heading. For example, a participant who was changing her food brand to veganism deleted older posts that featured meat based products. It is common to refine or tweak personal brands given the difficult associated with re-branding completely. The one participant who attempted to undergo dramatic re-branding through changing brand categories and emotive register discussed how it has felt near impossible for him to do so successfully. Given the sensitive content disclosed, this participant wishes to remain anonymous in this particular quotation.

> Tried to revamp.. let's be honest, start my Instagram again, because I started Instagramming during a low point in life. I was overweight, mental health issues, addiction and so forth.. was fighting with my family and pretty much everyone close to me so my Instagram was really about being as rebellious and self destructive as possible.. I still don't really know, I don't know, I was just not in a good place. Since then, I deleted all posts and started posting (deleted for anonymity) which I am pretty well known for now, but back then, it wasn't really taking off after just deleting pics and starting posts again on the same account. My Instagram name was the same, so people associated that user name with who I used to be. So, then I decided to delete that account altogether and start a new account completely with a new user name and all.
>
> That meant not having my real name as my user name, not ideal but had to be done, I know a lot of people who have a quirky username when they don't want their actual name used for whatever reason. Anyway, the new account worked better.. until one day I Googled myself. I found all these websites that store deleted content from Instagram, including content from deleted accounts, you've seen them right? So when you Google my name it still showed most of my old photos with like, my name attached to them, even after all this time you can still find them so I worry about people seeing it constantly. When I accidently come across these I'm honestly traumatised, it's just not nice being reminded of things you aren't anymore, it's so like upsetting and frustrating that it can't be completely gone... Even if you somehow get them down off a group of sites, there will be 10 more you find in a month's time, it's like this insidious cycle.. At this point I've very reluctantly had to incorporate aspects of my old self into my new profile,

> show people what I've done and hope they get it, before others expose me to you know, ruin my credibility. Didn't really work well as the brands didn't mesh.
>
> I have a lot of regrets. I wish I knew how like important online branding is, if someone told me how serious and important it is I would of done things a lot differently, I would of posted photos that made me look like I lived the perfect life like normal people do. I wish I understood the permanence of visual social media. I didn't get, well I think most people didn't get it at the beginning of Instagram, but I didn't get at all that data is stored permanently out there somewhere in some server and can reappear, even deleting it means nothing. I mean it does something, it makes it a lot harder for people to find things but if they want to they can still find it. I just don't understand why these sites store deleted content, don't they know people don't want it anymore? I don't know... At times I wondered if I should bother trying to improve myself as my old self can always be found and has been found by employers etc... It is also deeply hurtful when I'm criticised that my new Instagram is fake.
>
> I've been put down and made to feel pathetic for trying to change my Instagram. When I started trying to do it I realised that hardly anyone does this... It gives others the impression that something major is wrong in your life. It's the biggest red flag for today's generation unfortunately. It's such a huge pressure to be told that you get one shot to create a good online identity and if you mess up, it's pretty much messed up forever. You can't change your name anymore and move to a new city if you fuck up, you can change your name and move to the other side of the world but social media tagging has become so advanced that it will recognise your face in photos online and link you to your old accounts. Do you know that even if you cover your face with your hand, Facebook still knows it is you!? That 'With Me' app uses that data even after you're dead to become you, I won't know which version or me my family will be talking to when I'm gone (laughs). (Anonymous male, 2018, **celebrity**)

This participant illustrates the extreme difficulty associated with re-branding given the branding culture of social media. This individual has undergone extensive self surveillance and identity work to manage his personal brand and to try and alleviate the dissonance he feels between his new brand and former brand. Interestingly, he expressed that if his initial brand was idealised in the same way most users appear to be, he may not have experienced such extreme feelings of dissonance. This suggests that the tendency to display idealised, polished celebrified performances may protect users from forming a brand that portrays intimate details of their personal lives that could be used against them in a public arena. For example, employers finding photos from a person's past that depicts undesirable behaviours.

The participant quoted above expressed that even though he has created a new brand for himself on Instagram he cannot completely separate himself from his initial brand persona and this has damaged his employability and ability to evolve offline as a person. This example further highlights the way users are limited by branding. The culture of Instagram's business model favours consistency and deems re-branding as deviant with the participant quoted above viewing it as "the biggest red flag for today's generation". This is only one example but this single case study demonstrates how important the online brand formation process is for young people as if not done

correctly, it has the potential to impact the rest of their lives indefinitely. Online brands have become such a vital aspect of peoples overall identity that compared to offline facets has a greater sense of permanency and immense power to shape someone's social standing.

The quotations presented earlier raise questions surrounding authenticity as judged by audience perceptions. If authenticity is built on being open and transparent with audiences as argued in previous research, one would assume that audiences and Instagram as a platform for that matter would embrace re-branding as users are making an effort to be open and transparent about how changes in their offline lives have shifted their online performances. This research suggests that authenticity appears to be assessed according to brand consistency rather than transparency. This is an interesting tension and contradiction. As consumers, audiences value consistency in identities but as producers of social media content they desire fluidity. Users are valuing authenticity judged by audience perceptions over achieving a sense of personal authenticity which is not surprising given the highly public, fame oriented nature of microcelebrity culture.

The participant quotes on the previous page make reference to the popular app 'With Me' that takes and stores social media data from a deceased person to replicate and reproduce emails, text messages and social media interactions so that loved ones can communicate with them as though they are still alive. This artificial intelligence technology allows users to continue to text message their loved ones and receive back messages that replicate the responses they would have normally given. Even after a user has passed away their brand prevails and is stored in algorithms in data storage centres. In the end, we become data. Our digital footprint or brand remains. The significance of this app is the permanence of online brands as digital legacies remain online to be used by third parties indefinitely (Arnold, et al. 2017). The permanence of online brands further highlights the need for users to put work into maintaining their persona. The participant response on the previous page suggests that he is working on leaving behind an online brand that he is proud of.

Instagram users are to some degree prisoners of their brand. Breaking free, or attempting to break free from an online brand category or celebrified temple, as we saw in Tasia's and Gracia's excerpts, is seen as deviant behaviour that is going against the norm. Microcelebrity culture restricts it and so do users that are accustomed to this culture. To be true to your audience and to your brand, you need to be consistent. However, the only way to be authentic to yourself is to be deviant by defying the norms and challenging your brand. Participants expressed feeling restricted from self growth at the cost of a consistent public persona. It is important to note that contracted influencers

have significantly less agency, and sometimes no agency at all over the permanent and ephemeral content they share when compared to uncontracted microcelebrities therefore more pressure to remain consistent to a single chosen brand. Those who are paid for their social media use usually have contractual caveats over their online brands that dictate the kind of content the user is allowed to post while under contract. After reading over a contract from a brand deal I was offered it stated that "during the duration of the contract period any content posted without approval can result in the ambassador paying back any money earned. In this instance the ambassador may be liable for related penalties." For digital influencers who make a living from these brand deals departing from their brand often renders too great of a risk.

Relationship breakups were one re-branding context that appeared to be supported and encouraged by audiences on Instagram. The breakdown of relationships is seen by participants as a re-branding crisis particularly when the breakup is not amicable. One non-microcelebrity participant who wishes to remain anonymous described the emotional process of re-branding after a break up.

> We were engaged and had the wedding organised any everything ready to go. We had been together for nearly eight years... As far as social media is concerned... She had been there on my Instagram from day one pretty much, right through my profile, the holidays, birthdays, anniversaries, family stuff, all of that... With social media, pretty much the first thing I did was delete all pictures that had her in it on my Instagram which was also painful, she did the same thing. It was hard to do.. as some of those memories were good and you want a record of those holidays and milestones but at the same time.. it's just what you have to do. You can only really keep photos and change captions to sound less lovely dovey when you're staying friends and shit like that, those people are the lucky ones, its mature and makes the most sense, but we ended on really bad terms. I've started dating again and even if we did stay friends honestly I probably still would delete most of the pictures because how can you move on if new gfs (girlfriends) are seeing all these pictures and ask questions, get jealous and compare the relationships.. If people scroll too far will they get confused and call your current girlfriend your old girlfriend's name? It just stuffs up majorly, it does need to be consistent in that sense. (Anonymous male, 2018, **survey**)

During relationship breakdowns it has become the norm to delete photos to remove digital traces showing that the two individuals were once in a relationship. This was a sentiment shared by the majority of participants. A relationship documented through Instagram becomes a facet of a users brand and participants believe that facet needs to change to create a clean slate in order for both parties to move on and meet future partners. As previously discussed it is common for young people to 'insta stalk' individuals they are interested in getting to know, this is especially true when a user is romantically interested in someone. Removing evidence of a relationship makes a clear statement that a user is single. Therefore any evidence of a past relationship can impede a new relationship brand from forming and can cause jealousy to occur later on. This example further

highlights the need for a consistent, branded identity. It appears as though online brands do not account for the convoluted twists and turns we take in our personal lives. A romantic relationship depicted through social media needs to neatly fit into a branded performance of self that maintains a sense of neutrality.

Through the lens of personal authenticity, reluctantly removing photos that hold personal significance for the sake of re-branding is a difficult thing for users to do. In this instance where re-branding is encouraged, it is not about changing the content of a users brand, it is about removing personal afflictions to maintain authenticity with an audience. In this situation, users are creating greater dissonance between their online and offline lives by removing personally significant milestones in order to make future dating easier and to avoid evoking feelings of dissonance in their audience who favour consistency. Maintaining brand neutrality and solidarity is prioritised over personal authenticity as users choose to delete personally significant content at the cost of appropriate re-branding.

Re-branding by removing content can also occur during times of mental health crises. During my fieldwork I observed people I knew personally or friends of people that I know personally either deleting all of their posts or posting drastically different content during a mental health crisis. It was interesting to see how at the time of a crisis one of the first considerations for these individuals was to re-brand. As demonstrated by the example provided earlier, this type of re-branding seems to be used as a public cry for help and is a complicated endeavour fraught with difficulty. The following interview response by an influencer participant explains this phenomenon. This participant asked to remain anonymous in this instance.

> I would be keen to see the statistics of people deleting their Instagram in times of depression, people who are going through some sort of crisis do that or something dramatic to their online profile before you have any idea from looking at them, and also the rates just before someone's suicide... I would say that it's common for people to rebrand or delete during depression and before suicides.. it's like their demise or death of them as their profile before they actually die physically, why don't people talk about this, that is happening all the damn time? (Anonymous male, 2016, **celebrity**)

Participants explained that they deleted content during 'low times' because it is often during these times that they feel most pressure in relation to managing competing identity performances. They expressed that it is significantly harder to maintain an idealised branded presentation of self when they are struggling in their offline lives. Deleting content appears to be an attempt to be transparent with their audiences and in effect regain a sense of personal authenticity. Participants

explained that regaining personal authenticity through being open and honest with others has helped them find the support they needed. However more than often, this decision has damaged their online brands in that they have lost followers and received negative feedback again demonstrating that audiences on Instagram favour consistency in branded portrayals of self over transparency.

Benefits of a branded self

At a point early in my research I asked myself 'Why am I still doing this? Why am I continuing to worry about posting content and getting more followers?' I have achieved my original goal which was to achieve insider access to the world of internet celebrities, yet there is something so enticing about the lure of microcelebrity culture. Knowing my following could continue to grow makes it difficult to give it up, and even if I could see past that, not using the application anymore would feel self-isolating as it has become a normalised part of socialisation. There are many benefits associated with having a successful online brand.

When I asked the 504 non-microcelebrities 'Do you aspire to be popular online?' 83% expressed that they do. Interestingly, the majority of respondents who answered 'No' to this question, still expressed that they engage in strategies to increase their online visibility. When non-microcelebrities were asked if they could identify some benefits to Insta-fame, they highlighted both the lure of Insta-fame and the belief that it could increase feelings of self worth and social status. Some of their responses are provided below.

> Higher sense of self-esteem, confidence, & self-actualization from knowing that one's creative projects or lifestyle is appreciated by others and oneself 2.) A sense of accomplishment and success no matter how much such feelings are rooted in a virtual reality as opposed to any other reality. (21, Female, Texas, **non-celebrity**)
>
> Creating a brand to prove that you are somebody. (Male, 23, Bangkok, **non-celebrity**)
>
> Freebies and potentially self-worth. (Male, 31, Sydney, **non-celebrity**)
>
> It would boost your confidence and overall aura, you believe that you are wanted and loved and are in some way important. (19, Female, Auckland, **non-celebrity**)
>
> It can boost your ego and make you feel liked. (34, Male, New York City, **non-celebrity**)
>
> Self esteem and self actualization I think. (21, Male, Paris, **non-celebrity**)

> It is used for people to experience a sort of self worth derived from admiration. (21, Male, Colorado, **non-celebrity**)

> When walking around shops etc people recognize you and people aspire to be like you and your feed. (18, Female, Johannesburg, **non-celebrity**)

Furthermore responses revealed that there is a sense of hope that their efforts on Instagram can amount to success. There was a strong belief that putting work into creating a successful online brand will translate into success offline, in particular, career success.

> Let's just say it's between you and another person for a gig. Let's also say it's a gig showcasing ur music or your acting skills. The one with more followers gets the gig almost 100% of the time. I think the world is no stranger to the power of social media and finding people who have access to large groups of targeted audiences is beneficial for the overall marketing of whatever they are trying to accomplish. So more jobs, more "trust" in ur personal brand.' (26, Female, Los Angeles, **non-celebrity**)

> 1.- Get more followers and be famous. 2.- Be sponsored by someone and have a monetary income. (19, Female, Mexico City, **non-celebrity**)

> It provides a stepping stone into most industries. (22 Male, Los Angeles, **non-celebrity**)

> Self confidence boosting, elevated social status, positive self identity etc. The two predominant benefits would be: - Increased social status among ones personal and social community; and - increased chance of career enhancement and development. (20, New South Wales, **non-celebrity**)

> In my opinion, "Insta-fame" can benefit your life. One way is opening new doors for jobs, making yourself heard, and letting employers know what kind of person/life you behold. Another way is being able to meet new people, make connections, etc. (18, Male, New York, **non-celebrity**)

Participants expressed that their online brands have afforded them opportunities in life that would not have otherwise been possible. They explained that their personas have helped them form relationships and gain exposure in the job market. Aaron Rhodes explained how his TV star lifestyle in Los Angeles has been made possible by his online brand.

> I wouldn't be able to live here (Los Angeles). It has afforded us our living and our way of life here. I wouldn't have the opportunities that I have if it wasn't for social media because that's where we posted our viral video, that's what started our career this year, so had that not been there, it would have been a lot different, my life would be a lot different. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

As an influencer who does not makes money from my online brand I see my online presence differently to Aaron. As an academic, I know that my career success is not dependent on my social media profile. It has definitely helped me in relation to recruiting participants for this project and promoting my work, but once this project is over, my Instagram will return to being predominately about interacting with the world using a facet of my identity. Just like I have a front that I put forward at work, to my family, to my friends, my online brand is the facet of my identity that is used to interact with the public, on the world stage. How popular I am on that world stage, impacts the way I feel about myself overall. Negotiating personal authenticity, navigating identity dissonance and engaging in identity work such as surface acting to maintain my brand is worth it. The significance of an online presence and an awareness of permanent digital legacies motivate me to put work into my online brand. This was the view that was shared by many of the participants who had little desire to ever be an Instagram influencer in a career sense.

Having the freedom to choose an online brand and craft it to make it distinctively yours grants people the opportunity to explore another facet of their identity. This important part of modern identity composition is often the first point of contact in many social situations. An online brand makes people visible within an increasingly online society and builds personal and professional relationships. Internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities reported feeling a sense of belonging to a community, a feeling that they are lacking offline in physical communities. Instagram is an efficient way to connect with people who share a brand and therefore aspirations, interests, hobbies and goals.

Despite feelings of dissonance and the lack of agency surrounding altering personal brands, both the microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities expressed discomfort at the thought of not having Instagram and therefore their online brand.

> I guess I'd have to go to college or something, I don't know, I wouldn't know what to do with myself, I've never really thought about it, what the hell, it's like the world ending, I would just lay there and wait for the bad dream to end or something (laughs). My god.. It's what people need to interact with people (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**).

> What a crisis, what would I do.. I mean life would go on.. but I'd be a lot more shut off from the world and from fans or people who follow me. It would be a lot harder to promote my art, it would, and get work for my art, I think honestly that's what's started me having a career in art, through Instagram, most of my sales have been all through myself and that's all because of Instagram. (Michael Turchin, 2015, **celebrity**)

> It's not the end of world.. but we would have to go back to how we interact with people traditionally without it, how we met people traditionally.. and I don't think this generation, the internet generation, know how to do that. (Ezra Williams, 2016, **celebrity**)

Aaron and Michael discussed the negative impact losing their online brand would have on their careers. Ezra focused on the way brands have become a normalised facet of our identity that is used as one face we put forward to society. Just like our physical presentation is a part of our identity that people value in the offline world. An Instagram profile is also often the first point of contact when meeting someone for the first time. As discussed earlier, when people meet others physically they have come to rely on their online brands to form an overall impression through assessing identity dissonance. Aaron and Ezra's quotations suggest that young people who have grown up on social media would struggle to interact with others without their online brands.

Several non-microcelebrities expressed that they feel empowered by having a platform to say what they want to say publicly, without the interference of those who tend to facilitate their offline expression such as parents and teachers. Before social media and the internet, the few who had the opportunity to express themselves publicly, were mediated by broadcast media, journalist, public relation agents and so on. Social media users can express themselves without their voice being mediated by others. Now people have direct access to public forums and therefore greater power of expression. The following survey responses from non-microcelebrities express this viewpoint.

> Fourth wave feminism is all about freedom of expression through technology so for me as a young woman, Instagram is my platform to exercise that... I can say what I want to say, look how I want to look and no one can control that. That is pretty awesome and a big deal I think. That is an advantage not just to women, but for all young people who have access to the internet. (Female, 22, Perth, **non-celebrity**)

> Freedom used to be when you were 18 and could legally make your own life decisions, now it's as soon as you get a smartphone. An example would be that my father is very strict so I would never be able to wear the sort of clothes I wear on my Instagram out of the house, so no one would get to see my style. Instagram lets me dress how I like, it gives me freedom to be me. Also being from a small town, I can get amongst the kind of girls I prefer to associate with, from other parts of the country, I don't have to be like those I've grown up with in school if that makes sense. (Female, 19, Oklahoma, **non-celebrity**)

Conclusion

This chapter explains how the branded self that exists through visual social media alters the trajectory of a user's self presentation both online and offline. Users feel pressured to follow the display rules of microcelebrity culture and produce online brands. Self branding for widespread public consumption is a result of the advent of visual social media and its affordances that both enable and encourage celebrified, branded performances. For many young people, possessing a brand is required in order to participate fully in microcelebrity culture. This phenomenon entails a

unique set of practices used to construct and manage a branded self that involves identity work. This chapter offered a typology of the brand categories available to Instagram users. There were eighteen content categories identified with each having several subcategories. Users further categorise their brand into emotive registers that allow them to apply personality to their brands. These brand categories provide a template in which visual social media users begin the process of building their online brand.

As consumers, audiences value brand consistency but as producers of social media content they desire fluidity. The rigid nature of online brands means that users are often required to uphold a brand that they do not always identify with. Participants engage in surface acting to deliver online branded performances and negotiate feelings of identity dissonance and two often competing notions of authenticity. Differences between online and offline versions of self is now an active tension that is in itself, a valuable facet of a person's overall identity. This highlights a shift in the way young people understand themselves and relate to others. We live in a point in time where identities involve often contradictory and competing online and offline facets. Social media users normalise this dissonance understanding that assessing and managing it is a part of developing a sense of self and engaging with the public. Understanding a social media user on more holistic level means understanding these intricate tensions and processes as a part of identity construction.

It can be difficult for internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities to depart from a branded identity highlighting a lack of agency. Rebranding is acceptable only during relationships breakdowns, to an extent, and can occur when users are suffering a personal crisis however it remains a complicated endeavour that involves negotiating dissonance between their online and offline selves. An online brand brings benefits to the lives of Instagram users. Having the freedom to choose an online brand and craft it to make it distinctively yours grants people the opportunity to explore another facet of their identity. This important part of modern identity composition is often the first point of contact in many social situations. An online brand showcases a person's interests, makes them visible within an increasingly digitised society and builds personal and professional relationships. Having introduced the concept of identity dissonance in relation to microcelebrity culture, the following chapter extends the discussion through exploration of content creation for a more nuanced analysis.

Chapter Five: The work of content creation

In a nightclub in New York City, my new influencer friends danced, sang and posed as they took photos of themselves, and then repeated the performance so that others could take photos of them. Adjusting their bodies to capture the spurts of neon light they glared into multiple iPhone cameras held by their friends to ensure the perfect images were captured. Once the photoshoot was over it was down to the business of posting. Sitting alone in corners of booths and leaning against bathroom walls these care-free party goers had suddenly withdrawn completely from the action, tapping their feet anxiously as they decided on which photos to post. There was a dramatic shift between their social media performances and their behind the scenes behaviours. They would often ask me or whoever was nearby for approval, then follow the same process when selecting filters, captions, emoticons and deciding on whether to tag the location.

After arriving home in the early hours of the morning, I woke up late afternoon and went downstairs to find what felt like a boardroom meeting on the kitchen table. Discussing photos from the night before over home delivered coffee they were visibly stressed and anxious. Two of them were mulling over why they didn't receive as many likes as they were hoping for, was it the time of night it was posted? Did their followers not like their outfit? Is it because their microcelebrity friends didn't like their photos fast enough? All while one verbally attacked the other, accusing him of purposely uploading an 'ugly defamatory' photo of her. I walked backwards towards the staircase and sat on the bottom step to take notes of what I was seeing. As I started typing, one of them discreetly moved to the next room and sat on the couch, taking Snapchat selfies in the mirror, explaining to her audience how exhausted she was from the night before. Thinking that no one could hear her, she repeated the exact same phrase over and over. By attempt number nine she still didn't have it right and was getting noticeably frustrated, sighing deeply after each attempt thereafter. The sixteenth attempt was a success, and the temporary post was uploaded. I received the final product on my phone and watched the four second clip, just like thousands of others did. However, I saw it in a whole new light.

I have spent time with microcelebrities who have become digital influencers, accumulated millions of followers and made hundreds of thousands of dollars from their online presence, yet still approach Instagram the same way as I do. It does not matter how successful you are in the microcelebrity game, people continue to invest their energy into it, spending a significant portion of their day planning and creating content because living life with a public branded persona has become the norm. The pressure is heightened for those being paid for the content they post. The

following quotation by influencer Ezra Williams captures the effort that goes into creating high quality content on Instagram.

