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BRANDING THE POSTFEMINIST SELF

THE LABOR OF FEMININITY

The brand is a gift, and it will set you free.

—Self-branding seminar, Los Angeles, 2010

More than a decade ago, on April 14, 1996, a young college student named Jennifer Ringley began uploading a constant stream of pictures of herself on the Web. Filmed from her dorm room, a new photograph was taken every three minutes and automatically posted to a website. The result was a catalog of a young woman's life, detailing her daily activities: Jennifer with friends, Jennifer studying, Jennifer having sex. Named "JenniCam," this project attracted up to 4 million views a day at its peak. A few months after she started, Ringley realized the economic potential of this kind of involvement; she began charging for "full" entry into her site. Through automatic credit card payments by means of another nascent Web phenomenon—PayPal—paying customers gained "premium" access to (even) more frequent updates on her life. According to the mission statement of JenniCam.org, Ringley sought to create "a window into a virtual human zoo."¹ Ringley might be said to be the first web-based "lifecaster." Within the decade, her lone stream of images would become a deluge; as *Wired* magazine states, "Ringley's pioneering adventure in self-exposure anticipated the appetite for reality-based

voyeurtainment.”²² Why this kind of relentless self-exposure is a “pioneering adventure” is not raised as a question; rather, JenniCam heralded a new era of media production.

Indeed, this “appetite” has certainly been whetted; a more contemporary manifestation of “voyeurtainment” occurred in the fall of 2008, when a twenty-two-year old American woman named Natalie Dylan attempted to sell her virginity on the online auction site eBay. According to a press release, Dylan hoped that selling her virginity on the immensely popular website would help pay for graduate school; she has a bachelor’s degree in women’s studies and expected to fund her master’s degree program with the profit made from this unique auctioning. “We live in a capitalist society,” she said in a later interview. “Why shouldn’t I be able to capitalize on my virginity?”²³ According to Dylan, eBay refused to host her auction (and other sales like it, such as the sale of one’s kidneys or one’s parents) on the grounds stated in the site’s regulations: eBay prohibits the sale of anything “immoral, illegal, or just plain distasteful.”²⁴

Dylan then took her virginity to the Moonlite Bunny Ranch, an infamous brothel in Reno, Nevada. According to her own account, she was taking “the ancient notion that a woman’s virginity is priceless and [using] it as a vehicle for capitalism.”²⁵ She has said that she has been congratulated by a CEO of a Fortune 500 company for her “entrepreneurial gumption” (although she apparently was not hired by this company) and has argued, using the language of business, that she might even be an “early adopter of a future trend.”²⁶ While it is certainly easy to see Dylan’s virginity auction as a publicity stunt (after all, she announced her sale on the Howard Stern radio show)—or even a kind of performance art, like JenniCam—Dylan’s “project” nonetheless raises questions about what elements of the corporeal can (or should) be saleable.

Two years before Dylan’s display of “entrepreneurial gumption,” another woman, Tila Tequila (née Tila Nguyen) became famous for a different kind of entrepreneurship. In 2006, she had more than 1.5 million “friends” on MySpace, her MySpace profile had been viewed more than 50 million times, and she was receiving between 3,000 and 5,000 new friend requests every day. In an article detailing Tequila’s MySpace fame, *Time* reporter Lev Grossman wrote, “She is something entirely new, a celebrity created not by a studio or a network but fan by fan, click by click, from the ground up on MySpace.”²⁷

Tila Tequila has become the exemplar of the use and power of social network sites to create brand visibility. As she herself said, “Once they saw how I worked it, everyone did what I did and started promoting themselves.”²⁸ Her popularity on MySpace soon led to a record deal with MySpace music and

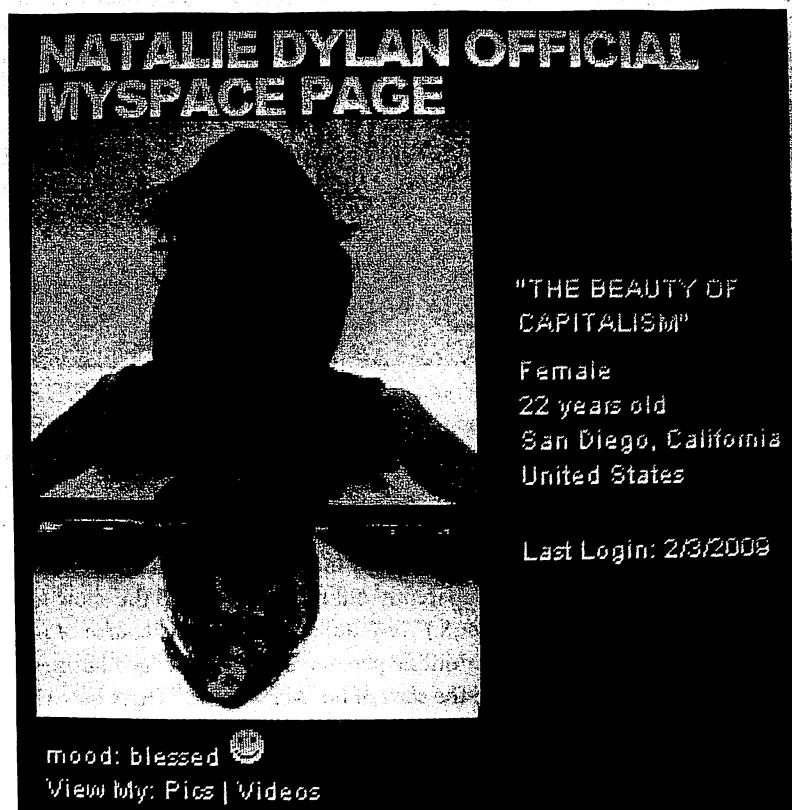


A shot from JenniCam.

then to a popular MTV reality show, *A Shot of Love with Tila Tequila*, where, in the spirit of reality dating shows, she sought a life partner from thirty-two well-screened contestants—sixteen straight men and sixteen lesbian-identified women. (Her first choice apparently did not work out, so the show ran for two seasons, in 2007 and 2008.) As Tequila says, over the course of her stay on MySpace, she turned her online persona into a full-fledged business. “This is my job,” she said before the start of her MTV show. “That’s how you maintain your popularity and keep it alive.” Grossman continues by saying that Tequila “clearly grasps the logic of Web 2.0 in a way that would make many CEOs weep.”²⁹

The fact that Tequila claims the maintenance of her online brand as a “job” clearly situates her project as labor: she labors to create and maintain her self-brand. From this kind of work, questions inevitably arise: What kind of job is it? Who pays? And for whom does one self-brand?

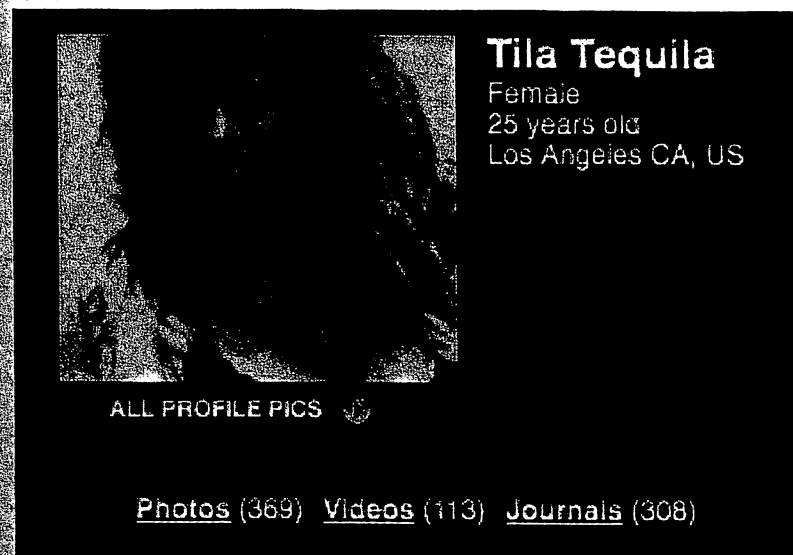
I begin this chapter with these anecdotes not to make a reductionist collapse between the JenniCam project, Natalie Dylan’s sale of her virginity, and Tila Tequila’s self-promotion but to point out a shift manifest in contemporary brand culture. “Selling” yourself, or your virginity, is understood as illegitimate—“immoral, illegal, or just plain distasteful”—at least by eBay (and, again, even though the Fortune 500 CEO “admired her gumption,” he did not actually offer Dylan a job). To accomplish her goal, to “capitalize on her virginity,” and perhaps to increase the shelf life of her publicity stunt, Dylan turned to the Moonlite Bunny Ranch, and to what is still seen as an illegitimate career choice: prostitution. Ringley’s JenniCam is positioned somewhere between Dylan and Tequila; her endeavor was acceptable because she did not prostitute herself, but she did not yet have the ability, knowledge, or



Natalie Dylan's MySpace page.

cultural context to brand herself like Tequila and was rather content with making immediate money from her visitors. Tequila, on the other hand, is recognized as successfully parlaying her life online into a lucrative career.¹⁰ While few people can maintain a personal profile on social network sites with the ferocious energy of Tequila, "branding" oneself is today understood not only as legitimate but as a goal to strive for. Indeed, self-branding is positioned by marketers and brand managers as the proper way—perhaps even the necessary way—to "take care of oneself" in contemporary advanced capitalist economy.

In this chapter, I turn my attention to the self as a brand. I focus on the technological capacities of the Internet and the creative possibilities of the interactive user as primary contexts that animate strategies of self-branding. Additionally, the processes, and the consequences, of self-branding are well



Tila Tequila's MySpace page.

illustrated by looking at the work of girls and young women. The vast cultural, political, and economic shifts within advanced capitalist consumer culture that I explore in this book are also accompanied by significant shifts in gender constructions. It is the intersection between shifts that become important for the legibility of self-branding as a normative strategy. Foucault spoke in 1978 of the "technology of the self": sets of practices, or methods, that "permit individuals to effect by their own means or with the help of others a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality."¹¹ These "operations," in the context of brand culture, involve economic principles such as brand management strategies, self-promotion, and advertising techniques that help to explain the self within a set of social and cultural conditions. Technologies of the self have vast and often contradictory implications for women in the 21st century, where "putting oneself out there," and the ensuing quest for visibility, is an ever more normative practice.¹²

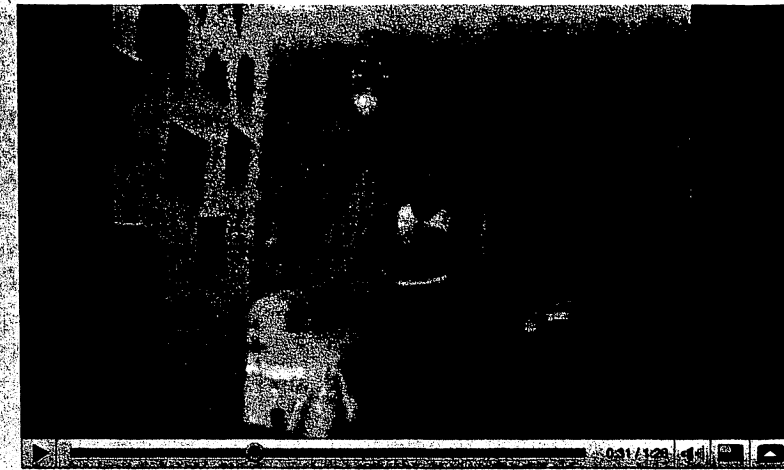
The visible self on global display gains traction in the contemporary context of postfeminism. Here, as I discussed in the previous chapter, in the US, postfeminism is both an ideology and an increasingly normative strategy of engaging with the world. These practices—theoretical and practical alike—connect traditional liberal feminist ideas about everything from freedom to

choice to independence, to an expansive and distinctly contemporary capitalist engagement with media, merchandise, and consumption.¹³ Certainly postfeminism is not the only feminist practice available in the early 21st century, but it is one that has appeal and purchase on many levels, and has in relatively few years been absorbed into everything from political ideology to popular culture to consumption habits.

