Review:

Papacharissi, Zizi (ed.): *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Networking Sites,* Routledge, 2010. ISBN: 9780415801812.

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"Networks exist for a reason. They spread ideas; they spread knowledge; they spread influence. What happens if you give a piece of information to an individual, who passes it on to friends, who then pass it on to their friends, and so on?" This quote from the first chapter of the book from Albert-László Barabási immediately sets the scene for this excellent collection of essays from leading researchers within the field. Particularly, this articulation of the ubiquity and therefore importance of understanding networks underpins one of the themes of the book, the relationships, differences, and complementarities between online and off-line social worlds.

The book offers a wealth of new research and perspectives. Given the growth of interest both within this field as an area of emerging research and social networking itself as an evolving and popular activity, this collection sketches out an agenda for the area. It is helpfully divided into three sections. The first of these, "Context: Communication Theory and Social Network Sites" explores different dimensions of online communications theory and offers nuanced perspectives and new frameworks for considering aspects of social networking. The section includes an examination of the interactions of interpersonal, peer and mass communication messages as they co-appear on social networking sites (Walther et al.). Further, an investigation of the value of examining "network publics" through understanding how properties, affordances and dynamics online impact interactions and social practices (boyd). Consideration of the potentially addictive qualities of social networking sites and whether a personal preference to use social networking sites can turn easily into habits with potentially problematic and harmful consequences (LaRose et al) Finally, an essay on commercial exploitation which brings home that participants on social networking sites may be naive in

not realising how their conversations and other contributions may be "privatised" and sold (Andrejevic).

In section 2, "Social Textures: Emerging Patterns of Sociability on Social Network Sites" examines social practices within different media ecologies. Social network sites are assessed in relation to their qualities to facilitate the formation of Virtual Communities (Parks) and interestingly they are found to fall somewhat short of the mark. Nevertheless, the next essay argues the benefits of social network sites for generating social capital (Ellison et al.). Hargittai and Hsieh demonstrate how diverse user characteristics and demographic differences map to variances in how first-year students at an urban public university use social network sites. Finally, consideration is given to how social network sites can be used in the workplace. Watson-Manheim points out that users tend to bring established external social practices into the workplace when using the social network sites and that for this facility to be of benefit within the workplace, these aspects need careful management.

The final section: "Convergent Practices: Intuitive Appropriations of Social Network Site Affordances" focuses mainly on the political, professional, production aspects of social network sites. The first essay focuses on social network sites and civic engagement. In particular, it considers the degree to which the use of social networking sites and YouTube can predict on and off-line political participation, intention to vote and reliance on face-to-face discussions to gain political information (Johnson et al.). Related to this, in the next paper, Kaye examines the motivations for using social network sites and blogs for exchanging political information. It is interesting that she found that demographic differences between participants were linked to different patterns of social network sites and blog use. "Working the Twittersphere" examines Twitter as a window onto the complex processes of professional identity construction as employed by public relations practitioners. Gilpin found that these practitioners use social networking sites in a multiplicity of ways which include information sharing, networking and establishing professional expertise.

The idea of identity formation and presentation is then explored further by Mendelson and Papacharissi through examination of college students' photo galleries as a means of visual autobiography online. It shows how young people post photos on social network sites to perform the identity of being a student. Whilst little is shown of the academic side of college life, posting photos allows students to show their adherence to the student peer group and independence from parents and family. One fascinating aspect of this, as noted by the authors, is the prevalence of photographs of friendship groups which then diminish as a more serious one-to-one relationship takes over and photos of the couple begin to dominate. The following chapter examines copyright, fair use and social networks, reporting on the issues that can arise through creative cultural production and introducing the concept of fair use, and

the "Code of Best Practices in Fair Use for Online Video" that the author, Aufderheide and legal experts from the Washington College of Law crafted about online video to help producers understand the potential pitfalls. Aufderheide argues that what is considered to be fair use will develop over time as standards emerging from practice will emerge and help producers to negotiate the situation. Finally, Papacharissi concludes with a discussion of the different aspects covered within the book including self-presentation, self-identity, collective identities, performance and the notion that social network sites are based upon principles of convergence.

This collection offers an extensive exploration of many of the emergent elements and important considerations relating to social networking. It contains much new evidence about how people engage with social networking sites and it is difficult to do justice to these in a short review. However, an interesting facet of the book is how some of the content is concerned with the oppositions of opportunity and risk for adults in line with the focus of many studies of children's internet use (e.g. Livingstone, 2009). On the one hand, some of the chapters focus on benefits such as how people can gain social capital from social networking, the opportunities presented for identity formation and presentation, the benefits of using social network sites for organising work in the workplace. On the other, content also focuses on the pitfalls of social networking such as, negotiating the complexity of copyright law for people involved in creative production, the lack of awareness of how social network sites are used for commercial purposes and potentially the "privatising community" aspect of this, and the careful management of social networking use that is required within the workplace to benefit performance.

In total, this book provides a very useful addition to research in this area. It lays the foundations for the field and should be taken very seriously by anyone interested in social networking.

References

Livingstone, S. Children and the Internet. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009.