> Because everyone is now able to take such good photos, the higher the competition is. Like when people see good photos people feel they need to be different by distinguishing yourself, and the only way to do that is by creating better quality photos on Instagram. You need to work on your captions, lighting, backgrounds, the team (photographers, management etc), the outfits, Instagram posts have become like mini-photo shoots you know... People pretend it's just taken on the spot but it actually takes hours. It's so funny when people talk about it, they're just like 'oh it's just Instagram, it's not that important' but then they take 30 minutes to decide on just the Instagram filter. Even on Snapchat it can take like 5 minutes to re-do and re-do the same 'in the moment' snap. (Ezra Williams, 2016, **celebrity**)

Participating in microcelebrity culture to increase public visibility is labour intensive (Abidin, 2016; Bishop 2018a; Bishop 2018b; Fuller & Jeffery, 2016; Marwick & boyd, 2010; Meng, 2014). Crystal Abidin describes this as visibility labour. Abidin (2016) defined visibility labour as "the work enacted to flexibly demonstrate gradients of self-conspicuousness in digital or physical spaces depending on intention or circumstance for favourable ends. It is the work individuals do when they self-posture and curate their self-presentations so as to be noticeable" (2016, pg. 90). Identifying modes of visibility labour such as self branding techniques offers insight into the strategies influencers use. More research is needed to better understand the invisible labour that is less about observable strategies, and more about the emotion work (Hochschild, 1979) that goes on behind the scenes. As explained, existing literature has not explored the work of managing dissonance in relation to social media identities. In the sociology of emotions literature, emotion work is defined as the "management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display" (Hochschild, 1983, p. 7).

This chapter explores emotion work specifically associated with creating content on Instagram. I explain how the work managing identity dissonance is a part of planning social media posts, creating branded content and modifying the body according to a celebrified branded template. Digital influencer participants identified four aspects of Instagram that feel labour intensive; 1) thinking of content to post, 2) creating content, 3) satisfying their audience and 4) striving to maintain their online popularity. Mirroring the experiences of the influencers, the non-microcelebrity sample view their own Instagram use as labour intensive with the majority of them also identifying; 1) thinking of content to post, 2) creating content, 3) satisfying their audience and 4) trying to increase their number of followers as 'feeling like work/labour intensive'. Furthermore, both the microcelebrities and their followers have used the same five strategies to increase their

online visibility; 1) Make your profile look nicer, 2) post content that makes your life seem more interesting, 3) post more sexualised content, 4) edit photos of yourself to improve your physical appearance and 5) change your physical appearance offline so you're more photogenic (over 30% of non-microcelebrities said they would do this). Furthermore, over 90 percent of the non-microcelebrities recognize that internet celebrities put work into creating their posts.

Planning an Insta-worthy life

In the lead up to August 2017 I was planning a trip to Greece with my family. It was the first time I had been so I spent a lot of time mulling over the itinerary to make sure I could see as many places as possible. Once we decided on which cities and islands we were visiting my cousins and I organised the hotels and day to day activities. A primary consideration was how well hotels would photograph. I spent hours researching. I looked at photos online that previous guests had posted to decide whether they would fit our social media brands. My cousins and I met to organise which clothes we would pack and in doing so plan our outfits according to locations that we want them photographed in. I ended up purchasing clothing that I never would have if it wasn't for the desire to publicly document this trip. Although Greece was in the middle of a heatwave with it forecast to be around 40 degrees most days, I packed a blazer and pleated pants to mirror similar outfits I had seen male influencers wear on the Greek islands. In order for me to be feel completely prepared for the trip I needed to feel like this part of the work aspect was organized. This work aspect is planning our social media output to ensure it will be of a high enough standard in comparison to what others post in similar situations and of course in accordance to our personal brands. Planning details for my trip and therefore my online content was not about what would look or feel right to myself, but what I imagined would look right in the eye of a public audience.

During this trip and almost every other trip I can remember from the time I got a smartphone my brain was in a constant cycle of managing content and therefore my branded self. In this sense my brand is connected to my body as it is constantly on my mind. During particularly stressful times I am comforted by the fact that those around me seem to have the same anxieties over their online brand. During the trip I had a checklist entitled 'photo ideas'. As each photo was done, they were ticked off the list. I wanted to get the social media photos taken as early as possible so the work of creating content of the trip could be out of the way. Once they were done, I felt immense relief and truly as though I was on holiday. I felt as though I was experiencing each moment for myself and enjoying it completely. It was a sense of total freedom as I knew my obligations during this trip were over. These

obligations extended beyond my own photos to the photos I would need to take for the people I was travelling with. There is a mutual expectation and unspoken rule that we allocate time during holidays or any event, to take photos of others. It is reciprocal brand awareness and an exchange of labour. I often find myself wondering how different holidaying was for those who did not have social media and therefore had no obligation to stage their trip for public consumption. I often feel saddened that I do not foresee myself ever having that experience. The thought of a holiday or special life event not being publicly documented is almost unfathomable.

Switching between taking photos designed for the public and personal photography means that there is an omnipresent awareness and consideration of branding. During the trip we made an effort to take what we call 'fun photos for us'. These in the moment, family photos resemble the vacation shots we have in our childhood photo albums. They usually contain more than one person, are not highly posed, have a fun and light-hearted tone characterised by a smile or warm gesture and primarily serve to document personal memories. We made a conscious effort to take these photos as we were missing these kinds of shots from previous holidays. I anticipate showing my children photos of myself with my grandparents in Greece rather than a shirtless selfie designed purely for public visibility.

Before I take a photo there is a brief moment where I adjust my pose and facial expression to suit my audience. Photos have become synonymous with self branding and I can only remember a handful of times in my life since I owned a smartphone that I took photos without considering its public value. Social media has changed how and why I take photos. In order to take photos without the intention of publicly posting them, I need to shift my perceptions, go against everything I see on my phone every day. I need to remind myself that this is photo does not need to be posted so therefore it will not be edited, it will not be quantified, it will not potentially lead to social mobility, it is just for me, and there is nothing wrong with that.

The autoethnographic excerpts above exemplify the labour involved in organizing day to day life when planning branded content. Presenting myself differently for social media content and for personal content means managing identity dissonance every time I take a photo. Planning locations, angles, lighting, outfits all while having an awareness of identity dissonance and being conscious of two competing notions of authenticity is a part of planning social media content. The fact that social media has become a consideration when planning events and life milestones further highlights the shift towards managing brand awareness in social media user's day to day life. When I looked

carefully at the birthday parties, engagements and weddings I've attended in recent years I noticed cues at almost every event that exemplify the influence of microcelebrity culture. Photo walls, designed as photo backdrops that in the past would only be used in red carpet events are now fixtures available for party hire. It is also common for events to have their own hashtag for example #MikeTurns21 or #RyanAndAnnaGetHitched that guests are asked to use in captions of photos they post from the event. At one particular party I attended, the photo wall was designed around the birthday girl's outfit to ensure she would be as photogenic as possible. The point I am making is how public performance and branding has become a consideration when planning day to day life.

Research into the emotion work performed by women has detailed the invisible labour involved in running a household (Daniels, 1987; Erickson, 1993) such as thinking about what to cook, organising and coordinating their children's schedules, listening closely to what family members have to say even when they don't feel like it and so on. Similarities can be drawn here in terms of the emotion work involved in anticipating and organizing day to day life however a point of departure in regards to social media is that people are planning for a branded performance of identity rather than for another person. People are nurturing a facet of their own identity that did not exist for most people before the advent of Instagram. Users are planning public performances designed for consumption on a mass scale even though it something they do not always feel like doing. The following responses from non-microcelebrities demonstrate that social media users who do not consider themselves internet celebrities are also experiencing the day to day planning associated with their online brand as emotion work.

> It can be hard always wanting places and things to be Insta-worthy, sometimes you just want to have fun with your friends but it's always on the back of your mind. (Female, 19, London, **non-celebrity**)

> A downside is that we forget to take memorable photos for ourselves that will end up in those family photo albums. We don't even make photo albums anymore for the sake of keeping memories, photos have become about perfection for social media and I think that's a negative. (Male, 21, Milan, **non-celebrity**)

> I keep saying that I'll go to the store and print photos instead of having them in the cloud but it's so hard to remember because no one seems to print them anymore except for the parents. And even when you do, you realise that you don't actually have many pictures that are appropriate for albums. No one wants a coffee table album full of sultry selfies or highly edited images where you look totally obsessed with yourself. (Male, 29, New York, **non-celebrity**)

> I used to like to look back to this time 3 years ago for example and see how I have changed physically and I can't do that because all of the photos in my cloud are selfies that are highly edited for social media. (Male, 34, Johannesburg, **non-celebrity**)

These quotations demonstrate that non-microcelebrity participants are often prioritising content designed for their online performances. They are putting work into planning their day to day lives around their online personas despite expressing that they do no not always feel like doing so. The non-microcelebrities above are aware of identity dissonance in that the majority of photos of themselves that were taken for social media use do not correspond to their offline priorities or interests. Users are managing identity dissonance as part of planning and documenting their day to day life and are feeling conflicted as a result. The following section explores the work of executing social media content. I explain how participants negotiate online performances and manage identity dissonance.

Creating content

Content is created in accordance with a user's brand. The following quotations demonstrate how influencer participants consider their brand when creating content to ensure it will be consistent with their public persona.

> I never post party pictures. I don't like to post pictures that indicate who I'm with or what I'm doing in a way that's sort of a popularity contest kind of thing. Like lots of people post pictures like 'look at me eating with Kylie Minogue at some after party' and that's um you know.. each to their own with what they want to do with their Instagram. I would never tell anyone how to run their own Instagram.. whatever you want to do with the app is absolutely fine but for me personally, party pictures, I would never post party pictures. It's not necessarily that I don't like them in general, but I don't think they represent me, online. (Patrick Belaga, 2015, **celebrity**)

> What you share depends on what your image is.. food and travel is our brand... L'Oreal asked us to try this new shampoo, I always think twice about things like that because it's not our brand. Tasia and I would never post photos of us drinking, partying or clubbing, You don't want to post anything that conflicts with your image. Instagram needs to have a theme, a colour scheme and everything so sometimes the photo, or even something as simple as the quality of the photo means it isn't good enough to share. You really have to look into details, carefully... We realised which photos get more likes and which get less. So if we posted, let's say a scenery photo, that doesn't get many likes believe it or not, but if it's our face or food that we cook, it gets more likes. Say if I post that photo of us working with Obama, for example, of course that would get more likes because he is a public figure. (Gracia Segar, 2017, **celebrity**)

> I've noticed that my audience is more in-tune with fashion, lifestyle and travel.. so whenever I'm posting boring photos that doesn't have to do with what they primarily follow me for I tend to lose followers... I'm just naturally attracted more to vibrant colours, like striking, so I guess subconsciously I'm always conscious of it, always trying to keep my profile into that rhythm. (Ezra Williams, 2016, **celebrity**)

This next section is dedicated to the work involved in creating content for social media with the aim of achieving public visibility. It is divided into five sections. The first four sections are a case study of sexualised content, a category of content that receives significant reach compared to other posts. I explore how sexual content, focusing heavily on the male shirtless selfie, is produced through enacting aesthetic and sexualised labour oriented towards microcelebrity culture. The closing section of this chapter includes personal case studies to demonstrate how I have performed surface acting to convey diverse branded performances. Each section is underpinned by an analysis of how participants manage dissonance between their online and offline conceptualisations of self.

Shirtless selfies: A case study of branded sexualised content

Sexualised content is prominent in branded online performances. Most of the internet celebrities and 40% of the non-microcelebrities said that they would post more sexualised content in order to increase their visibility online. Both groups are posting sexualised content to attract attention and further their profile. The power and pervasiveness of sexualised content in traditional media is not a new phenomenon. The normalisation of young people creating sexualised content for public consumption on a mass scale is one outcome of microcelebrity culture.

Sexualised content is a powerful and popular self branding tool utilised by users from a broad range of brand categories. Instagram's explore screen or popular page is dominated by sexualised content consisting of the male shirtless selfies and bikini/underwear selfies of women. As discussed in the previous chapter, 'popular page' is a tab located on the Instagram main menu where photos that accumulate a large number of likes are advertised by Instagram without the user's consent to prospective followers. For participants in this research, high quality shirtless and bikini selfies are considered more likely than any other kind of photo to make it onto the popular page.

Shirtless selfies, or selfies taken by toned men with their shirts off are a popular form of sexualised content on Instagram. Shirtless selfies often attract more likes than other posts at the cost of them being more labour intensive. The following screenshots (figures 13 to 20), all from Instagram's popular page, demonstrate the significant increase in likes and therefore reach, between a shirtless-selfie and a clothed selfie for myself and three other male influencers. I have included a red arrow to point to the tally of likes under each photo.

Figure 13: clothed selfie (Jonathan Mavroudis)

Figure 14: Shirtless selfie (Jonathan Mavroudis)

Figure 15: clothed selfie (Benji Condie)

Figure 16: shirtless selfie (Benji Condie)

Figure 17: clothed selfie (Michael Turchin)

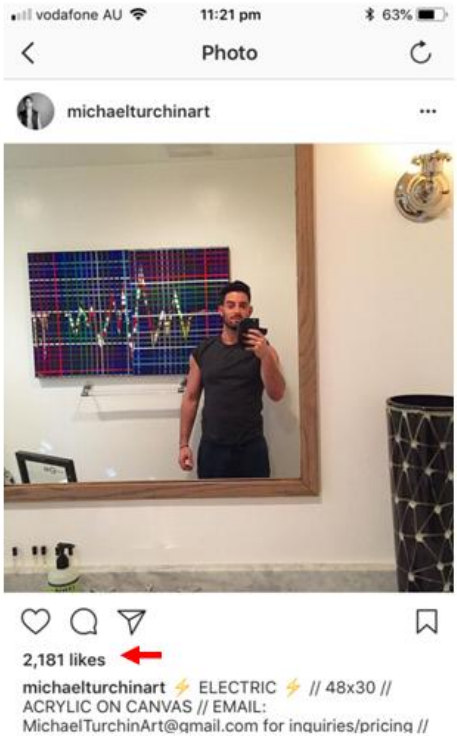


Figure 18: shirtless selfie (Michael Turchin)

Figure 19: clothed selfie (Jack Wade)

Figure 20: shirtless selfie (Jack Wade)

Creating shirtless selfies

For both gay and straight influencers and non-microcelebrities, the shirtless-selfie was seen as the fastest and most effective self branding strategy and in effect the best way to increase their exposure.

> Sadly the majority of my followers and likes are for if I post something of myself. I have to realise that the majority of people follow me for my shirtless selfies, I get frustrated because when I post my art or something else to do with work.. I usually get half as many likes which is frustrating..I know that if I post a photo of my body, I'll get 100s of likes in a couple of minutes, where as if I post my art, it (the likes) will just creep up slowly over a few days. (Michael Turchin, 2015, **celebrity**)

> People wait for me to post shirtless selfies... that's where I get all my likes, follows, comments and responses, so I guess they're a fan of my torso... It's such a buzz kill when you post different kinds of photos after posting a shirtless selfie cause you just don't get the same response, it's such a stark difference. (Male, 34, Los Angeles, **non-celebrity**)

The shirtless-selfie was understood as being by far the most challenging photo to execute. This is because of the precision needed to execute the pose which has a profound effect on how the torso appears in photos. The following quotes by an influencer and non-microcelebrity capture the physical and emotional labour including surface acting, involved in creating shirtless content.

> How many photos I take ranges from you know, 5 to 20 takes, I know (laughs), I try to limit it (laughs) because then my whole day would be taken up by taken selfies, it's very time consuming. I try different angles... it's like ok, I have to squeeze and get into position and not move. There's a fine line between trying to make your face look relaxed while not being able to breathe. (Michael Turchin, 2015, **celebrity**)

> It's that much harder making shirtless selfies because other than trying to look good, suck in your belly and flex you have to appear as though you are relaxed and comfortable when you are far from it usually... You don't want to seem full of yourself or that you've tried all day to get the pic. (Male, 27, Male, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

For the shirtless selfie pictured below, posted on October 26, 2015 I convinced my brother to drive for nearly an hour to the Dandenong Ranges to be my photographer:

Figure 21: Jonathan Mavroudis shirtless-selfie

It was a very warm day, over 30 degrees, and neither of us really wanted to be taking photos outdoors. I forgot to bring water, but I didn't forget to bring push up grips so that I could do deep push ups before each round of photos to ensure I looked as muscular as possible. After the first unsuccessful round of photos and on my second round of push ups I was tired. Feeling disoriented from the heat, lack of water and the push ups, my hands slipped off the push up grips. I grazed my arms and knuckles, don't worry, I survived, however I was bleeding from the grazes and had one particularly deep cut on my right knuckle. The two photos below show me doing the push ups and my injured hand providing a visual account of the physical labour that occurred behind the scenes.

Figure 22: Physical injury

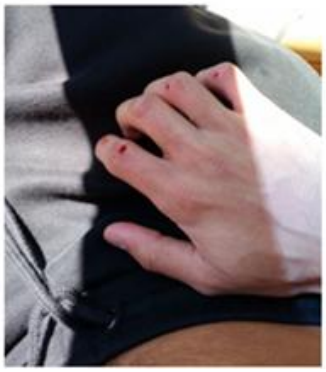


Figure 23: Photo preparation

I remember pausing at this moment and thinking that I should call it a day. It was not enjoyable for myself or my brother and I was in physical discomfort. However, we both knew that this shirtless selfie was important for my profile. I hadn't posted a shirtless selfie in some time and my following was decreasing dramatically. Over approximately five weeks I had lost nearly 400 followers. I had not posted anything due to being busy with my studies and followers expressed their disappointment through unfollowing me. On a platform where followers are consistently increasing, losing followers is something both influencers and non-microcelebrities are constantly trying to avoid. The shirtless selfie pictured on the previous page was also particularly important as it was the time I started using temporary social media. The caption 'Made it to the top. Also I'm on Snapchat: Jmav9' advertised my Snapchat name to my followers. It was convention to advertise your presence on Snapchat through a shirtless-selfie to attract as many Snapchat viewers as possible. There was no Instagram Story at this time so Snapchat was the only avenue to post temporary content.

Throughout the course of this research I have carefully observed the way male sexuality is branded within microcelebrity culture. For microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities alike, the revered shirtless-selfie is a complicated endeavour. I have identified four broad shirtless-selfie subcategories that are distinguished primarily by pose. Surface acting is often required to deliver the performance appropriate to the selected shirtless-selfie subcategory.

Figure 24: Suggestive nudity

Figure 25: Hip movement

Figure 26: Relaxed

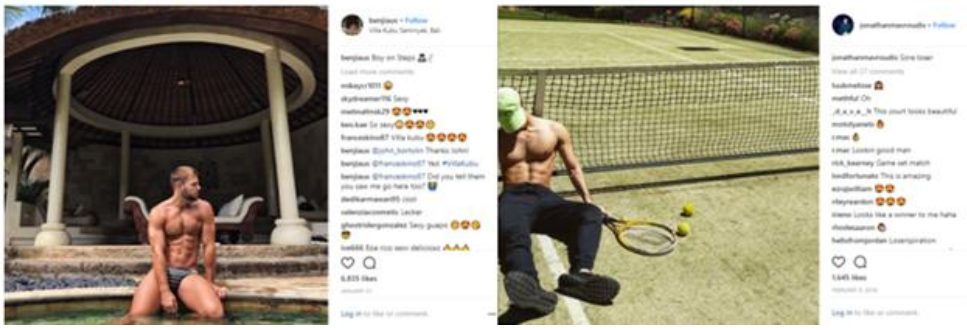


Figure 27: Action shot

Sexual neutrality

For both gay and straight male influencer participants, deliberation over the provocativeness of a shirtless-selfie is common practice behind the scenes. The provocativeness of influencer and non-microcelebrity shirtless-selfies were measured by placing them on a continuum somewhere between four subcategories depicted in figures twenty one to twenty four. 'Suggestive nudity' is seen as being the most provocative type of shirtless selfie with 'Action shot' being the least provocative. 'Hip movement' is believed to be associated more with gay men and 'Action shot' more with straight men. There are blurred and very fine lines between each category and variation within each category. Factors identified that make a photo more or less provocative include; facial expression, what is worn on the bottom half of the body, filter, editing options, clothing brand, caption, hashtag use and composition of other shirtless selfies present on a profile. For example, if a user has predominately suggestive nudity poses and a handful of action shots they tend to be associated with a suggestive nudity persona.

Ensuring that a shirtless selfie is in accordance to a person's overall online brand (brand category and emotive register) is important as posting an ill fitting shirtless selfie may result in negative responses from followers. Any post that is off brand has potential to result in backlash

however audience responses to shirtless selfies tend to be heightened due to the value they hold within microcelebrity culture. Participants were of the view that although shirtless photos have the potential to attract a large number of likes and new followers, an off brand shirtless photo has the potential to result in a great decline of audience engagement. Male influencers understand that the majority of their followers follow them for shirtless photos that are consistent with their overall brand.

Influencers strived to make their shirtless selfies as neutral as possible so that they can appeal to both women and men and the younger demographic within the platform. A shirtless selfie that is generally either 'Relaxed' or an 'Action shot' is considered neutral as it is more likely to appeal to both sexes and not be considered explicit for users under the age of 18. The purpose of neutrality of sexuality in this sense is to increase the reach of a post as it is believed that a shirtless-selfie should be as widely consumable as possible.

Users have reported being criticised by followers with comments like "thirst trap" when shirtless selfies are too provocative. Thirst trap refers to a photo that is overtly fishing for likes. This is an interesting tension as shirtless selfies are highly regarded by audiences because of their sexualised nature however when a user's sexuality is overt, they are shamed. Participants also reported being condemned by Instagram for posting overly sexualised or provocative content. These participants received messages reminding them to post 'culturally appropriate content' or risk their provocative content being deleted or having their accounts temporarily disabled. The following quotations explain how influencers and non-microcelebrities negotiate their online brands based on the provocativeness of the content they create.

> There's a fine line between selfies that are 'oh that's cute and hot' to 'that's slutty' (laughs), so yeah I wouldn't ever post a selfie with just me in my underwear where you can see everything, I wouldn't do that, I'm more of a sophisticated shirtless selfie person you could say, there's a fine line between too much. (Michael Turchin, 2015, **celebrity**)

> How many shirtless-selfies are on a guys profile shows how slutty they are.. but it's actually the type of shirtless selfies, more than how many there are that sets the tone.. Like, are you at the beach, playing tennis on a 100 degree day? Or are you just naked in a bathtub for no real reason? (Male, 2018, **non-celebrity**)

> I shy away from shirtless selfies and stuff cause I feel like that over sexualises people and I don't want to be put in that box... I don't want to over sexualise my brand cause then you'll have Disney for example, who approached me for a brand deal, so I won't put alcohol on their cause that cuts off everyone who's trying to get that young person demographic, especially underage that's just too much. So yeah I definitely watch everything that I do cause it's scary... Cause I need to make money. Like fuck, what would Disney think of this (laughs) and Disney owns my channel as you know, so I can't really do too much. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

For Aaron the act of posting shirtless-selfies in itself is too sexualised for his brand given his teenage audience and Disney contract. His brand endorsements restrict him from posting shirtless content to his profile. However, since being interviewed Aaron has posted shirtless-selfies to his Instagram story. It is common practice for people to post temporary content to Instagram Story when it does not suit the branded persona of their online profiles or is not neutral enough to be widely consumable. By doing this users are able to display sexualised content that may be deemed too provocative to remain on their profiles without tarnishing their brand. Given that Aaron is a digital influencer and is paid for some of his posts he has more to lose than followers if he posts something that is off brand. He could potentially lose brand endorsement deals worth tens of thousands of dollars and ultimately his source of income. The lure of shirtless selfies is highlighted by the fact that someone like Aaron is willing to risk so much by posting them.