Because postfeminism has been almost seamlessly incorporated into consumer culture, it is a particularly rich context for girls and young women to build a self-brand. Postfeminism marks a historical shift in representation, as Anita Harris, Angela McRobbie, and others have pointed out, from women as a vague mass of passive consumers to girls and young women as active, increasingly individualized entrepreneurs. As we saw with Dove soap, the act of consumption is configured as an act of self-empowerment. With the normalization of postfeminism comes an increasing cultural recognition of girls and young women as both powerful citizens and consumers; such recognition can seem a radical disruption of the gender relations that have dominated American culture for the past century. The reality, of course, is far more complicated. Postfeminism in practice is often individualized and constructed as personal choice rather than collective action; its ideal manifestation, in turn, is not struggle for social change but rather capacity for entrepreneurship. Within the guise of empowerment, the “girl entrepreneur is the ultimate self-inventing young woman who represents a fantasy of achievement accomplished by good ideas, hard work, and self-confidence.”¹⁴ Importantly, the ideals and accomplishments of the postfeminist subject— independence, capacity, empowerment—are entangled with similar ideals about the contemporary media-savvy interactive subject who is at ease in navigating the ostensibly flexible, open architectures of online spaces.

This interactive subject, like the postfeminist subject, realizes self-empowerment through her capacity and productivity. I define the interactive subject as an individual who can move between and within media platforms with ease, and who can produce media online, whether in the form of videos, blogs, or even through comments and feedback. Interactivity here also implies the design of the technology that is engaged. That is, the interactive subject participates in and through interactive technology; she “finds” a self and broadcasts that self, through those spaces that authorize and encourage user activity.¹⁵ These two cultural formations—postfeminism and interactivity—both enabled by advanced capitalism, make self-branding seem not only logical but perhaps necessary. Postfeminism and interactivity create what I would call a neoliberal *moral* framework, where each of us has a duty to ourselves to cultivate a self-brand.

me & nicole.. crazyyy



★★★★★ 468 ratings

654,033 views

“me & Nicole crazyyy” YouTube video, with 654,033 views.

In the following pages, I trace the entangled discourses and spaces of self-branding, postfeminism, and interactivity as a way to account for new configurations of gender identity in contemporary culture. As I discussed in the previous chapter, brand cultures are increasingly formed around discourses and practices traditionally seen as outside the market, in “authentic” spaces. The practice of branding the “self” is legible in such discourses and occurs in the context of certain specific cultural ideals of selfhood. These ideals include not only traditional liberal feminist ideals of freedom, self-determination, and self-improvement but also residual notions of sexual freedom and sexual confidence for women. Cultural ideals of selfhood are richly supported in online social network sites, which are increasingly spaces to ask and answer the question: Who am I? Even if girls and young women do not set out to strategically, or intentionally, build a self-brand, the logic of online sites and the presence of feedback mean that one’s online presence will be viewed by others using the same rubric to judge brands: through evaluation, ranking, and judgment, and with the ideal of visibility in mind. Thus, I focus on social network sites as complex, technologically mediated venues for the branding of the postfeminist self, attending to three subgenres within the realm of such sites: amateur videos by girls and young women engaged in everyday, mundane

activities (dancing, singing, playing) on YouTube; the emergence of the "lifecaster" on digital platforms as a lucrative career; and personal profiles on sites such as Facebook.¹⁶

At the self-branding seminar referenced earlier, an impassioned marketer told his audience, "The brand will set you free." But what, exactly, does it mean to be free in the current moment, amid the market-driven promises of postfeminism, within the seemingly limitless spaces of media interactivity? And why is building a self-brand understood as not only the most efficacious but also an increasingly moral way to achieve this kind of freedom? To address these questions, it is necessary to first account for the perspective of branders themselves. That is, a dedicated market for the self-brand, an industry for a seemingly never-ending consumer base, needs to be established by brand marketers.

The Brander's Perspective: The Industry of Self-Branding

Though certainly not everyone is invested in crafting a self-brand, more and more people in the US in the 21st century seem to agree with Tila Tequila: branding yourself is important. College graduates are counseled on the necessity of building a self-brand when entering the job market. Self-branding experts and professional Facebook photographers provide support services for the job of building a self-brand. Trade books with titles such as *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out from the Crowd*; *Managing Brand You: 7 Steps to Creating Your Most Successful Self*; *Make a Name for Yourself: 8 Steps Every Woman Needs to Create a Personal Brand Strategy for Success*; and *Me 2.0: Build a Powerful Brand to Achieve Career Success* now occupy a weighty bookshelf on a topic that barely existed fifty years ago. These physical books coexist with countless "how-to" forums online, where amateurs and experts alike debate the dos and don'ts of self-branding. Academics and intellectuals (and even those who study branding and consumer culture) are increasingly advised to further professionalize by developing personal brands as a way to strategically market both career and personal identities.

The marketing books on self-branding are useful archives for thinking through what, exactly, it means to embrace the practice of self-branding. Most of the books begin with the premise that because branding has been such an effective business strategy for corporations, it is perfectly logical to apply this business model to the crafting of oneself. David McNally and Karl D. Speak, the authors of *Be Your Own Brand*, have a chapter titled "Becoming More of Who You Are," in which they state:

Many of the proven, successful loyalty-building ideas and tactics used by businesses in managing their brands can be brought to bear on your own personal relationships, with outstanding results. As you learn to understand and apply sensible, practical brand-development and self-management principles, you will gain tools you can use to create and progressively strengthen your relationships with the people you interact with on a daily basis.¹⁷

Another marketer, Catherine Kaputa, in her book *U R a Brand!*, promises that readers will "learn how the branding principles and strategies developed for the commercial world may be used to achieve your business and personal potential.... In short, you are a brand.... savvy professionals, businesspeople, and entrepreneurs are also using self-, or personal, branding, so that they can be more successful."¹⁸

The self-brand, as the branding strategists continually remind us, is a complex relationship one has not only with the outside world but also within oneself. Marketers McNally and Speak define the personal brand in this way: "Your brand is a perception or emotion, maintained by somebody other than you, that describes the total experience of having a relationship with you."¹⁹ By this definition, self-branding is an expression of a moral framework, a means to access "authenticity," and crucially important in order to become "more of who you are" as well as who "you were meant to be."²⁰ Brand strategists emphasize that businesses employ brand management principles and techniques by focusing on building relationships between products and consumers. If an individual were to utilize these same principles and techniques, she or he could have one's family, friends, and coworkers "truly understand and fully acknowledge who you are and what you do."²¹ Brand strategists and marketers desire the brand relationship to be the most loyal kind of relationship for an individual—indeed, the entire brand industry, composed of brand marketers, strategists, and consultants, depends on this relationship being understood as both profound and loyal.

But because there is tremendous unpredictability in consumer culture in terms of what brands will actually inspire loyal relationships, marketers and branders are often anxious and insecure about which brands will succeed and which will fail. The relationship between brands and consumers needs to be constantly made and remade, and this continuous process creates yet another demonstration of the ambivalence in brand cultures. Especially in an era of seemingly constant new media options for not only branding, there is a precariousness to the brand relationship, one that marketers and branders struggle to secure in an ever-changing environment.²² One strategy in

securing this relationship involves collapsing brand strategy and personal identity. The collapse between business brand strategy and personal identity construction that these marketers assume has logic in an economic context where the individual is privileged as a commodity, and where cultural and social life is increasingly organized and experienced through the terms and conditions of business models. This means that cultural values, such as morals and personal standards, are harnessed and reshaped within these same business conditions, so that building a brand is often promoted by marketers as a moral obligation to oneself.

Clearly, the line between commodifying one's body and branding one's body is slippery. Traditionally, a Marxist critique of commodification has rested in part on the ways this process does not acknowledge the (human) labor that is necessary for the production process. But in the practice of branding the self, the construction of the self-brand *necessarily* acknowledges the individual's role as the producer of her individual life narrative. A crucial difference between commodification and branding is thus the self-conscious role of individual labor in the production of the self-brand. This labor of the individual is a necessary element in the "enterprising self," even more so on digital platforms that rely on self-disclosure as part of self-branding.

Self-Disclosure and Postfeminism as Brand Strategy

The practices of self-disclosure typical of building a self-brand, of "putting oneself out there," and transparency are both part of what Foucault would call "the proper care of the self."²³ Disclosure and transparency in this context are part of one's moral obligation to oneself. By disclosure I mean the detailing of one's everyday life for others' consumption; transparency is the effect of this kind of disclosure, ostensibly giving viewers a complete view of one's "authentic" self. Digitally aided disclosure, such as building a self-brand on MySpace or Facebook, relies on traditional discourses of the "authentic" self as one that is transparent, without artifice, open to others. As I discussed in the introduction, authenticity not only is viewed as residing inside the self but also is demonstrated by allowing the outside world access to one's inner self. For example, Jean-Jacques Rousseau implied that authenticity is built upon a collapse of one's outer appearance and inner sentiment, to be "true" to oneself. But, as Andrew Potter points out, "This project was never about merely telling facts about yourself. More than that, it was seen as a moral achievement, the result of a long, arduous, and artistic process of self-creation."²⁴ In the contemporary context, the creation of the "authentic self" continues to be understood as a kind of moral achievement, but moralism

itself has metamorphosed into a fun-house mirror version of Rousseau's conviction, where to truly understand and experience the "authentic" self is to *brand* this self.

Principles of contemporary branding—such as engagement, building relationships, and consumer coproduction—authorize branding the self as authentic, because self-branding is seen not as an imposition of a concept or product by corporate culture but rather as the individual taking on the project herself as a way to access her "true" self. This branded self then becomes publicly legible in a surrounding brand culture. For the contemporary virtuous self, individual entrepreneurship is the conduit for self-realization, and online spaces are a perfect site for realizing this entrepreneurship.²⁵ Individual entrepreneurship, such as that demonstrated by Tila Tequila, within online spaces is legible within the broader cultural context of postfeminism, a context that is animated by neoliberal capitalism and by the participatory culture that structures much online activity.

Postfeminism can be seen as many things: as ideologies, a set of practices, and strategies. I find Angela McRobbie's formulation the most useful: starting in the late 1990s, she argues, postfeminism has formed a "cultural space," or "a field of transformation in which feminist values come to be engaged with, and to some extent incorporated across, civil society in institutional practices, in education, in the work environment, and in the media."²⁶ McRobbie calls this engagement of feminism by contemporary culture "feminism taken into account" because it is a process in which feminist values and ideologies are initially considered, only to then be found dated and passé and thus repudiated. McRobbie characterizes this dynamic—acknowledging feminism only to discount it—as a "double-movement," noting the paradox of how the dissemination of discourses about freedom and equality provides the context for the retrenchment of gender and gendered relations. In other words, young women are able to progress in society (in the realms of education, work, sexual freedom, etc.) on the condition that feminism "fades away."²⁷ Once again, as women are encouraged to "put themselves out there," we confront the notion of visibility. While feminism fades from vision, the individual entrepreneur takes its place.

