

User Competencies

Understanding the user experience of social media

A view from Social Interaction Design
by Adrian Chan

www.gravity7.com



Acting is the art of “turning
psychology into behavior.”

director Elia Kazan



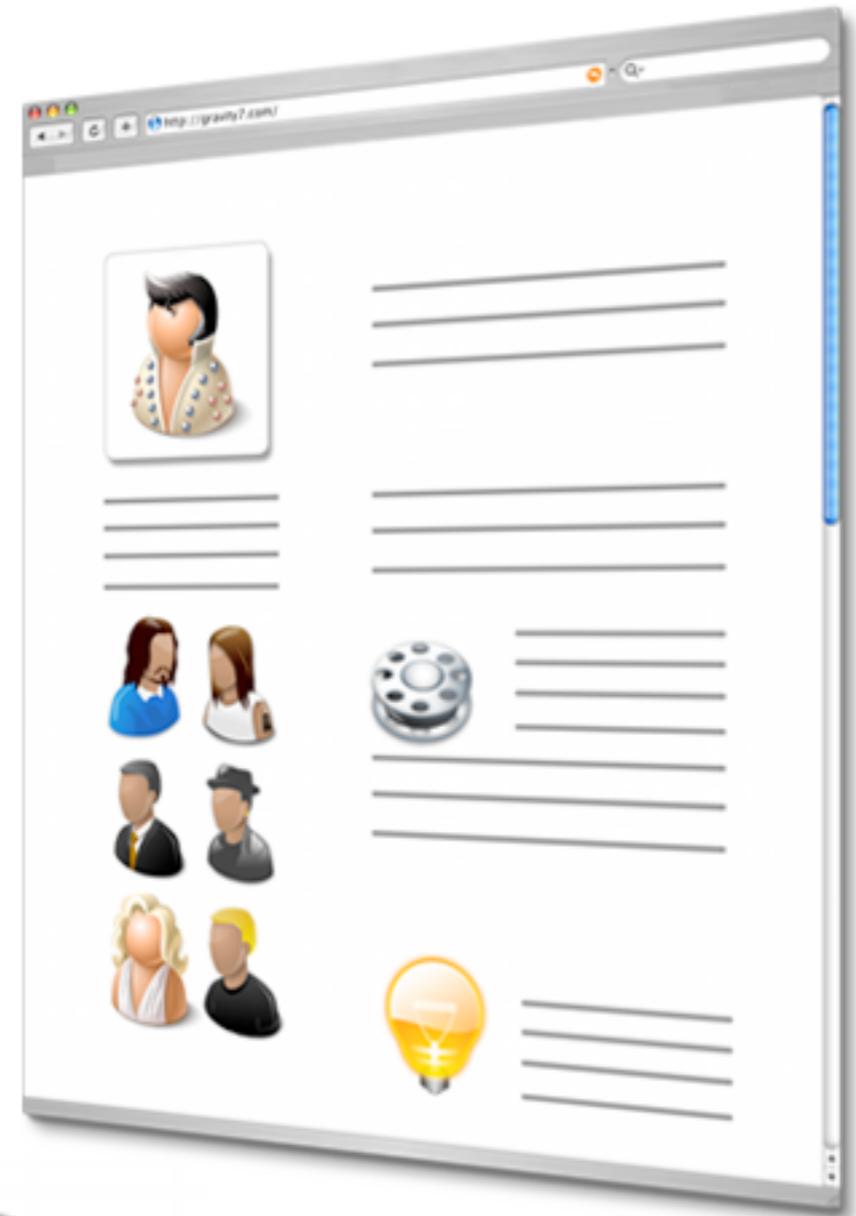
Contents

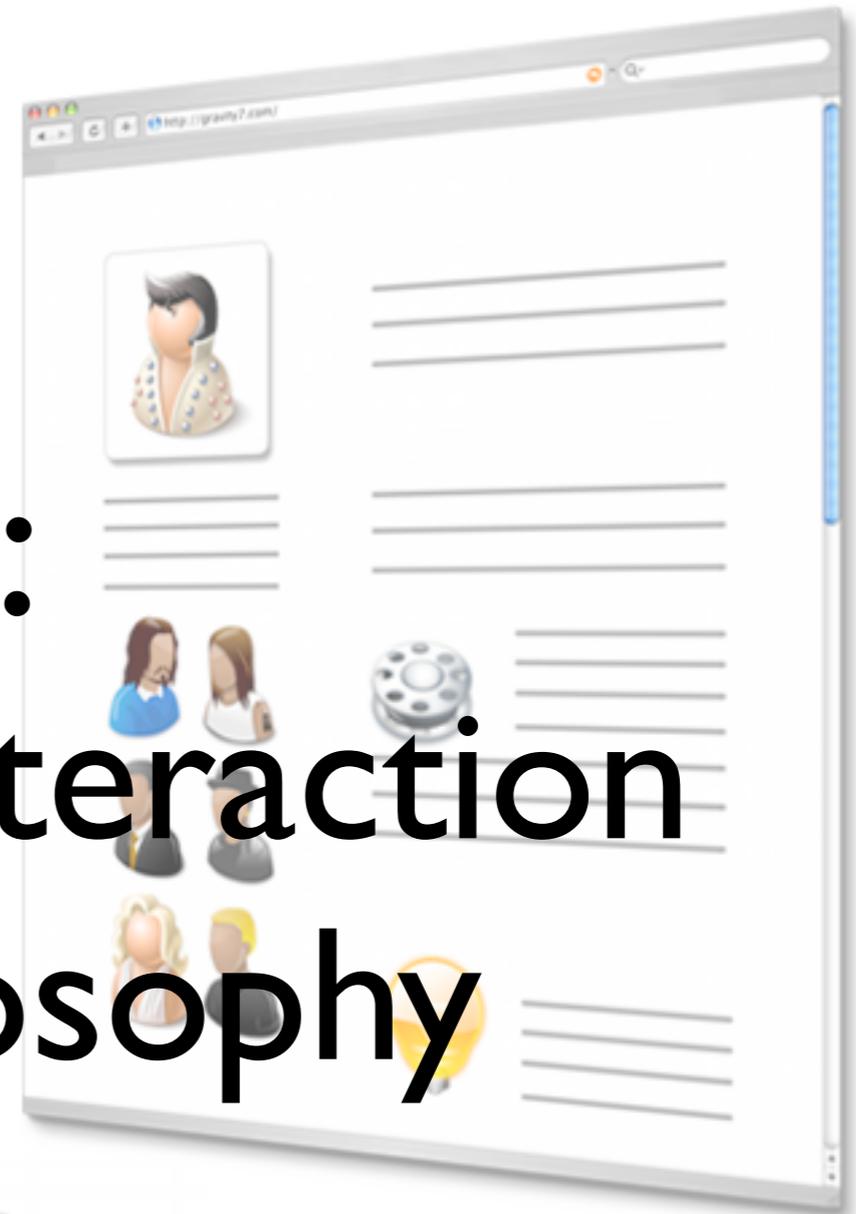
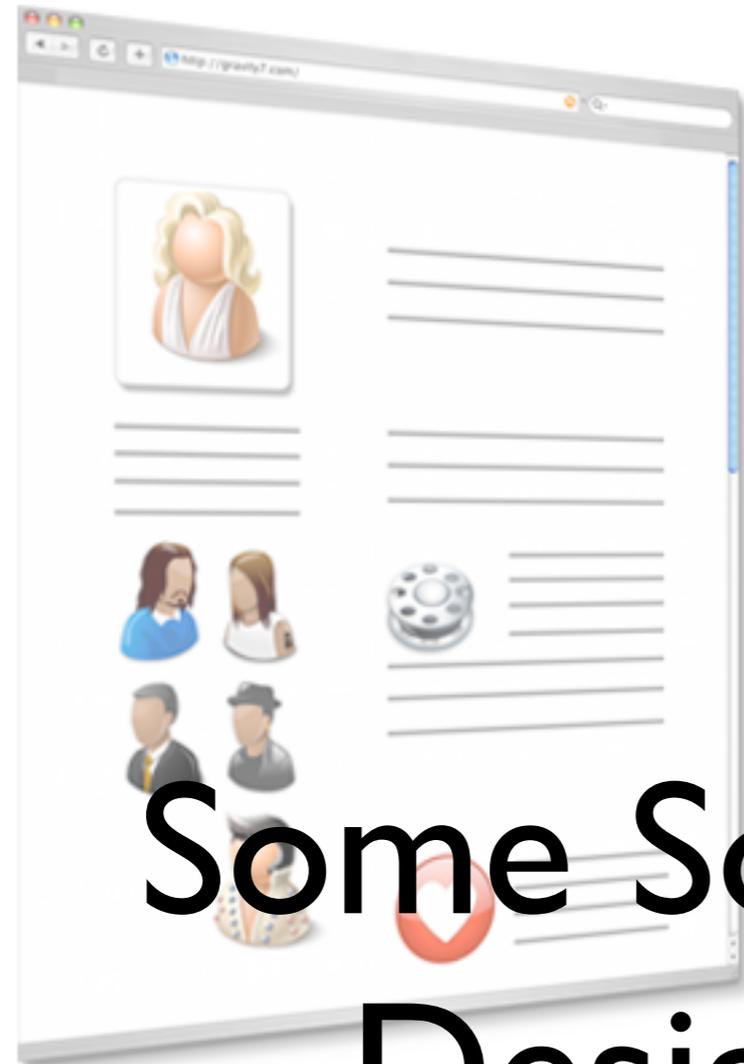
Part I: Some Social Interaction Design Philosophy

Part II: User Interests & Interested Users

Part III: Social Media & Social Action

Part IV: Social Media Competencies





Part I: Some Social Interaction Design Philosophy



Overview

- Purpose of this presentation:
 - To introduce new concepts to our understanding of the social media user experience
 - To argue for user *interests* instead of user needs and goals
 - To ground the user's interests in a social media context
 - To grasp differences among users' self-interest, their interests in others, and their interests in relationships
 - To lift the user experience out of the context of discrete transactions and software interaction, and to place it instead in the context of ongoing social interaction and communication
 - To distinguish among competencies for communication, interaction, and relationships



Why “competencies?”

- Social media users are *competent* users: technically, culturally, socially, and psychologically
- Their competencies empower them to use social media for interaction, communication, knowledge, commerce, and social activities
- While the user experience is *user-centric*, it goes beyond “goals” and “needs” to “interests”
 - We can assume that social media participants users have an interest in mind, and find the experience of using social media interesting
 - Interests are captured in motives, habits, desires, routines, and more
- User competencies with social media are expressed with personality and style, and reflect the user’s self-image, sociability, relationship habits, and ways of handling of interpersonal communication and social situations



And of other competencies?

- This presentation focuses on social competencies with social media, and largely ignores competencies required for ordinary web use:
- Competencies in use of the web for searching, browsing, navigation, etc.
- Competencies in negotiating the variety of web pages and social applications, including page layouts, use of form pages, buttons, sequenced actions, and numerous other interface concerns.



A few fundamental remarks

- While our goal may be to describe both the user and user experience in terms of competencies with technology and *mediated* social interaction...
- In social interaction on and offline, participants need to know what is going on in order to know how to proceed
- We must start from competencies with face-to-face interactions, for
 - social convention and etiquette shape online user behaviors and social practices
 - users have a sense of who they are, how they are seen, and how to be
 - and these competencies are not captured by descriptions of moods, tastes, or preferences — they are not how the user is but how she acts
- A personal competence is social if it involves the user's self-reflection and self-understanding, and if it not only includes *a self-understanding of his or her own activity but also anticipates how it will be taken by others*



Why a framework?