Even those who do not have contractual caveats over their profiles use Stories to share sexualised content that does not adhere to their online brand. Participants posted provocative shirtless selfies to Instagram Stories even though they are striving to maintain a widely consumable Instagram brand. Apart from the high number of new followers and likes a shirtless selfie can bring, there are other benefits to posting them such as attention from potential new partners in a romantic sense. Nearly all of the influencers and many non-microcelebrities reported having met at least one of their sexual partners through Instagram and expressed that shirtless selfies played a deciding role when considering their interest in meeting them.

Several participants explained that they have posted provocative sexualised content to their Stories to portray themselves as they would like to be seen offline by potential partners. Participants are managing identity dissonance as they strive to uphold brand neutrality while simultaneously trying to exert sexuality representative of their offline interests. There is a tension at play as highly provocative sexualised content is not usually shamed by users or policed by Instagram when it is posted to Instagram Stories. Stories give users the opportunity to play with their sexuality for reasons other than increasing their reach freeing them from the pressures they feel to uphold sexual neutrality through permanent digital traces.

Instagram Story and Snapchat complicate the argument on shirtless selfies and self branding. Branding on visual social media no longer relies on permanent digital traces. A user's reputation is built by an accumulation of both permanent and temporary digital traces with temporary content having less bearing on a user's personal brand. Using Aaron Rhodes as an example, he is able to reap

the benefits of sharing sexualised content through stories with a lesser risk of compromising his brand made up of permanent, traceable content. It is important to note that for some users, provocative or highly sexualised posts are in itself their brand. The following non-microcelebrity explained the difficulty she experiences maintaining her highly provocative fashion/travel brand because of persistent pressure to neutralize it.

> I'm all for freedom of sexual expression, especially for women. So I do post suggestive photos where I am semi-nude. The difficulty I face is Instagram basically telling me to post less provocative photos... They send me warnings saying to take down particular posts or run the risk of having them or your profile disabled. I have deleted photos when threatened that my account will be disabled and cover them up with an emoji or blur or something creative that doesn't ruin the photo. I always put them back on Stories, so they're out there even if it is for a short amount of time... It's actually encouraged to post skin, just in a less provocative way, like cute bikinis at the beach for example is what Instagram love to see, but this is my thing, what I am known for, and I'm staying true to that (Female, 25, **non-celebrity**)

In contrast to Aaron using stories to post sexualised content in an effort to preserve his Disney rated brand, and others to express their sexuality to attract romantic partners, this user posts nudity to stories in an effort to uphold her highly provocative brand that is limited by Instagram's terms of use and culture. She uses ephemeral social media as a way to circumvent censorship and to maintain her brand. Participants are negotiating their branded sexuality using Instagram Stories. Sexualised content is ultimately a self branding tool that is about delivering performed sexuality that adheres to the rules and norms of microcelebrity culture.

In late 2018 the photo sharing app *OnlyFans* was introduced. The site is external to Instagram however is used alongside it with users sometimes posting links to their OnlyFans profiles in their Instagram descriptions. OnlyFans is an app where users often share naked photos of themselves to subscribers who pay a premium to view the content. Only those who subscribe and make payments are able to view user's content. On their webpage, OnlyFans use the headline 'ANYONE CAN EARN' and go on to state:

> As far as we're concerned, if you use social media and produce your own content, you should be using OnlyFans. Whether you're uploading tutorials, tips, behind the scenes footage or just endless selfies, a lot of your followers would be willing to pay for them. (OnlyFans, 2019)

Beneath this description OnlyFans provide an earnings estimate calculator where you can select your number of followers and choose what you would charge per month to view your earning potential. By selecting my number of followers and selecting a monthly subscription cost of $10 the

page calculated that I could earn between $6,120 and $30,600 per month based on an estimate of between 1% and 5% of my followers subscribing. I have spoken to both digital influencers and non-microcelebrities about their perception of OnlyFans. Only one of the participants I discussed the app with has used it however, many of them followed at least one person who has an OnlyFans account. Participants understand the lure given the opportunity to earn significant amounts of money. There was a general concern that people who use it are unaware that they have unintentionally become "porn stars" overnight and are doing so under the illusion that they are doing it within a safe and supportive space. The site's name suggests that subscribers will be fans, who the user shares some affiliation with.

The participant who has an OnlyFans account uses it to post semi-naked and sometimes completely naked photos of himself. He charges $5 a month and donates all of the proceeds to charity. He explained that his motivation to use OnlyFans was not money. Like most of the celebrities consulted, this user's followers enjoyed his shirtless-selfies, so he felt that "taking it that step further" would build an even stronger following. This participant's Instagram brand is highly sexualised shirtless selfies. The two participant quotations provided in this section suggest that Instagram users with provocative brands find it difficult to maintain their brand, as they have to be strategic about what they post to their profile and what can be posted to Instagram Stories. OnlyFans is a space where users with a highly sexualised brand can increase their following by posting the content that they wish to post and in doing so, further their Instagram brand with the help of an external app. OnlyFans market their site in a way that gives users the impression that they are merely extending their social media presence to meet audience demands however this site raises new concerns in regards to managing identity dissonance.

The participant who uses OnlyFans has a conservative offline persona. This dissonance is difficult for him to manage when his stark identities collide. He explained that he has been met with criticism and judgement when people become aware of his OnlyFans profile. Other participants explained to me that many of the Only Fans users that they follow do not have highly sexualised Instagram brands. They view their OnlyFans account as a covert identity that is separate from both their Instagram brands and their offline identities. I contacted three of these people and asked about their intentions on the app. They explained that they do it to "express their sexuality" and for "an easy source of income." They believed that their content will only be made available to subscribers within the site. Participants showed me pornographic sites that leak content from OnlyFans, meaning that OnlyFans content is being accessed elsewhere from people not paying subscriptions.

Users are managing dissonance between their two competing online brands and offline personas and this tension will inevitably heighten once these users realise that their 'covert' personas are publicly available.

Microcelebrity culture encourages users to display sexuality however censors 'excessive' displays of sexuality resulting in users striving for a neutralised sexual expression. Users negotiate displays of sexuality through Instagram Stories to manage identity dissonance. The branding power of sexualised content on Instagram has been realised by third parties who fill this gap by providing Instagram users the opportunity to take their sexualised content a step further. OnlyFans enables others to carve a new identity that allows them to make money from exerting sexuality that is censored on mainstream social media while adding a new layer of identity work in relation to managing dissonance. The following section explores how gay men present their sexualities on Instagram and manage dissonance between their online and offline expressions.

Gay neutrality

Gay male influencers and non-microcelebrities feel the need to portray a 'straight acting' persona online in order to adhere to the neutralized tone encouraged by Instagram. The following quotations by gay non-microcelebrities demonstrate that Instagram users neutralise their gayness in order to appeal to a wider demographic.

> If there's too much gay shit in a photo, only gay people will like it and follow you and that limits your audience. (Male, 20, Los Angeles, **non-celebrity**)
>
> We turn it (sexuality) down in Instagram posts to not be too controversial, turn it up on Stories to show it off and make those select few who want it happy. (Male, 23, New York, **non-celebrity**)
>
> I try to take shirtless selfies that depict me doing a sport or being active. Girls and guys love seeing a shirtless guy in grey sweatpants running on a field for example, macho manly outdoorsy stuff... People are almost always surprised by how flamboyantly and unapologetically gay I am in person when they meet me. (Male, 29, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

These individuals neutralise their shirtless selfie content by making it appeal to a wider audience than just gay males. This is a branding technique that requires a level of brand awareness and self surveillance if a user is to maximise their visibility. Participants are often expressing a sexual identity online that is different to their offline sexual identity. This example further demonstrates how users are managing dissonance between their online branded self and offline performances.

Some of the gay influencers explained that although they enjoy the widespread reach that their neutral brand affords them, their muted expression of gayness has lead to confusion offline when meeting new people. Participants explained that they often have trouble maintaining a relationships offline that has begun through their neutralised social media profile. They explained that when dating, men often meet them with the expectation that they will be more 'straight acting' or masculine than they appear to be online and are often disappointed when meeting them in person. Participants are aware of their dissonance and expressed that when meeting new people they are often conflicted about how they should present themselves. They explained that because there is an acceptance that people are different online to how they present offline, men that they date usually appear to not be surprised when they present differently to their brand. Participants are often met with disappointment rather than shock as they were hoping that the masculinity aspect of their brand was not exaggerated. Observations of the content gay male microcelebrities posted revealed that any expression of 'gayness' that was limited through content posted to their profiles ended up on Instagram Stories. Users attempt to manage this dissonance by posting content that more accurately represents their offline sexuality to Stories.

These findings finding suggests that Instagram could be a heteronormative space. Brooke Duffy (2017) argued that those most likely to stand out in the realm of social media and achieve fame are individuals who are similar to those who have long occupied celebrity roles in our society; people who adhere to heteronormative standards of beauty. She argued that these standards appear to be emulated and therefore reaffirmed by social media users rather than challenged. It is important to note that Duffy's work primarily focused on the female experience. These sections have focused on male sexuality. Gay microcelebrities consistently expressed that Instagram feels highly inclusive of LGBTI content and a space where they feel free to express their sexuality if they choose to do so. They explained that any decision to suppress their sexuality in a post was attributed to branding. It is purely about creating a widely consumable version of sexuality that adheres well to most brand categories and boosts a users profile by attracting new followers. Instagram in relation to its terms of use does not appear to be heteronormative as users are not restricted in anyway way from posting gay content. It is audiences who measure gay content against heteronormative standards of beauty and therefore dictate branding practices. Consistent with Duffy's argument, brands representing those who have long occupied celebrity roles in our society are more visible on social media. Branding practices on Instagram reaffirm and reflect heteronormative ideals in that gay content is minimized.

Shirtless selfies exemplify the identity work that goes into creating content. Shirtless selfies are physically and emotionally taxing when you take into account the pressures that drive people to take this style of photo, the level of brand awareness and surveillance required. Instagram users are delivering sexualised performances while managing dissonance between their offline personas and online brand. Participants performed surface acting when enacting aesthetic poses and deep acting when managing the straight acting persona they have forged online, in offline spaces. This identity work can be described as deep acting as participants are not only displaying an aesthetic front, they are feeling their branded performances (Hochschild, 1979). Participants embody the identities that they are performing when they are suppressing their sexualities, a core part of their being, for their online performances. I now turn to a discussion of the work involved in modifying the body so that it adheres to aesthetic and sexualised templates endorsed by microcelebrity culture.

Branded bodies

During fieldwork in the United States and Australia I encountered men who disclosed the dark side of shirtless selfies that further illuminates the emotional labour some men endure to achieve highly muscular shirtless selfies. Four male non-microcelebrities shared with me that they have used steroids and injectable testosterone in order to lower their body fat count so that they appear more muscular. These men explained that the types of steroids used can only be used for approximately three months at a time before it starts causing adverse health effects. To avoid harming themselves they are required to take a three to six month break after a cycle to allow the body time to recover. During the three month steroid cycle the men explained that their bodies appear highly muscular and that they feel energetic and healthy at this time. However during the recovery break, they reported feeling lethargic and generally unwell. This resembles withdrawal symptoms from abusing almost any drug so this was not particularly interesting. What interested me was the fact that they reported losing their muscle mass during recovery to the point where they become physically smaller than they were before they begun their cycle. I immediately questioned why they would engage in something that causes adverse health effects and is more detrimental to their physical appearance than it is beneficial. I went on to ask men about this phenomenon. Below are their responses.

> Guys at gyms I've been to take this stuff before holidays like it's a vitamin or something... They have a profile full of photos of their shredded (muscular) bodies, then spend the rest of the year hiding under a baggy jumper. (Male, 24, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

> You get to see how you look at your best and can show the world, no one needs to see recovery.. no one cares about that... They take a shit load of pictures when they're physically at their peak and store them, post them throughout the year making out that's how they look all year long. (Male, 32, Sydney, **non-celebrity**)

> I've done a cycle while on holiday, maybe yeah, so I look better in photos. Then you rest when you're back, and do it again for next summer when you're shirtless again. Essentially I guess it's to be proud of how you look shirtless... Instagram is how we document this. (Male, 32, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

> If I go back to how I was who cares, I got the photos. When you have that proof of how you look at your peak that's like the proof we need for our online brand. Just like foodies post their culinary creations our bodies are our work, our masterpiece.. our living.. our hobby really. People see those photos and look up to you for inspiration, and then most importantly want to buy your workout and meal plans. (Male, 21, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

One of the men shared that they stock pile photos by taking many photos during their cycles so that they can be used throughout the year to give the illusion that that is how they look all year round. They are managing their identity dissonance through planning and creating content. The physical benefits from steroids are short lived however the benefits to a users brand are permanent and seem to outweigh the adverse health effects. Aside from the observable physical toll steroids have on the body, the emotional burden was evident in every user I spoke to. One of the men shared the emotional toll recovery had on him. He explained the significant time he had to take off work due to lethargy and chronic fatigue and how his personal relationships suffered as a result of his declining physical state. He reported experiencing 'low points' during recovery where he felt depressed to the point where he avoided looking at himself in mirrors. He explained that he engaged in self sabotaging behaviours where de deliberately drove romantic partners away so that they do not see who he is during recovery.

During recovery months this participant becomes a kind of recluse, limiting physical social interactions to only those that he feels are necessary, for example, family events. Online however, he maintains the same level of sociality as when he is aesthetically in his prime. His online persona did not change even during his low points. He seemed to embody the overall persona of his brand when behind his screen both during and after his cycles. He consistently expressed and appeared to believe that who he is while on steroids is his truer self. He therefore identified more with his branded portrayal of self than his offline realities. It seems that although his offline life may be less than enjoyable, he finds solace in the fact that his online self persists. There is a complicated entangled relationship between branded selves and offline selves as users prioritise the idealised version of themselves despite the fact that it can damage their offline identities. Participants

downplayed the emotional toll of negotiating this kind of dissonance and justified the emotion work by explaining the benefits a muscular physique brings to their brand namely greater visibility and status.

When asked whether he would consider stopping and settling for more realistic shirtless photos it was clear that this question evoked feelings of discomfort. A fear of letting down his audience by damaging his brand was his primary concern. He felt that the inconsistency in his physical appearance would result in people losing interest and questioning the authenticity of his brand. Ultimately, endangering his online brand and losing interest from his audience took precedence over his physical and emotional wellbeing. This example highlights the physical and emotional toll that some people are willing to endure for public gratification on Instagram. They are going beyond surface acting and modifying their bodies to display an on brand performance.

As mentioned earlier over 30% of the non-microcelebrities consulted said that they would change their physical appearance offline so that they are more photogenic. Because the online survey limited further explanation I engaged in follow up interviews with male and female non-microcelebrities to ask for more information. Users who alter their bodies are not only motivated by a desire for a hyper masculine shirtless selfie. I spoke to 29 non-microcelebrities who reported undergoing either invasive medical cosmetic procedures such as botox, injectable fillers and surgery with the specific aim of either looking better in Instagram photos or looking more like their Instagram photos offline. The following responses demonstrate that young people are seeking medical cosmetic treatments to look 'better' in photos and to make the process of creating content for social media less labour intensive.

> I got filler in my lips because I hated how small they always looked in photos, I was done with the duck lips and re-applying lip liner. (Female, 18, Auckland, **non-celebrity**)
>
> I got my nose job for my self esteem, it always bothered me... Now I can take photos and look good from any angle. I literally only have to take a couple photos now before I get a good one. It's a dream, has made life a lot easier. (Male, 21, Sydney, **non-celebrity**)
>
> Fillers make your makeup look better in photos definitely. You always have this glow especially with flash on. Gives you a more polished, model like look without the effort... You also look more like your Instagram in real life so you have more confidence when meeting people. (Female, 29, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)
>
> It's the Kylie Jenner effect, everyone wants to look as good as her and she did it all with fillers and botox, pretty much. (Female, 19, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

> Fillers in lips and asses are making girls look like walking sex. It gets them attention online and that's really all they care about. It's funny how none of these girls are comfortable showing their families or even friends these photos in real life (Female, 22, Melbourne)

> The botox and fillers, especially in my jaw is subtle but you can see how I look fresher and more polished in photos now. I can take so many more photos with less effort and I think it's also given me my signature expression. (Male, 26, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

> Before my nose job I used to get so much anxiety taking photos, there was this elaborate plan to mask how gross it was.. mastering the head tilt and finding a good angle, really ruled my life... Every time I saw people taking photos I would panic and literally turn my back as I didn't want my nose captured on some hideous angle. Since my nose job I deleted photos on my Instagram where my nose looks disgusting so there's no evidence that I ever looked that way. (Female, 22, Sydney, **non-celebrity**)

Body modifications in the form of steroids and medical cosmetic procedures are enabling branded physical bodies. People's offline appearances are moulded according to aesthetic online beauty ideals driven by celebrified branding discourse. Looking more like celebrities such as Kylie Jenner both online and offline appears to restore a sense of personal authenticity by reducing identity dissonance. For those using steroids however, this sense of personal authenticity is short lived. The side effects create greater dissonance as their physical states during recovery are dramatically different to their online persona. One of the quotations above reveals that cosmetic injectables are aiding some female users achieved a pornified body aesthetic that accentuates bodily curves such as "lips and asses". Interestingly this participant explained that girls that she knows who modify their body according to this aesthetic template are uncomfortable displaying a pornified version of self in offline spaces, again highlighting dissonance felt between online and offline performances of sexuality.

Identity dissonance can be difficult to manage offline when there is a significant gap between online and offline body image. Not all users minimize these discrepancies by engaging in body modifications. Furthermore, physical appearance usually cannot be managed through surface acting as users do to uphold the facade of their emotive register and brand category. The following non-microcelebrity is fearful of meeting new people because of the dissonance she feels regarding her physical appearance.

> This is hard for me to speak about... I have always edited my photos so that my body looks a lot slimmer than what it is in real life... It was always on my mind when I met new people but people didn't ask about it or make any comments because it's kind of assumed, right, that everyone looks a bit exaggerated on their Instagram than they do offline, but in the past year or so, I've been really anxious about meeting new people because I've kinda gained weight but continue to edit my photos so that I consistently look as thin as I have always looked on my Insta. Once or

> twice guys in particular have made comments shaming me about it, calling me a catfish (someone who deceives people on social media) and so on, so ever since then I have had like, genuine full blown panic attacks about meeting new people. Sometimes It's just easier to talk to people over chat and let them see you in the way you want them to see you. (Female, 34, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

Similarities can be drawn here between this participant and the participant who uses steroids. When dissonance in relation to physical appearance cannot be easily managed users prefer to engage with others through their online brands. Both users have created an idealised branded portrayal of self that is their preferred identity and an identity that they choose to uphold despite the work involved in managing this dissonance and the difficulty this dissonance creates for them in their offline lives.

Surface acting Insta-photoshoots

There are countless photo genres, arguably all photo genres on Instagram that require surface acting in some capacity. As previously discussed, surface acting (Hochschild 1979, 1983) is the careful display of visual cues that is not felt by the performer. It is the type of acting present in impression management (Goffman 1959, 1969; Ashforth & Humphrey, 1993). Regardless of the type of photo a user is creating, there is a level of impression management required in way of surface acting so that the performance attached to a post is executed according to a branded persona. Below are posts from my own profile, the excerpt below each post explains the surface acting I needed to perform to produce the posts.

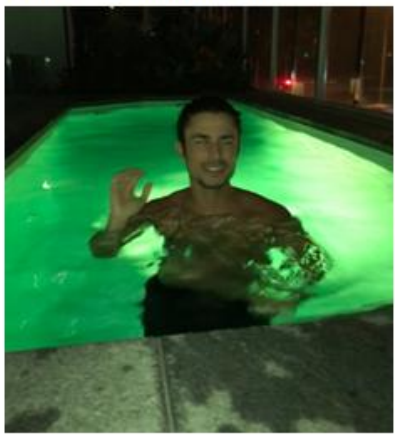
Figure 28: Surface acting in the post entitled 'Night moves'.

The dark, enigmatic emotional display of this photo seductively captioned 'Night moves' did in no way match my mood on the night it was taken. This photo was taken in Kirra, Queensland while on a birthday trip with my partner. Before this photo was taken we had watched a movie, had dinner and were in a playful mood. We were laughing between almost every shot making it difficult to get the mood right for this photo. We had to remind ourselves of the mood we were aiming for and act out that role through non-verbal cues, namely facial expression and body positioning. It was a stormy, cool night with light rain, we had asked the lady at reception earlier that day to put the pool temperature up in the hope it would make this shoot easier. The pool was warmer than usual but still cool. The cold breeze on my wet skin and hair made it difficult to not shiver and hide the discomfort in my eyes. The physical discomfort coupled with the light-hearted mood I was in off camera made it difficult to uphold the performance I wanted to convey in the photo. I was delivering a performance that involved exhibiting behaviour that I did not feel, emotionally.

This kind of surface acting requires effort. This can be likened to people working in service industries who are expected to regulate their emotional display and expression to adhere to pre-determined emotions that comply with the norms within a particular work culture for a wage (Hochschild, 1983). Within microcelebrity culture, users are regulating their emotional display in their personal lives in order to maintain public branded personas that become important facets of their overall identity. Although some enjoy monetary payment, the vast majority of us do so only for increased visibility. Nearly all of the 504 non-microcelebrities reported regularly engaging in surface acting when producing content for Instagram. The following two behind the scenes photos demonstrate the emotional state I was in at the time that was significant different to that performance portrayed in figure twenty eight.

Figure 29: Behind the scenes

Figure 30: Behind the scenes



Like the previous example, my emotional display in figure thirty one was drastically different to my emotional state when taking the photo. We were on a boat ride off the coast of Santorini to see a volcano and other landmarks. The surface acting here was evident through non-verbal cues including my pensive pose and still facial expression. During this photoshoot I was feeling extremely nauseous from the notoriously choppy Aegean Sea which made this pensive, relaxed pose difficult to maintain. In-between photos I would vomit in a plastic bag that was placed behind my back.

Figure 31: Surface acting in the post entitled 'Full speed to Nammos'

The photo in figure 32 was intended to appear as though I was a golfer however I actually learned the basics of golf on the day this photo was taken, for this post. I watched other more experienced golfers around me so that I could imitate their non-verbal cues including their stance, the way they gripped the club, how they hit the ball and their overall etiquette in order to produce the most authentic post possible in the eyes of my followers. The majority of the microcelebrities I interviewed have had to act out a new skill or role for posts, especially for sponsored posts that must appear believable in order to sell a product. People are learning new skills in order to deliver a convincing performance to self brand and increase their visibility. Surface acting therefore requires commitment that extends beyond time allocated to shoot a photo.

Figure 32: Surface acting in the post entitled 'Trialling retirement #notcoachella'

The aforementioned examples demonstrate the emotional labour involved in creating diverse content through surface acting. Surface acting creates branded content and masks dissonance between online and offline selves. Surface acting in face to face interactions is not a new phenomenon. People constantly change their verbal and non-verbal cues according to context, for example speaking in professional versus informal environments. However, performing surface acting specifically to manage a branded identity has not been well documented.

Conclusion

Participating in microcelebrity culture is labour intensive. Both microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities experience thinking of content to post and creating content as feeling like work. Identifying modes of visibility labour offers insight into the strategies influencers use however misses the invisible labour that is less about the strategies themselves and more about the emotion work involved in creating content. Planning branded social media content involves considering a user's personal brand as part of day-to-day life. Planning life events revolve around considering their public value. People are planning for a distinct facet of their identity and are nurturing that facet of identity that did not exist for most people before the advent of Instagram. Users are planning public performances designed for consumption on a mass scale even though it something they do not always feel like doing. Users are managing identity dissonance as part of their daily self presentation.