Postfeminism is also what Rosalind Gill calls a "sensibility" that shapes everything from products to media representation to digital media.²⁸ This postfeminist sensibility authorizes the individualism of women more than anything else. The individual entrepreneur becomes the signature of a post-feminist woman, where individual success and personal consumption habits are the expected behaviors of the ideal feminine subject. According to Anita Harris, "The image of successful, individualized girlhood itself is one of the

most profitable products being sold to them and others."²⁹ Importantly, this is a *commodity* image—that is, within a postfeminist sensibility, femininity is defined as a “bodily property.” As Gill elaborates, “The body is presented simultaneously as women’s source of power and as always already unruly and requiring constant monitoring, surveillance, discipline and remodeling (and consumer spending) in order to conform to ever narrower judgments of female attractiveness.”³⁰ One way in which bodily property is manifest is in the encouragement of what Harris calls the “can-do” girl, who is identified by her ambition and career goals, her overt self-confidence, and her commitment to an explicit consumer lifestyle.³¹

The “can-do” girl finds a supportive environment online. Indeed, it is clear that, in the early 21st century, young people increasingly “live” in online spaces,³² and “living online” has differently gendered stakes and consequences for young women and men.³³ Because of a previous historical context that situated girls and their practices as outside, both literally and intellectually, the realm of technology (usually because of girls’ assumed “natural” deficiency when it comes to technology), the ever-increasing presence of girls online—and what they do when they are there—has been the focus of recent scholarly analysis.³⁴ Much of this work has challenged traditional communication research that links technological use (ranging from watching television to participating in chat rooms) to harmful social effects, where technology has been blamed for everything from violence to hypersexuality to “growing up too soon.” Instead, feminist scholars are now exploring the potential benefits, especially for girls, of exploring the Internet as a space in which creative identity-making, among other things, might be possible. This work has detailed not only the various ways in which girls participate in online practices but also the increase in video production by girls in the last several decades.³⁵ The notion that girls can be producers as well as consumers has been embraced, albeit with many hesitations, as a kind of empowerment.

The fact that young people, and girls and young women in particular, are using social media in increasing numbers raises questions about empowerment, voice, and self-expression. The answers, needless to say, are not simple. Not all online spaces are the same; nor do they contain the same possibilities for self-presentation and self-expression. Personal home pages, blogs, and self-produced videos all capitalize in different ways on the flexible architecture of the Internet as well as on its potential for user interactivity. Young women’s self-presentation online is a contradictory practice, one that does not demonstrate an unfettered freedom in crafting identity any more than it is completely controlled and determined by the media and cultural industries. As Mark Andrejevic has pointed out in his work on surveillance

and corporate control in the online era, “The point of exploring the ways in which the interactivity of viewers doubles as a form of labor is to point out that, in the interactive era, the binary opposition between complicit passivity and subversive participation needs to be revisited and revised.”³⁶ Focusing on the opposing forces of passive and active participation, as I have discussed, distracts us from the ways in which consumption and production are imbricated practices, or, as Mary Celeste Kearney argues, a kind of relationship, rather than isolated, discrete activities.³⁷

Heeding the call of Kearney and others to avoid the simplified binaries of consumption/production is critical when parsing the deep interrelations between these categories. It is convincing, as many scholars have argued, that online spaces afford creative possibilities in terms of production.³⁸ However, the argument that creativity is defined, understood, and made legible within the commercial parameters of the online spaces in which it is enacted is equally convincing. Of course, neither extreme is true; nor does critical exploration necessitate a one-sided argument. If we question the celebratory discourse about gendered empowerment enabled by online technological formats, that does not in turn indicate that all forms and genres of online media production function in the service of consumer capital. Nor are all girls’ media productions mere masquerades rather than socially and culturally significant practices.

YouTube is a rich online space for exploring these kinds of ambivalences. On July 25, 2008, the user kpals27 posted “i kissed a girl” to YouTube. In the two-and-a-half-minute video, two young white girls, likely twelve or thirteen years old, dance and sing to the popular song by teen idol Katy Perry, “I Kissed a Girl.” The video seems to have been filmed with a webcam, a fairly low-quality image and no close-ups or any camera movement. The girls, wearing shorts and T-shirts branded with popular commercial logos, are clearly having fun in front of the camera—at times the dance turns silly, they giggle throughout, interrupting their own singing, making faces to the camera. In the grainy background we see what looks to be a typical middle-class teenage girl’s bedroom: a nondescript bed and dresser, toys, books, and pink blankets strewn on the floor. At the time of writing, there were forty-two comments evaluating the dance performance in the feedback section beneath the video feed. One comment, from sophieluvzu, states: “LMAO! I can’t say anything bad about them, because I remember when I was this young I made dances up like this but suppose its for fun, although I didn’t know what youtube was back then.”³⁹

YouTube has established itself as a clearinghouse for the posting of videos that chronicle everyday life. The Katy Perry sing-along is one of thousands

of amateur videos posted on YouTube featuring young women dancing and singing to popular music, referencing commercial popular culture, and presenting themselves for display.

YouTube was the most popular entertainment website in Britain in 2007, and it was consistently in the top ten most visited websites globally in early 2011.⁴⁰ Of course, YouTube is not only a video site for youth video exhibition; the site is a platform for audiovisual content of all kinds, from user-created videos to commercial advertisements to pirated broadcast media content to presidential addresses.

YouTube was launched in 2005 as a user-friendly means to upload, store, and share individual videos. It was acquired by Google in 2006 for \$1.65 billion and has expanded to become a primary commercial venue for marketing music, movies, and television, while managing to retain its original identity as a site for amateur users. As Jean Burgess and Joshua Green state, YouTube is a "particularly unstable object of study," in part because of its "double function as both a 'top-down' platform for the distribution of popular culture and a 'bottom-up' platform for vernacular creativity."⁴¹ The website's "double function" offers an opportunity to think critically about how YouTube helps with the creation of the self-brand.

The double function of YouTube also mimics the dialectic between the public and private with regard to subject formation, making it a particularly rich site for self-branding. In particular, some user-created YouTube videos specifically invoke what I am calling the "postfeminist" self-brand. These videos, like "i kissed a girl" mentioned earlier, both support and perpetuate a commercial postfeminist discourse in which girls and young women are ostensibly "empowered" through public bodily performances and the production of user-generated content. This may not always be a strategic positioning of the video for self-branding by the poster but rather a consequence of the way YouTube videos are situated in the context of postfeminism and online user interactivity. That is, the transition of YouTube from its earlier incarnation as a personal "digital video repository" to its now well-known function as a platform from which each of us can "broadcast yourself" cannot be seen as merely part of the expansion of Web 2.0 technologies.⁴² Because of the site's dynamic capacity for displaying both individual public performances and viewers' comments and feedback, it has become an ideal space to craft a self-brand.⁴³

For instance, a YouTube video by Uzsikapicics called "13 year old Barbie Girls," had, at the time of writing, 777,085 views and 1,226 feedback comments. The video, featuring six white girls, opens with a shot of a Barbie and a Ken doll (and a tube of toothpaste adorned with images of Disney

princesses) arranged on a chair. A young girl sits on the dolls, nonchalantly fastens her shoes, stands up, turns on the stereo and begins to dance. She moves to the front door, opening it to two other girls, dramatically involved in putting on lipstick and other makeup. The girls, clearly mocking celebrity as well as beauty culture, air-kiss each other and also begin dancing to the song. The camera pans to two other girls: one girl is looking at a teen magazine with Paris Hilton on the cover, while the other is occupied by dramatically brushing the hair of a small toy dog. In the next shot, the five girls sit together on a couch, performing a choreographed routine of crossing and uncrossing their legs. Another girl enters the room, and with a dramatic gesture sprays the girls with a spray can. The five then collapse on the floor. As they get up together, they begin singing the popular song by Aqua, "I'm a Barbie Girl." One girl brandishes what looks like a steak knife. The video ends with a last shot of the Barbie and Ken dolls, with one exception: Ken's head has been cut off, and the aforementioned steak knife sticks out of his neck. The violent, vaguely political ending of the video is offset by the silliness of the girls, who are obviously having fun, and demonstrates a central contradiction of a kind of public femininity.

YouTube affords girls, such as the "13 year old Barbie Girls," an opportunity to experiment with performance as a way to craft gender identity. The possibilities here are indeed profound. And it is clear that the technological space of the Internet is also a cultural and social space that is potentially expansive in its ability to reimagine gender identity. New media seem to provide every adolescent's fantasy: a space—both culturally sanctioned and a little risky—in which to bring identities "into being" (and share them with friends). With playful parody, these girls explore the challenges involved in being a "Barbie Girl"; the girls both perform a stereotypical gendered identity and point out its contradictions. Popular cultural artifacts, Barbie not least among them, are often used in this way by individuals, their original use transformed into an object of resistance, a statement of challenge.⁴⁴

Yet, despite the potential of YouTube and related sites, many of the YouTube videos created by young girls depend upon conventional, and nearly always gendered, brand contexts. For every radical statement, there are many more that are shaped by a confluence of commercial and sexual codes: Disney princesses feature prominently in girls' bedrooms and on clothing; the songs most often danced to, or sung along with, are commercially produced pop confections, made for profit by Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez, Katy Perry, and others, released by a media industry that has made billions on a hegemonic female sexuality; posters on the walls in girls' rooms seem a steady repeat of heteronormative teen celebrities, mainstream movies and

television programs, and retail outlets such as Abercrombie and Fitch. The girls producing these videos are certainly engaging in identity formation, but they also are engaged in immaterial labor, where branded performances do promotional work for the corporations or celebrities referenced (Disney, Beyoncé, Abercrombie and Fitch). A case in point: Beyoncé's video of her hit single "Single Ladies" became immeasurably more visible because of the number of people who copied its choreography (both sincerely and as parody) and posted their videos on YouTube.

The almost inevitable presence of commercial brands as structuring narratives for YouTube videos indicates that self-presentation does not imply simply *any* narrative of the self, created within an endlessly open cultural script, but one that makes sense within a cultural and economic context of recognizable and predetermined texts and values. Of course, an individual's use and combination of these texts and values may be unexpected, as there is no such thing as a truly "open cultural script" apart from cultural artifacts already in circulation. However, the script that is often relied on in these videos utilizes familiar branded elements.⁴⁵ Thus, the fact that girls produce media—and thus ostensibly produce themselves through their self-presentation—within the context of a commercially driven technological space is not only evidence of a kind of empowering self-work but also a way to self-brand in an increasingly ubiquitous brand culture (even if self-branding is not the overt intention of the producers). Videos are produced in ways that mimic MTV and other commercial music videos, and girls dance to Beyoncé, Jennifer Lopez, Katy Perry, and other pop artists, reaffirming the brands of the artists even as they create their own self-brands.

This is not to say that this commercialized script always dictates a heavily stylized image of traditional femininity—indeed, Beyoncé has been recognized as a strong icon of postfeminism, one who challenges hierarchies of gender. But this sort of "girl power" also relies on commercially popular music and gendered images. The result is a fixed cycle: postfeminism offers a cultural context that celebrates the production of the self but is shaped by an economic context that relies on that self to be a brand. In other words, young women can articulate, craft, and broadcast identities on YouTube, but they do so within the commercial context of branding and advertising, and this context can contain and limit young women. The empowerment that ostensibly results from identity construction is then logical within a commercial context. Therefore, adolescents' questions of "Who am I?" become more about "How do I sell myself?" especially for young women, precisely as a process of figuring out personal identity.⁴⁶

The Internet is typically promoted as an open site, unfettered by the messiness of "real" life, by the entrenched power dynamics—gendered and otherwise—of the "real" world. Such an ideal situates technology, and technological mechanisms such as online feedback, as conduits to empowerment. However, there are two particularly relevant critiques of online empowerment in the context of the self-brand: one focusing on labor, the other on depoliticization. From an economic perspective, the empowered consumer who is also a producer (even if the "yield" of that production is just online feedback) has an additional, less celebrated, function: aside from helping to build brands by featuring them within video productions, the meaning-making and work of consumers can also be exploited by service providers eager to aggregate and sell large sets of data regarding user behavior.⁴⁷ The work of these active consumers is also seen in what Andrejevic calls an "off-loading of corporate labor," where consumers advertise for corporations through blogging, product placement, online competitions, and so on.⁴⁸

The depoliticization critique is found in Jodi Dean's theory of "communicative capitalism." According to Dean, the "fantasies" of empowerment that characterize Web 2.0 technologies need to be understood within a broader context of late capitalism, "in which values heralded as central to democracy take material form in networked communications technologies."⁴⁹ These values include abundance, communication, and, of course, personal empowerment. Dean is primarily concerned with the ways in which abundance, or circulation of communication—demonstrated by the amount of information and the number of online messages in which a person can locate herself—"stands in" as political activity without ever actually achieving engaged political discourse. She argues that ultimately the "micropolitics of the everyday," the kinds of debate and activity that characterize online interaction, distracts individuals from engaging in broader political issues.⁵⁰

While Dean overgeneralizes in her indictment of activity within online spaces as mere "stand-ins" for politics, her argument is helpful for thinking about the role of user feedback in self-branding. It is not that attention to everyday micropolitics in itself counteracts engaged political discourse; after all, in the historical context of feminism, it is precisely such attention to everyday life that encouraged millions of women to critique the dominant relations of power. The daily, just like the personal, is indeed political. But in the context of digital technologies and a postfeminist environment, attention to everyday politics becomes less a reason to collectively challenge power structures and more a reason to embrace self-branding.