- We need a framework for understanding user activity and user experiences that work as well as those that fail:
 - communication but also miscommunication
 - conversation but also misunderstanding
 - new friendships but also false impressions
 - ongoing commitments but also mistaken expectations
- We need a framework that can describe the appeal of social media to different kinds of users
- And which can appreciate that users become engaged and participate on the basis of many distinct social competencies



Remark on user needs and goals

- A description of user experience grounded in self-presentation, interpersonal communication and relationships, and social interaction will be far more powerful than one grounded in a non-reflexive definition “needs” and “goals”
- Non-reflexive goals and needs are stable and static definitions of human interests, but are observed of human action from the “outside” of experience, and not understood as a self-understanding, or from the “inside” of experience
- Self-reflexive *interests* are those that are observable and which the user also has of him/herself: the user is motivated and is “in” the activity as a person who understands what s/he is doing
- **Note:** This presentation focuses on competencies of user using social media, and while it draws on psychology and personality, is not a description of user psychology, or of the user’s psychological experiences with social media.



Implications for Social Media

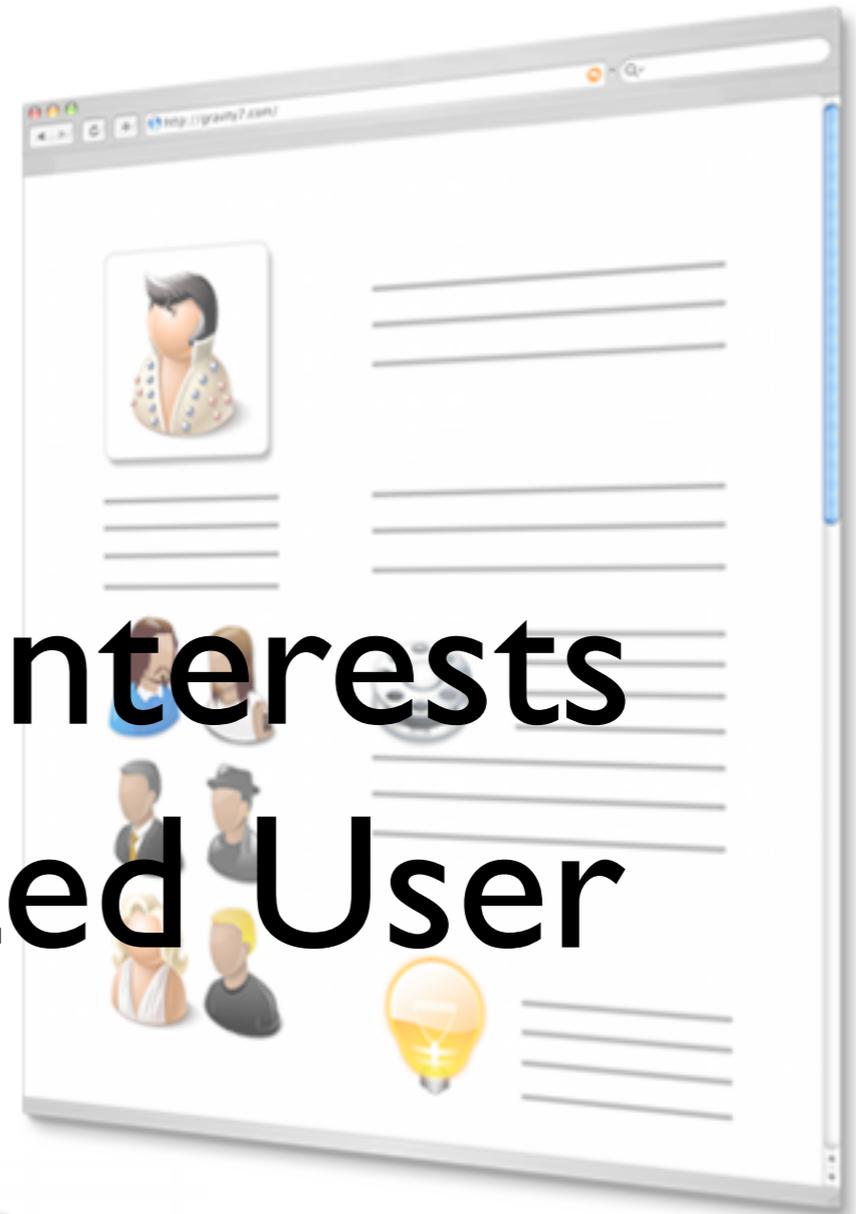
- Social media engage users in what interests them
- Social media can offer numerous applications and variations on content and interaction, each preferred by users *competent* in that mode of participation
- People are the content, and in any social medium, users can take an interest in site content and/or those who contribute it
- Social media succeed when they allow users to do well and look good
- User competencies involve multiple modalities of participation:
 - Self-Image, identity, presence, sense of self, self expression
 - Face and appearance, perceptions, and making an impression
 - Community participation, activity, conversation, and contributions of others
 - Social structure, hierarchy, status, and rank and relationships



and more implications...

- Users must see opportunities by which to make an impression
- Social media can work even if they “don’t work” as software, because the transactions in communication are not discrete, but ongoing.
- Social media can fail even if they “work,” such as when user’s can’t see one another, when there’s no social purpose to a site’s content, when there’s no audience paying attention to contributions, and so on.
- Social media, when they fail as software, can still engage users:
 - in compensating for what is unclear
 - in completing what is unfinished
 - in making explicit what is implicit
 - in asking what has gone unstated
 - and so on





Part II: User Interests & the Interested User



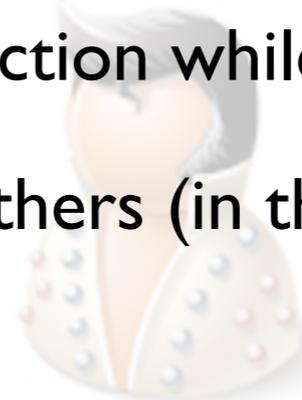
Users are people

- We all have social skills and competencies — ways of handling social interactions, of paying and directing attention, and interest, in others
- Social media facilitate social practices among users with *different competencies* in interacting, communicating, presenting themselves and recognizing others online



Users are people

- We all have social skills and competencies — ways of handling social interactions, of paying and directing attention, and interest, in others
- Social media facilitate social practices among users with *different competencies* in interacting, communicating, presenting themselves and recognizing others online
- Social competencies involve our handling of ourselves and others in social interaction and communication
- Each of us is better at some kinds of social interactions, and we all vary in how we
 - as “selves,” become involved in social action while
 - sustaining and engage the interest of others (in their self involvement and in us)



An interest in social competence

- Successful social media depend on the user, on her involvement and ongoing participation, not only with the “system” but with other users also



An interest in social competence

- Successful social media depend on the user, on her involvement and ongoing participation, not only with the “system” but with other users also
- And it is by organizing this world of meaning that social media compel and engage participation
- Social media must capture the user’s interest and enable him or her to both feel and appear *socially competent*
- For this, social media engage and motivate user interests:
 - in activities on the system
 - in participating with others in those activities
 - in their own self-sustaining and self-actualizing membership
- Common individual interests form social attachments, and in this can form the basis for user engagement



Social media competencies

- For example, social media competencies require a grasp of
 - technical functions and features
 - thematic distinctions between sites and services, etiquettes and behavior
 - sensitivity to private/public and personal/impersonal modes of communication



Social *media* competencies

- Competencies vary in their sophistication with a number of aspects of individual and social presence online:
 - the world is not here and now
 - other people can't be seen looking back
- The lack of face to face co-presence and context distinguishes communication and interaction on social media in that action, interest, mood, personality, and all other “communicative” meanings must be *represented*



Motives and motivation



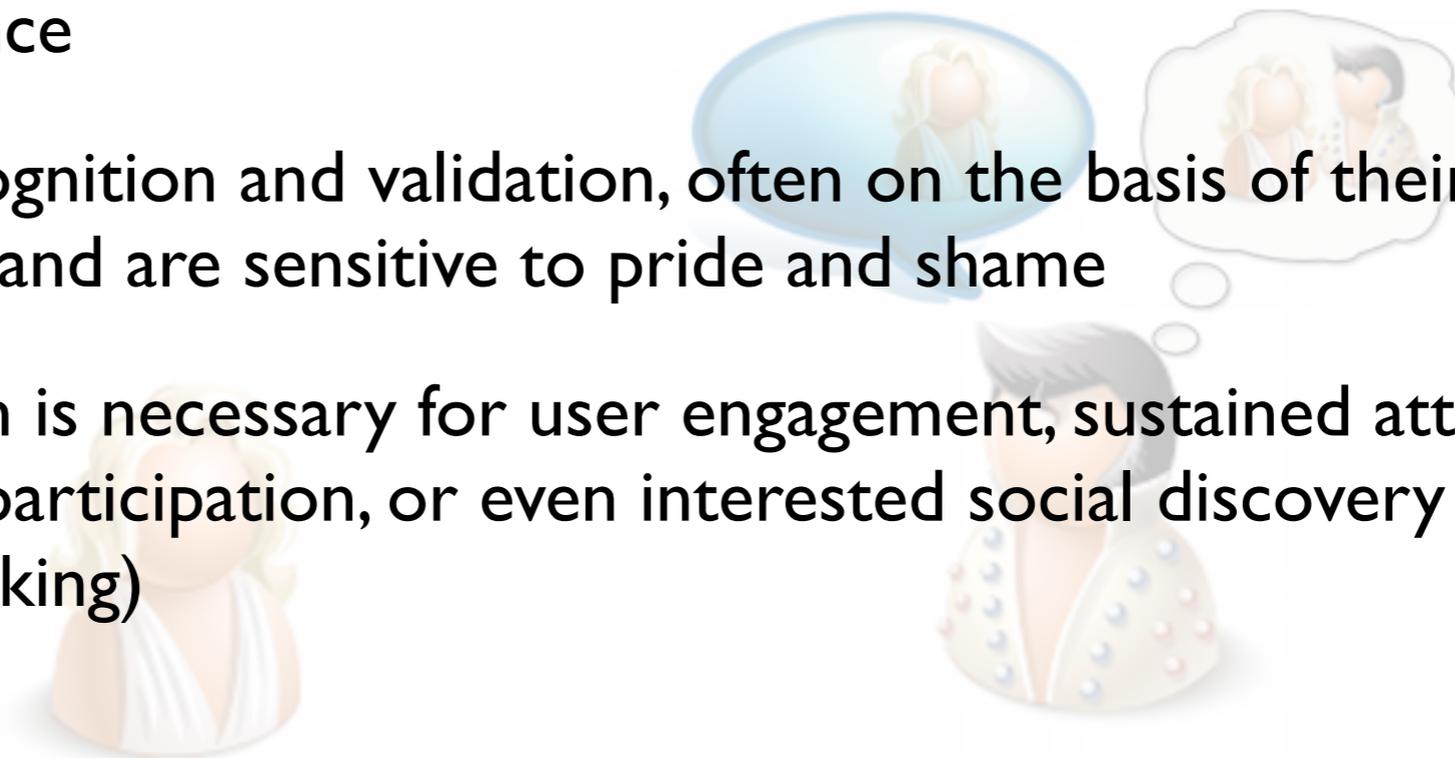
Motives and motivation

- Users of social media are self-motivated, and self-interested:
 - in themselves and their self-image
 - in others and their impressions of others
 - in how they appear to others, and what others seem to think of them



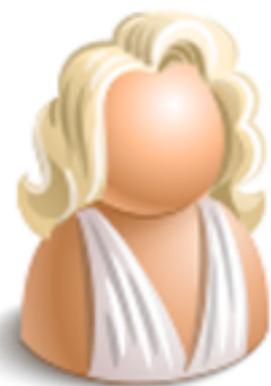
Motives and motivation

- Users of social media are self-motivated, and self-interested:
 - in themselves and their self-image
 - in others and their impressions of others
 - in how they appear to others, and what others seem to think of them
 - in relationships, interaction, and communication for acknowledgment and acceptance
- Users seek recognition and validation, often on the basis of their like-ability and desirability, and are sensitive to pride and shame
- User motivation is necessary for user engagement, sustained attention and interest, active participation, or even interested social discovery and exploration (lurking)



Interests have interests

- Interests become interested — general interests take an interest in something particular



Interests have interests

- Interests become interested — general interests take an interest in something particular
- Specific interests are general interests in association or relation, with an object, idea, image, person, or feeling
- The content of social media come from these associations and relational interests of users:
 - to themselves, or their representation, appearance, etc.
 - to others, either to people known or to people by their appearance
 - to relations with others, be they actual or possible
 - to content, such as images, video, signs, pictures, visual messages
 - to communication, private and public messages, posts, etc
 - to activities, such as ratings, ranking, status, etc.