Sexualised content is a powerful and popular self branding tool. The normalisation of young people publicly performing sexual identities online that differ from their offline sexualities is a direct result of microcelebrity culture. Instagram's explore screen is dominated by shirtless-selfies with

shirtless selfies attracting significantly more likes than other kinds of posts. Microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities measured the provocativeness of shirtless-selfies by placing them on a continuum somewhere between four broad categories. The majority of men strived to make their shirtless selfies as neutral as possible so that they appeal to both women and men. A shirtless selfie that is generally either 'Relaxed' or an 'Action shot' is considered neutral as it is more likely to appeal to both sexes. The purpose of neutrality of sexuality is to increase the reach of a post as it is believed that a shirtless-selfie should be as widely consumable as possible. Gay men are also neutralising their shirtless selfies in order to appeal to a wider audience. Users prioritise brand neutrality over personal authenticity. Instagram story and Snapchat complicate self branding. Branding on visual social media no longer relies on permanent content. A user's reputation is built by an accumulation of both permanent and temporary digital traces. Users utilise different online outlets and performances to manage dissonance between their offline sexuality and online sexuality.

The nuanced processes surrounding shirtless selfies and body modifications exemplify the emotional labour that goes into creating content for social media. Users experience physical and emotional work when morphing themselves into celebrified brands. They enact surface and deep acting, manage two types of authenticity and negotiate identity dissonance through enacting diverse forms of aesthetic and sexualised labour. Navigating these processes involves a high level of brand awareness. A branded performance of self has become an indispensable aspect of identity that involves distinctive emotionally laborious processes. The following chapter explores identity work involved in managing a public audience.

Chapter Six: Managing a public audience

When using Instagram I have always felt a sense of obligation to document my life. The point of departure from the self documentation I have experienced in diaries and scrapbooking is that content posted on social media is consumed by a public audience. Conducting my online self as a brand forces me to consider my public value which is determined by how well I self document. The popular phrase "gram it or it didn't happen" captures the mindset that I have come to normalise. Moments that do not get posted to my Instagram profile, never become a part of my brand and therefore a part of my online identity. There is an omnipresent anxiety relating to ensuring that moments that have potential to further my brand are documented or seen by the public. Publicly documented digital traces of my life are important identity cues compiled on my page that determine my online social standing. As explained, my Instagram brand is an indispensable aspect of my identity that when put forward to the world is just as important as my physical self presentation. It is a permanent, readily accessible aspect of identity that I use to engage with the world.

If I'm feeling good about my physical appearance on a particular day, for example, having a good hair day and I don't post it, I see that as a wasted opportunity. I feel as though it isn't enough to be seen by people in the physical world. Moments often feel most valuable to me when they are shared with followers and receive a positive reaction. Public validation in forms of follows and likes feel so good that other forms of validation often cannot compete. In the previous chapter I explained the relief I feel when I have created branded content. Although there is intermediate relief at that time, I do not feel completely at ease until photos are shared with my audience. It is not until a post is made available to the public and received well that I feel as though a particular moment from my life has fully served its purpose, reached a public audience and furthered my online brand. This relief however is short lived. This feeling of obligation is sparked every time I glance at my phone and are reminded by Instagram's nagging icons that I could and should, be posting something.

Chapter four focused on how Instagram users select and produce branded identities. I explained how participants perform the self according to the display rules of microcelebrity culture, brand categories and emotive registers to introduce the discussion of managing identity dissonance. Chapter five narrows the focus to the identity work specifically involved in planning and creating social media content. Chapters four and five focus on how participants produce and manage their online profiles predominately through the lens of profile curation. This chapter explores the identity work enacted to maintain a public audience. I open this chapter by explaining the pressures participants feel to publicly document their lives to be seen by a public audience. I then explore

documentation processes, how influencers and non-microcelebrities interact with followers, manage audience responses and measure the value of their brands according to public reach. I go on to explain the role third parties play in assisting Instagram users in managing their expectations in relation to audience engagement. The phenomenon of social media detox is examined to better understand the emotional toll of documenting the self to satisfy a public audience. This chapter closes by exploring the bonds participants forge with their followers, the value participants place on these relationships, and how they change the way users approach offline relationships. Each section is underpinned by an analysis of how users manage dissonance between their branded identities and offline selves.

Publicly documenting the self

'Gram it or it didn't happen' relates to captions I've seen participants use where they say things like 'If I don't post a shirtless selfie did it even happen?' or 'If I don't post my tan lines was I even in Europe'. When digital influencers Aaron Rhodes, Ezra Williams, Michael Turchin, Yassine Serrar and Dion Visser were asked whether they would consider travelling overseas without posting pictures to their social media accounts they responded as follows.

> 'No! It's like a wasted opportunity, it's like what you were doing has slipped through the cracks and nobody gets to see it.. you don't get to document that, so it's like it never even happened.. You don't have anything to show for it... I mean I have 230,000 (at time of the interview) people who want to see what I'm doing, so it's like you let them down if you don't post anything. It's like you owe it to them in a way. I don't know.. I feel like it's just so part of my life now, to post everything I do, so it would feel weird or out of my element not to post something. Like I feel I could probably do it, but it would definitely be like, weird, and I'd feel like I'm missing out by not sharing with people what I'm doing. It would be like a wasted trip. It's so weird when you think about these things, you're like getting in my head! I'm starting to think about how crazy I sound. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

> Well it would be hard now, not being able to do that since we are all so accustomed to sharing on Instagram. I guess I could still travel.. but it definitely would be harder, what do you think? Like I'd think something is definitely missing, I'd feel like we're going back to, being transported back to the 90s you know, losing my ability to connect myself to people out there. (Ezra Williams, 2016, **celebrity**)

> Would I consider not.. I mean probably not. I feel like, I love to post when I travel.. So I take a lot of photos and then post when I get home, the few that I think are cool. But yeah I'll definitely post something. I'll be honest, I'll feel a little, how do I explain it, like I'm missing out. (Michael Turchin, 2015, **celebrity**)

> Stressed, because most bloggers like me have to share their daily life on their social media, especially when it's about travelling... Travelling is when you get the most opportunities to get good content, that is really what followers wait for. (Yassine Serrar, 2017, **celebrity**)

> Really upset because the thing I do the most on a holiday is taking pictures and edit them and post them on my Instagram. (Dion Visser, 2017, **celebrity**)

There was a sense of discomfort during interviews when microcelebrities contemplated not sharing moments with their followers. Influencers have normalised documenting themselves for public consumption. There was a palpable narrative of obligation and "missing out" as not documenting the self excludes them from the culture that they have become accustomed to. Despite the work involved in creating content, Ezra expressed that it would be hard for him to not document moments understood to be branding opportunities which further demonstrates the high value placed upon self documentation within microcelebrity culture.

The value of life moments are measured by public reach. Participants expressed that moments lose significance with Aaron stating that "it's like it never happened" if content is not publicly made available. Letting their audience down was a concern as they feel that they "owe" them content. Participants explained that when they do not document themselves they lose their ability to connect with others. Not sharing with followers compromises their brands as their brands are measured by statistics of popularity. The quotations above are from influencers who are often paid for the content they post therefore there is contractual pressure for these users to document the self. However non-microcelebrities expressed that they also feel obliged to publicly document themselves in order to participate in Instagram and maintain their followers. The following responses from non-microcelebrities demonstrate the pressure non-microcelebrities feel in relation to constantly being available to their audience and striving to ensure they receive positive responses.

> Pressure to create content and always be available to the public... Even when you don't feel it, it's important to post for them because you need them just as much as you need a pretty profile (Male, 22, Sydney, **non-celebrity**)
> Pressure to post. Instead of enjoying life's moments you are obsessed with entertaining your fans. It feels like you need them to be fed. (Male, 22, Daytona Beach, **non-celebrity**)

> Feeling forced to please audience, and that creates insecurities/anxiety. (Female, 18, Salt Lake City, **non-celebrity**)

> Constant pressure to increase your following and to post good content. (Male, 31, Windhoek, **non-celebrity**)

> Pressure to post regularly. Pressure to please your followers or fans. (Female, 21, Leuven, **non-celebrity**)

> The obsession and addiction that comes with wanting to constantly grow one's following I view as a negative. (Female, 21, Melbourne, **non-celebrity)**

Users put work into committing to brand categories and emotive registers and then build that persona through creating content, but as participants explained, without an audience that brand serves no purpose within microcelebrity culture. It is important to notice the language used in the quotations above. There is an overwhelming sense of pressure and anxiety. These users have under 1000 followers, do not consider themselves microcelebrities however a high importance is placed on satisfying their public audience and documenting the self according to a branded discourse. It was common for them to refer to their audience as fans, further demonstrating that a celebrified discourse has been normalised.

A life event appears to lose value to an individual if it is not shared with a public audience. The concept of 'value' was discussed in several interviews with users explaining that their travel adventure, holiday, or other aesthetically pleasing "Insta-worthy' activities would have no to little value to them if it was not documented, or not documented correctly. A holiday or any moment for that matter is understood as being well documented or of high value if it is received by a significant number of people relative to their following, receives positive responses and in effect enhances their brand. Both influencer and non-microcelebrity participants expressed that online documentation is about visibility offline as well as online. As mentioned, a successful online brand amounts to social status offline meaning that successful documentation on Instagram, translates to offline visibility. Participants mould their content in order to meet their audience's expectations. In this sense the direction of a user's brand is influenced by audience demand. As we saw in previous chapters, identity dissonance is managed when performing branded portrayals of self. In this context, dissonance is associated with documenting moments as participants prioritise being available to their followers even when they do not feel like it. Furthermore, social media documentation affects how users feel about their lives in offline contexts as participants placed higher values on life moments that are made publicly available.

Influencers expressed that there are benefits to documenting moments that extend beyond satisfying audience demands and building a successful brand. Documenting the self according to a celebrified discourse results in an abundance of photos that provide a detailed account of user's lives. The following digital influencers explain how their digital legacies preserve memories that would not have been documented if it was not for microcelebrity culture.

> I mean I was born in 1991 and by the time I was 15 I had a camera phone and I basically have been pretty thoroughly documenting my entire life from like the mundane daily things to larger more important events since I was 15, so anyway yes, I do look back at old photos... I have an extremely detailed account of my life since I was a teenager and I just think that's really interesting. It's something that is a relatively new concept in the world and children being born now will basically have that for their entire lives, but for me I don't have much photographic evidence of myself before 15. Obviously I have pictures, but its these little snapshots of these little moments in time that you kind of create borderline false memories around, I mean it's very easy to invent the past but with the photographical evidence I have of myself over the past like 8 years due to social media, I can't make things up. I can look back at it and accurately remember things in detail and can remember things somewhat objectively because I have a photo that gives me a lot of information. (Patrick Belaga, 2015, **celebrity**)

> Fun to see how you've evolved, like sometimes I think in like 10 years from now where is this all going to be, like our generation is documenting our lives whereas before you didn't really have anything but a photo album where as now we have photos and videos from almost every day of our lives for years and we can see what we were doing, so it's going to be really interesting when I'm looking back in 5 or ten years on my life and see every part that got me there.. it is weird when you think about it. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

In this context, participants attach value to documented moments regardless of whether they are shared with a public audience. Participants value the highly saturated, chronological, memory provoking traces made possible by documentation practices. Self documentation provides them extremely detailed memory cues that would not of have existed in the absence of microcelebrity culture. The rest of this chapter explores processes of managing identity dissonance while managing self documentation.

Life-streaming brands and ephemeral social media

Instagram stories have transformed the way life-streaming is experienced on visual social media. The affordances of Instagram stories enable and encourage more frequent updates with many participants posting to stories multiple times a day and often hourly. Before Stories, posting extensively planned, highly edited content regularly was required to keep followers engaged. Now, if a user is having a busy few weeks where they do not have the time to plan and execute permanent content, posting a temporary post that takes minimal effort to create will suffice.

Posting less polished content allows influencers and non-microcelebrities the opportunity to stretch the boundaries of their branded persona without tarnishing their brand. As discussed, Instagram Stories are often more representative of a user's offline interests than permanent content. By being less edited, stories can reduce feelings of dissonance between online brands and offline identities. It is important to note that Stories are still branded, just to a lesser extent. Stories

that depart too far, too often, from a user's Instagram profile often result in negative audience responses. The following participants explained how Stories reduce pressures associated with creating content. They explain that Stories make it easier to document content and in effect maintain a public audience while reducing feelings of dissonance.

> Followers need to see content if they are going to continue to follow you and engage with you. Without followers an Instagram account loses its popularity... It was a lot of work making high quality content all the time, Stories don't have to be as perfect as posts, they can just be things you do casually already do in your day-to-day so they're definitely easier to make, it is easier to keep audiences interested. (Female, 24, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

> There have been times where I'll be looking at my Instagram and realise that my followers have decreased and then I realise that that's probably because I haven't posted in like two months or something crazy like that. Before stories I would have to plan something to get a good post, now I can just take a lazy picture of myself on the couch where I look semi-cute and that will usually do until I feel like doing a proper post... I explain myself in the caption by saying something like 'been a hectic few weeks, taking a minute' or 'taking some me time' and followers appreciate that honesty and that makes me feel good as well. (Male, 25, Nashville, **non-microcelebrity**)

As explained in previous chapters, departing from a brand through permanent digital traces can have a damaging effect, usually resulting in a decline in audience engagement and perceptions of authenticity. Using ephemeral visual social outlets in conjunction with permanent posting can enhance audience perceptions of a sense of authenticity because consuming less edited, slightly off-brand content makes them feel as though they are privy to more details of people's offline lives. All influencers reported receiving positive feedback from their followers since using Snapchat and Instagram Story with followers feeling like they can relate more to the content they post. Stories also restore a sense of personal authenticity as identity dissonance is minimized when user's offline performances can more easily be incorporated into a user's online brand. Temporary social media makes online performances easer however they complicate them at the same time.

Temporary social media makes documentation of the self more efficient, effective and enjoyable however it also restricts users from disengaging with the self surveillance and identity work inherent to online performances. Ephemeral social media has resulted in life-streaming on a scale not seen before. Online brands have become fluid, mimicking identity construction in the physical social world, rather than being static depictions frozen in time. Marwick (2013) used the term life-streaming in her work into Twitter and in doing so defined it as "the ongoing sharing of personal information to a networked audience, the creation of a digital portrait of one's actions and

thoughts... the always on aspect of social media, the constant pings and alerts that make smart phones so hard to ignore" (pg. 208).

As a result of ephemeral social media, I am now documenting content and managing identity dissonance multiple times a week, even sometimes multiple times a day rather than once every fortnight or so. Surface acting is usually less pronounced as performances are less polished however they are still branded. Surface acting therefore it is still exercised, just to a lesser extent. Participants expressed that they feel as though they are constantly exercising brand awareness and therefore in a constant state of brand surveillance. It's temporary, visual nature replicates the way physical moments happen and pass offline, creating an atmosphere where there are constant flows of social media documentation. The emotional labour involved in managing brand awareness and surface acting is omnipresent as day-to-day online performances are now fluid rather than static. The advent of temporary social media can alleviate feelings of identity dissonance by enabling users to share content that relates to their offline performances. Stories also ease pressures associated with content quality, increase user's sense of agency, and sense of authenticity both personally and based on audience perceptions. However at the same time it induces more frequent assessments of identity dissonance as users more regularly toggle between online and offline personas. Stories induce pressure to life-stream online more often and in effect manage audience responses more frequently.

The 2019 addition to Instagram Stories 'highlights' further complicates the way users engage with their audiences through Instagram Stories. Stories are still used to post temporary content however the highlights addition means that 'temporary posts' can now become permanent. This has made the Stories feature align more closely with the affordances associated with permanent posting. It undermines the original function of Stories which was to encourage more frequent posting that is less edited and therefore more closely aligned with offline presentations of self. Participants expressed that since they realised the potential Stories have to become part of their permanent brands, they put more effort into them. Stories that receive positive feedback are often chosen to become highlights or permanent Stories. The highlights feature narrows the gap between permanent and temporary content and induces pressure to life-stream high quality branded content on an almost constant basis.

> Instagram posts are magazine photoshoots where people know that they are supposed to make themselves look perfect. Stories is where people act like they're going about their daily business looking perfect, all the time. Just like reality TV stars don't actually look and behave that way in their everyday life, highlights are in no way representative of someone's everyday

> lifestyle but they deceptively look like they are because that was originally the point of that Snapchat style posting. (Male, 22, San Diego, **non-celebrity**)
>
> The fact that people now have these highlight icons on their profile means that it is harder to make stories a fun, effortless space where I can share less flattering aspects of my life. (Female, 26, New York, **non-celebrity**)
>
> Negative is that stories have slowly become more branded, first it was the filters that look very similar to the original filters, and now highlights means that stories are now too, taken very seriously. Nowhere on Instagram is care-free anymore, nowhere is raw and honest. (Male, 27, Glasgow, **non-celebrity**)
>
> Stories made Instagram feel more real with people showing more of who they are through showing daily activities. People still share the real stories but since highlights, stories feel like they should make everyday casual shots also perfect. Making something look effortlessly perfect is actually harder. (Male, 24, Athens, **non-celebrity**)

Electing to use the highlights feature transforms the way authenticity based on audience perceptions is understood. Stories are still there to function as a lens into the backstage, every-day aspects of people's lives however the deliberate nature of 'un-edited' highlights has resulted in users conveying false transparency. Users are now surface acting not only to create idealised branded portrayals of self but to create the illusion that their less polished, every-day aspects of life are effortlessly in line with their idealised self. It has become harder to post personally significant content that is representative of offline interests because of this tension. Highlights induce a heightened sense of identity dissonance as the permanency now associated with stories makes users be more deliberate about how temporary content is branded.

Participants reported that Instagram Stories generally made them feel a higher level of authenticity from the people they follow as they got to see unedited, daily insights that are more representative of user's day-to-day offline realities. Since highlights, users are grappling with the idea of inauthentic authenticity, or judging when someone is falsely appearing authentic to followers. Since the advent of highlights, deciding on which Instagram Stories to post involves another layer of assessing dissonance. As the participant quoted above explained, delivering a performance based on false transparency is more difficult. People accept the idealised version of self through permanent posts and as demonstrated in chapter four, are skilled at deciphering how and why idealised branded portrayals of self are exaggerated. On Instagram Stories, people are still guided by the mindset that a user should be unedited, honest and in effect vulnerable when life-streaming daily real-time insights. Participants expressed that they are learning to assess the surface acting involved in creating the illusion that less polished, every day aspects of life are effortlessly in line with branded identities. Online performances are now layered. Understanding the tension

between permanent, two versions of temporary online performances and offline versions of self requires new assessments of identity dissonance which makes it harder for audiences to assess authenticity in the people they follow.

Stories and the highlights feature ultimately create more work for Instagram users, more frequently. Pressure to publicly document the self and engage with followers has been heightened with the advent of Instagram Stories. Stories has created a social climate where documenting moments of the self online mimics real time self presentation in offline social situations. Stories both reduce and induce identity dissonance and perceptions of authenticity depending on how they are used. The following section explores how both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities respond to audience feedback and specific processes they engage in to manage audience responses.

Audience feedback: Responses and strategies

Pressure to document moments in a particular way is motivated by a need to please a public audience. Microcelebrities reported the positive emotions felt when sharing content that receives a high number of likes and increases their following. Aaron Rhodes explains this experience using his coming out video as an example.

> Overwhelming, I expected it to do well, but I didn't expect for it to get as crazy and as far as it did. I mean, I remember when I got the call from CNN, it was the first thing that reached out to me, I was like shaking, omgosh what's happening right now. So it was pretty crazy and overwhelming for sure... But obviously with that it comes with negativity from people who don't agree with it, especially because it was a controversial issue to do with being gay, LGBT.. so I expected that. I still haven't read any of the comments on that video to this day, 6 months later, because I didn't want to get any of that in my head because it was such a positive experience and I want to keep it that way. Cause I feel like if you read something that's negative I feel like that's all you think about, so I made a point to myself that I wouldn't read anything that people said about it because I want it to remain positive in my head. Cause if I don't, it'll ruin it for me. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

Aaron's video exceeded expectations he had in terms of follower reactions as it went viral. His video reached not only new social media followers but multiple broadcast media channels. Aaron received a surge of over 200,000 new followers to his Instagram following this video and as explained in chapter three, received brand deals and other work opportunities. Aaron explained to me that this video "changed his and his brother's worlds" he described it as a defining moment that shifted the trajectory of his life. This is an extreme example but non-microcelebrity participants explained that witnessing such events inspires them to strive for similar audience responses.

As discussed in chapter three, Aaron's viral video was about him and his twin brother coming out to their followers and their father on YouTube. It was pressure from their followers to disclose their sexual orientation that led to this post being created. The video demonstrates just how reluctant the brothers were to take this step in their offline lives however they did it with the intention of pleasing their audience. Prior to this video the brothers chose to omit their sexualities from their public personas. This is an example of how Instagram users manage dissonance between their offline desires and online behaviours in order to maintain a public audience.

Aaron's example also demonstrates the importance placed on achieving authenticity as judged by audience perceptions. Furthermore this example highlights the active tension between private experience and public performance. This is a fine line that becomes blurred and sometimes nonexistent as a result of self documentation practices a part of microcelebrity culture. As explained, Aaron's emotive register is intimate stories so this video was very much in line with this brand, hence it became a permanent fixture on their profiles. The way Aaron came out to his followers mirrors the way participants with different emotive registers use Stories to share personal moments that they would not permanently post.

Posts are not always received well by an audience and this too has an emotional toll on social media users. Photos may not receive the number of likes that was expected for a number of reasons including the time it was posted, image quality and it departing too far from their brand. The responses below describe how influencers feel when they do not receive the public response they expected.

> I feel sad I guess. Then I start thinking about the time of day I posted it and why it didn't do as well as the others or if there's a reason... You stare at it for like forever, I don't know.. I don't know.. and then you try to follow up with a photo that does really well so that you don't feel as bad about yourself. (Aaron Rhodes, 2015, **celebrity**)

> I try and identify the reason, what's going on and why it hasn't it got the likes I expected, and that reason changes. That reason can be timing. That reason can be the photo is too complex, it can be too simple.. the content can be slightly offensive or controversial or it can be too obviously baiting people to like it and in that case they won't. You know, there are so many, so many reasons and it's hard to parse them all out. (Patrick Belaga, 2015, **celebrity**)

> Well it's funny because, Instagram is, it becomes such a focal point in everyone's lives, myself included. So it's just like with everything else, you almost feel rejected I don't know. I don't know, you don't feel validated as stupid as that sounds, so it definitely plays into your psyche a bit, like if you're in a play and no one applauded for you, it's that same feeling. (Michael Turchin, 2015, **celebrity**)

It is evident that these influencers are affected emotionally when their online content is not received well by their audience. Feelings of failure, rejection and self-blame are common amongst both influencers and non-microcelebrities when their posts receive a 'low' number of likes or negative comments. Receiving less likes than was expected and negative comments signifies that audiences did not enjoy a particular post as much as previous posts that received a higher number of likes and more positive comments. A negative audience response tends to be attributed to intrinsic factors and the user believes that they are required to do something to rectify it.