The abundance of user feedback online exemplifies what Dean would call a "post-political" practice characteristic of Web 2.0 environments. The

cultural and social value of online self-brands is partly measured through the number of views and comments these self-productions (be they personal profiles or YouTube videos) receive. While certainly the sheer quantity of "hits" one receives is not synonymous with social value, the number of comments, views, and "friends" a webpage garners means visibility, a necessary component to the self-brand. After all, it was Tila Tequila's 1.5 million MySpace friends who paved the way for her other entertainment possibilities. Feedback is critical to creating a self-brand; to sell oneself as a brand, there must be a conscious recognition of the fact that other users are "buying," even if feedback is negative (the Internet embodies the maxim that "all press is good press"). Feedback functions on YouTube as a way to create a continuous dynamic between consumer and producer. This dynamic is neither top-down nor bottom-up but ostensibly a meeting between the two, and thus implies a nonlinear power distribution between producer and consumer, with neither system controlling the other.

The interplay between media production and feedback is far murkier than this optimistic view, however. Feedback can easily replicate a culture's (offline) strategies of surveillance, judgment, and evaluation—practices signaling consumer agency, but simultaneously disciplining and constituting subjects. Just as not all online media productions are the same or have the same purpose, not all feedback is the same. To take YouTube as an example, feedback on girls' videos I examined on the site functions often as a disciplinary strategy, where through comments, videos are judged according to how well their creators fit normative standards of femininity.

This kind of comparative feedback is often positioned by marketers as evidence of user interactivity. Across the web, users engage in ranking products (such as customer rankings on Amazon.com), individuals (such as the website Hot or Not, the logic of which is self-explanatory), and media texts (such as those found on the TV review website Television without Pity).⁵¹ Posting a video on YouTube is both an explicit and an implicit request for this kind of feedback and situates videos (and, implicitly, their makers) as products to be evaluated by customers. Importantly, feedback on YouTube forms a crucial element in the relationship between consumer and producer; in the logic of the web—just as in "real" lives—evaluation, judgment, and ranking are necessary components of the self-brand.

Recall the YouTube video "13 year old Barbie Girls." Below the video, feedback ran the gamut from the creepy ("I love all of u young girls") to the more embracing ("LOL 13 year old boys aren't like this! Women are just too sweet-hearted. Makes me sad to think of the way women are treated in this world"). Others commented on the high number of views: "763,292 views!!!! Anyway

the girls are cute. . . but 763,292 views!!! For God sake the video is so stupid. . . sorry this is my opinion."⁵²

Almost invariably, feedback on YouTube videos featuring young women eventually focuses on normative physical appearance, "hotness," and dancing skill. Comments on a variety of videos I examined ranged from "Damn girl, keep them coming" ("Stair Dance") to "excellent body" (Lissawentworth) to "god help me & have mercy on my soul, this is so goddamn hot" (irisvery-good) to "I wanna do these little snots" (coolcokeify). Though again running the gamut of intention, each of these judgments exercises a kind of control over the girls' self-presentations, situating videos like this one squarely within a familiar script of objectifying the bodies of young women. Indeed, feedback for these videos does not invoke interactive dialogue. YouTube's comment system, in fact, makes it difficult to reply to other commenters. Instead, not unlike other ways of objectifying young women, these comments are nearly always a one-way discussion, in which the producer absorbs these judgments but has little venue to respond to them.

In some ways, in a manner similar to the notion of what McRobbie calls "feminism taken into account," the YouTube context (including both posting videos and supplying feedback) also provides a platform for the self-branding of girls and young women based on what Dean calls the "fantasy of empowerment."⁵³ Yet, alongside the position of the Internet as a key component in a gendered economy of visibility, there is another, more subtle issue here. In the use of the term "fantasy of empowerment," Dean presumes the existence of a nonfantasy version—that is, an empowerment that is more real, more authentic. Such a critique unintentionally reifies the simplistic binary that I have been arguing against—here between authentic empowerment and fantasy empowerment—rather than parsing their deep interrelations. I would like to suggest that the contrast between an offline empowerment that is "real" and an online empowerment that is "fake" is ultimately beside the point, since it misses the logic of digital technologies, simultaneously dynamic and disciplinary. Instead, the reality is far murkier. The ideals shaping the discursive and ideological space of the Internet—freedom, equality, innovation, entrepreneurship—are the same discourses that provide the logic for girls' self-branding, a practice that situates girls ever more securely into the norms and values of hegemonic gendered consumer culture, as they also reshape definitions of a new, interactive femininity.

Self-branding is thus not just a tired rehashing of the objectification of female bodies but rather a new social arrangement that relies on different strategies for identity construction and hinges on more progressive ideals such as capability, empowerment, and imagination.⁵⁴ The culture of

self-branding, like other brand cultures, is structured by such ambivalence; self-branding is fraught with tensions between empowering oneself as a producer and occupying this empowered position within the terms and definitions set up by broader brand and commercial culture. Thus, like the "new category of womanhood" McRobbie describes, the self-branded girl is encouraged to be self-reliant, to embody the "can-do" spirit. Indeed, self-branding strategist Kaputa argues in *U R a Brand!* that while all people need to be self-brand "builders" in the contemporary marketplace, this is particularly true for women and girls: self-branding "is especially for women, women like myself, who were told as children, 'Don't upstage your brother' or 'It's not nice to call attention to yourself.' The truth is, if you don't brand yourself, someone else will, and it probably won't be the brand you had in mind."⁵⁵ This sentiment exemplifies the postfeminist vision of empowerment, acknowledging that there have been historical obstacles for women to be independent, but that in the contemporary context it is up to women to carve out space for themselves—and the best way to do so is to develop a brand.

For some girls, and some women, Web 2.0 culture does provide a perfect space to realize this particular kind of empowerment. Tila Tequila, by most accounts, is a success in the contemporary economy. Similarly, digital technology has enabled the self-branding of Rebecca Black, the much-maligned but very successful California teenager who in 2011 created the song "Friday, Friday" (dubbed by many critics as the worst song ever) through the record label ARK music factory and became an immediate online phenomenon. Because of the structure and definition of an empowerment animated by the Internet, the web becomes the perfect space for a heightened kind of self-monitoring and self-improvement undergirding self-branding. In other words, online empowerment is not always false proposition or hope; rather, it is defined and circumscribed precisely by the architecture of the Internet, as well as by the cultural and political conditions that make the Internet seem an appropriate vehicle for gender empowerment. Again, empowerment may be realized, but it is realized within the context of brand culture. Girls, then, are constructing themselves as gendered beings within this context, where their performances of visibility and spectacular femininity are subject not only to the evaluative feedback of others but also to their own self-evaluation.⁵⁶

Brands, Not Products: The Self as Brand

In order to theorize the self-brand, it makes sense to first turn to the deceptively simple notion of the branded product within an advanced capitalist

political economy. If self-branding is about branding the self as a product, what is the substance of the product itself? How does it register in time and space? Or perhaps even more basic: What counts as a product?

Typically, a product is a thing, a tangible object made through labor (human or mechanical). While certainly conventional products continue to be exchanged within advanced capitalism, as Naomi Klein has argued in her oft-cited antiglobalization manifesto *No Logo*, the central organizing feature of contemporary corporate culture was no longer products but rather brands.⁵⁷ Others have also noted the gradual shift in the marketplace from a tangible product to a more symbolic articulation of the brand; for instance, Jeremy Rifkin and others have argued that the contemporary economy is an economy of attention and access rather than one built on the more traditional notion of ownership of products. Henry Jenkins argues that the world can today be defined by "affective economics," in which brand culture has shifted how consumers relate to products, so that commercial culture is not merely about the profit a product makes but rather is more open-ended; the result is an expansive milieu in which new, affective relationships forge "networked publics."⁵⁸

The replacement of things with affective practices, or, as Arjun Appadurai terms it, the "social relations of things," calls attention to the ways in which symbolic narratives of the brand, or the brand experience, have become more resonant with consumers than actual products.⁵⁹ If Ogilvy & Mather are successful, as I have discussed in chapter 1, buying a Dove product today is about far more than just choosing a soap. With these affective practices, the successful brand becomes more diffuse, more permeable, and therefore more wide-reaching in the influence it can have on each consumer, and the way each consumer, in turn, can influence it.

These shifting dynamics between tangible and intangible products and labor practices point to the dynamism of the concept of the product itself. The product has not disappeared from this affective, experiential landscape but has expanded to encompass a range of new phenomena that are characteristic of the contemporary US political economy—affect, emotion, the self. In other words, the product itself has a different value in this political economy, as do labor practices. The neoliberal digital economy privileges forms of labor that are not generally recognized as labor by a more conventional capitalist exchange system, such as affective relationships, emotion, and brand experiences.⁶⁰ This kind of "immaterial labor," as I argued in chapter 1, not only involves new characteristics of production, such as digital technologies and flexibility, but also "involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as 'work'—in other words, the kinds of activities

involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and more strategically, public opinion."⁶¹ As a result, the relationship between labor, products, and capitalism has a new dynamic, so that affect, attention, and culture itself are available as part of capitalist exchange.⁶² Because labor is now understood as flexible, ephemeral, and continuous, the product in turn is flexible and "becomes more of a process than a finished product."⁶³ The commercial exchange of products is thus more difficult to capture and quantify with concrete numerical value.

The relationship of immaterial labor to self-branding involves, as Alison Hearn points out, an understanding of the self as a kind of product, as flexible, fragmented, and saleable.⁶⁴ Thus, branding the self is not simply a function and effect of economic structures but also a result of changing cultural outlooks. Economic structures and cultural norms form a deeply interrelated framework for branding the self; the labor of self-branding is thus economic in the sense that it relies on conditions of production of advanced capitalist societies, and it is cultural in that it involves a more diffuse, immaterial labor that creates new cultural norms and outlooks about the "authentic" self. These economic and cultural conditions can produce collaboration among communities, but they also privilege individual entrepreneurialism.