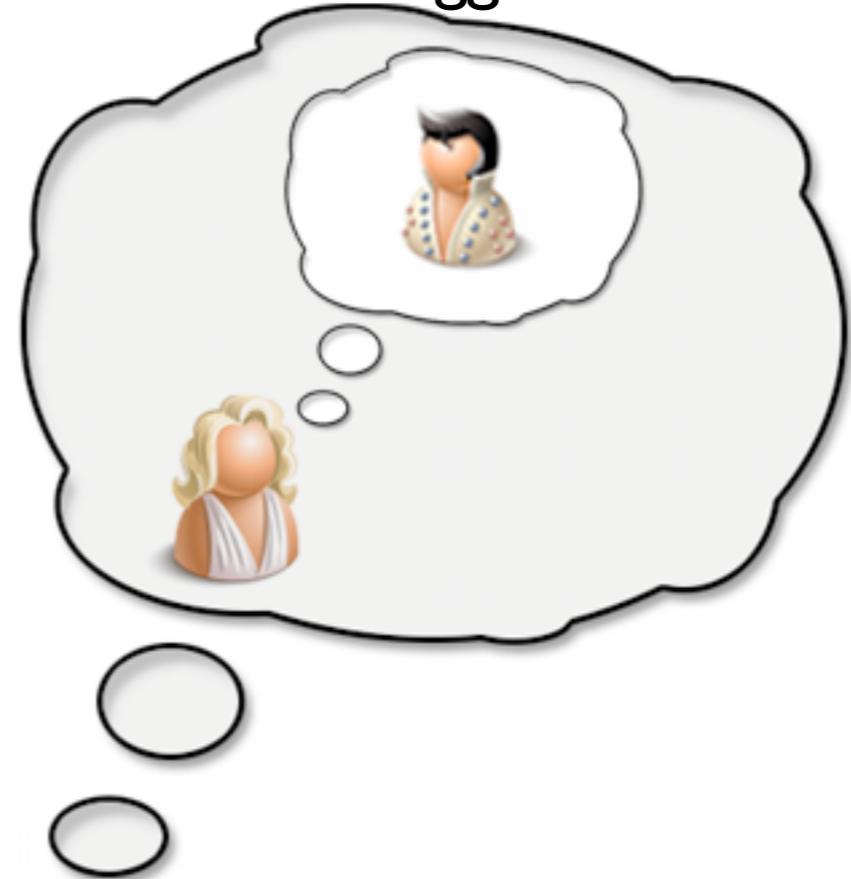
Interests are represented

- Because social media capture and present participation, activity, and content through representations, interests are reflected and interested users are self-reflecting
 - self-reflection is a sense of self
 - self-reflection is a sense of one's appearance
- The representation of the user's self online serves as a mirror
 - the user sees his or her own self represented
 - this echoes, amplifies, or exaggerates the user's self-reflections
- Representation of others on social media serve as window, lens, or portrait
 - the user sees an image of the other
 - which can confirm, amplify, or exaggerate, the user's impression of the other



Self Interests

- “Self-Interests” involve how we see ourselves, what we think of ourselves, and what we think others think of us. In social media these are represented or indicated on the page, and stated or suggested in messages.



Self Interests

- “Self-Interests” involve how we see ourselves, what we think of ourselves, and what we think others think of us. In social media these are represented or indicated on the page, and stated or suggested in messages.
- Self-Image
 - Self-Image, “who I am”
 - is who (I think) I am, and how I see myself
- Self Reflection
 - Self reflection, or “what am I doing?”
 - is what I think of myself, how I think of myself
- Self Perception
 - Self perception, or “how do I look, how do I seem?”
 - is an internalized impression of how I appear to others



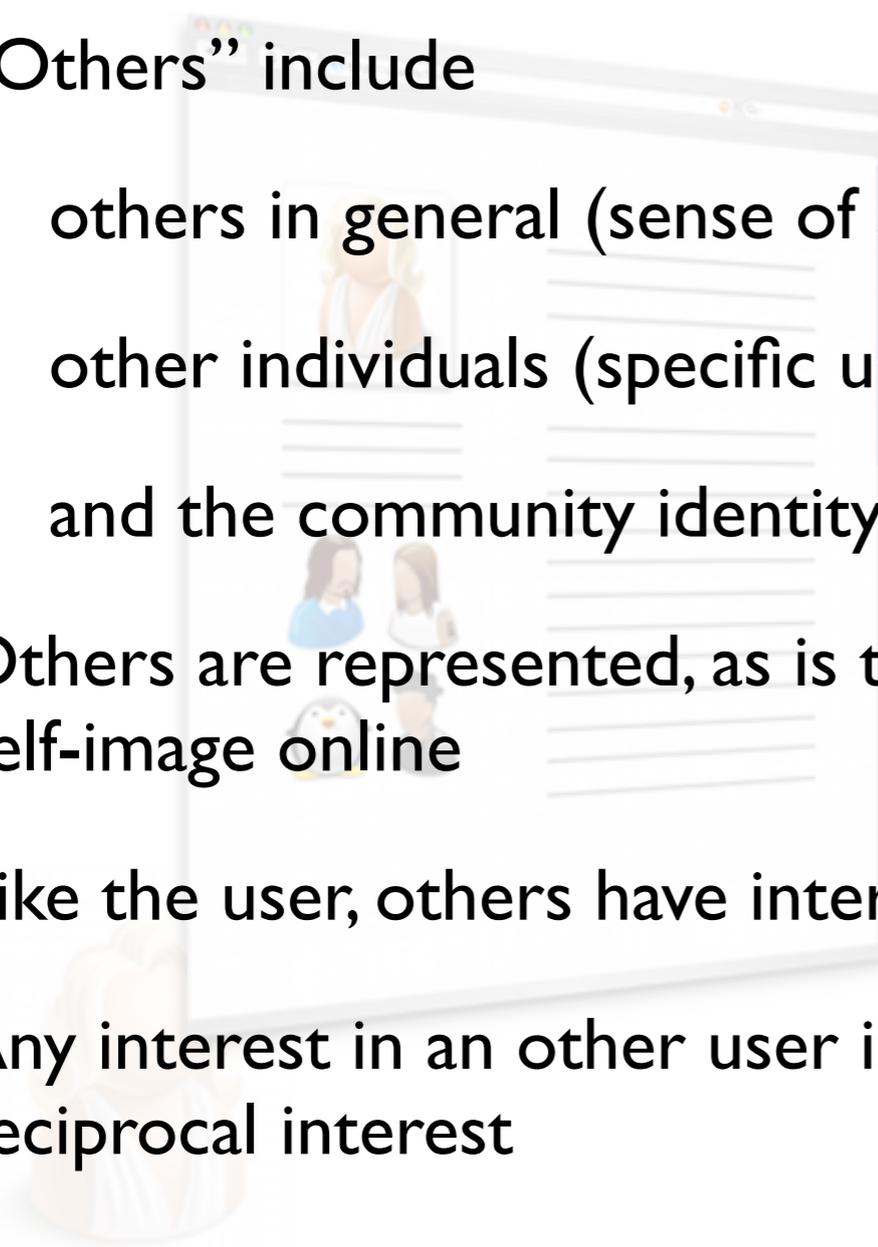
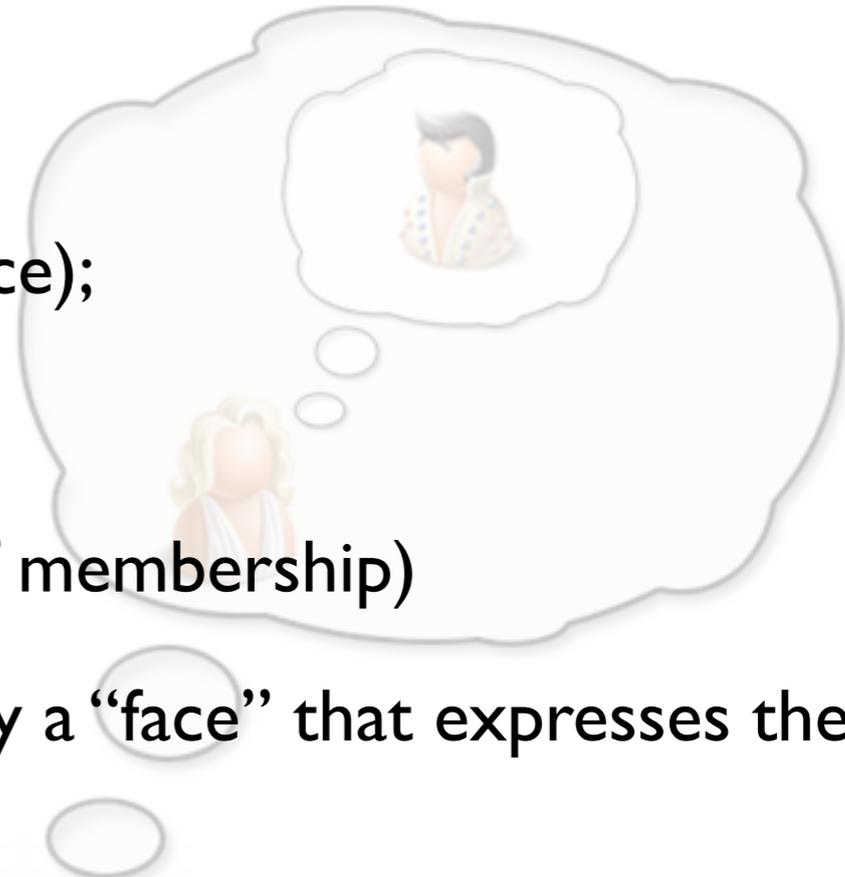
Interests in others

- “Interests in others” are what we think of others, their interests and who they are, but also what we think they think of us, and whether and why they might be interested in us.



Interests in others

- “Interests in others” are what we think of others, their interests and who they are, but also what we think they think of us, and whether and how they might be interested in us
- “Others” include
 - others in general (sense of an audience);
 - other individuals (specific users);
 - and the community identity (sense of membership)
- Others are represented, as is the user, by a “face” that expresses the user’s self-image online
- Like the user, others have interests and are interested
- Any interest in an other user includes the possibility of the other user’s reciprocal interest



The possibility of relationship

- What passes quickly between people in face-to-face situations is deferred and displaced online
- But where we have a clear impression of our own face (our self-image), we can only form an impression of others (applies even to those we know):
 - appearing to be appealing, interesting, smart, popular, funny, cool, etc.
- Until communication begins, others are thus always in possible relation:
 - interested in us, are like us, might like us
 - not interested, not like us, might not like us



Self is a face

- The user's profile is the anchor of his or her public presence online. It presents a face shown to others, as well as a reflection seen by the user him or herself.