Aaron explained that he tries to follow a negatively received post with a positively received post to feel better about himself. Michael likened the experience to being in a play and having no one applaud for you. This highlights the importance of audience responses within microcelebrity culture where branded performances are measured by following statistics. Several non-microcelebrities also demonstrated self-blaming behaviours when they received a lower amount of likes than they desired. They also explained that like Aaron, many non-microcelebrities try to follow negatively received post with a positively received post to feel better about themselves. They explained that in order to do this they must remain on brand, displaying that they are in a positive mood and create a near perfect branded display to achieve the response they desire despite experiencing negative emotions offline. Users are managing dissonance at this time as they supress the feeling of disappointment they are experiencing offline that conflict with their branded persona. The following quotations explain how participants manage this situation.

> You have to keep that mentality of 'get back up and don't give up'. You just do your best based on what you've learnt about your followers and what they prefer to see. (Male, 20, Las Vegas, **non-celebrity**)

> It can be hard when you're proud of a photo and you believe you look hot in it and then realise ok, maybe I don't look good, clearly I've missed something because people just don't like it all, and that is definitely an aspect I find challenging from an emotional viewpoint. (Male, 28, Sacramento, **non-celebrity**)

> Acting as though you're not affected by a photo that has done horribly with the likes is a struggle. I've been mad at my followers but you have to stay diplomatic and just carry on as normal and strive to be better next post. (Female, 19, Brussels, **non-celebrity**)

A negative audience response or 'low' number of likes is relative to a users following. For example, I have interviewed an influencer who engaged in self blaming behaviours when a post received 200,000 likes instead of his usual 300,000 and a non-microcelebrity who behaved the same way when they received 50 likes instead of 100 likes. Natural fluctuations of audience engagement

coupled with ever increasing competition within the platform means that there will always be disappointment in the number of likes a user receives. No matter how long they spend trying to identity a reason, users cannot control how many people their post reaches or how they will receive it. Furthermore there will always be another user with more likes and more followers to compare themselves to.

One way of trying to secure positive audience engagement is to communicate with followers regularly and consistently. For influencers in particular, this strategy is felt to be an extremely time consuming and labour intensive aspect of Instagram. For influencer participants who use Instagram as a source of income, sufficient audience engagement is vital to their influencer status and relationship to personal management. Pressure to communicate with their followers in order to maintain status often comes from their management agencies. It is common for digital influencers who take on brand deals to have a manager from one of the many PR agencies specialising in social media influencers. Neglecting this aspect of their Instagram can compromise their income as well as their influencer status. In the following excerpt Tasia Seger explains how these agencies monitor audience engagement and penalise negative follower responses.

> So Gracia and I used to be really bad.. we replied, but sometimes we didn't reply, but nowadays, you want to reply because now with these PR agencies, not only do they look at your followers, they want to measure the interactions you have with your followers. It looks bad if you have this many followers but you only communicate with this many. So if you scroll down in our past photos you can see that we did reply, but we weren't very active in replying, we would reply to maybe 10 comments out of all 30. This year we decided we need to reply to all the people and not take too long because you want to keep them around... They (management) know about your interactions from comments but often they ask for statistics from your Instagram. If you put yourself as a public figure on Instagram you can check statistically your response rate that is now automatically calculated by Instagram... If they see that you disregard followers and that followers are complaining about being ignored they will pull you up on it and maybe even threaten contracts (Tasia Seger, 2017, **celebrity**)

For both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities engaging with followers is a fundamental part of successful audience engagement. Internet celebrities are often under surveillance by PR agencies that monitor their level of audience engagement. Digital influencers who do not respond consistently to their followers run the risk of receiving a bad reputation amongst PR agencies and losing brand deals. Although the stakes for influencers are higher given that they run the risk of compromising their source of income, non-microcelebrities similarly are trying to avoid negative responses from followers. Non-microcelebrities explained that followers often post rude comments on their photos or show their disappointment or unfollow them if they take too long to respond to a

personal message. Within a culture where brands are measured by following statistics, audience responses matter to both cohorts of users.

It is important to consider that some of the influencer participants receive hundreds, sometimes thousands of comments which means that it not possible for them to respond to all of them. These participants explained that they strive to respond to a random portion of comments on each post so that audiences see that they do respond to follower comments and therefore might one day respond to theirs. One of them has a system where they ritualistically respond to the first 40 comments. This influencer has shared this with his audience. Therefore his followers accept that they will only get a response if they comment fast enough making commenting somewhat of a competition for recognition. He explained that this system also boosts his engagement statistics that are assessed by his management as his engagement rate is rated 'faster' than many other influencers in his following range.

Participants explained another method to increase their engagement statistics. These participants simply respond to as many comments as possible to increase their engagement statistics. One of them revealed that he has once spent 6 hours responding to all of his comments. Participants often have little interest in communicating with followers however behave as though they do. If a user responds to all of their 50 comments their comment tally doubles to 100. Even if an influencer can only respond to a portion of their comments it will still boost their level of engagement and offer the illusion of achieving greater reach. This finding suggests that audience engagement is driven by a desire for brand advancement rather than socialisation or building bonds with followers. Influencers and non-microcelebrities maintain emotional engagement with their audience through responding to comments using emojis. Participants explained that it is not emotionally taxing to simply add an emoji such as love heart eyes or excitement to convey emotion even when they do not feel like doing so. Pressing an emoji does not involve emotion management in the form of surface acting. This method therefore involves minimal emotional labour to manage dissonance between their branded self and offline moods.

Building an audience is hard work. Although followers can organically increase through posting content that audiences enjoy, my observations found that an increase in followers is usually a result of deliberate efforts to attract new followers. Tasia Seger explained one method often referred to by participants as 'baiting'. Baiting involves finding people who have liked posts similar to your own, and liking or commenting on that person's profile in order to lure them into visiting your page. Given

that they have previously like similar branded content it is believed that they are likely to also like your content, and hopefully follow you. Participants explained that the most difficult aspect of baiting is pretending to have genuine interest in a high volume of people and their content. Participants often engage in surface acting to deliver this fake interest that often involves leaving complimentary comments and initiating small talk in attempts to build good rapport. They expressed that once positive interactions have taken place, people are more likely to follow them. Tasia explained how the baiting method is practised.

> Gracia and I... don't get me wrong, everyone does this to gain more following, but you would go to say the MKR hashtag, and I would like those photos to get that interaction going, then they like us back. This is how you gain following and attention without using things or posting things. There are real followers to gain just by engagement, by liking their photos because usually they will like your photos back.. sometimes they say oh this account looks pretty interesting, I might follow you. You don't necessarily have to follow them first, but you can make that interaction first. (Tasia Seger, 2017, **celebrity**)

Adopting hashtags to advertise posts to prospective followers is another strategy. Using the hashtags #summer for example, will reveal every post that has incorporated #summer into it. Incorporating a popular or trending hashtag at any particular moment will mean that a photo will have greater reach. Participants explained that they often create content according to trending hashtags. One participant explained how he purchased a t-shirt that related to trending hashtag just so that he could take a selfie that he believed was more likely to go viral. There was dissonance between his offline desires and online intentions as he did not particular like the t-shirt, nor did he wear it again once the selfie was taken.

Another method is 'following to unfollow'. This often controversial method involves following people so that they follow you back, and then eventually unfollowing them in the hope that they will continue to follow you, and repeating this process over and over with new people. The aim is to increase your following while maintaining a ratio where you are following fewer people than follow you. Having more followers of 'fans' than the number of users you follow is consistent with celebrified branding that characterises microcelebrity culture. This finding further suggests that audience engagement is driven by a desire for brand advancement rather than socialisation. There are apps where users can pay third parties to follow and unfollow periodically on their behalf. Both paid internet celebrities and unpaid non-microcelebrities reported using this audience building strategy however they found it difficult to speak about given the negative connotations associated

with it. One non-microcelebrity explained the tensions and stigma associated with using this method.

> It's unorthodox in that no one wants to be unfollowed. We all know how shitty it feels to be unfollowed by someone and in this case people do it for no reason other than self advancement. People do it in the hope that it goes unnoticed and that they will continue to follow them for weeks, months, sometimes years and forget that that you ever followed them in the first place. Plenty of people have done this, it's easy and fast to do, but don't speak about it because it's like, damaging to someone's character, if people associate you with this method you can be seen as a savage, like a selfish, overtly likes obsessed individual who has a total disregard of others feelings... I do it sure and it honestly breaks my heart when you first follow someone, and you get the inbox saying 'hello! Nice to meet you or where are you from?' Or something like that. You can feel that they're excited to have the new follower and then you just unfollow them a week after and you feel like a total shit head, but you have no choice as you can't follow everyone. It be great if people didn't take it personally. (Male, 26, Sydney, **non-celebrity**)

Internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities explained that there is an emotional impact in regards to the following to unfollow method. Participants usually take unfollowing personally because they are often unsure if this strategy has been employed or if the person who followed them genuinely wanted to follow them. Unfollows are often followed by aggressive messages shaming users for using this tactic even when the unfollowed person has used this method themselves. Despite this method being a widely used and accepted method, users are more than often not prepared to be unfollowed themselves. Participants reported the aftermath of this strategy as being difficult to deal with.

Participants reported feelings of guilt as they feel as though they have upset someone else for the sake of self advancement. They also struggle with the fact that backlash often takes the form of online abuse. Furthermore, participants explained that they have had to manage dissonance in relation to negative character traits associated with this method. Undesirable character traits such as being self indulgent often become attached to people's offline identities. Influencers and non-microcelebrities consistently expressed that this method does not represent their offline character traits and that they struggle when they receive this kind of criticism. Criticism usually does not deter them from using it again in the future as they describe it as being a fast and extremely effective audience building tool.

Multiple participants explained that posting a shirtless photo after following and unfollowing a large number of people is one strategy used when trying to retain the new followers they have

acquired from this method. They believe that posting a non-sexualised photo is less likely to entice new followers to keep following you. They explained that when posting shirtless selfies, more of the people they unfollowed continue to follow them. This example further highlights the power of sexualised content. This example suggests that shirtless selfies are so highly regarded by audiences that they continue to consume this content despite being unfollowed.

> After a clean out (unfollowing a large portion of people) I'm strategic about what I post. If you post a boring photo of say, a building, a lot of people will think, hang on, why did I follow this person if she isn't following me... I understand this process because I've been on the receiving end of being unfollowed, many, many times... If I see a sexy photo of someone, to be frank, I don't care why I followed them, I don't care if they follow me or if they unfollowed me, most of the time I will continue to follow them because they're hot. (Male, 29, New York, **non-celebrity**)

Brand refinement is a strategy used to meet changing audience demands. Instagram allows users to view their following demographics, following and unfollowing trends and other follower behaviours such as the times followers are most active. Through having access to follower ages, gender, location and online behaviours users are able to determine the content that is most suitable to post and refine their brand accordingly. As discussed, internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities adjust their brand retrospectively by deleting old posts that are no longer suited to the intended direction of their brand. The following participant explains how he engages with this method while managing audience responses. This participant expresses that this method exacerbates feelings of dissonance as he continually refines his brand to suit audience demands, spiralling his brand further away from his offline interests.

> Business feature show how many people unfollow you after certain posts, when they're more engaged etc, having access to this kind of info makes it kind of a no brainer to adjust your content accordingly... I usually make my next post more like what got the better response and my brand takes new directions and after a while you're like wow, this is where I am now. You tweak and tweak away and you become even more removed from your Instagram in the sense that your brand is purely a brand in the traditional sense, not really representative of who you are as a human. (Male, 29, Melbourne, **non-microcelebrity**)

Participants used 'Stockpiling' as a method to satisfy audience demands. Many influencers and non-microcelebrities expressed that it is simply unfeasible to create new high quality branded content on a regular basis. In order to maintain supply and demand users often take multiple photos during an Instagram photo-shoot so that they can be used at a later time. Users often post photos taken months or years earlier and make it seem as though were taken recently. Participants

explained that they often search through photo archives to find old photos when audiences express that they are dissatisfied with the regularity of their posting. Photos that come from stockpiling are typically not as highly regarded by audiences as they prefer to see updates from a user, for this reason users try to mask the fact that a post is stockpiled. Stockpiling satisfies follower demand for content and has the potential to attract new followers. Stockpiled photos can make it on the popular page like any other photo and attract new followers who are not aware of whether the post is current or not, therefore a stockpiles photo can have the same power to pull new followers in the explore screen than current photos.

Another strategy used was referred to by participants as “delete to re-post”. Participants reported deleting a post shortly after it was posted when it did not appear to be gaining likes as quickly as they anticipated from their audience demographic data. Users then post that photo at another time that has been suggested to them as a maximum exposure time frame. The following participants explained how using this method evokes feelings of dissonance relating to their desire to share personally significant photos with family and friends and the obligation they feel to maintain the level of public sociality driven by celebrified discourse.

> I have posted photos while in different time zones that have meant my normal followers don’t see them... I have deleted them and posted them when my followers are most active, prime time for me is around 7pm. It has meant that my family have missed seeing photos because I post them when they are asleep, I find that inconvenient. (Female, 21, Sydney, **non-celebrity**)

> People are now very conscious of when they post, everyone has their peak or prime times. Sometimes these times change and people notice this when they post and get fewer likes. This is why people post at random times like really late at night that don’t really make sense. It’s random because why would you post a selfie of yourself eating brunch at 2am? People do that because the majority of their followers are on an opposite time-zone (Male, 18, New Jersey, **non-celebrity**)

An alternative use to stories is to advertise or promote permanent posts when a photo has received a lower amount of likes than was desired. Participants regularly share stories where they provide a screenshot of their recently posted photo signalling that it is available for followers to like. These self promotional posts usually conceal an element of the photo in a way that induces intrigue so that followers are enticed to view the user’s new post. An example would be a shirtless photo where the writing ‘new post’ covers the majority of the torso. Participants explained that advertising stories is often done with the intention to boost their photos exposure. Users often miss photos on her news feed that regularly updated. A simple screen refresh could mean that a user’s story has

been permanently removed from a newsfeed. Advertising a post to stories means that for 24 hours, followers have an additional opportunity to view a particular post.

The Instagram black market: User's expectations and aspirations

The increasing number of once ordinary Instagram users who have achieved fame, social capital and brand deals entice non-microcelebrities into believing they can do the same. It is important to recognise that not all who engage in the aforementioned audience building strategies will achieve their desired goal of having a popular, successful online brand. There is a market to help people grow their social media presence. In almost every corner of Instagram users are exposed to the 'Insta black market', there is an abundance of advertisements for companies offering artificial followers, likes and comments at competitive prices. Users can pay these companies to automatically enhance their social media profile if they are unable to make it happen on their own. The pressures that lead people to the insta black market can be likened to the pressures that lead people to use steroids and cosmetic injectables with the specific aim of enhancing their online brand.

Some of these companies have real people working for them, operating behind multiple false personas where they interact with users full-time making it extremely difficult to decipher their legitimacy. These faux users, post photos to create a realistic online persona of their own so that they go undetected. Instagram bans the use of such accounts so faux accounts are hiding from Instagram users and Instagram staff. People who work for these growth engines are part of the microcelebrity labour industry. When building their faux online brands, they are exerting paid labour in order to perform identity work on the behalf for others. Other nodes enacting labour within the terrain of microcelebrity culture are PR agencies who manage internet celebrities. The fact that users are turning to the Insta black market further highlights the pressure to participate in and comply with the display rules of microcelebrity culture. Participants feel continual pressure to produce a successful brand and an engaged audience is an important facet of any successful Instagram brand. A significant public audience has become synonymous with successful online and offline identity construction. Participants explained that the status of their online following has bearing on their self esteem in offline contexts.

> After people get a taste of Instagram popularity they feel really good about themselves. It's like all those memes that joke around by saying that you should date a girl before she becomes an Instagram celebrity because then she'll be too full of herself. Once people have Instafamous as part of their psyche they have to maintain it to keep feeling good about

> themselves offline, many can't handle when people start to lose interest so they do crazy things like buy followers to stay up on that high. (Male, 25, Chicago, **non-celebrity**)
>
> Insta fame can be likened to being the popular kid at school with the coolest clothes. I think that people who use growth engine apps do it to make themselves feel better about themselves... Once people reach that level they want and need more and more, they can't let it go hence demand for the black market. (Male, 26, Birmingham, **non-celebrity**)

Growing one's audience makes participants feel better about their offline identities. An interesting tension lies in that participants often feel negative about the dissonance between their inflated online brands and offline personas yet having an online following that in no way corresponds to their offline social network evokes positive feelings. Participants explained that once users achieve microcelebrity or influencer status it becomes a part of both their online and offline identities. When online brands suffer, users feel the effects of that offline. In this sense users turn to the insta black market to restore self esteem lost as a result of a decline in online audience engagement. The following section describes the act of social media detox. Social media detoxes relate to the desire social media feels to refrain from documenting the self and engaging in audience building strategies for short periods of time to restore a sense of personal authenticity. Users restore personal authenticity by refraining from posting to satisfy their audience and prioritising doing things they enjoy in their offline lives.

Social media detox

For internet celebrities, not documenting things like holidays is seen as a luxury that they cannot afford. Enjoying moments privately and thus not devoting time to creating content and managing their audiences was usually laughed off as an unrealistic yet enticing endeavour during interviews. As explained, participants feel obliged to publicly document themselves to build an audience. Most internet celebrities and many non-microcelebrities have attempted what they call 'social media detoxes' where a certain time frame is allocated free of social media use. For myself, and participants, social media detoxes are seen as a time where we refrain from using social media in order to fully experience moments in our lives privately. It is a time where experiencing a moment in our lives for ourselves takes priority over documenting it for public consumption. During this time users have more time to do the things they enjoy in their offline lives and therefore enjoy feelings of personal authenticity. Temporarily dissociating from self branding means that people should relieve themselves from the work of managing identity dissonance.

Every participant that attempted a social media detox reported initially feeling more relaxed in that they have disengaged from managing identity dissonance however, this relaxation was short lived. None of the microcelebrities detoxes lasted as long as they hoped it would. In the lead up to abandoning their detoxes, feelings of social exclusion and a fear of missing out or 'FOMO' were reported. In the context of this study FOMO refers to the fear of missing a branding opportunity that could potentially increase audience engagement. For both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities, rather than time-out, holidays entail a mandate to work harder for the followers and further your Instagram brand. Both samples feel the same pressures to work for their social media while on vacation and share the same internal struggle between experiencing a moment privately and publicly documenting it.

The lure to comply with microcelebrity culture and document moments was too strong as none of the microcelebrities interviewed were successful, nor do they know someone who has successfully completed a detox. The month of June 2017 was recorded as my social media detox. After hearing about it from participants and through the media (*Daily Mail*, 2018, 2017; *The Economist*, 2017) I was intrigued and wanted to attempt this myself. Below are my autoethnographic excerpts. They demonstrate my experiences during this process including negotiating social connection, satisfying my audience, dealing with issues of personal authenticity and my experience of 'value' in relation to documenting content with my followers.

June 5, 2017

It is my understanding from what I've learnt from other microcelebrities, that a social media detox should mean completely withdrawing from Instagram. That means, not posting to it or not checking what others have posted. At the beginning of my detox, I had planned to withdraw completely from Instagram, It is now day three and I'm beginning to feel isolated and as though I'm missing out on what is happening in the world. Logically, I knew that I have only missed a few photos, and I can pretty much guess what they would be, but not viewing these public displays of self feels as though I'm losing a connection to people because this public display through Instagram is the only connection that I have had with most of the people I follow. My primary concern however is that I will lose a lot of followers by the time this detox is completed.

June 6, 2017

It is now day four and I have given in under the pressure of being asked whether I had seen a particular person's photos and what had happened to them. I've checked Instagram, but from this

point onwards I have decided to detox only in so far that I will not post anything or communicate with my followers until the end of the month. I am completely refraining from engaging with my audience.

June 12, 2017

My social media detox planned to last a month lasted one week, up until I had a friend's birthday party at a scenic location that I could not resist documenting. Mirroring what was said during interviews, not documenting it felt as though the event would have been a wasted opportunity. During the internal struggle leading up to my surrender I questioned why I felt that this event had to be documented and what would happen if I didn't? The other influencers expressed that not documenting results in the event having no to little 'value'. Before my attempted detox I understood the term value in relation to the value content has to an audience in so far that if it is not seen by the public, I was not advancing my online brand. Publicising these personal moments for others to experience took priority over experiencing it for myself. I felt disappointed in myself that I couldn't prioritise myself, and experience things privately. Aside from value in relation to audience engagement and brand building, I realised that the event would also lose value to myself on a very personal level. I didn't view the event as meaning as much to me personally.

June 19, 2017 – Turning point

In an interstate trip following this party I decided that I would detox again, for just this one trip. Once I overcame the obstacle of accepting the loss of public value of my trip and the inevitable decline in followers I did thoroughly enjoy myself. I became comfortable with the extra free time and realised how much more I was experiencing of the trip for myself when I sacrificed audience engagement. It felt so strange to see a monument and notice my arm move automatically to my pocket to take a photo. Resisting this almost mechanical urge that has been engrained in me was refreshing and in that moment I finally felt the benefits of a detox. It was profoundly satisfying to just stand there and see something new for myself, really look at it, and engage with my senses rather than making sure others are experiencing it. I realised that I have experienced many life moments only through a screen. I'm used to viewing a sight while on vacation for example, through my phone. Almost as soon as I see it, I hold my phone over it without really looking at it through my own eyes. Later I spend time looking at it through my phone again to edit. There have been so many beautiful places I've been to that I haven't properly looked at through my own eyes. At this stage of my detox I had to actively resist my engrained urges to perform according to a branded celebrified script. During photo opportunities I had to pretend to not be concerned with satisfying my audience. For me, considering my audience has become synonymous with important life moments.

In saying that, my state of 'living in the moment' bliss was short-lived. When I returned from this trip I noticed a decline in followers and was questioned by everyone who was told about the trip, they were asking where the photos were and wondering if something went wrong. It was difficult for people to understand why I didn't document my trip. This aftermath resurfaced the feeling that this trip is now less meaningful to me personally. Microcelebrity culture has engrained a mindset within people that tells us a value of a moment is measured by its public reach.

Microcelebrity culture through visual social media has engrained a mindset that makes me measure a moment by its public reach. Fear of missing out on branding opportunities, feeling that events in my life are more or less valuable according to their public reach and the internal struggle between experiencing a moment privately and the pervasive need to publicly documenting the self to maintain my audience is emotion work experienced by internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities. Feeling rules regarding how I should behave during a photo opportunity means managing dissonance between my online behaviours and my offline desires. The difficulty felt to refrain from online obligations suggests a lack of agency in offline situations.

Some participants revealed that during detoxes they still took photos with the intention to post them later demonstrating that they did not disengage from engaging in brand awareness. These participants used their 'detox' periods to stockpile photos that can be used at later times.