Within this context, the self-brand functions as a kind of social and cultural trace, or a palimpsest of a more conventional notion of a tangible, saleable object. The product is still present, but the practices of labor that produce it also make the product ephemeral, emotional, and affective. Thus, the "producer" ostensibly enabled by a context of user interactivity could as easily be considered a "marketer" for the product of the self. As Kaputa, a marketer and brand strategist, argues, "In many ways, brands are like people: They have qualities, attributes, and personalities. And people are like brands. They are products that can be nurtured and cultivated to become winning brands."⁶⁵

This slippage between people and brands, where "brands are like people" and "people are like brands," is validated within the variegated practices of advanced capitalism and its ever-expanding markets. The marketization of the self, and indeed of social life in general, indicates that economic practices have been retooled to reach not just a generic audience but ever-more-individualized communities, utilizing key strategies of emotional engagement, authenticity, and affect. In turn, cultural practices have also been retooled, so that the conditions of labor in the contemporary moment imply not so much the "prescription and definition of tasks" but rather involve the production of subjectivities: immaterial labor is about "becoming subjects."⁶⁶ Discourses of empowerment and self-improvement that provide an ontological framework

for current understandings of subjectivity are embedded within these labor practices, which insist that the subject maintains an authoritative discourse about herself. Importantly, the self-as-commodity involves a "social relationship" with oneself, one of innovation, production, and consumption, charged with ideally producing a unique, "authentic" self. Consider again the example of Tila Tequila. As Tequila said, it is her "job" to cultivate popularity through her self-brand, part of what Laurie Ouellette and James Hay call a larger ongoing "self-work," where individuals "create biographical 'narratives' that will explain themselves to themselves, and hence sustain a coherent and consistent identity."⁶⁷ But this self-work relies also on explaining oneself *to the users*—audiences, viewers, peers—who view and evaluate the self-brand, so that self-presentation is a dynamic between production and consumption, between the individual and the culture at large.

Self-Work: I Want to Be a Lifecaster When I Grow Up

What does this self-work look like in practice? While the process of selling is often incidental (and, indeed, can be unknown) to many of the YouTube video producers discussed earlier, for those individual entrepreneurs who recognize the potential of online sites such as YouTube as a platform for a more consistent and constant narrativizing of the self, a new career option, the "lifecaster" has emerged. A case in point: a comment on a video of a young girl dancing on YouTube, "13 year old MiSS Delazee," states: "You are a very cute girl and you can dance very well. Ue seem a little camera shy but ii hope that you will get over that. Ii love the cargos & ii could like to see more videos from you. Hoping you get discovered with both hands & feet crossed!!—Pretty&Not paid." This comment, like hundreds of others on similar YouTube videos, explicitly makes reference to the function of YouTube in "getting discovered," ostensibly by the commercial media industries, and gives value to the YouTube brand. Indeed, youth talent agencies for kids now often specialize in making online stars (often through social networking sites), thus institutionally legitimating YouTube as well as social networking sites as lucrative venues for self-branding.

As but one example of this kind of legitimation, the popular "how-to" website eHow.com contains an article titled "How to Be a Star on YouTube." One "step" in the path to YouTube stardom is: "Come up with a concept that others will become addicted to when watching. It must be presentable as a series. It should be controversial, sensational or shocking. If it isn't any of these then inject it with your sex appeal, your incredible sense of humor or be bizarre. Each episode must terminate in suspense."⁶⁸ Alongside "how-to"

tips like these, the business media have become involved as well. For example, the Business Insider website, in August 2010, published an article, "Meet the YouTube Stars Making \$100,000 Plus a Year," that features ten YouTube stars, the majority of whom video blog about their everyday lives and have their own channel on YouTube (and sometimes more than one).⁶⁹

Other stories about online stardom circulate in culture, functioning much like the generations of celebrity dream narratives where unknowns "get discovered" by producers and are made into Hollywood stars. Perhaps the most recent is the teen pop idol Justin Bieber, whose YouTube videos were discovered by a music agent, who then connected him with music star Usher and an eventual contract with RBMG studio. Both of Bieber's albums have since gone platinum—and, as perhaps a subconscious nod to the power of self-branding, were titled *My World* and *My World 2.0*, respectively. In 2010, Bieber had 17 million Facebook fans, had the most-viewed YouTube video of all time, made \$100 million, and published a memoir (and he was sixteen years old).⁷⁰

On the tails of Bieber's success, perhaps the most recent iteration of the discovery narrative is acceptance into YouTube Partner Program, through which amateur video bloggers and video makers are invited to become "partners" with YouTube once their videos receive a certain number of hits. Here again, visibility is a key to success. Once an individual has been accepted into the Partner Program, advertisements begin to appear overlaid on or next to the uploaded videos, and YouTube then splits the revenue generated by those ads with the partner. The more the videos are viewed, the more revenue they generate.⁷¹ According to the press release about its new program, YouTube positioned the Partner Program as "an exclusive development program for up-and-coming YouTube Partners who are well on their way to star success."⁷² Part of the program offers YouTube partners "training and mentoring to build their brands and improve their content, global promotion across the platform, and an invitation to what will become a global community of leading content creators." In this same press release, a YouTube spokesperson lauded the online site as a mode of self-expression and a business; my argument is that for YouTube, and for an increasing number of social network sites, self-expression is a business.

This has been an especially appealing program for young people. YouTube estimates that 10 percent of its most-subscribed users are nineteen or younger, and that "as a whole, more than one-third of the most successful participants in its revenue-sharing Partner Program are under 25."⁷³ Girls and young women have found a space amenable to global visibility in YouTube, where videos on how to shop (often called "haulers"), how to put on makeup,

how to dance, and other tutorials in hegemonic femininity seem to generate hits in the millions.⁷⁴ A central logic of discovery narratives is that *anyone* can be discovered; the YouTube Partner Program clearly ascribes to this egalitarian rhetoric. And certainly, it is not the case that only, say, white middle-class girls are invited to become partners in YouTube's program. However, brand culture, social media as a site of empowerment, and the privilege of the "can-do" girl together form a context for a selective typology of girl video makers to be invited as partners and to be legible as branded citizens.

Indeed, the Partners Program is one small hint of the hierarchies that are characteristic of YouTube, just as they are everywhere on the Internet. It is often declared—and sites like YouTube, not to mention derivative "how-to" manuals, insist—that the web is open to everyone. But the notion that there are clear—and accessible—steps one can simply follow in order "to be a star" renders invisible how bounded those steps are in terms of age, race, and class. Individuals who are culturally marginalized (through law, policy, media representation, etc.) because of race or class, for instance, do not have the same access to the practice of self-branding as white, middle-class girls and young women. Like the discourse of postfeminism, the normalization of self-branding necessarily relies on practices of exclusion and is available primarily to "can-do" girls.

The YouTube Partner Program is part of the emergence of the career of "lifecasting" as an increasingly visible niche. Lifecasting, defined as a live video programming on the Web, "shows life in unabridged form, programming without a thematic concept, without a casting director, without an editor, without anything in the subject's life that is much different than the audience's, other than the willingness to be on view."⁷⁵ Lifecasting takes various forms, of course, but the basic skill set needed for a successful "career" in this field is merely a "willingness" to broadcast every moment of one's everyday life in real time. Lifecasting is cheap in comparison to other media-related endeavors; video streaming is all but free for those who have access to a computer and the Internet, and the only equipment needed is basically a webcam on a laptop.

I began this chapter with one of the most famous lifecasters, Jennifer Ringley, whose "JenniCam" livecast detailed her life from a webcam from 1996 to 2003. Launched from Ringley's dorm room, JenniCam was on twenty-four hours a day, focusing viewers' attention on the apparently unfiltered minute details of her life, including using the bathroom, having sex, and masturbating. As I mentioned, at the height of JenniCam's popularity, the video received 3 to 4 million viewers daily and was soon expanded into a pay-for-service site, where viewers who wanted "full" access to Ringley's life had to

pay. Ringley thus positions herself, and is positioned by context, as occupying a space between Natalie Dylan and Tia Tequila; she engaged in both "selling" and branding herself. Seven years after JenniCam was launched, the online banking system PayPal shut down Ringley's account, citing its new antinudity policies, leading to the demise of the entire site.

As Mark Andrejevic points out, JenniCam "seemed to demonstrate the revolutionary potential of the Internet."⁷⁶ JenniCam was a popular show produced with almost no resources, and as such, it seemed to be an exemplar of the boundary-breaking power of the Internet, where media producers are no longer needed in the same way, where "uncut" reality can be aired without the messy clutter and crass commercialization of advertising, and where a young female college student can make a profit from her entrepreneurialism and her "empowered" postfeminist sexual identity.

However, as Andrejevic further points out, while webcams of the late 1990s and, for my purposes, the emergence of the lifecaster as a potentially lucrative career choice in the early 21st century, do mark a transformation in the way we use media, the transformation is not necessarily one that endows users and producers with newfound power. Rather, "the use of webcam pages for perpetual self-disclosure (personal 'reality TV,' as it were) anticipates the emerging surveillance-based rationalization of the online economy."⁷⁷ Webcam culture, argues Andrejevic, allows for the "exploitation of the work of being watched," where marketers and data miners keep a watch on lifecasters in order to ever more closely determine their profit potential. Among other things, this means that within the "digital enclosure," the spatial division critical to modern capitalism between work and leisure is rendered obsolete. Work, or labor, as I have discussed throughout this chapter, becomes immaterial, and this process "does not make work more like 'free time,' but, rather, tends to commodify free time by transforming it into time that can be monitored, recorded, repackaged, and sold."⁷⁸ This is especially true in an era of data mining, where individuals' personal information is mined for its commercial value to corporations.

The core logic of the lifecaster involves the transformation of quotidian and personal existence into a commodity that is packaged and sold. This is also why lifecasting is perhaps the quintessential example of the self-brand. The idea that one's everyday life should be not only recorded but *broadcast*, with every detail laden with significant meaning, is one that makes sense in a culture of branding, where the self is a product, promoted and sold by individual entrepreneurs. Branding strategist Kaputa points out that although brands are "wordless, a brand's packaging and design speak to us in color, shape, and material. Brands speak through imagery and symbols in

logos, packaging, and advertising. It's the same with people."⁷⁹ A self-brand depends on an individual's willingness to be viewed for "purchase," a willingness aided by the normative use of marketing strategies and lexicons, demonstrated bluntly by Kaputa, as a way to construct the self. Lifecasting is a perfect mechanism for the self-brand, as the practice uses video to describe one's life on the Web and has a dedicated market category and an increasing consumer base to support it.

Justine Ezarik, for instance, is a lifecaster with a very popular YouTube channel, "iJustine," and has made more than 300 videos and posted them on YouTube, including skits, satires of television shows, and spontaneous dancing in the middle of an Apple store. Her video about wanting to order a cheeseburger was viewed more than 600,000 times on YouTube in one week and, at the time of writing, had more than 2 million views.⁸⁰

Ezarik began her career in 2006 on Justin.tv, a website that facilitates continual live webcam streaming supplied by anyone wanting to broadcast their lives through video. Justin Kan, the founder of Justin.tv, pioneered the technique of wearing a camera on his head while he livecast, thus inviting the viewers to see his life as he does, in a constant stream. Justin.tv was attractive to lifecasters because, unlike YouTube at the time, it did not have a time limit. It was also attractive because the new practice of lifecasting was seen as a conduit to stardom; as the *San Francisco Chronicle* headline about Justin.tv put it clearly: "It's Justin, Live! All Day, All Night! S.F. Startup Puts Camera on Founder's Head for Real-Time Feed, and a Star Is Born."⁸¹