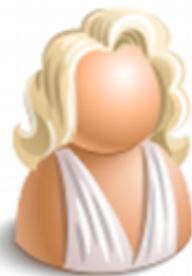
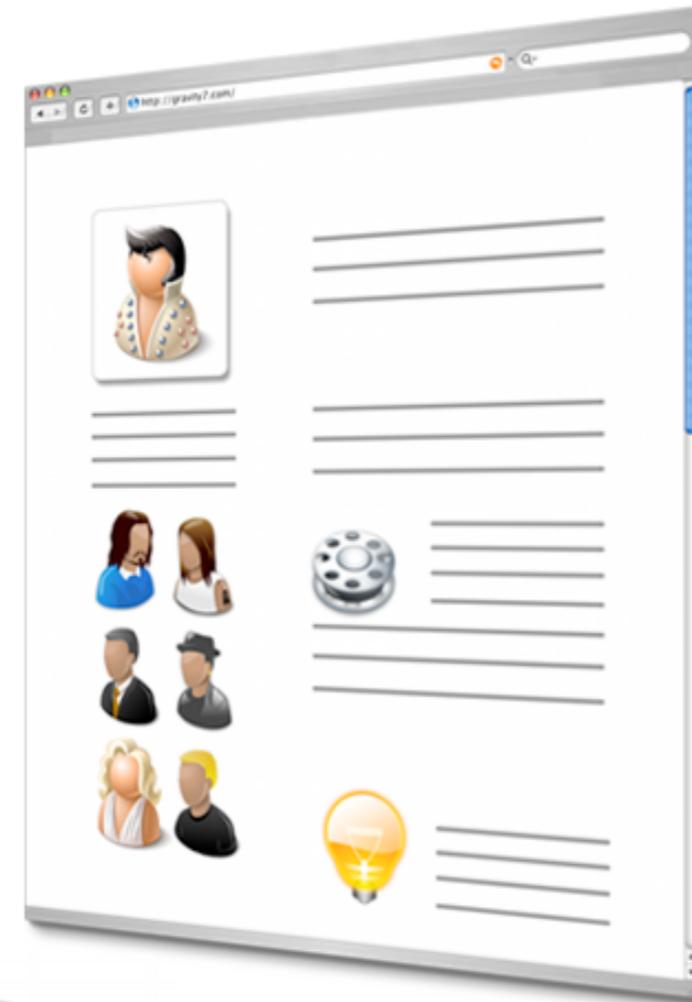
Self is a face

- The user's profile is the anchor of his or her public presence online. It presents a face shown to others, as well as a reflection seen by the user him or herself.
- User "produces" him/herself with a member profile, posts, friends, etc, all of which extend his or her face, as well as reflect on him/her
- User's presence and contributions elsewhere create navigation to the user
- This public face is a new cultural form, a new media form, as well as a new social practice
- Even on social media and social network sites that are not profile-based, the user is only known by his/her contributions
- Promoting, designing, producing, and distributing face adheres to cultural conventions, and is practiced in cultural and social contexts
- The user manages his/her public face, but depends on the community for acknowledgment and recognition



Impression management

- Users can manage their appearance and appeal, their presence and self presentation, in a number of ways:



Impression management

- Users can manage their appearance and appeal, their presence and self-presentation, in a number of ways:
 - users have sense of how they *appear* to others (however in/accurately)
 - *attract* others with looks, poses, style, personality, etc
 - *appeal* to others with statements, references, know-how, passions, interests, etc
 - achieve *credibility* through others in peer, professional, friend, or activity circles
 - *suggest* to others one's motives and intentions (in meeting, working, communicating, doing an activity)
 - *engage* others in online activities
 - etc



Relations

- By definition, our interests in others are relational. That is, the user's interests in an other or in others, and in their view of him or her, is an interest in their relationship to him or her



Relations

- By definition, our interests in others are relational. That is, the user's interests in an other or in others, and in their view of him or her, is an interest in their relationship to him or her
- Familiar others are in an *existing relationship* to the user
- Unfamiliar others have a *possible relationship* to the user
- The user forms an impression of unfamiliar others:
 - this captivates the user's interest, desire, curiosity, attraction, wish to be associated with, friends of him/her, etc.
- By blurring the distinction between personal and social, private and public, and direct and indirect interaction and communication, social media produce content



Relations

- For example, the possibility that users might like each other because they like similar things and share similar interests



Relations

- and then become friends online



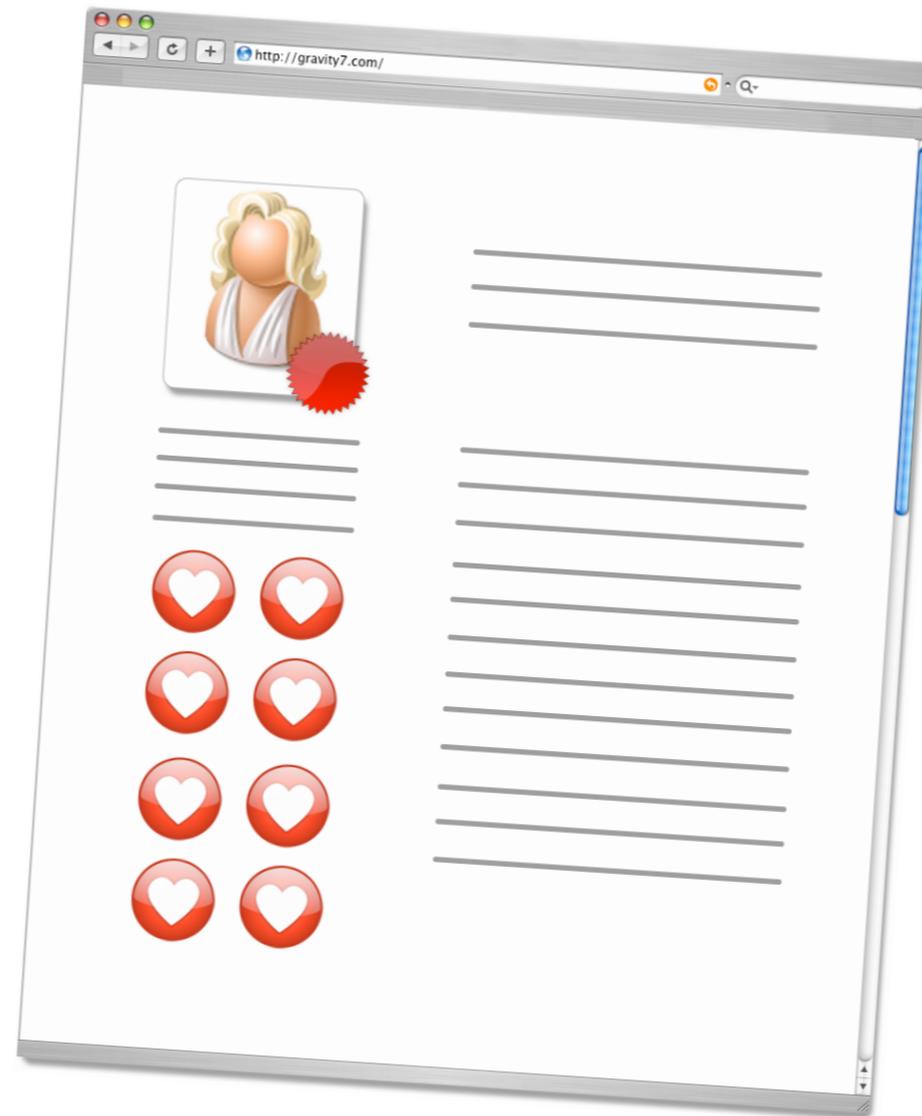
Relations

- and network among shared friends for further possibilities — all of which are relationship opportunities



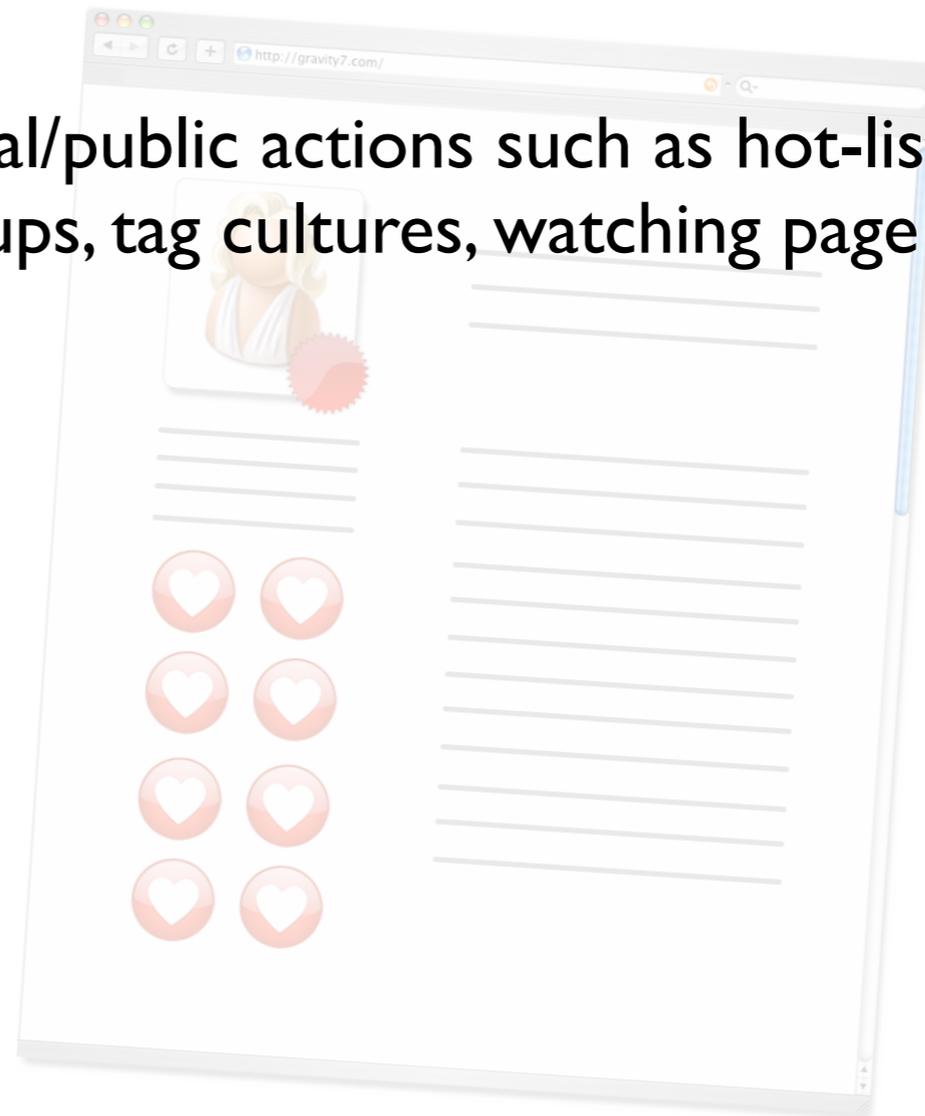
Relationships

- Social media offer a means of developing relationships among familiar and unfamiliar users



Relationships

- Social media offer a means of developing relationships among familiar and unfamiliar users
- Relationships develop through direct and private/personal interactions, such as communicating, posting, sharing, inviting, asking, recommending and other kinds of messaging...
- ...and through indirect and social/public actions such as hot-listing, bookmarking, joining same groups, tag cultures, watching page views, etc.