> My detox, like many others, was not a complete detox. Yes I did stop posting and using the platform to interact with my followers which gave me the break I really needed but I found it impossible to just switch off completely. Switching off completely, I feel, would of just created more pressure for me in the long run. To avoid this I used the time to take photos, at a leisurely pace, which was nice because not posting and doing all of that meant I could just take my time focusing on creating content and i knew that my future self would be very, very grateful... I didn't post them during detox, I didn't even really look at them much, I looked at them and edited them later and used them to post over the next few months. (Female, 29, Colchester, **non-celebrity**)

> Just abruptly stopping something that you do all day everyday is like trying to quit smoking or biting your nails, it doesn't happen overnight, it is challenging to say the least. I had to do something to feel as though I was not neglecting my social media completely and that was take photos which was surprisingly less taxing when you remove editing, thinking of captions, posting and engaging with followers from the equation. (Male, 27, Brisbane, **non-celebrity**)

Participants relieved themselves from documenting and associated pressures associated with branding and audience engagement. However, users still took photos so that they can be used later. Although this undermines their original intention which was to completely disengage, users struggle

to completely disengage from their branded identity. The participants quoted above explained that they used their time to ensure that once it was over, they had content to share with her audiences as not having content to satisfy demand would of caused them greater stress in the long term.

Microcelebrity culture has resulted in users being so attuned to documenting their lives on a consistent basis that not documenting or sharing an experience with their followers is deemed deviant. Microcelebrities reported feeling obliged to apologise or explain themselves in their captions when they do not document a moment or post less often than usual. Instagram users are apologizing for prioritising personal authenticity over audience assessed authenticity. The following posts that were posted to these participant's profiles are examples of Instagram users justifying themselves to their followers for not documenting. Maintaining an engaged audience is an important part of a successful online brand so publicly apologising in this way is an attempt at brand preservation.

Figure 33: Documenting justification

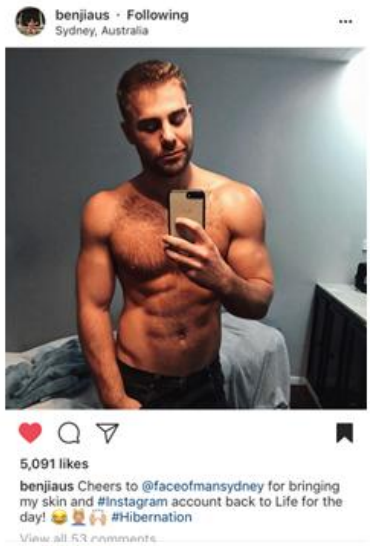


Figure 34: Documenting apology

One of the participants quoted earlier who used her detox to stockpile used the photos she stockpiled during their detox to apologise to her audience. She shared her vacation posts to justify what she was doing in a way that seemed to make up for her time away. The affordances of Instagram compel users to present their brand according to a rules governed by a celebrified discourse and in effect, users demand that others uphold this mode of self presentation. Social media detoxes are an attempt at restoring a sense of personal authenticity and reducing the stresses

associated with managing identity dissonance as Instagram users attempt to reconnect to their offline selves. Users feeling the need to apologise for not publicly documenting themselves, demonstrates the pervasiveness of documenting the self within microcelebrity culture and that some users are prioritising their audience over their own wants and needs. As discussed, not being consistent and transparent reduces audience's perceptions of authenticity. Participants explained that publicly apologising for not documenting is a way of preserving authenticity assessed by audience perceptions.

Participants have become alienated from their own life experiences in that they are prioritising publicly documenting their lives over experiencing them for themselves. As we have seen in this chapter, participants place higher value on life moments that have been documented with a public audience. Social media detoxes are ultimately about users prioritising their offline lives, experiences and identities through disengaging from the work associated with managing their Instagram brands. The final section of this chapter explains how online and offline relationships are impacted by the work associated with managing a highly public online audience.

The new normal: Branded relationships

During my social media detox I missed the connection I have to my followers. After my detox attempts I realised that I have come to value these superficial bonds. I do not speak to the majority of my followers yet I miss knowing that they are there, seeing their likes, views and comments. I miss the attention. Not taking photos meant that I actually got to see things through my own eyes and enjoy the experience privately however, it also meant that I lost the ability to connect with my audience that have become a fixture in my daily life.

As discussed earlier, users reported benefits to having an online brand which includes increased status and visibility, a platform to express themselves and career opportunities. Furthermore both microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities expressed that Instagram has allowed them to connect with like-minded people from across the world that that they would not have otherwise had the opportunity to connect with. Respondents have kept in contact with relatives, made close friendships and met partners through Instagram. Patrick explained how Instagram has helped them build meaningful relationships.

> I feel like social media has allowed me to, like a dating app allows you to find people to date its allowed me to find people that I share common interests with, just, like minded individuals who I

> would get along with. I have several friends, some of whom are very close and important to me who I would not know if it were not for social media, if it were not for Instagram specifically, and some people like to reduce those kinds of relationships to being like 'oh you met them on an online app' or whatever and I just find it as a way to.. you know.. you sift through sand in a river to find that one thing that you're looking for? I feel like it's a great way to sift through people that you may not get along with to find those people that you will get along with. And you can do that in person, you can do that at bars, you can do that at clubs, you can do that at coffee shops, you can do it anywhere, and I do do that at those places, but I also do it on the internet and to be honest the internet has been in my life the most effective way to find those people. So it's enriched my life in a manner of aiding me in finding healthy relationships with people. (Patrick Belaga, 2015, **celebrity**)

For Patrick, Instagram has helped him find people he gets along with and that he finds this method of meeting new people more effective. Although Patrick has made some close friends the bulk of relationships formed on Instagram appear to be based on bonds based on mutual reciprocity or exchanges of visibility. For the non-microcelebrity sample, 72% knew less than a quarter of their followers offline with 37% knowing less than 10% of their followers personally. For the internet celebrities, more than 95% of their audience were people that they did not know offline. For both microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities the vast majority of their relationships are described as working relationships. Users exchange likes, comments, views and follows with their audience often to build collaborative networks. Networks consist of users who share brand categories and other personal or professional ties. Networks usually follow each other and support each other's posts. These networks however are fragile as their only contact with each other tends to be through post interactions.

When Aaron Rhodes was asked what he thinks would happen if Instagram was to disappear he replied "I feel like a lot of people would disappear." Others including myself shared this sentiment and explained that one of the reasons they would struggle with an Instagram detox is because they would completely lose connection with their followers. These connections lack the elements of a traditional offline friendship but participants have grown used to these bonds reminiscent of working relationships, and have come to rely on them. For respondents these ties based on public displays of affection for mutual benefit are the only connection they have to the majority of people they interact with on a daily basis. The following non-microcelebrity quote demonstrates how the bonds formed through Instagram hold importance in the online lives of users yet do not translate to their offline social lives.

> We all have those people who we follow or that follow us that we know nothing about but feel so close to them because their face always pops up on our screen and puts a smile on your face. Those loyal followers that like everything, view everything, and always have something positive

> to say. It's such a strange thing because online, you feel like giving them a big hug but at the same time, you know that if you were to walk past them in the street, you would both pretend like you don't know each other. (27, Male, Perth, **non-celebrity**)

In the example above the participant experiences dissonance in relation to the way he interacts with people offline versus online. He explains that their online intimacy is based on consistent interactions however they accept that if they were to see these people offline they would not interact in the same way. This suggests that online ties on Instagram are based on branding reciprocity rather than meaningful connections. Therefore Instagram shapes relationships based on branding reciprocity. This is a complicated tension in that these reciprocal ties reminiscent of professional, impersonal ties hold personal and emotional significance for participants. As explained in the quotation above, the participant feels as though they want to give certain followers a 'big hug' suggesting a feeling of close connectedness online despite the fact that these feelings do not correspond to offline social settings.

As explained in chapter four, participants form offline relationships based on their assessments of online brands and the dissonance identified. In this sense the way we engage with others online facilitates offline relationships, especially when forming new relationships. Participants explained that the majority of their socialising happens in online spaces so friendships reminiscent of working, professional relationships have become normalised in day-to-day interactions outside of the workplace. They expressed that this model of social connection has become a template for how they practise offline relationships. The participant quoted below explains that he feels dissonance in that the social ties they enjoy on Instagram function well online however are problematic when applied to offline relationships.

> It has taught us to value people in relation to what you get in return. It's a model of relationships that makes friendships almost contractual and business like. We grow up knowing that if I like someone's post or follow them or say nice things, they'll most likely do the same back, and the moment someone does something that we don't like, like, doesn't like pictures anymore, or unfollows you, they don't exist, they are just cut off... Subconsciously I do think that we have adopted this mindset to our real life relationships. It's why we dispose of relationships so easy because we think that the moment it doesn't suit us or no longer serves us, we can just swipe over to a new one. I think that's why our generation struggle to find partners and even meaningful lifelong friendships, we don't get that in the real world, relationships don't work like they do online. (Male, 23, Melbourne, **non-celebrity**)

It seems that microcelebrity culture as it is experienced through Instagram has created a model of friendship or social interaction that offers users a sense of closeness and familiarity sustained by

fragile, impersonal reciprocity. These fast paced high volume relationships characterised by efficiency are how some young people perform a large proportion of their socialisation. This model of sociality may translate well to certain offline situations such as workplaces however evoke feelings of dissonance when this model proves to be an inappropriate way of maintaining offline relationships. Further research is needed into analysing how brand driven bonds forged on Instagram affect how young people do offline relationships.

Conclusion

This chapter focused on explaining how users maintain their online brands through negotiations with their audience. This chapter is underpinned by an analysis of how participants manage dissonance in relation to managing a public audience. Instagram users behave differently online to how they feel offline in regards to socialisation and managing this dissonance involves emotion work. A sense of obligation to document life moments and share them with a public audience was a prominent theme. Participants felt obliged to document themselves in order to further their brands. A moment is understood as being of high value if it is publicly documented correctly, reaches a significant number of followers and enhances a user's online brand. This chapter demonstrated a nuanced experience of 'value' in relation to publicly documenting content. Participants prioritise being available to their followers and brand development over personal desires compromising their sense of personal authenticity which induces feelings of identity dissonance. Participants reported feeling an ongoing tension between experiencing moments for themselves and sharing that experience to build morale with their audience. Placing a higher value on life moments that are documented means that documentation practices affects how users feel about their lives in offline contexts.

Ephemeral social media has dramatically shifted the social media landscape in regards to life-streaming the self. It's temporary, visual nature replicates the way physical moments happen and pass offline, creating an environment where there are more frequent flows of social media documentation. This essentially makes an online brand a fluid being, mimicking identity construction in the physical social world. Although the advent of Stories can alleviate pressures associated with identity dissonance and achieve authenticity based on audience perceptions it induces pressure to life-stream branded performances more frequently than ever before. This means that users are assessing identity dissonance on a more frequent basis. Highlights feature further complicate how people document themselves on social media. It transforms the how users both assess and achieve

authenticity based on audience perceptions and induces new feelings of dissonance. This affordance narrows the gap between permanent and temporary content and induces pressure to post high quality content on a more regular basis. On the surface, temporary social media makes documentation of the self easier, however in other respects it restricts users from turning off the high level of brand awareness inherit with online performances. Emotional labour in way of brand awareness, self surveillance and delivering branded aesthetic and sexualised performances is now omnipresent as day to day online performances are now fluid rather than static. Identity dissonance is therefore a part of almost every action a user makes both online and offline, both characterising and transforming identity composition.

Microcelebrity culture through visual social media has engrained a mindset that makes users measure a moment by its public reach. Participants reported the positive emotions felt when sharing a photo that receives a high number of likes that increased their following. However posts are not always received well by an audience and this has an emotional toll on Instagram users. Feelings of failure, rejection and self-blame and denial are common when their posts receive a 'low' number of likes. Strategies that participants use to increase their following include baiting, stockpiling, using hashtags, following to unfollow and brand refinement. These methods are about increasing audience engagement and often induce feelings of identity dissonance. Not all who participate in microcelebrity culture will achieve their desired goal of building a significant audience. The Insta black market further highlights the pressure to participate in and comply with microcelebrity culture. People who work for these companies as well as management companies are other nodes enacting labour within the terrain of microcelebrity culture. Benefits to having an online brand includes increased status, increased visibility, a platform to express themselves and career opportunities.

Users who attempted social media detoxes reported feelings of social exclusion and a fear of missing out or 'FOMO' were reported. In the context of this study FOMO refers to the fear of missing a branding opportunity that could result in positive audience engagement. For the internet celebrities, rather than time-out, holidays entail a mandate to work harder for the followers and further your Instagram brand. Non-microcelebrities feel the same pressures to work for their social media while on vacation and share the same internal struggle between experiencing a moment privately and publicly documenting the self. Social media detoxes were found to be an attempt at managing identity dissonance as Instagram users attempt to reconnect to their offline selves. Participants strived to restore a sense of personal authenticity due to feeling alienated from their offline life experiences. The affordances of Instagram compel users to present their brand according

to a rules governed by a celebrified discourse and in effect, users demand that others uphold this mode of self presentation. Participants experience dissonance in relation to the way they interact with people offline versus online. Online relationships through Instagram are characterised by behaviours that resemble working relationships based on reciprocal exchange. Online ties on Instagram appear to be based on branding reciprocity rather than meaningful connections. Instagram friendships may lack the elements of a traditional offline friendship but participants have grown used to this template of sociality enabled by microcelebrity culture and have come to rely on them.

Chapter Seven: Fame labour

Microcelebrity has become a central aspect of online society and has a significant cultural impact in regards to labour and identity composition. Social media platforms like Instagram are connected to the notion of celebrity as they enable users to produce highly public, branded versions of self that adhere to a celebrified template. This thesis explored how and why Identity construction and performing for a public audience is occurring simultaneously through visual social media. The purpose of this chapter is to summarize key findings presented in the previous three chapters and in discussing them, make an argument for the use of the term 'fame labour'. I explore the implications this kind of identity work has for broader conceptualisations of selfhood. As we have seen, managing a branded persona alongside offline personas involves a great deal of identity work as offline identities often clash with the celebrified template enabled by microcelebrity culture. Theories of identity and emotion work can be applied to almost every facet of the social world. This research applies them to uncover the everyday invisible challenges by those producing an identity within microcelebrity culture. This research has provided linkages between diverse theories of identity work and the management of online performances that are entangled with offline identities. The emotion work specifically involved in producing and maintaining a branded version of self on social media alongside offline identities has not yet been explored.

Users often manage emotion work involved in negotiating identity dissonance in private which can render their struggles invisible to others. For many participants, this research was the first time they have vocalised the emotions experienced as a result of managing a personal brand within microcelebrity culture that is entangled with offline performances of self. Results chapters have detailed the work of managing identity dissonance when producing a branded self and engaging with a public audience. This thesis has demonstrated that the fluid narrative of offline performances contradicts with online performances given the fixity of online brands, and how managing this tension is experienced as emotional labour. The fixity of online brands is one factor that contributes to why users experience this kind of dissonance. In explaining diverse forms of emotion work including surface acting, aesthetic labour, body work and sexualised labour I explored how and why Instagram users negotiate dissonance between their online and offline selves. This thesis answered two research questions; 'How is emotional labour involved in creating personal brands on Instagram for microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities?' and 'Why are microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities enacting these forms of labour? What kinds of selves are constructed in the process?

I argue that 'fame labour' or emotion work involved in juggling tensions between competing online 'fame' oriented selves and offline performances and conceptualisations of self, characterise and transforms online and offline identities. I explain how maintaining celebrified online brands alongside offline personas has become a normalised aspect of identity composition for both social media celebrities and the everyday user. For participants, this productive tension has become a valuable and assumed facet of a person's identity. Fame labour is distinguished from concepts like visibility labour as it describes the emotion work specifically related to negotiating identity dissonance. Fame labour alters the trajectory of a user's self presentation both online and offline. Through exploring intricate forms of identity work involved in managing identity dissonance on social media I highlight the importance of studying emotion work in studies on microcelebrity culture.

To examine the emotional processes involved in managing a branded identity on Instagram, the research engaged with a body of work on Symbolic Interactionism and digital identity work. Drawing from Erving Goffman's dramaturgical perspective along with more contemporary theories about identity, microcelebrity, labour and emotion work this thesis explored how young people are conducting themselves online and offline at a time where fame is socialised, encouraged and more accessible than ever. Adopting a Symbolic Interactionist lens allows online identity to be theorised as fluid self-narration within multiple versions of selfhood. This thesis is underpinned by the notion that identity as a performance of self is fluid, multifaceted, fragmented, contradictory and constructed through interactions made up of interwoven online and offline performances. Through adopting this lens, I have contextualised social networking within broader cultural practices of identity work that destabilize the dichotomy of independent offline and online identities.

This chapter is divided into two parts. Each section summarises key aspects of fame labour that were detailed in the previous three results chapters and discusses the broader implications of these findings. **Part one** summarises the work involved in managing identity dissonance in relation to profile curation. I discuss how Instagram users engage with and simultaneously shape Instagram's affordances and culture through the identity work they enact. **Part two** summarises the labour of negotiating identity dissonance in relation to managing a public audience. I do this through discussing the reciprocal identity work that operates between Instagram users and their followers. Each section reveals the nuances, contradictions and tensions that led me to argue that 'fame labour' or emotion work involved in juggling tensions between competing online 'fame' oriented

selves and offline performances and conceptualisations of self, characterise and transform online and offline identity work.

Part One: Profile curation and identity dissonance

Online technologies act as tools for the socialisation of public visibility or fame as a behaviour and cultural value. Throughout the results chapters I discussed affordances that enable and encourage a branded, celebrified self however, performances enacted on Instagram such as sexualised labour and aesthetic labour are not directly enabled by the platforms interface. Users are actively shaping microcelebrity culture while simultaneously enforcing identity practices that sustain it. Dobson, Carah and Robards explain that the data we post contributes to engineering social media platforms, enabling its "algorithmic capacity to shape and reproduce social relations, to make judgments about people like us and our affective capacities" (2018, pg. 17). When social media users self brand in their quest for visibility, they are producing visual content that both affects other users and is recognised by algorithms that mobilise their visibility tactics (Dobson, Carah & Robards, 2018). There is a dynamic loop at play (Carah & Dobson, 2016), as content shared with a user's audience also function to train algorithms that "broker attention on those platforms" (Dobson, Carah & Robards, 2018, pg. 21). Participants are producing content that is shaping identity work practices within microcelebrity culture while simultaneously being shaped by algorithmic workings that they have helped to create. The following section discusses the wider implications of the identity work participants enacted to produce branded social media identities. I begin by summarising how identity work is shaped by microcelebrity culture and then move onto explaining how performances of aesthetic and sexualised labour by some Instagram users play a role in moulding identity expression on Instagram.

Fame affordances

Emotions performed on social media have become quantifiable data that matter to social media users in regards to self branding. Participants reported the emotional process associated with managing a social media brand that is entangled with offline performances of self. As Kennedy and Hill (2017) have argued "because social life is increasingly datafied, numbers are acquiring increasing importance... data are as much felt as they are experienced..." (pg. 2). Chapter four detailed the way influencers and non-microcelebrities engage with Instagram and the role the platforms affordances play in moulding their identity work. For participants, the value of their brands are measured by

statistics of popularity and value is extracted from these statistics. Illouz argued that "for a particular form of cultural behaviour to become a capital, it must be convertible into economic and social benefits' (2007, p. 63). Power differentials on Instagram seem to exist in relation to status derived from following statistics. As Grosser (2014) argued, the use of metrics on social media, quantifies sociality and encourages users to seek ways to increase those metrics. Participants attach value to popularity statistics that are afforded through features such as 'business page' and therefore engage in a range of behaviours to develop their branded persona which for the young people consulted, has become an indispensable facet of identity composition.

Findings from this study revealed that from the perspective of both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities affordances of Instagram dictate a branded performance of self in accordance to a celebrified discourse. This dispels Marwick's (2013a) view that affordances of social media do not necessarily encourage users to commercialise themselves. Participants see 'value' in having a celebrified online brand that follows the display rules of microcelebrity culture even if they have no desire to make money from their online presence. There was an understanding that adherence to the display rules of microcelebrity culture can result in attracting a large audience which is seen as validation of their identity work. Marwick (2013a) argued that sites likes Facebook encourage users to produce a single online identity linked to verifiable information relating to a user's offline life. As we saw this is not the case on Instagram as participants engaged in various forms of identity work to create online celebrified versions of self that differ emotively, aesthetically and sexually from their offline identities suggesting that identity play is very much a part of the culture of current social media platforms.

Our digital footprints become a life narrative consisting of everyday life moments (Robards, et al., 2018; Lincoln & Robards, 2017). In the context of Instagram, this reflexive project of the self is understood by participants as their self branding journey. The first step involved in forming an online brand on Instagram is either consciously or subconsciously choosing a personal brand based on categories that already exist within Instagram. Results showed that brands needed to fit within predetermined category templates that mould appropriate expressions of identity set by Instagram's affordances and culture. Participants engaged in surface acting to portray the general brand category they subscribed to. There was a lack of agency in regards to the branded and emotive registers users felt that they could produce and also a lack of agency inherent with the fact that the self users display on social media is in itself branded and by default, almost never exactly how a user presents offline. For the Instagram users consulted in this study, possessing a personal brand is seen

as being required in order to participate fully in microcelebrity culture. Non-microcelebrities and internet celebrities police their online behaviours in order to uphold their branded identity. This ongoing surveillance requires a high level of brand awareness and in effect emotion management. Findings suggest that emotive registers play a role in audience engagement practices. Enigmatic registers are built on creating distance between user and follower while other emotive registers are about inducing a sense of familiarity and closeness between user and follower. This suggests that performed intimacy and distance can be part of constructing a strong following and an online brand.

Angela Cirucci argues that social network platforms "are not social utilities, but, in fact, celebrification utilities" (2018a, pg. 33). Findings detailed the emotion work involved in anticipating and organizing day-to-day life around public performances designed for consumption. Planning branded performances of self means anticipating and organising identity work that involves emotion management on a constant basis. Senft's (2012) concept 'code switching' is extended from switching between audiences to switching between an online branded performance and an offline performance of self. Participants reported regularly transitioning between performances designed for the public online, and private performances. The emotion work involved relates to self surveillance, brand awareness, surface acting and deep acting while performing various forms of aesthetic and sexualised labour. Results demonstrated that presenting yourself differently for social media content and for personal content means managing identity dissonance every time a photo is anticipated and every time a photo is taken. At times where a photo opportunity could be used either for Instagram or for private use, people are conscious of personal authenticity (documenting the moment for personal use) and authenticity based on audience perceptions (sharing moments that their followers might enjoy).

Social media narratives are shaping cultural trends. The influencer market is now a multi-billion-dollar industry (MediaKix, 2018) that relies on labour exerted by prosumers. In relation to immaterial labour, Andrejevic (2011) views exploitation as an exchange where a social actor loses control or agency over their productive and creative actions. From this perspective, it can be argued that Instagram users are being exploited in that their online performances are moulded by the affordances of Instagram and microcelebrity culture. Both influencers and non-microcelebrities are performing intricate emotion work both in online and offline spaces in order to uphold an online identity moulded by microcelebrity culture while simultaneously shaping the culture they are a part of.

Are you Insta-worthy? Co-constructing microcelebrity culture

Sexualised labour, aesthetic labour and body work performed on Instagram exemplifies the emotion work that goes into creating a branded identity. Both internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities are posting sexualised content to attract attention and further their profile. Sexualised posts such as shirtless-selfies are seen as the most lucrative visibility strategy as likes and followers are seen as social currency within microcelebrity culture. Young people are enacting physically and emotionally taxing identity work in way of surface and deep acting to deliver performances online that often conflict with their offline presentation of self. Findings revealed that online performances of self become embodied performances that are very much felt by the social actor in the same capacity as offline identity work.