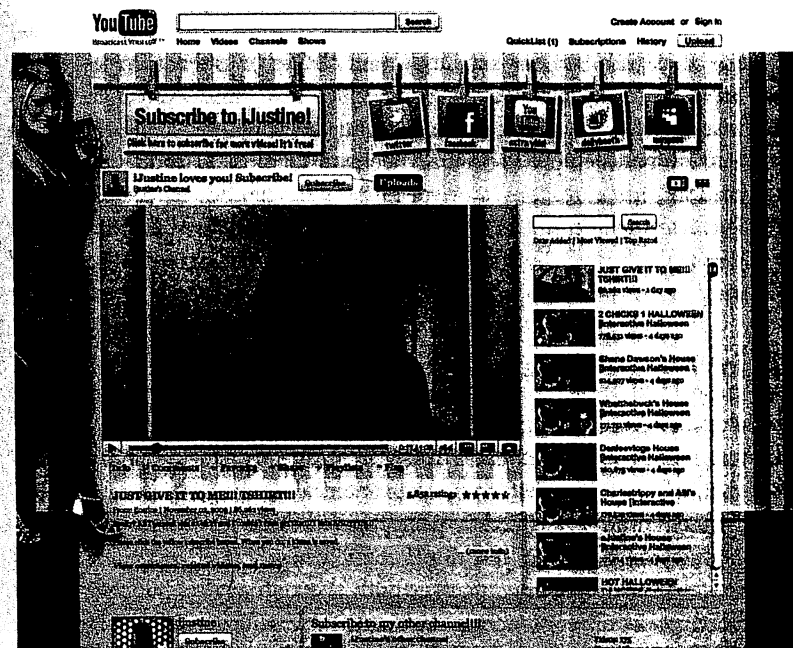
Unlike Kan, Ezarik turned the camera on herself, thus changing the narrative of the lifecast from one that is about capturing the personal experience of a lifecaster from his or her point of view to one that is about turning the attention—and the media visibility—on the lifecaster. Ezarik is the visible center of attention in her lifecast. And, by turning the camera on herself, Ezarik positions the feminine body as the crux of her self-brand.⁸² Ezarik is the postfeminist self-brand, "putting herself out there," capitalizing on the visibility of global online sites for display, the camera's optic focusing on her body. Indeed, a desire to be noticed or recognized is perhaps the quintessential element to the branded postfeminist self; this desire mobilizes young women to "come forward" as feminism "fades away." Displaying self-work, whether through consumption practices, popular culture, or digital technologies, is key to branding the self in the contemporary moment. In this sense, lifecasting can be connected to a broader normalization of "confessional culture," spaces that provide venues for individuals to tell the truth about themselves as a way to construct subjectivities.⁸³ Confessional culture depends on the exposure of the self, and the normalization of this culture in

digital media can renovate everyday, mundane practices into items for consumption.⁸⁴ As iJustine demonstrates, ordering a cheeseburger, paying the bills, and dancing in the Apple store are practices that are “worthy” of posting on a global site for display; they are practices made saleable through the logic of lifecasting. This kind of transparency and disclosure blurs traditional divisions between the public and the private, so that one’s private life is a central feature of popular entertainment, and immaterial labor—the work on the self, affect, and emotion—is the primary form of labor within the practice of self-branding. And the public, accessed through the 24/7 camera, gets compulsively incorporated into the private.⁸⁵

The emerging practice of lifecasting calls to mind other sorts of performances of femininity. For instance, in 1991, Sandra Lee Bartky detailed the various ways in which women discipline their bodies, from training themselves to move in certain “feminine” ways to ornamenting their bodies with makeup and jewelry.⁸⁶ As a theoretical framework, she used Foucault’s notion of the panopticon, the means by which individuals in contemporary society are disciplined through constant surveillance and observation. Bartky noted that women are especially susceptible to such disciplinary practices. On the one hand, women’s bodies are more “docile” than men’s, due to historical and cultural constructions of gender. On the other, mastering the practices of self-construction can be understood as a kind of empowerment in the face of external pressures:

Whatever its ultimate effect, discipline can provide the individual upon whom it is imposed with a sense of mastery as well as a secure sense of identity. There is a certain contradiction here: While its imposition may promote a larger disempowerment, discipline may bring with it a certain development of a person’s powers. Women, then, like other skilled individuals, have a stake in the perpetuation of their skills, whatever it may have cost to acquire them and quite apart from the question whether, as a gender, they would have been better off had they never had to acquire them in the first place.⁸⁷

I would like to extend Bartky’s analysis of the docile feminine body and consider what female lifecasting means in this context. Today, twenty years after Bartky’s essay was published, this external gaze has expanded to encompass an even more relentless internal gaze. A self-policing and self-absorbed gaze is animated both by new digital technologies and by an increasing belief that visibility leads to a reimagined self-empowerment. The docile body, as a result, has been transformed. In the postfeminist milieu, the ideal feminine



The iJustine YouTube channel.

subject is often understood as precisely *not* the docile body but rather the “can-do girl,” who is “flexible, individualized, resilient, self-driven, and self-made and who easily follows nonlinear trajectories to fulfillment and success.”⁸⁸ Feminine bodies, however, are still docile bodies. Indeed, the idea of the docile body is crucial for the articulation of the “can-do girl.” This mastery also disciplines the feminine body in a different way: as a self-brand. Justine Ezarik (as well as many others) is a “can-do girl,” a necessary condition to developing a successful self-brand. Her body—thin, white, conventionally attractive—is “brandable” in the current media economy of visibility.

The practice of self-branding by women and girls in the contemporary moment requires an updated sort of contradiction from the one identified by Bartky: while the practice of self-branding subjects one to processes of judgment and evaluation (through “feedback” mechanisms, among other things), mastering the practice of self-branding is expressive of a definition of empowerment in the current technological and postfeminist environment. As I explored earlier, the blurring of boundaries between producer and consumer, enabled by interactive technologies, has been undeniably empowering for girls and women. Again, girls and women have historically

been excluded from the realms of production (especially technological production), so creating media is an important challenge to their long-standing position as primarily consumers of media.⁸⁹ Online "production," though, is often inseparable from "self-production," thus offering a new complication in the spectrum between production and consumption; self-production online can position girls and women as specific kinds of products for consumption. This is evident in the YouTube videos I examined (even if that was not the video maker's intention), as well as in the burgeoning career category of lifecasting.

Will You Add Me? Facebook and the Self-Brand

To craft a successful self-brand, one not only has to brand oneself as authentic but literally has to *be* authentic. This is a shift from historical liberal values where being true to the self is solely an internal process (think of parental lectures to children influenced by peer pressure: "It's not about what others think about you, but what you think about yourself"). The contemporary context of self-branding encompasses both these strategies, but their order is reversed, so in order to access one's authentic self, one must be true to others. To be authentic to yourself, one must first be authentic to others; it is about external gratification. As marketers McNally and Speak state, "It matters a whole lot what other people think. Your brand, just like the brand of a product, exists on the basis of a set of perceptions and emotions stored in someone else's head."⁹⁰ Alison Hearn points out that this kind of "outer-directed self-presentation . . . trades on the very stuff of lived experience in the service of promotion and profit."⁹¹ This reimagines a traditional notion of authenticity, one based on intrinsic motivation, which values uniqueness, original expression, and independence from the market.

Online spaces provide a potentially expansive opportunity for young people to explore and express this "outer-directed self-presentation," this version of the "authentic" self. In a postfeminist context, this "authenticity" is tied to a particular version of femininity, so that it is increasingly normative for gender and sexual identities to be expressed through girl-oriented websites, personal profiles, and YouTube videos.⁹² As Susannah Stern points out about personal profiles online, girls often use these spaces as "a forum of self-disclosure, especially as a place to engage in self-expression."⁹³ Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell have similarly argued that online youth productions are examples of "identities-in-action," where young users combine old and new images to establish creative, multifaceted identities. Like other scholars investigating identity-making online, Weber and Mitchell see online youth

productions as self-reflexive, where media made by youth are also viewed primarily by those youth, so that users constantly revisit their own web productions and update them, as well as see how many "hits" or comments they might have generated. The fact that young people producing media online are their own audience demonstrates, for Weber and Mitchell, a "conscious looking, not only at their production (themselves), but how others are looking at their production."⁹⁴ danah boyd takes this self-conscious looking a step further and sees online spaces as formative of "networked publics," places where "teens are modeling identity through social network profiles so that they can write themselves and their community into being."⁹⁵

As boyd's notion of "networked publics" implies, and as we have already seen, digital technologies sit at the intersection of the public and private; so too does self-branding, which is about both a private and a public performance. Constructing oneself as what Hearn calls a "detachable, saleable image or narrative" necessarily entails a private disclosure—*this is who "I" am*.⁹⁶ Yet the "I" that is created is marketed to a public of both known and anonymous subjects. Digital technologies are intended to communicate the self to others—the Internet and its innumerable appendages rely on a dynamic between self and others that results in self-construction. This dynamic, often expressed through feedback, works to legitimate personal profiles as sites for self-branding and regulates girls and their gendered self-presentations. While personal profile sites are not the same as YouTube videos, in that ostensibly one chooses one's audience by "friending" people or inviting them to the site, personal profile sites are nonetheless both a public and a private performance—public because they are displayed to an audience, and private because they purport to answer the intensely personal question of "Who am I?" Answering this personal question occurs in public, in a space that positions itself as a kind of constantly surveilled, yet seemingly intimate, public sphere.

The questions of "Who am I?" and "Who do you think I am?" are the central mobilizers of online personal profiles. For instance, besides encouraging users to brand themselves as "they really are," personal profiles encourage communication and feedback between user and producer that then validates the self-brand. To take just a few examples of how this "authenticity" in self-branding is maintained: the social networking site Friendster kicked out "fakester" fake profiles; Facebook requires users to post under their "real" names (or at least individual status updates must carry the same name as that profile does at the time of posting); and Twitter maintains "verified" celebrity accounts (though it does not eliminate fake accounts).⁹⁷ This maintenance of "authentic" communication enhances the notion that such communication

is empowering for the user, as it ostensibly presents users as “they really are.” However, as I have discussed, the empowerment supposedly gained by such participation can only be understood within specific online contexts. This potentially distracts individuals from what empowerment might mean in a broader sense. That is, in online spaces, media debates center on empowerment but often rely on a limited, binaristic understanding of participation—say, whether or not one posts a video. This is especially evident within the public performances of girls’ personal lives—the communicative act involved in self-disclosure works as a technique of self-branding, thus objectifying young women precisely through the act of authorizing them as subjects.

To take one example, Facebook personal profiles rely on a commercially recognized script that invokes and validates brands and brand strategies. Facebook is a global social networking site that is privately owned and operated by Facebook, Inc. Created by Mark Zuckerberg as a tool to connect and reconnect college friends, the site initially included only college students, then opened access to high school students, and now is available to anyone over the age of thirteen. It currently has more than 300 million active users worldwide and is seen (at least for the moment) as an important tool of communication—clearly no longer limited to helping college students get to know each other, Facebook is now widely used by employers, businesses, and brands as a way to distribute information about people, groups, and products. (The ubiquity of the site is evidenced by the critically and popularly acclaimed film *The Social Network* (2010), which narrates Facebook’s success—along with just enough controversy to make it fit with Web 2.0’s paradigm for media success.) According to the web trafficking monitor Compete.com, Facebook was, in 2009, the most used social network worldwide, followed by MySpace.⁹⁸

Facebook’s origin story is not insignificant to its current position as a preeminent site for self-branding. The college newspaper the *Harvard Crimson* reported that Zuckerberg, a Harvard undergraduate student, created a website called Facemash as a version of the popular online rating site “Hot or Not” (one in the aforementioned genre of Internet personal rating sites, including others such as RateMyFace and AmIHot.com), where users rate the “attractiveness” of photos voluntarily submitted by other users. These sites, aside from the insidious and highly gendered practice of rating “attractiveness” and “hotness,” depend on an online definition of “popularity” that is determined by the rating numbers and user votes. (the site BecauseImHot.com launched in 2007 and simply deleted anyone with a rating lower than 7 out of 10). As I have argued, self-branding is often legible within a context of a culture of commercial hypersexuality, so we then witness things like

the normalization of “hotness” as both a category of analysis and an inspirational and aspirational subject position. This kind of sexualized objectification, seen historically as a misogynist practice that contained and managed women, is legible in new ways within brand culture.⁹⁹ For instance, many online sites evaluate women based on physical attractiveness, using the concept of “hot” as defining ideal femininity. Sites such as Hot or Not, Because I’m Hot, AmIHot, and RateMyFace, as well as the assignation of icons such as chili peppers next to professors’ names on the student evaluation site RateMyProfessor, legitimate the concept of hot as a desired feature of a “can-do girl.” These rating sites and the normalization of “hotness” as an aspirational subject position also situate “hotness” as an important factor in self-branding of white, middle-class girls, where the “hotter” one is, the more one will be noticed.¹⁰⁰

The prehistory and cultural context of these social network sites are significant because of the way in which the sites privilege a specific sort of logic: evaluating and comparing people (primarily women) is the purpose of the site. And, although Facebook is not explicitly designed for side-by-side comparison like these other examples, it purportedly did originate as a site that evaluated and compared women (a history that plays a central role in *The Social Network*: in the film’s opening scene, Zuckerberg creates Facemash as a vicious, public revenge against his ex-girlfriend). There is a base aspect to the logic of rating sites: the evaluation of hotness is translated into the “right” to visibility—the lower-ranked faces on some of these sites are simply deleted, rendered invisible. This practice of evaluation and user feedback is enabled by the web’s most basic norms—indeed, many users simply expect to be able to leave a comment on a given site, or to rate its contents. Of course, Facebook has evolved since these origins and has other clear uses aside from evaluating women or developing self-brands. Indeed, the flexibility of new media opens up spaces such as Facebook that facilitate empowerment; it is, however, important to understand empowerment as a concept that exists within a context of social network sites. The ethos of individual entrepreneurship and postfeminism, both emerging from advanced capitalist cultures, works to situate the hypersexualized female body as the conduit for this kind of empowerment on social network sites.