Part III: Social Media & Social Action



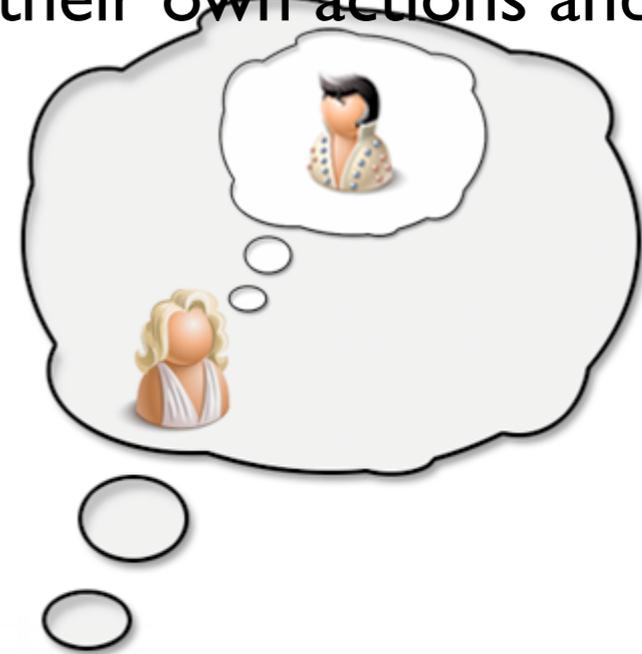
Social action

- In everyday social encounters, social interaction is meaningful to those present and participating, and individual actions are contextualized
- Social action is facilitated by common codes and norms, by convention, context, shared language, and so on — all of which reduce ambiguity and make communication likely
- Action means something different to each:
 - it is intended by the actor
 - it is interpreted by the other
- Social action is impossible without actors anticipating of its reception: its meaning is *contingent*: what the user intends, and how s/he anticipates it will be understood



“Double contingency”

- Action is posted, recorded, represented, sent, shared, and otherwise captured by the medium
- In social media use, action is de-coupled from performance, communication from utterance, and interaction from context
- The mediation of social media used for communication and interaction disrupts the ability of interactants to monitor their own actions and the perceptions of others



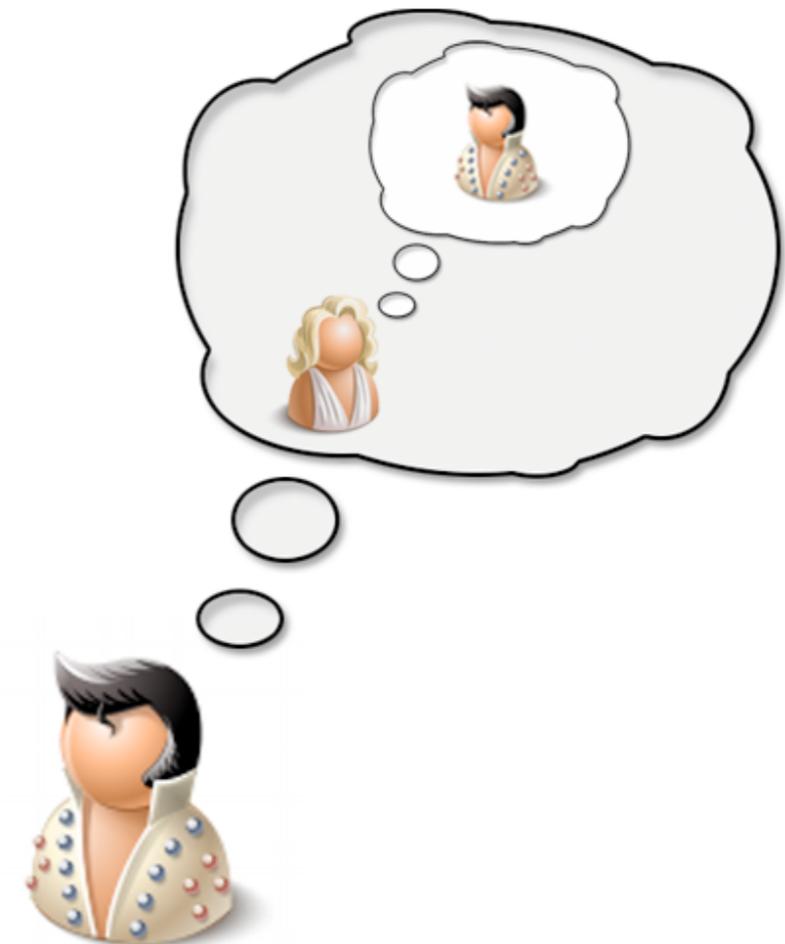
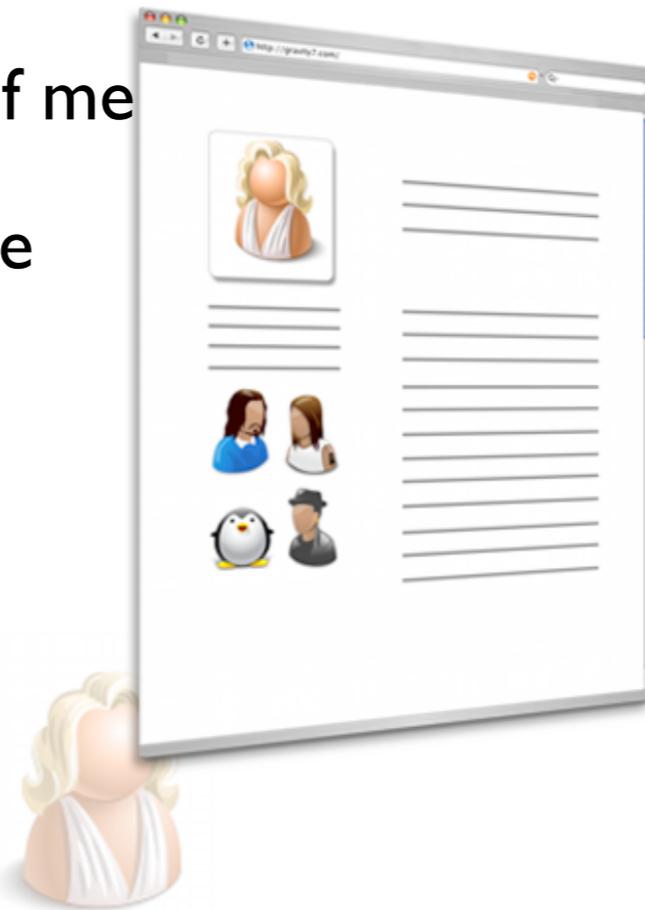
“Double contingency”

- Meaning in social action and communication is *doubly contingent*:
 - For example, I am aware of how you are likely to understand me (and what I say or do), and thus my saying or doing it already anticipates what it will mean to you...
 - I have an idea of your idea of me, and this idea of your idea of me permits me to interact with you meaningfully
- Social media complicate the double contingency of social action:
 - I may not know you
 - You may not be there
 - You may not be paying attention
 - You may not be interested
 - and so on....



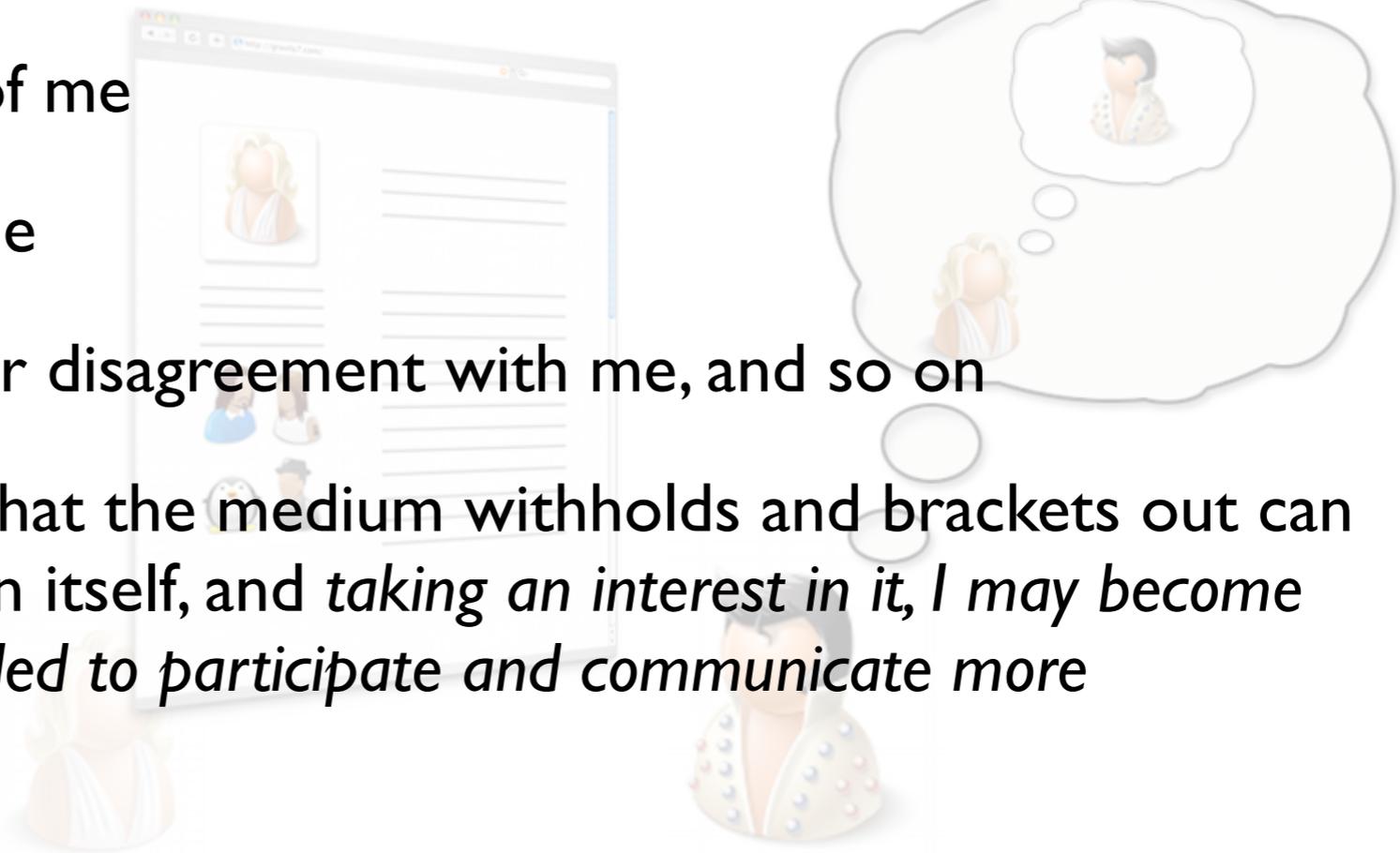
Doubled double contingency

- Because I cannot monitor your interpretation of my action or communication online (or with any asynchronous medium), I can easily become interested in:
 - the status of an interaction
 - your reception of my communication
 - your perception of me
 - your interest in me