Consistent with Drenton and Gurrieri's (2019) results, females in my research accentuated body parts that they believed enhanced their sexuality. Social media users are exerting aesthetic labour through delivering poses and body work when modifying their bodies according to porn chic branded ideals and in effect performing sexualised labour. Pornified, highly provocative performances by females on Instagram were found to be an effective way to achieve visibility. I revealed that many women are achieving this aesthetic through invasive cosmetic procedures and producing online content that accentuates bodily curves. The male influencers in my research strived for a more muted display of sexuality where no specific body parts were accentuated and bodies appeared to be actively performing tasks that relate to masculine ideals of athleticism, strength and dominance. For male participants, depicting less provocative displays of masculinity enjoy greater reach as their audiences favour less sexualised poses. The nature of the poses, gestures or aesthetic labour enacted by participants when enacting sexualised labour differ between males and females. As Butler (1993) explained, through repeating predetermined norms and identity categories such as gender and sexual orientation they become performances of self-hood.

Drenton and Gurrieri's (2019) findings suggest that female influencers maintain their social media performances through the replication of 'porn chic' poses and gestures. They found that female Instagram influencers positioned themselves as objects alongside the products they promoted. The male influencers consulted in this research usually depicted themselves as actively doing something such as a sport or outdoor activity rather than being passive, static objects. It appears as though women are objectifying themselves (Drenton & Gurrieri, 2019) in the same way they are portrayed in heterosexual pornography while men maintain hegemonic masculine ideals

(Cook, 2005). Findings from this thesis support the 'porn chic' argument. How men perform sexuality on Instagram affirms pornification and legitimizes the objectification of women.

Provocative poses enacted by some of the gay men in this study mirror a porn chic aesthetic associated with notions of femininity. The underlying difference is that these pornified poses and gestures result in mainstream attention for females where it limits the reach of males. Therefore, porn chic aesthetic is mainstreamed for females but further marginalises males on Instagram that enact this aesthetic template. Maximising mainstream visibility for men means adhering to longstanding aesthetic ideals associated with heterosexual masculinity and it is for this reason that pornified poses associated with femininity do not equate with mainstream visibility for men. It is interesting to note that gay male participants often marketed products aimed at gay men however did so using a heterosexual body display that differed to their offline expressions of sexuality reinforcing Rich's (1980) concept of 'compulsory heterosexuality'. This mirrors what the female influencers did in Drenton and Gurrieri's (2019) study as the women marketed their products toward women using a porn chic aesthetic marketed towards men.

Given that gay male participants in this research felt the need to mask their 'gayness' in order to achieve visibility is consistent with the argument that gay body image ideals reflect long standing gender hierarchies that idolise heterosexual masculinity (Duncan, 2007; Hennen, 2005) and perpetuate the logic of hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005) rather than other more feminised expressions of masculinity. Gay body image ideals are believed to reflect and endorse long standing gender hierarchies that idolise heterosexual masculinity. These gender hierarchies reflect and perpetuate the logic of hegemonic masculinity (Duncan, 2007; Hennen, 2005). Signorile (1997) argued that the stigmatization of femininity is a part of the foundation for what he described as a contemporary obsession with body image among gay men and offers an explanation of why participants turned to steroid use to achieve a highly muscular, hyper masculine body image. Instagram in relation to its affordances does not appear to heteronormative as gay men are not restricted in anyway way from posting feminised, porn chic content. It is audiences who measure content against heteronormative standards of beauty and therefore dictate branding practices. Consistent with Duffy's argument, brands representing those who have long occupied celebrity roles in our society are more visible on social media.

Cefai and Couldry note, "heteronormativity shapes what can appear to us as 'intimate' even in settings where questions of sexual identity are typically not articulated as such" (2017, p. 2). This

research has explored the ways heteronormative notions of self branding shape how social media users perform identity work in offline as well as online spaces. Robards et al. (2018) explain that queer young people use social media sites to explore their sexuality and connect with others like themselves to achieve sense of belonging. This research suggests that self branding practices on Instagram are influenced by a heteronormative undertone that marginalises certain gay identities through reinforcing performative aspects of hegemonic masculinity. There is an interesting tension at play as participants who suppress their gay identities online do not feel the need to do so in offline contexts. The gay men in this research felt more free to express themselves sexually in offline contexts rather than the online public arena.

This tension is significant as it suggests that online spaces believed to be more inclusive of queer identities (Robards et al., 2018) can be less inclusive than offline spaces when they are premised by celebrified branding discourse. Participants consistently expressed that the affordances of Instagram itself do not restrict them from expressing their sexuality. Participants choose to adhere to heteronormative aesthetic temples when performing sexualised labour on Instagram in order to advance their brand. Research presented in this thesis concurs with previous research (Brown & Graham, 2008; Baker, 1994; Wilson, 1997; Blouin & Goldfield, 1995; Schwerin et al. 1996) as participants from Australia, the United States and Europe associated feminine displays of masculinity as less desirable within the Instagram economy. Another interesting tension observed was how the majority of influencers and non-microcelebrities who adopted an intimate stories emotive register characterised by a narrative of care, were women and gay men. This finding lends support to research that found gendered patterns of work extend from the household into digital spaces (Cirucci, 2018b).

The way some male participants use steroids exemplifies how social media users monitor emotions relating to managing dissonance between online and offline identities. In Hochschild's words, they are "experiencing emotion and... working on it in socially patterned ways" (1979, p. 557). These participants understand that managing dissonance is a socially accepted behaviour and accept that masking the negative emotions associated with it are a part of the culture as users strive to appear authentic to their followers. The men and women consulted in this research perform body work to create idealised branded personas. Much like the young people in Robinson's (2018) study participants engaged in suppressive work to both mask their emotions from the public and avoiding feeling the negative emotions themselves by justifying it as being a "part of the game" of microcelebrity culture. The 'hiding under the baggy jumper' quotation is a pertinent example of

emotion management involved in enacting diverse performances of aesthetic labour to manage identity dissonance. This participant physically presented very differently offline when he was in the recovery phase and when he no longer as muscular offline as he consistently portrays to be online. He masks his body with baggy clothing in offline contexts. This identity dissonance impacted his mood and ability to function in offline contexts heightening dissonance between his online and offline selves. The hyper muscular body these men strive to produce can be seen as a hyper masculine ideal that is about achieving a sense of hegemonic masculinity.

Findings in this thesis demonstrate that sexualized labour is enforced and defined outside of traditional employment relations. Sexualised labour in the context of Instagram is directed by the norms of digital culture however it is Instagram user's actions that sustain the heteronormative undertone that exists within microcelebrity culture. I have interrogated the relationship between sexualisation and the cultural norms involved in managing sexualized and aesthetic representations in online spaces. By better understanding the aesthetic and sexualised labour that takes place on Instagram for men and women we can begin to uncover the underlying power dynamics that underpin these online performances of self. Performances of sexualised labour are complicated given that male and female participants are choosing to repress their sexuality in online contexts to gain public visibility without necessarily repressing their sexual expression in offline contexts. Sexualised labour enacted for social media brands is unique as displays of sexuality often do not match offline displays meaning there is dissonance in relation to performances of sexualities. Sexualised labour as a performance of self on Instagram involves body work that requires an interrelated dynamic of emotional and aesthetic labour. It is important to study this complex, entangled relationship in relation to self branding practices. Self branding practices within Instagram have transformed the way sexuality is experienced and practised both in online and offline contexts. Participants are engaging in identity play between competing performances of self simultaneously in their day-to-day lives.

Part two: Audience engagement and identity dissonance

Previous research has focused on how microcelebrity as an identity is generated by negotiations with an audience which as I have argued, underestimates the significance and power of profile curation and underplays the co-dependent relationship between the microcelebrity and their audience. This research is studying online identity development through the lens of profile/identity curation and Davis's concept of 'identity-affirming interactions' as audiences asses and evaluate

branded performances of self and engage in brand refinement and re-branding accordingly. Part one of this chapter summarised and discussed the implications of key findings in relation to identity work practices both in online and offline contexts. This part of the chapter summarises and discusses how personal brands are sustained on Instagram through co-dependent identity-affirming negotiations that involve fame labour. Participants expressed that engaging with a public audience through their idealised, fame motivated brands, required managing dissonance between their celebrified self and their offline identities.

How social is social media?

Consistent with Ward's (2017) argument, performances of self were evaluated by others and participants felt positive emotions when their identity work was affirmed by their followers. Participants engaged in reciprocated identity-affirming interactions when they approved others' identity work and receive approval in return. Participants simultaneously affirmed and help build each other's Instagram brands through affirming actions such as following, viewing, commenting and liking. When followers do not respond well to posts by either not liking, commenting or unfollowing, participants perceived that their audience disapproves of their branded persona or idealised identity work. In this instance both influencers and non-microcelebrities strive to refine their future performances according to audience demands that emanate from norms of microcelebrity culture such as aesthetic templates and sexualised performances. Participants also engaged in several strategies in an effort to maintain their audiences interest and increase their following such as regular posting, stockpiling and baiting.

Users experience positive feelings when a post is received well by an audience. Feelings of failure, rejection and self-blame are common amongst microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities when their posts receive a 'low' number of likes. A negative audience response tends to be attributed to intrinsic factors and the user believes that they are required to do something to rectify it. Participants vigilantly monitor their branded personas and engage in 'cleanses' to ensure their brand is as idealised as possible. These findings resonate with Thoits's (1989) insight that, "Identity-enactments in turn should influence feelings. Successful identity performances generate positive affect… inadequate performances produce negative emotions…" (pg. 332). The link here to managing identity dissonance is that when a branded presentation of self is not affirmed by their audience users often refine their brand in a way the induced further dissonance from their offline desires and interests. Participants also manage negative emotions experienced offline when their

online branded identity is suffering a kind of loss, and engage in suppressive work to mask these emotions online.

As Kennedy and Hill (2017) explain, aspects of social life including friendships have been datafied. This research has shown the way online relationships through Instagram have turned into quantifiable data. Third parties such as influencer management teams or social media users themselves can extract value from everyday identity work and monetise it. My findings suggest that monetisation associated with influence on social media may not be the only signifier of status operating within microcelebrity culture. Status amounts from visibility which amounts from successfully producing a branded persona that adheres to the display rules of microcelebrity culture. An online brand through Instagram has becomes an indispensable facet of identity that is revered in an increasingly online, datafied society. Drenton and Gurrieri (2019) assume that all influencers strive to gain affiliations with companies by implying that less visibility equates to non-monetisation while higher visibility equates to monetisation. Many of the non-microcelebrities engaged in work utilized by brands without remuneration or compensation and this is consistent with work by Abidin (2016a). My research shows that influencers with a significant following choose not to monetise their following as they see it purely as a facet of their identity. I described benefits associated with successful online bands such as social connectedness and self expression. My research argues that producing content for Instagram is fundamentally about developing a brand that becomes an indispensible facet of identity used to function in an online society. Mobilising this brand to attract brand deals and other modes of monetisation is secondary to establishing an online identity.

Audience engagement strategies detailed in chapter six such as following to unfollow, baiting, obligatory emotive responses and the way participants replied to comments purely to enhance personal engagement statistics highlight the narrative of obligation around audience engagement within microcelebrity culture. These findings suggest that these interactions that appear reciprocal and technically function as reciprocal are not about building reciprocal bonds. Participants including myself, are preoccupied with profile curation and see audience engagement as merely a tool to advance our branded identity. Possessing a successful online brand has become a highly valued component of identity in our increasingly online society that is independent from any desire for monetisation. In the following section I summarise life-streaming practices and how the mobilisation of online identities through ephemeral social media exacerbates fame labour.

Life-streaming: Mobilising identity dissonance

A sense of obligation to document moments was a prominent theme that directly relates to the pressure to comply with microcelebrity culture. There was a strong narrative of 'missing out' as not documenting the self excludes them from the culture with which they have become accustomed. A life event appears to lose value to an individual if it is not shared with a public audience. The concept of 'value' was discussed in interviews. A moment is understood as being of high value if it is publicly documented correctly, reaches a significant number of followers and enhances a user's online brand. There is a sense of dissonance associated with documenting moments as participants prioritise being available to their followers over experiencing a moment for themselves. There is an ongoing tension between experiencing a moment for themselves and enacting identity work to document that experience for public consumption.

In the context of this thesis FOMO is discussed in the findings chapters in regards to the pervasive need to document the self and the tendency to view life moments as branding opportunities. Fear of missing out, feeling that events in my life are more or less valuable according to their public reach and the internal struggle between experiencing a moment privately and the pervasive need to publicly documenting the self is emotion work experienced by internet celebrities and non-microcelebrities. Participants justified themselves to their followers for not documenting enough. Maintaining an engaged audience is an important part of a successful online brand so publicly apologising in this way is an attempt at brand preservation through upholding a sense of authenticity based on audience perceptions. Users feeling the need to apologise for not consistently publicly documenting themselves demonstrates the pervasiveness of documenting the self within microcelebrity culture.

Findings included ephemeral social media as a part of the discussion on identity work in online spaces. Marwick (2013a) used the term 'life-streaming' to describe how social media users have constant access to the internet and therefore can share information about themselves as they happen. She argued that it results in the normalisation of constant monitoring and social surveillance. In chapter six I explored how ephemeral social media complicates the concept of life-streaming and transforms the way online identity construction has been understood in previous research. Ephemeral visual social media has resulted in life-streaming on a scale not seen before. The advent of Instagram Stories alleviates identity dissonance, pressures associated with content quality, increased user's sense of agency, and sense of authenticity both personally and based on

audience perceptions. However, it induced a constant ongoing pressure to life-stream public performances of self.

Through Instagram Stories, participants reported engaging in surface acting and emotion management more frequently than they did before the advent of ephemeral social media. Instagram Story's temporary, visual nature replicates the way physical moments happen and pass offline, creating an atmosphere where there are constant flows of social media documentation. This essentially makes an online brand a fluid being, mimicking identity construction in the physical social world, rather than being static depictions frozen in time. Ephemeral social media restricts users from turning off the self surveillance and subsequently, emotion management inherit with online performances. Emotional labour in way of brand awareness, surface acting and performances of aesthetic and sexualised labour is omnipresent. Fame labour is therefore heightened as it is now a part of almost every action a user makes both online and offline as users constantly juggle the dissonance between their online and offline identities which as we have seen, is emotionally taxing. Previous research argued that sites like Facebook and Twitter encourage constant streams of updates whereas on Instagram, posting is more selective (Keenan, 2015). Posting happens less frequently as posting too often is actually frowned upon (Marwick, 2015; Keenan, 2013a). Findings extend this discussion to demonstrate how life-streaming on Instagram which was been transformed by the use of ephemeral social media.

Instagram Stories archived through Highlights feature makes audiences privy to the kinds of memory cues that before the advent of Highlights existed only in private memory archives, increasing perceptions of authenticity. The permanency of temporary social media content has resulted in people using everyday memory cues (Robards et al., 2018) to forge the impression of brands that resemble the day-to-day movements of offline identities. In this sense, memories publicly archived through Instagram Stories have become commoditised in the same way permanent posts have. The highlights affordance undermines Instagram's intention to make stories less labour intensive, they have actually heightened pressure users feel to produce a branded self as all social media interactions as even the mundane 'temporary' posts are carefully curated. This creates dissonance in relation to memory work. Branded content on both permanent and temporary social media serve as curated memory cues designed for public consumption while those that remain in personal archives, hidden from public gaze, preserve memory cues that are more in line with offline life narratives.

Social media detoxes were a way for participants to refrain from documenting the self for short periods of time in an attempt to restore a sense of personal authenticity. During this time users are able to do the things they enjoy personally, and should not feel compelled to behave in accordance to their branded identity. The aim is to restore a sense of personal authenticity as users allow themselves to temporarily dissociate from idealised identity work and managing identity dissonance. None of the microcelebrities detoxes lasted as long as they hoped it would. In the lead up to abandoning their detoxes, feelings of social exclusion and a fear of missing out or 'FOMO' were reported. In the context of this study FOMO refers to the fear of missing a branding opportunity as well as missing out on a social event. Participants performed identity work including aesthetic and sexualised labour to create content for followers, prioritising audience engagement over offline wants and needs.

Am I too branded?

How digital influencers, microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities juggle their online brands and offline personas has been explored through reconfiguring the concept of 'authenticity'. As we saw in the findings chapters, participants are often juggling tensions between multiple online selves and multiple offline identities. Users are valuing authenticity judged by audience perceptions over achieving a sense of personal authenticity. The way some male participants used steroids and the way others edited and modified their bodies exemplifies the concept of fame labour as it highlights the emotion work required to manage dissonance between their online and offline body image. Although the physical benefits from steroid use were short lived, the benefits to participant's brands are permanent and outweigh what are perceived to be temporary adverse health effects. Aside from the observable physical toll steroids have on the body in the pursuit for the perfect shirtless selfie, the emotional burden was evident in every user I spoke to. When participants were asked if they would consider stopping and settling for more realistic shirtless photos it was clear that this question evoked feelings of distress. Participants reported a fear of letting down their audience as a primary concern. It was feared that the inconsistencies in physical appearance would result in people losing interest and questioning their authenticity.

Endangering an online brand and losing interest from an audience took precedence over the user's wellbeing. They were so concerned with appearing 'authentic' to their followers that they were being completely inauthentic to themselves. Maintaining brand neutrality and consistency and in effect, identity dissonance, was prioritised over personal authenticity as users chose to delete personally significant content at the cost of appropriate re-branding as judged by a public audience.

Male and female participants have undertaken medical cosmetic treatments to look 'better' in photos and to make the process of creating on-brand content for social media less labour intensive. Participants also enjoy looking more like their online selves offline. This restores a sense of personal authenticity through reducing feelings of dissonance in regards to their physical appearance. For those using steroids this sense of personal authenticity is short lived. The side effects create greater identity dissonance as their offline physical states during recovery, are dramatically different to their online personas.

Branded performances of self can lead to confusion regarding a person's offline identity. Identity dissonance describes the incongruence between online and offline performances and therefore provides scope to study the emotional impact related to managing competing versions of self. Both microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities are assessing their own sense of personal authenticity within themselves. They are judging how different their online brand is to their offline versions of self while engaging in a range of identity work practices on Instagram. This view on authenticity builds on previous notions of authenticity concerned with audience perceptions (Marwick, 2013; Marwick & Boyd, 2011) by considering microcelebrities perceptions of multiple identity performances made up of both online and offline facets. This is an internal dialogue that involves anticipating how genuine a users own lifestyle and sentiments will appear to a public audience while simultaneously critiquing the dissonance and tensions between their online brand and offline performances. This is a form of emotion work that involves constant self surveillance and emotion management of differing versions of self.

Some participants expressed that dissonance in regards to their physical appearance makes meeting new people particularly difficult. Participants have felt insecure because of the inconsistencies in their identities and at times confused regarding their identity. However they have grown used to this feeling and accept it is a part of "the game" of microcelebrity. They have moved away from a dichotomous view of identity (real vs. Fake/online vs. offline) and accepted that online identities are another facet of a person's overall identity that by way of convention differs from offline performances. In her research into popular Silicon Valley Tech scene figures Marwick (2013b) found that participants engaged in emotional labour in order to manage the incongruity between being open or 'real' online and displaying a business targeted brand. The current research extends scholarship in this field by understanding the emotion work involved in managing the incongruity between online and offline selves from the perspective of young people a part of microcelebrity culture.

In 1995 Sherry Turkle wrote about gender switching on virtual reality games, interviewing users who performed genders online that did not correspond to their offline performances. It was argued that 'disembodied' communication could allow people to create alternative identities This disembodied theory did not gain momentum as more recent studies show that there is correspondence between online and offline identities. Baym (2010) argued that people did not create radically different selves on these early platforms instead their online personas were similar to their offline selves. The current research supports this perspective as despite the dissonance that is experienced between online and offline selves, both identities function together to form a person's overall sense of self.

Analysing someone's identity dissonance has become a normalised part of getting- to-know each other discourse for both microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities. People accept that online brands are to a degree misleading yet still assess them to make judgements about a person's identity. Instagram users have accepted that online brands differ from a person's offline brand but that does not make it any less real or any less significant to that person's overall identity. Participants have departed from a dichotomous view of identity where online and offline versions of selves are seen as separate, and understand online identity as a valuable facet of a person's overall identity whether it is consistent with their offline personas or not.

The way users choose to craft their online brand says a lot about a person's offline performances. An online brand reveals a person's interests, aspirations, preferences, priorities, values, personality traits and aesthetic tastes. It has a real audience, it is used to interact with others, can amount to social status, lead to offline opportunities and therefore materialise into a real aspect of their identity. Nearly all the microcelebrities and non-microcelebrities encountered in this study expressed that analysing a person holistically now means considering both their online and offline performances and accepting dissonance. Marwick (2013a) argued that there are now fewer identity cues available on social media than face to face implying that it is easier to decipher a person's overall identity when you encounter them offline. Results from this research demonstrate that from the perspective of social media users, social media profiles provide important identity cues and that understanding them is required to fully understand a person's identity.

Non-microcelebrities who do not receive paid endorsements are restricted in regards to brand agency however more symbolically than explicitly. Participant responses revealed the difficulty associated with re-branding. This raises questions surrounding authenticity as judged by audience

perceptions. If personal authenticity us built on being open and transparent with audiences as discussed in previous research, it is reasonable to assume that audiences and Instagram as a platform for that matter would embrace re-branding as users are making an effort to be open and transparent about how changes in their offline lives have shifted their online performances. In this sense authenticity as it has been discussed in previous work, is assessed according to brand consistency rather than transparency. This is an interesting tension. As consumers, audiences value consistency but as producers of social media content, they desire fluidity.

Resonating with Hochschild's writings on alienation (1979) prosumers appear to be experiencing alienation in relation to the unpaid work they are performing on Instagram. For many participants in this research, their online brands generate social, cultural and economic value however they feel removed from their online brands and in effect performances of aesthetic and sexualised labour. Participants view their online brands and offline performances as separate entities that often lack correspondence. A relevant question to the current study asked by Hochschild in 1983 is "how is the self eroded or alienated by commodification" (pg. 78). Hochschild was concerned that the commodification of worker's emotions can lead to alienation as private sphere feelings are consumed by the public as a commoditised service interaction. Hochschild (1979; 1983) argued that emotional labour can be alienating in the same way as the production of physical commodities. Dissonance moderating identity work enacted by digital influencers is often performed in exchange for money much like those is service industries, however most of the time it is to create a branded identity that has little correspondence to a users offline realities. Boundaries between work and life become blurred as identity composition involving intimate emotions become commercialised and in effect externalised. As social actors within increasingly digitised social spaces governed by microcelebrity culture, it is imperative that we ask ourselves 'am I too branded?'

Suggestions for further research

It is imperative that we study the future of digitised brands. With online brands being produced by prosumers we need to better understand how prosumers are compensated for the brands they build. Prosumers are exerting intimate labour for the benefit of private corporations who disproportionately profit from their emotion work. Brands have transformed from something people work on from 9-5 to something that is continuously working, 24 hours a day. Brands have mobilised and become fluid being that mimic offline performances of self and it is important that we continue

to learn about the types of identity work being experienced by diverse groups of people who use platforms like Instagram.