As implied both by its user statistics and by its origins as a site to rate physical attractiveness, Facebook epitomizes how visibility is at the heart of digital technology. A brief tour of Facebook is helpful in situating the site as a rich context for self-branding: an individual’s Facebook page consists of a personal profile, organized around a series of one’s choice of “boxes.” Standard boxes on profile pages include a headline box, where users can

put a quote or video that defines them or a short self-description; a "mutual friends" box, where users can view friends in common; a "friends" box, which lists how many Facebook "friends" one has (a person needs to request or be invited to be a person's "friend"); a status box, where the Facebook user can describe what she is doing or thinking at that moment (thus connecting with Twitter, which can be linked to people's Facebook accounts, so that they update simultaneously, communicating one's status of, say, "doing homework" or "having a beer" or sharing important news clips with different audiences); and, finally, the "Wall," upon which other posts about the user are located along with past status updates, photos, videos, links, and notes (this varies depending on which applications the user and her friends have added to the site). Anything that is posted to the Wall also has a comments field, wherein friends can leave comments and feedback.

Finally, there is an "Information" box that displays whatever subsections the user has filled in: basic information, personal information, contact information, education and work, groups one has joined, links to fan pages, and so forth. The topics in the "Information" box are wide-ranging, but the response options are quite narrow, from sex (one can select only male or female), to home neighborhood, to relationship status (the choices are single, in a relationship, engaged, married, it's complicated, in an open relationship, and widowed). The user can list her "favorites," including books, movies, TV shows, and music. However, the "favorites" mechanism was revised in 2010, so that one's personal favorites are linked to existing Facebook pages as a way to help Facebook sell advertising, and the site deletes any favorites that are not brand names, which motivated many users to stop using the site. Throughout any of the information sections, users can post photographs or videos of themselves, friends, bands they enjoy, and so on.

Despite the fact that personal profile pages on Facebook are customizable, there remain standard elements that most people include in their profiles.¹⁰¹ Interestingly, Facebook makes a distinction between a user's personal profile and other, more commercial uses for the site. The site directly stipulates that a user cannot use a personal profile page to engage in commercial activity: "You will not send or otherwise post unauthorized commercial communications to users."¹⁰² But within a context in which the self-brand has become normalized, it is murky indeed to determine what is "unauthorized commercial communication." The distinctions between this kind of communication and branding oneself are vague at best. In addition, Facebook recognizes the porous boundaries between commercial communication and self-branding: according to a website specializing in navigating social media, "Facebook wants all commercial activity to take place from Business Pages and they

want you to pay them for the rights to advertise to their users. This doesn't mean you can't engage in indirect marketing from your profile or group, it just means you need to be much more careful and adopt conversational marketing tactics rather than direct sales pitches."¹⁰³ While I am supportive of individual users not adding to the Facebook coffers, there is no way, if one has a Facebook account, *not* to add value for Facebook if one uses the site. In the terms of use, Facebook claims ownership to *everything* that users post to the site. These divisions between conversation and commerce are fused, so that there is not a clear difference between the two but rather just a cautionary note to "be careful" about not being too direct in one's sales pitch. Importantly, this caution is offered not because it is a troubling trend to craft identities using business or commercial language but so that a user does not violate Facebook's official rules.

Self-Branding: Identity as Industry

Marketer Catherine Kaputa advises her readers that successful entrepreneurs achieve their success as personal brands because "of a conscious process, a strategic branding process, often undertaken with the assistance of advisers, coaches, and other mentors who propelled their achievements and celebrity."¹⁰⁴ The process that results in the crafting of an "authentic" self within the contemporary context, then, may remain a "long, arduous, and artistic process of self-creation," but it is increasingly achieved through a business plan, through a reliance on "experts," and legitimated within an industry of self-branding. Brand culture validates and supports shifting boundaries of what can and cannot be configured as a product to be sold; we now take for granted that the self is (and should be) branded, managed, and distributed.

Yet there are limits to what kind of self is brandable. The hypersexualized female body is particularly brandable in the current economy of visibility, but "hotness" is not "empowering" for all young women, who might not have the same kind of access to their own bodily property. Some women, notably women of color and working-class women, are identified by precisely the opposite position—they are girls "at risk" of failing economically and socially, signaled in part by "bad choices" regarding drugs, alcohol, early maternity, and inappropriate sexual behavior. While postfeminism claims to be inclusive, women and girls of color and the working class are often excluded from the "can-do" category; racialized and classed identities are always already "at risk" of falling into the "can't-do" category.¹⁰⁵ While other feminisms, such as critical race feminism and third-wave feminism, have shown how mainstream US culture marginalizes certain bodies while making others

normative, it is postfeminism that has recently achieved the greatest visibility in contemporary consumer culture, global culture, and the workplace.

As McRobbie points out, a postfeminist subjectivity (what she calls the "post-feminist masquerade"), created and experienced in large part through consumption choices that are clearly articulated as free choices, is also by definition a reinstatement of white femininity as the ideal: "The 'un-doing' of feminism in the present moment intersects with the 'undoing of racism,' a process that, like the un-doing of feminism, is animated and enabled by fantasies of empowerment."¹⁰⁶ Thus, we can find a moralist framework that undergirds the postfeminist context in which girls and women construct their subjectivities: some postfeminist practices are pathologized and considered immoral, while others are seen as the proper care of the self. Not surprisingly, those women who have mastered the skills of properly caring for the self, or building successful self-brands, are those who are the most socially and culturally valuable: white, middle-class women and girls. This is a shift from previous moments in feminism, where part of "taking care of the self" was political action that challenged patriarchal and misogynist culture. From the second-wave feminist insistence that the "personal is the political" to *Our Bodies, Ourselves* (1973), a pathbreaking book on women's health and sexuality, to the early 1990s feminist punk underground movement Riot Grrrls, taking care of one's self, and "owning" one's body was a specifically feminist issue, one that revolved around freeing women from patriarchal restraint.¹⁰⁷

Importantly, the successful postfeminist self-brand relies not on obscuring any failures or immoral behavior that comes as part of the process—Tila Tequila, after all, knows that her success relies in large part on playing a scandalous role. Brand culture loves controversy; key, however, is to juxtapose normative self-branding practices (including personal or moral failures) against those behaviors that are seen as pathological. The fine line between behavior that is merely immoral and that which is pathological, in the context of the "enterprising self," exposes the high stakes involved in mastering the skills of self-branding, or being capable of branding oneself at all. Clearly, for example, the teenage girls who are featured on MTV's *Teen Moms*, or the many women who do not have access to Facebook or other social network sites, or those who have neither the technology nor the skills to upload a video of themselves on YouTube are not simply not skilled at self-branding—they cannot possibly brand themselves. These young women are a necessary contrast to the "can-do girl." Self-branding, in the postfeminist context, becomes the selective hallmark of how to insert oneself into the future, as savvy, technologically astute, and invested in visibility.

This kind of comparing and evaluating oneself in relation to others, represented in the distinct spaces of personal profiles and online personal ranking sites, relies on feedback as a normative mechanism in the creation (intentional or not) of a self-brand. That is, if self-branding is part of a "project of the self," then the conceptual crux of this project is feedback. Evaluating or commenting on others' self-disclosures empowers one as a consumer-cum-producer of content, yet it also reproduces normative identities and relations. Self-branding, much like the branding of other products, only works if you enable other people to rank your product, which in this case is yourself. As each user is given the ability to reconstitute *someone* as *something*—whether "hot" or "not," whether perfect or pathological—is as much a telling of one's own story as a judgment of another's. Self-branding does not merely involve self-presentation but is a layered process of judging, assessment, and valuation taking place in a media economy of visibility.

This media economy of visibility, with its accompanying texts of how-to guides for "how to be a star" online, as well as the normalization of self-branding as both an industry and a practice, taps into what Jean Twenge has discussed as the extreme narcissism of contemporary young people.¹⁰⁸ At its core, narcissism is about total self-importance, an importance that authorizes entitlement, self-absorption, lack of personal accountability, and a whole host of other undesirable qualities. If narcissism is one of the defining personality characteristics of this generation, digital media are its official method; after all, where—or when—else was it this easy for an individual, with relatively few resources to have his or her own media channel?¹⁰⁹ Indeed, the most substantial manifestation of this kind of narcissism is the expectation and assumption of an audience, implying not simply the right to speak but the right to be heard. Twenge, in her book *The Narcissism Epidemic*, situates social networking sites as just another example (albeit an extreme one) of teens' and tweens' quests for attention, adding cumulatively to a culture of celebrity, materialism, and entitlement to produce a completely narcissistic demographic. Online spaces such as MySpace function as effective sites for self-promotion, Twenge argues, adding to a general culture that values visibility and self-worship. Twenge sees this pull toward narcissism as enabled and exacerbated by the Internet; as she argues, the availability of online sites to both users and producers "encourages narcissism, and, while we like an idiotic YouTube video as much as anyone, an Internet without rampant narcissism would be a much better place."¹¹⁰ Regardless of whether one agrees with this last statement, it is important to point out that Twenge sees narcissism as an unfortunate side effect of the Internet, one that can be ostensibly corrected by shifting social values from "me" to "us." Of course,

social network sites are also used to communicate and share thoughts with others, and they can facilitate the formation of networked publics to rally support for politics and events that are important to individuals far beyond self-image; we need only look at events such as Arab Spring 2011 to realize the import of social media in forming networks both on- and offline. This collective online world exists in constant tension with its individualizing tendencies, a tension that is struggled over constantly through efforts to regulate online spaces, the creation of alternative community spaces online, and the imposition of commercial platforms to structure these spaces. But while certainly the Internet affords possibility for collectivities, communities, and networked publics, it also enables and facilitates a focus on the individual; that is, it is no easy move to switch from “me” to “us” in the current moment of self-marketing and self-branding.