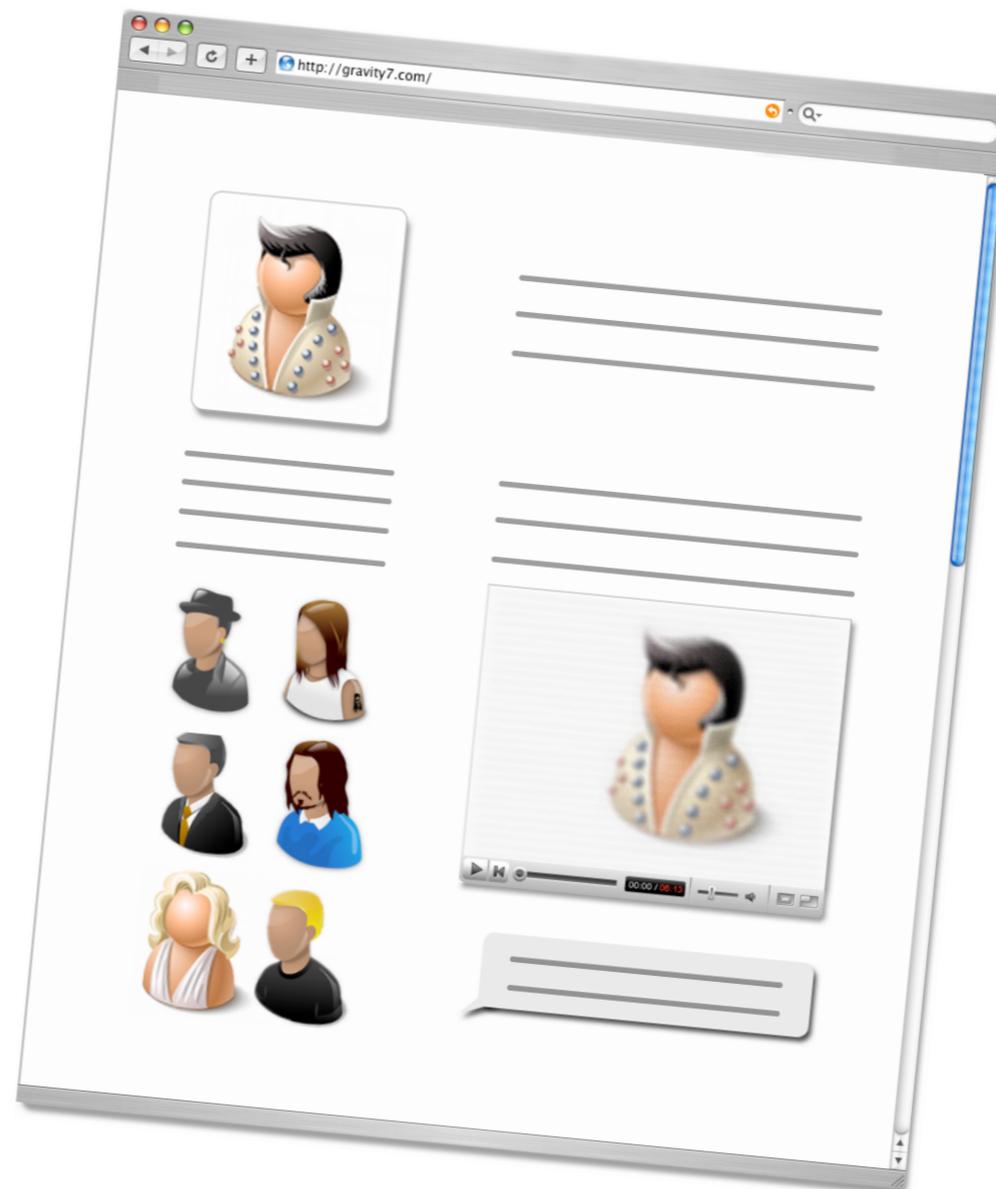
Doubled double contingency

- Because I cannot monitor your interpretation of my action or communication online (or with any asynchronous medium), I can easily become interested in:
 - the status of an interaction
 - your reception of my communication
 - your perception of me
 - your interest in me
 - your agreement or disagreement with me, and so on
- With social media, what the medium withholds and brackets out can become compelling in itself, and *taking an interest in it, I may become motivated and compelled to participate and communicate more*



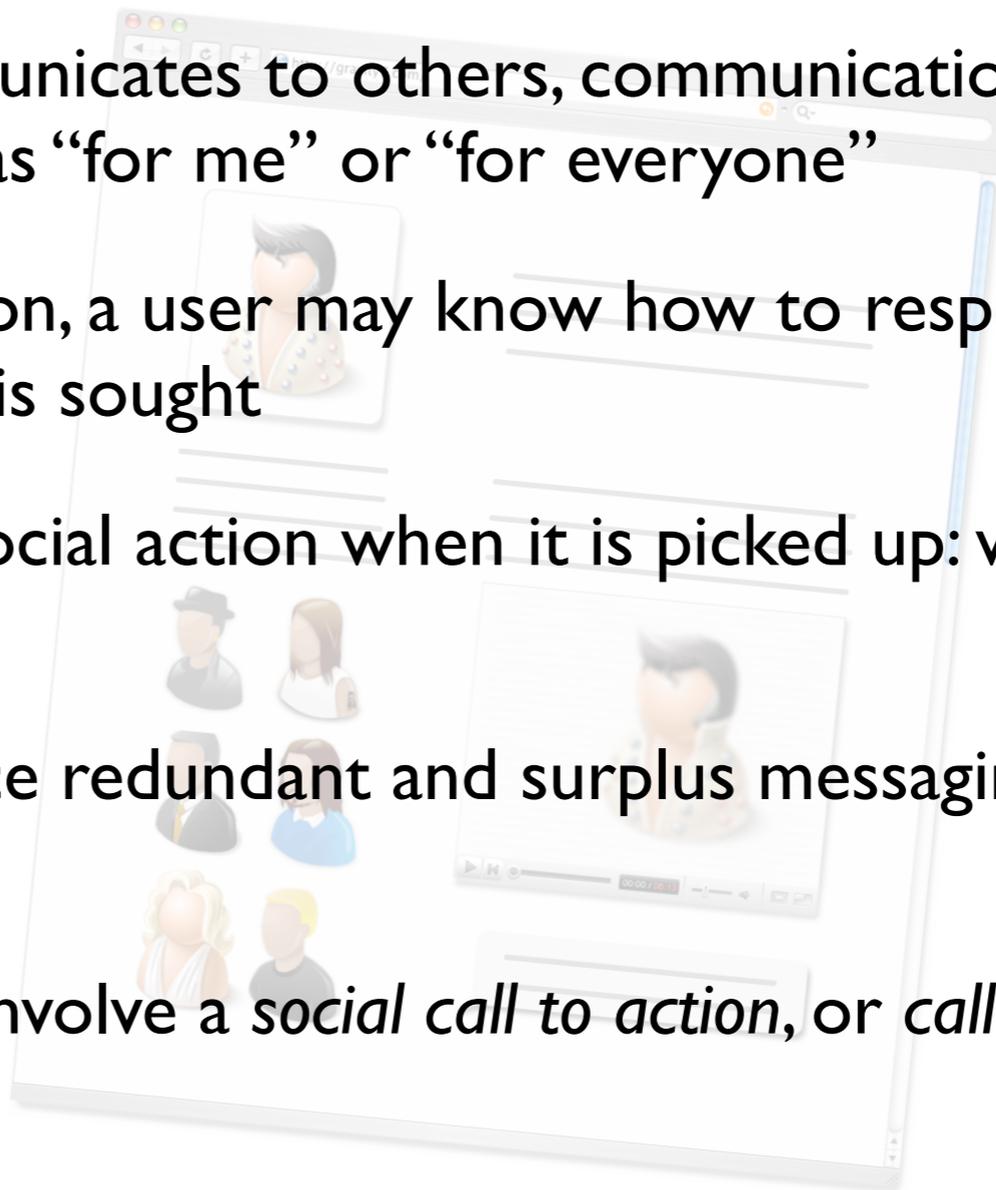
Actions

- Since users can do something on social media without meaning to interact, and since users are aware that there are others on the site who will see or use their contributions, double contingency is handled by the user's competence with the medium: we can call it *socio-technical competence*



The call to (social inter)action

- Since users can do something on social media without meaning to interact, and since users are aware that there are others on the site who will see or use their contributions, double contingency is handled by the user's competence with the medium: we can call it *socio-technical competence*
- For every action that communicates to others, communication can be read as intended or unintended, as “for me” or “for everyone”
- And for every communication, a user may know how to respond, whether to respond, and if response is sought
- Communication becomes social action when it is picked up: when it becomes talk
- Social media tend to produce redundant and surplus messaging because it is posted into the open
- Actions that communicate involve a *social call to action*, or *call to interaction*



Action communicates in/directly

- Communication can be addressed to a person in particular, or can be posted to a site's audience
- The call to social interaction that is implicit in communication on social media is what produces content and *at the same time* engages participation
- Direct communication addresses another user, as in messaging
 - to tell, ask, request, invite, share, list, etc in the form of communication
 - for the recipient (or Other) there is a *clear call to action*: accept or reject the communication
- Indirect action is public, not addressed to any user in particular, and is open
 - to response or follow through by others, as much according to what interests them as according to the author's intentions
 - for the audience (or Others) there is *an ambiguous call to action*



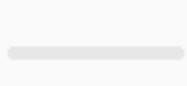
Direct communication

- Direct communication will express the user's interests and suggest an appropriate response



Direct communication

- Direct communication will express the user's interests and suggest an appropriate response
 - post questions, requests
 - message, short or long form
 - blog, comment
 - invite, announce
 - recommend or forward
 - share



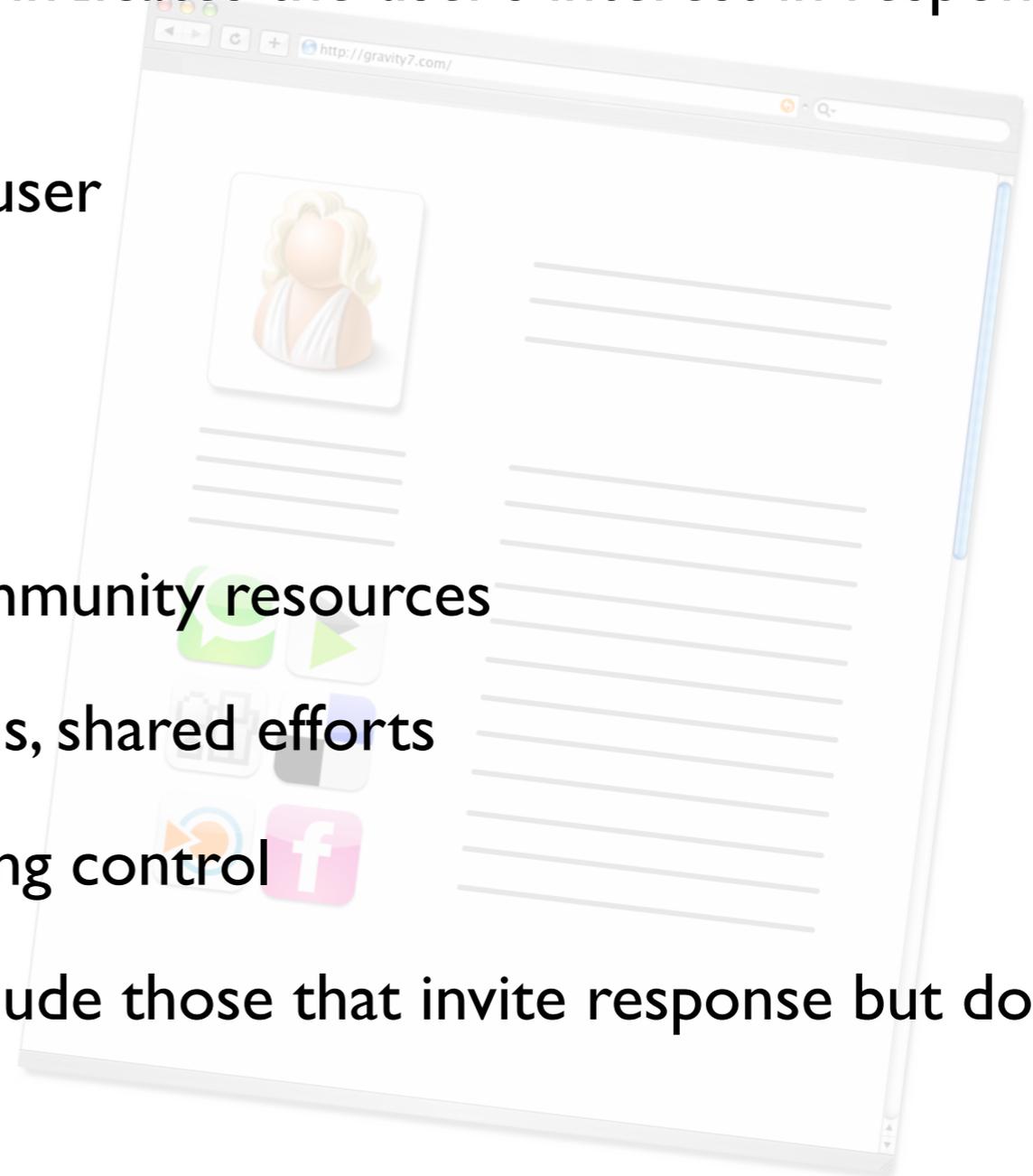
Actions that appeal

- Actions can suggest appropriate or sought-after responses implicitly or explicitly