Research is needed to build on Robinson's (2018) work on under-resourced youths who have hindered access to social media and are therefore unable to play what she calls the "identity curation game" (661). Robinson (2018) described social media as being the "currency of social inclusion" (pg. 676) in our increasingly online society where "high connectivity is assumed to be normative" (pg. 677). Robinson's research clearly shows the devastating consequences low access to the internet has on children from low income families. Future research needs look specifically at the long term implications of having undeveloped or non-existent personal online brands within a society where possessing an idealised online identity is normalised.

Participants in the current study found it extremely difficult to separate from a branded identity. This example highlights how important the online brand formation process is for young people as if not done correctly, it has potential to impact the rest of their lives. Artificial intelligence technologies like 'With Me' highlight the permanency of personal brands as they persist even after a person passes away. Branded digital legacies have become a part of a person's overall identity composition so longitudinal research is needed to understand the long term processes associated with managing it. It would be interesting to study identity dissonance and personal authenticity in relation to digital legacies. If users view their legacies through apps like With Me before they pass away, would they happy with that they see? Will they want their branded performances to be the aspects of themselves that live on for family and friends to interact with? Furthermore, the agency social media users have over which content is stored and who has access to it needs to be considered. Users should also be asked whether or not they would like their content stored by third parties altogether. This extends the discussion to agency regarding online performances to explore the autonomy users have over their own datafied identities.

Research into death and digital legacies needs to consider the impact apps like With Me have on the families of the deceased. This research highlighted the permanency of online content that remains stored in digital spaces despite the content owner attempting to remove it. The role of these apps and whether they make the process of grieving any easier would be an interesting research topic. There needs to a nuanced analysis of the level of brand awareness of these applications. For example if data is extracted from text messages send to all of a users contact including friends, partners, parents, grandparents and colleagues each thread will have very

different content. Furthermore, content extracted from branded performances of self through social media messages to followers will provide competing identity cues. If aspects of identity are extracted from a combination of platforms what will a singular identity look like that is made up of competing personas. Identity is multifaceted, even more so in the digital era, and it too simplistic to lump all of these modes of self presentation into a single entity. The idea that online archives act as memory cues is complicated by the fact that online traces are not always representative of a user's offline self.

This research revealed that the app OnlyFans are capitalising on the power of sexualised content within microcelebrity culture. Sexualised performances that are a part of online brands often do not correspond to a person's offline identity or interests, it is an extension to their online brand and this relationship seems to obscure the fact that users are producing pornography. There seems to be a shift in displays of sexuality as a result of the affordances of microcelebrity culture. Further research is needed to better understand how sexualised labour enacted on social media impacts offline performances of sexuality. There should also be research on how other forms of online identity work impact offline identity work such as performances of gender and race.

This research found that young people are performing identity to manage dissonance between an online branded identity and an offline version of self. The psychological impact of managing multiple, competing versions of self requires further research as this is a new identity composition that is a part of our increasingly online world. In *Fame: The Psychology of Stardom* (2001) Andre Evans and Glenn Wilson discuss the difficulties associated with newfound fame. They explain that frequent positive feedback can lead to self absorption, narcissism and grandiosity and resentment of public scrutiny. My research demonstrated the emotional affect positive and negative feedback has on microcelebrities and non microcelebrities and the strategies used in response to this feedback. I observed that Instagram users are rebranding and detoxing as a way to signal to the public that they are struggling with their mental health. Statistical research revealing behavioural patterns and trends on social media at times of personal crises could help mental health agencies more efficiently identity at risk users. In October 2018, Instagram revealed that through artificial intelligence technology they are now automatically identifying cyber bullying and removing that content to protect users. Automatically detecting other at risk behaviours is possible if they are presented with academic research demonstrating behavioural trends and patterns on the platform. Furthermore, identity dissonance appears to have possible links to body dysmorphia and other dissociative

disorders given that the young people consulted in this thesis are struggling to manage competing body images.

An alternative perspective on labour in concerned with how social software industries benefit from the labour people enact on social media (Marwick, 2013). In this view, the act of participation in itself is framed as labour as the value of sites like Instagram is extracted in the form of user data. The content users create, the amount of times they view advertisements or click like on any given post build the popularity and success of these platforms. It is essentially user generated content. The success of these companies is dependent on the work users put into that content. This exchange has been seen as uneven, as participatory culture is framed as a form of exploitation by social software industries (Marwick, 2013) who feed off the free labour exerted by users. This free labour has been found in this research to be experienced as emotional labour. Further research into the responsibilities and ethical obligations of companies like Facebook from a duty of care perspective would be valuable.

Future directions: Removing visible likes trial

On July 18th, 2019, Instagram begun a trail in six countries including Australia, Brazil, Canada, Ireland, Italy, Japan and New Zealand where they removed visible like tallies. Instagram explained that their intention is to remove pressures associated with posting by allowing users to focus on content rather than likes. Their aim is to make users feel happier online amid concerns that Instagram contributes to feelings of inadequacy, low self esteem, depression and suicidal thoughts in young people. This shift comes after former Facebook executive Chamath Palihapitiya said Facebook, who owns Instagram has "destroyed how society works" (The Verge, 2017). He professed that he feels "tremendous guilt" about the tools he helped to create. If the trial is successful it is predicted to become a permanent fixture globally. In Instagram's official statement they explained:

> We're currently running at test that hides the total number of likes and video views for some people in the following countries... We want your friends to focus on the photos and videos you share, not how many likes you get. You can still see your own likes by tapping on the list of people who've liked it, but your friends will not be able to see how many likes your post has received. (Instagram, 2019)

In the lead up to this change I asked some of the participants about their thoughts on the trial and potential reform. Opinions were divided with some expressing that it is a positive step in

improving people's mental health as users will no longer feel pressured to post content in accordance to like tallies. Others are sceptical and believe that that there will be little to no change in regards to pressures associated with Instagram. Participants expressed that pressures felt to post only partly stems from like statistics. They explained that pressure primarily relates to striving to maintain a branded persona that adheres to the display rules of microcelebrity culture. Display rules governed by celebrified discourse include branding practices and beauty standards. Participants emphasised, as they did throughout the course of this project, that the design of Instagram promotes branding and in effect social comparison. In this sense, it is believed that the trial or affordance change, if it becomes a permanent fixture, will not change pressures associated with creating a branded persona designed to attract a public audience. Instagram Stories are argued to be proof that removing likes will have no effect on how users use Instagram. On stories, people use it to watch other peoples content without seeing how many others have viewed the story. As we saw in chapters four, five and six, people place the same emphasis on stories and hold them to the same aesthetic standards as they do Instagram posts despite them not having visible like tallies.

Participants explained that under the trial Instagram is still a popularity contest. Likes, and other analytics are still a part of the game, they are just fought for behind the scenes. Statistics measuring visibility are still present and participants do not foresee these statistics being removed completely. Visible following tallies and metrics under the business feature continue to measure audience engagement. In terms of visible statistics, comments are still there. Participants explained that Instagram users are already focusing on comments instead of likes to gauge post engagement. They believe that if likes are permanently removed, comments will inevitable become the new likes that can potentially be more harmful to mental health given that comments can be either positive or negative.

Participants expressed that the damage in regards to comparing and quantifying ourselves is already done. Statistics as a measure of visibility and self worth is engrained in microcelebrity culture. Affordances of Instagram have instilled a mindset and culture that has normalised the pursuit of a branded self designed for public consumption. This culture has been around for long enough that a simple change of one feature will not alleviate the pressures associated with microcelebrity model of self presentation. Furthermore, some participants believe that not liking other people's posts means less opportunity to interact with others which could lead to people being more absorbed in curating their own profile.

If people really want to compare their likes, they can manually count the likes of other users. Furthermore, Instagram has not removed visible like tallies from the desktop interface of Instagram. It is harder for users to view likes as users primarily use the mobile applications but people from the trial countries can still view the likes of other users. A common criticism is that if Instagram want to remove the pressures associated with likes, why have they kept the like feature? The fact the users on the trial can still view likes, seems to undermine the intention of the trial. Users are still able to easily measure their own likes meaning that the same anxieties and insecurities are felt in private. Furthermore, participants are also concerned that removing likes will make it a lot more difficult to spot people who buy fake followers. They explained that it a lot more difficult to do so through checking people's followers. Checking likes was one way users judged the authenticity of the influencers they follow. They believe that people who previously bought fake likes and follows will still be buying fake followers, and might even be more enticed to do so because of how much more difficult it will be for people to notice. There was general consensuses that follower counts are likely to be given more emphasis with it remaining the most prominent, publicly visible tally of statistics.

A major criticism by participants relates to them being sceptical of Instagram's intentions to improve the mental health of users. Many expressed that this move is in no way altruistic. They believe it is a ploy by Instagram to gain greater control over engagement statistics so more businesses run their advertisement through Instagram directly rather than through influencers. Influencers expressed that that this has potential to make their businesses harder to run but it will not ruin them. They explained that influencer marketing as an industry is established enough and therefore a strong enough market to function without likes. They explained that they already have strong and loyal audiences and these bonds are built on connections with their followers, not likes.

Participants explained that the most significant shift that will take place if this trial becomes a permanent feature is that it will halt the influencer market in that it will be a lot harder for people to become internet celebrities or influencers. Influencers have achieved their status primarily though posting branded content that attracts large amounts of likes, and those large numbers of likes play a role in building an audience. When I began my journey to becoming an influencer it was posting photos that attracted a large number of likes that gave me the exposure I needed to grow my following. During Instagram's emerging years, I saw content with significant number of likes, and used it as a gauge of a user's popularity. Although users can still create a brand, likes provide a kind of base for upcoming influencers to work with. Likes are used to measure how well content has been received. Without monitoring what people are liking, it will be harder to understand what audience

respond best to and therefore, which kinds of posts will boost people's followings. Furthermore, it is important to note that removing likes is not believed to relieve pressure associated with managing a public audience.

Instagram's trial has another major flaw that I believe impedes the success of this trial. Instagram is a global community. As an Instagram user, I am still using the likes feature to engage with others from those countries not affected by the trial as I know for them, the same exchange of reciprocity of likes is expected. Therefore, I am unable to disengage with liking completely as it is still a part of the lives of the majority of people I follow and interact with. Ultimately, I believe that 'like' statistics will eventually disappear but 'seen' statistics will not. Instagram and online discourse as a whole that is dominated by microcelebrity culture will still be about branding. People will continue to be focused on perfecting their online self and striving to receive positive audience responses as measured by follows and other engagement statistics available to users. Online identities will remain an indispensable part of our identities in our increasingly online societies. I predict that if statistics were to disappear completely participants would still be preoccupied with self branding. Users will continue to strive to create branded content and deal with pressures associated with editing photos, negotiating sexualised content, body modifications, surface acting. Managing identity dissonance will remain common as long as online performances adhere to a celebrified template. Celebrified performances inherently differ from most people's offline presentation of self.

Limitations

It is important to recognise that economic capital shapes the experiences of many of the digital influencers, including myself, and the non-celebrities consulted in this research. The fact that participants in this research have personal smart phones and access to the internet means that all participants enjoy a level of privilege not available to all young people aged between 18 and 35. This privilege affords opportunity in relation to a user's ability to participate in online society. As discussed in chapter three, economic capital shapes opportunity in relation to the kinds of brands Instagram users are able to create. Many participants display symbols of wealth such as body work that places them at a clear advantage within microcelebrity culture. Although this sample is not representative of all Instagram users I have argued that the lifestyle and beauty ideals that participants in this study portray online, has become a dominant discourse that modulates visibility within the Instagram economy.

Part one of this chapter discussed algorithmic sorting. Instagram organises content to suit the ways in which users interact with the platform. For example, if users primarily follows shirtless men, likes shirtless photos or posts their own shirtless photos they are more likely to be shown shirtless content in their explore screens. In chapter five I state that explore screens are dominated by male shirtless selfies and female bikini selfies. It is important to note that this observation is shaped by my experience of Instagram that is influenced by algorithmic sorting. The fact that I create shirtless content and engage with accounts who also do, means that I was more likely to observe this kind of content. As discussed earlier in this chapter, there is a dynamic loop at play where users are shaping the culture that in turn continues to shape them. Ultimately, my use of Instagram has influenced my view of the platform and in turn my autoethnographic vision. Although I argue that certain aesthetic templates dominate microcelebrity culture I recognise that they are not the only cultural trends on Instagram. There are many more cultures that relate to the eighteen brand categories outlined at the beginning of chapter four. A researcher with a different Instagram brand would likely engage with different content, different users and therefore have a different experience of Instagram. I encourage researchers with Instagram brands different to my own, to conduct further research to gain a more comprehensive understanding of diverse Instagram cultures and subcultures.

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Images

Figures 1-34 were screenshots created by Jonathan Mavroudis. They were included in publication with approval from participants who produced the publicly available content.

List of publications during candidature

Mavroudis, J 2018, 'Fame Labour: A critical autoethnography of Australian digital influencers'. In Abidin, C & Brown, M (Ed.), *Microcelebrity around the globe: Approaches to cultures of internet fame*, Emerald Publishing, UK.

Mavroudis, J & Milne, E 2016, 'Researching microcelebrity: Methods access and labour', *First Monday, 27*(1).

Conferences during candidature

Mavroudis, J, 2019, 'Fame labour and branded sexualities', Social Media, Sexual Citizenship and Youth: Research Showcase and Panel Discussion held at Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, Melbourne, Australia, April 10.

Mavroudis, J 2015, 'Generation like: Life as a microcelebrity through visual social media', Critical Encounters Conference: A conference for and by postgraduate students in the school of Arts, Social Sciences and Humanities held at Swinburne University of Technology, Hawthorn, Melbourne, Australia, November 4 2015.

- *Won second prize in conference competition for most outstanding research.*

Appendix A – Internet celebrity information form and consent form

Hi,

My name is Jonathan Mavroudis, I'm a PhD student from Swinburne University and as a part of my thesis I am studying the experiences of people who have achieved fame on the internet. I have come across your site and would really like to interview you about your experiences on Instagram. Below are my details as well as the projects three supervisors:

Student Researcher: Jonathan Mavroudis BA(honours)
-PhD student, Sociology at Swinburne University

Primary Supervisor: Dr Deborah Dempsey BA(Honours) MA(University of Melbourne) PhD (La Trobe University)
-Senior Lecturer at Swinburne University

Associate Supervsior: Dr Esther Milne BA(Honours)(SUT) PhD (Melbourne University)
-Associate professor , Media and Communincations at Swinburne University

Associate Supervisor: Associate Professor Karen Farquharson BA(Berkeley) MA (Harvard) PhD (Harvard)
-Associate Dean, Research and Engagement at Swinburne University

The interview is expected to go for approximately 45 minutes and can take place at a neutral location that is most convenient for you. The interview will be video recorded (or voice recorded if you're not comfortable with being on video). You will remain anonymous in publication unless you choose otherwise on the consent form. Your screenshots, screen name or actual name will only be used if you give written consent o the attached consent form. You should only share information that you feel comfortable revealing.

To give you an example of the types of questions you will be asked I have provided two sample questions from the interview schedule.

1. *When do you think about posting to social media the most?*
2. *Do you post selfies? Explain the process?*

If you would like to participate please contact me at jonathanmavroudis@swin.edu.au so we can organise an interview time and location. I will collect the attached consent form at the time of the interview after I have answered any questions you may have.

The audio and video will be digitally recorded, only so that I can transcribe what has been said in order to identify themes that emerge from all of the interviews. The audio and video from the interviews will only be accessible to myself and the project's supervisors listed above. Upon completion of the study all electronic recordings will be deleted. Hard copies of the transcripts will be destroyed at the end of 2018. An electronic copy of the transcripts will be saved on a USB drive and stored in a locked draw in a supervisor's office for 5 years following completion of the thesis.

If you would like any further information about the study please do not hesitate to contact Dr Deborah Dempsey at ddempsey@swin.edu.au or on +61 3 9214 4374

Hope to meet you soon ☺
Jonathan Mavroudis

This project has been approved by or on behalf of Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC) in line with the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this project, you can contact:

Research Ethics Officer, Swinburne Research (H68),
Swinburne University of Technology, P O Box 218, HAWTHORN VIC 3122.
Tel (03) 9214 5218 or +61 3 9214 5218 or resethics@swin.edu.au

Project Title: Generation Insta-Famous: Life as a Micro Celebrity Through Visual Social Media

Student Investigator: Jonathan Mavroudis

Chief Supervisor: Dr Deborah Dempsey

Supervisors: Dr Esther Milne and Associate Professor Karen Farquharson

SWINBURNE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

1. I consent to participate in the project named above. I have been provided a copy of the project consent information statement to which this consent form relates and any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

2. ***In relation to this project, please <u>circle</u> your response to the following:***

   - I agree to be interviewed by the researcher **Yes** **No**
   - I agree to allow the interview to be recorded by an electronic device **Yes** **No**
   - I agree for my **actual name** to be used in publication **Yes** **No**
   - I agree for my **screen-name** to be used in publication **Yes** **No**
   - I agree for my Instagram /YouTube screenshots to be used in publication **Yes** **No**
   - I am over 18 years of age **Yes** **No**

3. I acknowledge that:

   (a) my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without explanation;

   (b) the Swinburne project is for the purpose of research and not for profit;

   (c) any identifiable information about me which is gathered in the course of and as the result of my participating in this project will be (i) collected and retained for the purpose of this project and (ii) accessed and analysed by the researcher(s) for the purpose of conducting this project;

   (d) I will not be identified in publications or otherwise without my express written consent.

By signing this document I agree to participate in this project.

Name of participant: ……
Signature: ……**Date:**……..

Appendix B – Internet celebrity interview schedule

Identity construction

1. So, how many followers do you have now on Instagram?
2. Approximately how many have you met in real life?
3. When you first started using Instagram, what were your intentions?
4. What do you usually post to Instagram? Why?
5. What would you never post?
6. Do you post selfies? Explain the process?
7. When people ask about your popularity on Instagram, how do you explain it?
8. How important is your online popularity to you?

Relationship with your audience

9. When you upload a photo, who do you have in mind as your audience?
10. How do you feel about having fans on the internet?
11. Who do you communicate with primarily? How much of your social media use is about keeping in touch with family and friends that you interact with offline?
12. If you were to travel overseas next week would you consider not sharing photos?
13. Have you ever forgotten to take a photo of something/post something that you wish you had? How did that make you feel?

Labour involved

14. Do you think there's a taboo around discussing what we do behind the scenes on social media? Which aspects?
15. Does using Instagram sometimes feel like work/labour intensive? (probe the following)
    - Creating content
    - Posting content
    - Thinking of content to post
    - Taking selfies
    - Liking and commenting on other people's posts
    - Maintaining/ satisfying your audience (e.g. making sure you post often enough)
    - Increasing your number of followers
    - Working on the aesthetic appeal of your profile

16. How about the labour involved with maintaining and increasing your audience (probe the following)

    - Posting sexualised content
    - Changing your physical appearance (in real life/ in editing)
    - Making your life seem more interesting than it is
    - Buying followers and/or likes
    - Trying to get an influencer to follow you (networking)

17. Do you ever feel pressure, stress or anxiety over your Instagram? (what you post, how your profile looks, how your audience receives your post)
18. Have you ever been approached by a company/marketer asking you to promote their product? Brand deals?

Online relationships and work

19. How has Instagram changed the way we do intimate relationships?
20. Are relationships harder or more work now? In what ways? (checking who they like, relationship goals)
21. How do you manage professional relationships on Instagram?

General

22. How do you think people perceive you when they look at your profile?
23. Do you think that your Instagram profile is an accurate portrayal of who you are in real life?
24. Do you feel that your online self is an important part of your overall identity?
25. How does Instagram/other visual social media enhance your life? What does it allow you do that wouldn't be possible without it?
26. If Instagram were to disappear, what couldn't you do anymore?

27. Do you think that Instagram and other visual social media encourages us to strive for fame on the internet? How?
28. Is insta-fame sustainable? Do you see it/ your popularity having a lifespan?
29. Do you associate internet fame with success offline? Can it be a career? Lead to a career?

Posting Stories

30. Last question, Do you use **Snapchat or Instagram story** to publicly post stories/live streams?
    i. describe why you use it
    ii. How's it different to Instagram (regular posting)
    iii. Does it change the way you interact with your audience
    iv. Do you use Instagram Story?

Appendix C – Announcement of non-microcelebrity online questionnaire

Posted on Instagram accounts:

Hey Guys,

I'm involved in a university research study about internet fame and It would be great if you guys, my amazing followers would also take part. All you will need to do is answer a short questionnaire via email.

If you're interested, please contact Jonathan Mavroudis at jonathanmavroudis@swin.edu.au

NOTE: You must be 18 years or over to take part.

Jonathan Mavroudis is a PhD student from Swinburne University in Melbourne Australia. As part of his thesis he is studying the experiences of people using Instagram and YouTube in relation to constructing a micro-celebrity identity, posting behaviour, online subcultures, online intimacy and fandom.

Appendix D – Online questionnaire: Non-microcelebrities

https://swinburnefhad.au1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_er2KBNjZKF0xeXr

Appendix E – Online questionnaire: Microcelebrities

https://swinburnefhad.au1.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_01XTb0iT2e8irMV

Appendix F – Ethics approval and final report acknowledgment

All conditions pertaining to the clearance were properly met. Annual reports and the final report have been submitted.

Dear Deb and Jonathan

SHR Project 2015/111 Generation Insta-Famous: Life as a Micro-Celebrity through Visual Social Media
Dr Deborah Dempsey, FHAD; Mr Jonathan Mavroudis, Assoc Prof Esther Milne, Assoc Prof Karen Farquharson
Approved Duration: 29-06-2015 to 31-01-2019 [Adjusted]

I refer to the ethical review of the above project protocol by Swinburne's Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC). Your responses to the review, as emailed on 10 June 2015 with attachments, were put to the SUHREC delegate for consideration and feedback sent to you. Your responses to the feedback, as emailed on 24 June 2015, was also put to the delegate for consideration and feedback sent to you. Your email of 26 June 2015 (with attached updated publicity, consent and research documentation) accords with the delegate's feedback.

I am pleased to advise that, as submitted to date, ethics clearance has been given for the above project to proceed in line with standard on-going ethics clearance conditions outlined below.

- All human research activity undertaken under Swinburne auspices must conform to Swinburne and external regulatory standards, including the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and with respect to secure data use, retention and disposal.

- The named Swinburne Chief Investigator/Supervisor remains responsible for any personnel appointed to or associated with the project being made aware of ethics clearance conditions, including research and consent procedures or instruments approved. Any change in chief investigator/supervisor requires timely notification and SUHREC endorsement.

- The above project has been approved as submitted for ethical review by or on behalf of SUHREC. Amendments to approved procedures or instruments ordinarily require prior ethical appraisal/clearance. SUHREC must be notified immediately or as soon as possible thereafter of (a) any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants and any redress measures; (b) proposed changes in protocols; and (c) unforeseen events which might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project.

- At a minimum, an annual report on the progress of the project is required as well as at the conclusion (or abandonment) of the project. Information on project monitoring, self-audits and progress reports can be found at: http://www.research.swinburne.edu.au/ethics/human/monitoringReportingChanges/

- A duly authorised external or internal audit of the project may be undertaken at any time.

Please contact the Research Ethics Office if you have any queries about on-going ethics clearance, citing the project number. Please retain a copy of this email as part of project record-keeping.

Best wishes for the project.

Yours sincerely

Keith

Keith Wilkins
Secretary, SUHREC & Research Ethics Officer
Swinburne Research (H68)
Swinburne University of Technology