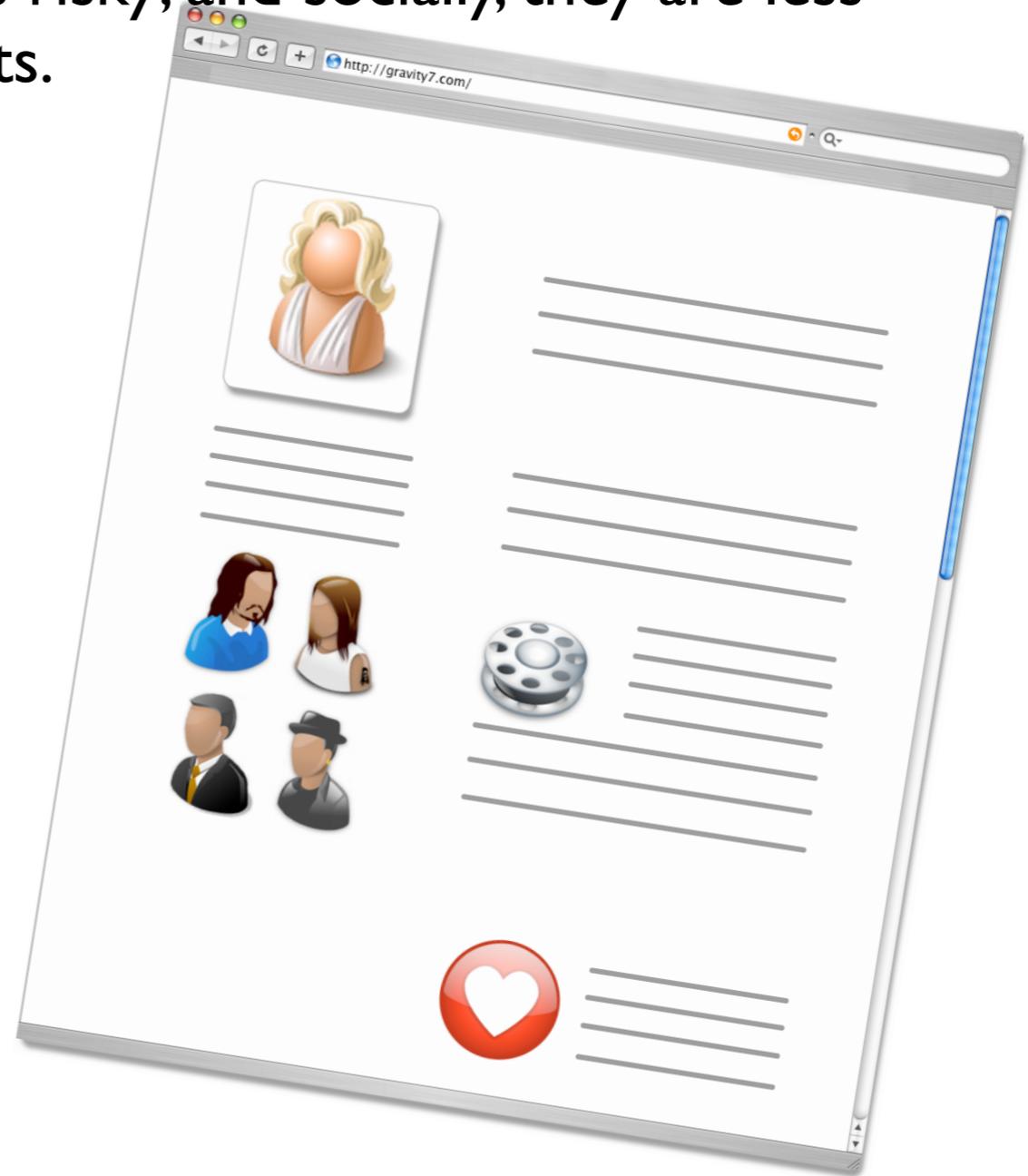
Actions that appeal

- Actions can suggest appropriate or sought-after responses implicitly or explicitly
- A direct or explicit call to action indicates the user's interest in responses from others
 - direct appeal to an individual user
 - direct appeal to audience
 - through talk, communication
 - by acts that contribute to community resources
 - by contributions to discussions, shared efforts
 - user has greater sense of having control
- Indirect appeals for response include those that invite response but do not seem to expect it



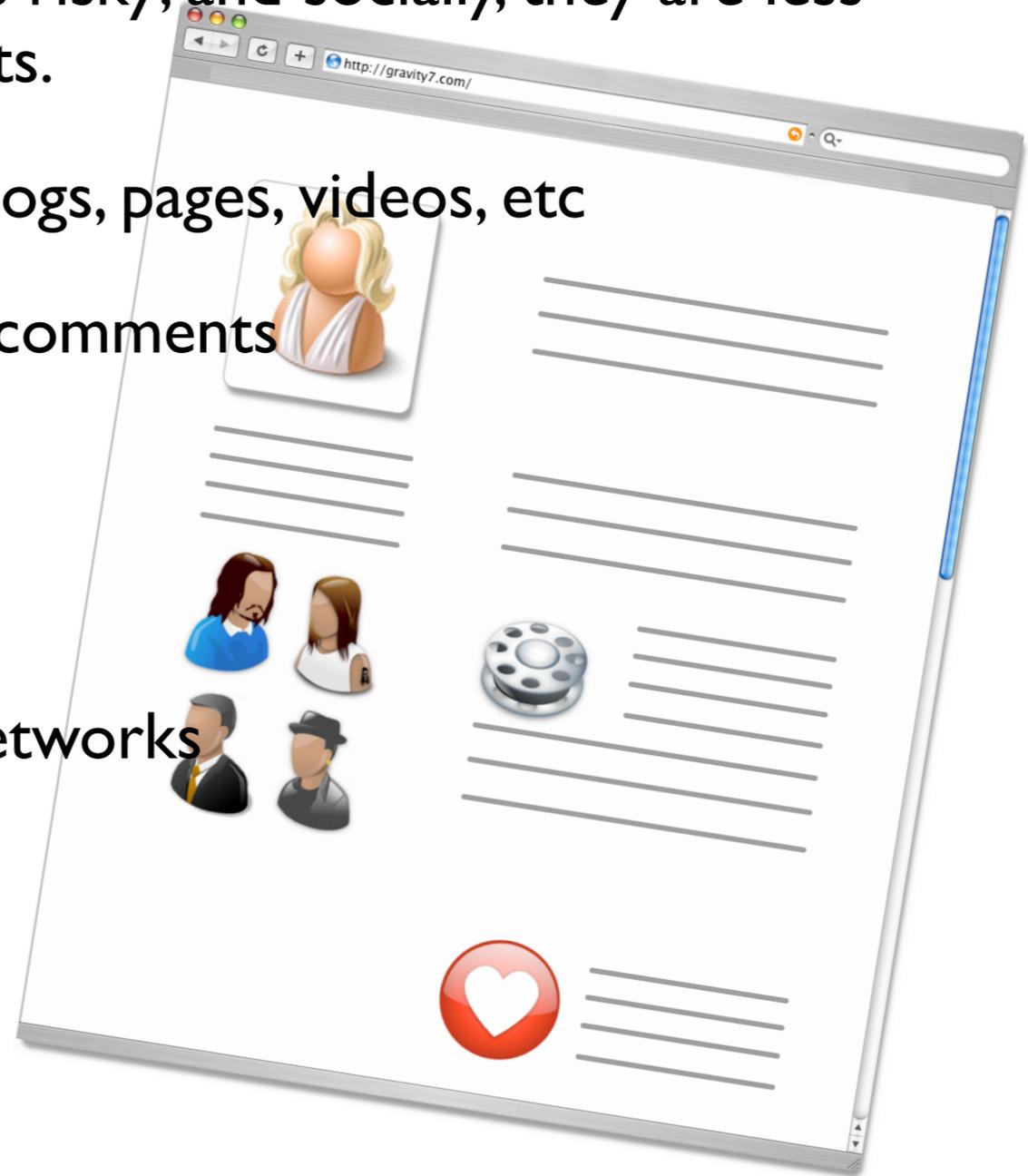
Indirect activity

- Indirect actions solicit responses. They are contributions that implicitly seek and solicit acknowledgment and response. In their indirectness, they protect the user's face and are less risky; and socially, they are less demanding than direct engagements.



Indirect activity

- Indirect actions solicit responses. They are contributions that implicitly seek and solicit acknowledgment and response. In their indirectness, they protect the user's face and are less risky; and socially, they are less demanding than direct engagements.
- comment on others' profiles, blogs, pages, videos, etc
- comment to others' posts and comments
- tweak profile and appearance
- edit status
- distribute content to groups, networks
- join groups, teams, networks
- review, rate, rank
- upload file, share



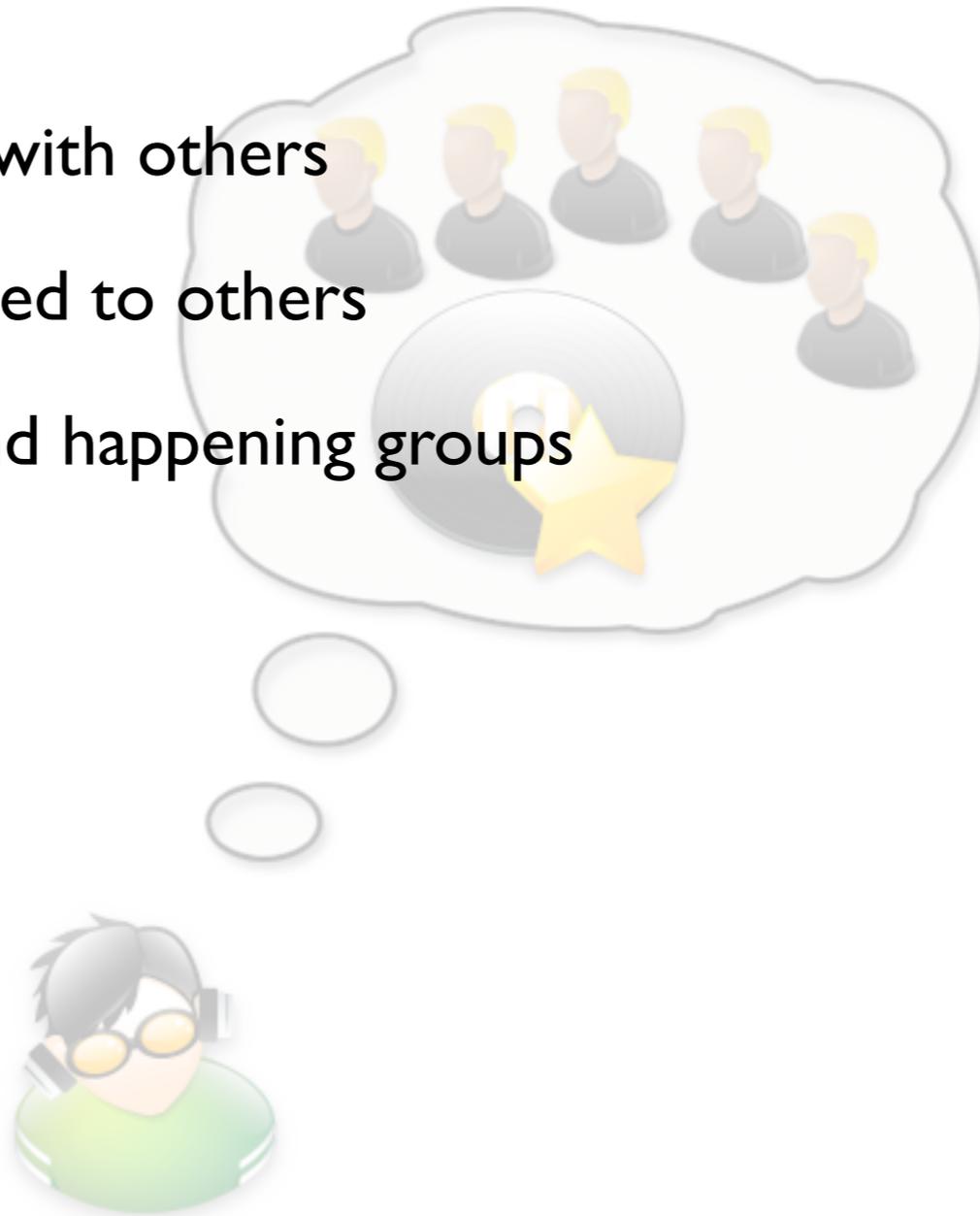
Indirect appeal

- Users can appeal for attention indirectly, by association with active members of online communities. This indirect acknowledgment by individuals or by a community of users includes being seen in the company of others:



Indirect appeal

- Users can appeal for attention indirectly, by association with active members of online communities. This indirect acknowledgment by individuals or by a community of users includes being seen in the company of others:
 - being seen in association with others
 - being associated and related to others
 - being a member of hot and happening groups
 - being mentioned, cited
 - being rated, voted on



Passive participation

- Passive participation also accounts for a lot of user activity, and may register as traffic, views, tagging, listing, and more. While it may serve the user's sense of self-image and self engagement, it produces little new content.



Passive participation

- Passive participation also accounts for a lot of user activity, and may register as traffic, views, tagging, listing, and more. While it may serve the user's sense of self-image and self engagement, it produces little new content.
- is a means of sustaining involvement and presence
- may correspond to the user's interest in what's happening, what's new, who's new, who's on, etc.
- is often discreet and intentionally avoids attracting attentions
- Some kinds of passive participation still increase the user's presence and visibility:
 - joining groups
 - accumulating friends, tokens, kudos, compliments, links, etc





Part IV: Social Media Competencies



Social media competencies

- The following user competencies are grouped to reflect the ways in which user personalities come to expression with use of social media
 - Self and Other
 - Relationships and Community
 - Things and Signs
 - Culture and Knowledge
 - Communication & Interaction
- No user will manifest these competencies in equal measure



Competencies: Self and Other



Competencies: Keeping Face

- Users take interest in maintaining their self-image online. Profile pages and their elements, declarations of interest, biographical details, and more that express the self while appealing to audience interest all require that the user has a level of comfort and confidence with keeping face online.
 - Updating profile
 - Contributing or tweaking profile to show style, personality, character
 - Showing and detailing personal interests
 - Providing biographical information
 - Telling about oneself
 - Associating oneself with others, with groups
 - Making common references to familiar topics, names, places, etc.



Competencies: Character

- Users may demonstrate character through style, personality, wit, and charm: these users handle and negotiate inter-personal encounters well by virtue of their character skills
- Character is culturally respected if not elevated
- Character makes a user consistent, predictable, and this helps set others' expectations
- Character suggests how a user will handle relationships and interactions
- Character expresses personality, talents, and social skills, manifesting the user's resources as a person



Competencies: Giving Face

- Users know how to pay attention to others, to acknowledge them, their interests, and their activities. Users who participate in social media by acknowledging others give good face.
 - Posting notes to user profile pages
 - Commenting on user profile pages, on other users' contributions
 - Linking out to others
 - Sharing and circulating the contributions of others
 - Rating, voting, digging, social bookmarking
 - Referring to others and talking about them/announcing them



Competencies: Showing/Hiding

- Users know how to show or hide face, to show sides of themselves for effect, reveal only parts of themselves to solicit interest, and play with their appeal on others through performance and facework
 - Revealing and appealing pictures and profiles
 - Suggestive or solicitous biographical profiles
 - Coded or insider interest descriptions
 - Selective and suggestive choices of interests
 - Self descriptions and observations, from profiles to status updates, intended to provoke or illicit curiosity and response
 - Ambiguous or only partially unclear messages, comments, or posts to other member pages



Competencies: Relationships and Community



Competencies: Relationships

- Users may be aware of and sensitive to relationships, to others' positions in them, attractions, affections, sincerity, and credibility, and to changes in relationships and among members of social networks
- Relationship maintenance for the sake of validating and acknowledging others
- Relationship maintenance for one's own sake and social relevance
- Relationship maintenance for the sake of friendship and friend activities
- Relationship maintenance in the interest of producing new encounters
- Relationship maintenance for the sake of social capital, popularity, and social rank



Competencies: Moderating

- Users may be skilled and entertaining moderators, interested in making things happen for an audience. These users need less to impress their own views on others than to help, even moderate, interesting encounters and events. Though they may take center stage now and then, they do so tactfully.
- Inviting friends and colleagues to be a part of something
- Moderating differences of opinion and interest
- Facilitating conversations and interviews in front of an audience
- Attending to the audience's reception of a performance by gauging its interest and attention
- Drawing out the best in a performer's presence and presentation
- Helping to secure and save face of those on stage



Competencies: Mediation

- Users may be skilled mediators, harmonizers, and emcees. Recognizing the personalities and interests of others, they often facilitate social interaction by moderating and connecting.
- Benefits accrue to mediators for their effort in helping to realize and draw out the latent potential among a group's members
- Mediation requires a partial sacrifice of self recognition for the sake and of others
- Mediation requires sensitivity to the interests and positions of others
- Mediators understand the balance of accounts among members of a group
- When it involves triangulation, mediation serves to circulate debts and obligations



Competencies: Things and Signs



Competencies: Treasure

- Users may collect and accumulate items, information, files, points, even friends: they can increase their ownership of things and people, and take pleasure in increasing what they have
- Counting is a common practice, as are having and owning possessions (be they things, signs, communication, etc)
- Owning and having suggests success and ability
- Users with the most may feel desire-able, which can be just a perception or can be real
- Growing and increasing numbers, collections requires little “social handling” skills and yet has social value
- Giving can be used to create debts and obligations
- Ownership assigns value to the user through his or her attachments



Competencies: Social status

- Users may be sensitive to their own status and/or interested in the social status others: they perceive rank, position, role, accomplishment, authority, respect, support among members of social groups
- Social status is a reflection on the user and can attract attention and solicit interaction
- Status can be pursued and then maintained through simple contributions
- Status communicates a user's value by means of social validation
- Status is often competitive and so it organizes social interactions
- Status can be tracked, measured, and read for changes



Competencies: Social commerce

- Users may be practiced and comfortable with different kinds of social commerce and currency, from gift economies and barter, to auctions, haggling — even blackmail
- Social currencies can include those that are visible and recognizable as well as those that are reserved for rare and private use (trump cards)
- Reciprocal exchanges are a common means of maintaining equal status while holding future interaction open
- Gift economies, in which users pass a gift around, bind together members of a group through debt and obligation
- Pass along currencies involve both a recommendation and a gift
- Many forms of price negotiation exist to help users arrive at optimal prices



Competencies: Culture and Knowledge



Competencies: Culture

- Users may use their cultural expertise and familiarity as a means of presenting themselves, of creating social activity, being in conversation with culture, and positioning themselves and their identity through use of cultural references
- Cultural references can represent a user because they are recognizable, familiar, and communicative
- Users familiar with cultural references can reveal who they are and what they like through their commentaries and contributions
- Cultural references can lend credibility and status to those who deploy them, especially those who make them first
- Cultural references demonstrate a cultural knowledge and social skill and are thus validating
- Can be easily picked up, quoted, shared, commented on, etc, and are readily available online and in many forms and formats



Competencies: Contributions

- Users can directly and actively contribute to social media content: on the basis of their interests, and out of their own interestedness in sharing
 - Forms and contributions for self expression, or expressive contributions
 - Public communication and interaction, or community contributions
 - Posting, sharing resources, or resource contributions
 - Self-promotion posts and self-oriented contributions
 - Inviting and friending, participating in groups and networks, or group contributions
 - Organizing, editing, distributing, promoting content, or editorial contributions



Competencies: Knowledge

- Users may respect knowledge, skills, know-how: they have a sense for what's true and credible, know how to present what they know, make their claims, and engage in discussion
- Knowledge and expertise are valued socially, culturally, and economically
- Knowledge is not a personal skill but an achieved and learned practice, and so is less a matter of personality but of biography
- Knowledge has an objectivity, is tested and wagered with appeal to arguments and communication
- Knowledge when practiced attracts attention and suggests intellect and intelligence (though these can be shown with character)



Competencies: Communication & Interaction



Competencies: Intimacies

- Users may be good at direct and private communication and exchange, whether through private messaging tools or with side and back channels in public forums. Some users can be utterly revealing in private exchanges with strangers, while remaining lurkers in public online social spaces.
- Private conversation provides a means to conduct highly personal and private, and sometimes, revealing information
- These conversations, helped by the anonymity and bracketing of the medium, can easily acquire characteristics of confessions, interviews, and talk therapy, among other private or intimate conversational forms
- Users can be skilled at closing out the social and public audience presence online
- Even the offer or suggestion of intimate exchange can hook draw users into a site



Competencies: Conversation

- Users may be skilled in talk and conversation: these users can be generous, engaging, attentive, and witty. Conversationalists are often practiced in the turn-taking and non-verbal cues of communication. They may often be good at making blogs, comments, chats, discussions, other forms of content posts conversational and serial.
- Conversationalists may be good at using non-verbal and gestural tokens, icons and symbolic languages to supplement what they say or write
- Conversation is the most common way of developing a relationship
- As a form of interaction, conversation provides a high level of information to participants about status, effectiveness, and how to continue
- Talk is the most common means of self-expression and can capture a user's interests, intellect, experience, character, disposition, wit, etc
- Online conversation is easily distributed and shared



Competencies: Narration

- Users may be skilled in story-telling and narration: these users can be compelling personalities, engaging producers, and entertaining presenters. Good narrators are often also graceful, challenging, witty, and commanding writers, posters, commentators, bloggers, vloggers, and podcasters.
- In contrast with conversation, which is “talking with,” narration is a “talking at”
- The skill of telling, narrating, and crafting story can be applied to many aspects of social media use, including: writing, editing, organizing, indexing, and sequencing content
- Narrative talents can be applied in multiple presentation formats, and across media such as blogs, discussions, chats, video, podcasts
- Many different narrative forms exist online, and are used to structure compelling user experiences and make content usable and meaningful
- Narrative skills also assist in creating or using interaction systems and navigation



Competencies: Activities

- Users may be skilled in games and social applications and online activities. They might know genres of games, their rules, and how best to make them fun online. They might enjoy playing positions and roles, spending time in games, repeatedly, episodically, and on an ongoing basis, with friends or with strangers.
- Players of socially mediated activities can benefit from the reality and presence that is screened out by the medium
- If understood and enjoyed by their players, many games can be played without physical proximity, and as long as moves are played in order, can be played asynchronously
- Games that map game play and game rules, content, themes, and elements onto social situations and contexts are a popular blend of social media and game cultures
- Games played among and within groups of friends online can take advantage of real relationship interests, and are ice-breakers for talk



Competencies: Transactions

- Users skilled in dealing, deal-making, buying and selling goods and property have competence in arranging, facilitating, conducting, negotiating, and completing transactions. These users are often good at participating in a public system of exchange (an economy and its currency) while protecting personal interests.
- Users are good at negotiating the exchange value of goods and services, be it transacted with money, credit, barter, or by other means
- Users can step up through the progressive and reciprocal establishment of mutual trust required to conduct and complete transactions
- Users know how to acquire credibility and trust from their trading partners, and how to maintain it and their reputations as reliable partners
- Negotiation of prices in ways that do not personally insult others, and an ability to close transactions are also social skills