Indeed, considering the possibility of merely switching focus from “me” to “us” is already to be theorizing social network sites and the people who participate on these sites in an acontextual manner. Narcissism is part of the very *structure* of online technologies. Today’s messy (and profitable) mixture—advanced capitalism and its attending labor practices, the flexible architecture of the Internet, and the ideal of the individual entrepreneur—validates a specific kind of narcissism and, related, the logic for the practice of self-branding. Narcissism, while identified by people like Twenge as a kind of pathology, something that can be “fixed” through refocusing social values, is reimagined within the context of self-branding and social media not only as a moral duty to oneself but also as a new kind of business model.

For example, in their book on YouTube, Jean Burgess and Joshua Green argue that in order to understand the cultural impact of social media such as YouTube, we need to think about all users, “whether they are businesses, organizations, or private individuals, as *participants*.”¹¹¹ They advocate moving away from thinking in terms of binaries—amateur versus professional, commercial versus community—in order to truly understand the kind of cultural work that YouTube does for individuals, corporations, and communities. To wit:

To understand YouTube’s popular culture, it is not helpful to draw sharp distinctions between professional and amateur production, or between commercial and community practices. These distinctions are based in industrial logics more at home in the context of the broadcast media rather than an understanding of how people use media in their everyday lives, or a knowledge of how YouTube actually works as a cultural system. It is more helpful to shift from thinking about media production, distribution,

and consumption to thinking about YouTube in terms of a continuum of cultural participation.¹¹²

While I fully agree with Burgess and Green about the inefficacy of conventional cultural distinctions as a starting point for analysis, we need to push further. Drawing sharp distinctions in culture is limiting *not only* because individuals and companies interact on a “continuum of cultural participation” but also because “cultural participation” is increasingly only legible in the language of business—and, more specifically, through the lexicon of the brand. While Burgess and Green recognize the blurriness within cultural formations, this indistinctness needs to be articulated in the context of broader shifts in culture and the economy. This is precisely an example of how YouTube works within a context of advanced capitalism; because it is understood as “a cultural system,” then “older” models of commercial media—including the logics of branding—are seen as antiquated and somehow, in the current era, not useful as analytics. The industry of self-branding and the consumer base for this new market, of which YouTube is a part, constitute a “cultural system.” Self-branding firmly situates the key actor in this “cultural system”—the individual entrepreneur—as an essential element in the maintenance of the broader landscape of brand culture. Recall Natalie Dylan, whose “project” of selling her virginity online was marked by (at least some) as entrepreneurial gumption. This individual entrepreneur, validated within postfeminism and interactive digital media, unfolds within preexisting gendered and racial scripts and their attendant grammars of exclusion. Certainly, as I have argued, producing a self-brand *is* cultural participation, but this kind of participation—what it does, and for whom—needs to be critiqued as a commercial practice.

69. Adam Arvidsson, *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
70. Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 132–146.
71. Dan Schiller, *How To Think about Information* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
72. Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Social Text* 18, no. 2 (2000): 38.
73. The idea that some products and their connection to social change are more "authentic" than others is one that continues to have cultural relevance; in a recent article lamenting the purchase of the organic and eco-friendly beauty product line Burt's Bees, the author tells the story of Burt Shavitz, the company's founder, as one in which the "authentic" creator, despite the evil takeover of his product by Clorox, continues to live in the "wilderness inside a turkey coop without running water or electricity." The juxtaposition between the hypercommerciality of Clorox (which, after all, makes products that destroy the environment) and the Thoreau-inspired "free" life of Burt Shavitz demonstrates the continued cultural significance of "authenticity." See Andrea Whitfill, "Burt's Bees, Tom's of Maine, Naked Juice: Your Favorite Brands? Take Another Look—They May Not Be What They Seem," March 17, 2009, accessed March 18, 2009, <http://www.alternet.org/health/131910>.
74. Castells, *Communication Power*, 421.
75. Mark Andrejevic, "Watching Television without Pity," *Television & New Media* 9, no. 1 (2008): 24–46.
76. David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 7.
77. George Yúdice, *The Expediency of Culture: Uses of Culture in the Global Era* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).
78. Ibid.
79. Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where All of Life Is a Paid-For Experience* (New York: Tarcher Press, 2001), 4–5.
80. Ibid., 5.
81. Ibid.
82. Personal interviews with brand marketers, from December 2008 to July 2010.
83. Terranova, "Free Labor."
84. See, for instance, Clay Shirky, *Here Comes Everybody: The Power of Organizing without Organizations* (New York: Penguin, 2009); Dan Tapscott and Anthony Williams, *Wikinomics: How Mass Collaboration Changes Everything* (New York: Portfolio Trade, 2010); Jeff Howe, *Crowdsourcing: Why the Power of the Crowd Is Driving the Future of Business* (New York: Crown Business, 2009); and others.
85. Arvidsson, *Brands*.
86. As Terranova points out in her discussion of "free" labor on the Internet, "The Internet does not automatically turn every user into an active producer, and every

worker into a creative subject. The process whereby production and consumption are reconfigured within the category of free labor signals the unfolding of a different (rather than completely new) logic of value, whose operations need careful analysis." See Terranova, "Free Labor," 75.

87. Ibid., 36.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

1. "Voyeur Web Site JenniCam to Go Dark," CNN.com, December 10, 2003.
2. "April 14, 1996: JenniCam Starts Lifecasting," Hugh Hart, April 14, 2010, *Wired*, <http://www.wired.com/thisdayintech/2010/04/0414jennicam-launches/>.
3. "22-Year-Old Natalie Auctions Virginity Online," *Herald Sun*, January 13, 2009, <http://www.heraldsun.com.au/aussie-tops-bids-for-virgins-prize/story-fna7dq6e-1111118552115>.
4. "Ebay," http://www.ebay-master.co.uk/what_cant_i_sell_on_ebay.php.
5. Natalie Dylan, "Why I'm Selling My Virginity," *Daily Beast*, January 23, 2009, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2009/01/23/why-im-selling-my-virginity.html>.
6. Ibid.
7. Lev Grossman, "Tila Tequila," *Time*, December 16, 2006, <http://www.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,1570728,00.html>.
8. Ibid.
9. Ibid.
10. Again, I am not implying that Tequila was offering sex through her cultivation of her MySpace persona (her reality program was ostensibly dedicated to "looking for love").
11. Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *Technologies of the Self: A Seminar with Michel Foucault*, ed. Luther Martin, Huck Gutman, and Patrick Hutton (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1988), 18.
12. Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).
13. Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2009); Rosalind Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2 (2007): 147–166; Anita Harris, *Future Girl: Young Women in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Yvonne Tasker and Diane Negra, eds., *Interrogating Postfeminism: Gender and the Politics of Popular Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007). These ideals of postfeminism are similar to the political ideologies I discuss in the previous chapter.
14. Harris, *Future Girl*.
15. In this sense, there is a distinction between interactive technology and the participatory user. In my argument, I use the term "interactive subject" to invoke both technology design and the participation of the user.
16. The general age range of girls and young women that I explore in this chapter is between twelve and twenty.

17. David McNally and Karl D. Speak, *Be Your Own Brand: A Breakthrough Formula for Standing Out from the Crowd* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2002), 5.
18. Catherine Kaputa, *U R a Brand! How Smart People Brand Themselves for Business Success* (New York: Nicholas Brealey, 2009), xv.
19. McNally and Speak, *Be Your Own Brand*, 4.
20. See Kaputa, *U R a Brand!*, 209, xvi; McNally and Speak, *Be Your Own Brand*. In his work on neoliberalism, Nick Couldry puts a different spin on this: referencing Marx's notion of the alienation of the self through labor, Couldry theorizes how a similar type of alienation could potentially come from the immaterial labor involved in building the self-brand. By replacing the self with the self-brand, one based in market logic, the self that is a potential site of alienation "because it has an inherent capacity to develop its own projects and voice" is eradicated. See Nick Couldry, *Why Voice Matters: Culture and Politics after Neoliberalism* (London: Sage, 2010), 35. This entrepreneurial self is validated by a popular moralist framework that is articulated as a duty to brand ourselves.
21. McNally and Speak, *Be Your Own Brand*.
22. This insecurity of marketers was clear to me throughout my interviews and observations of contemporary advertising and marketing, where I noted how marketers were constantly scrambling not only to keep pace with new media options but also to engage and interact with increasingly savvy consumers.
23. Foucault, "Technologies of the Self."
24. Andrew Potter, *The Authenticity Hoax: How We Get Lost Finding Ourselves* (New York: HarperCollins, 2010), 165.
25. As Wendy Brown points out, moralism within the current era is often about a "reproachful moralizing sensibility" more than a "galvanizing moral vision." The moralist framework that undergirds self-branding signals this kind of righteousness, where the practice of self-branding in a media economy of visibility invokes a moralism that "would appear to be a kind of temporal trace, a remnant of a discourse whose heritage and legitimacy it claims while in fact inverting that discourse's sense and sensibility." See Wendy Brown, *Politics Out of History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 22–23.
26. Angela McRobbie, "Notes on Postfeminism and Popular Culture: Bridget Jones and the New Gender Regime," in *All about the Girl: Culture, Power and Identity*, ed. Anita Harris (New York: Routledge, 2004), 5.
27. Ibid.
28. Rosalind Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture: Elements of a Sensibility," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10, no. 2 (2007): 147–166.
29. Harris, *Future Girl*, 20.
30. Gill, "Postfeminist Media Culture."
31. Harris, *Future Girl*.
32. A 2009 Nielsen online study confirmed what for most middle-class Americans already is a truism: "Kids are going online in droves—at a faster rate than the general Web population—and are spending more entertainment time with digital media." The report continues by stating that as of May 2009, the two- to eleven-year-old audience had reached 16 million, or 9.5 percent of the active online universe. Nielsen study, "How Teens Use Media," June 2009, http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/reports/nielsen_howteensusemedia_june09.pdf.
33. See Anastasia Goodstein, *Totally Wired: What Teens and Tweens Are Really Doing Online* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2007); Kathryn C. Montgomery, *Generation Digital: Politics, Commerce, and Childhood in the Age of the Internet* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007); John Palfrey and Urs Gasser, *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* (New York: Basic Books, 2008); Don Tapscott, *Grown Up Digital: How the Net Generation Is Changing Your World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2008). Much of the discourse surrounding the Internet focuses, from a range of negative and positive vantage points, on its democratizing potential. There are multiple reasons for why the Internet is understood as a democratizing space: to name but a few, its flexible architecture, the relative accessibility of the technology, the capacities for users to become producers, and the construction of the Internet as participatory culture. See danah boyd, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites: The Role of Networked Publics in Teenage Social Life," in *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*, ed. David Buckingham (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 119–142; Jean Burgess and Joshua Green, *YouTube: Online Video and Participatory Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009); Manuel Castells, *Communication Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: NYU Press, 2008). To these more optimistic characterizations of the Internet, challenges have been launched, especially those focusing on the multitude of ways the market has shaped and continues to shape what content is on the Internet, the labor that produces this content, and the conditions of possibility for future content. See Mark Andrejevic, *iSpy: Surveillance and Power in the Interactive Era* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007); Jodi Dean, "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics," in *Digital Media and Democracy: Tactics in Hard Times*, ed. Megan Boler (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 101–122; Dan Schiller, *How to Think about Information* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2006); Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Social Text* 18, no. 2 (2000): 33–58.
34. For example, Amy Shields Dobson, "Femininities as Commodities: Cam Girl Culture," in *Next Wave Cultures: Feminism, Subcultures, Activism*, ed. Anita Harris (New York: Routledge, 2008), 123–148; Mary Celeste Kearney, *Girls Make Media* (New York: Routledge, 2006); Sharon R. Mazzarella, ed., *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity* (New York: Peter Lang, 2005); Susannah Stern, "Expressions of Identity Online: Prominent Features and Gender Differences in Adolescents' World Wide Web Home Pages," *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 48, no. 2 (2004): 218–243.
35. Kearney, *Girls Make Media*.

36. Mark Andrejevic, "Watching Television without Pity: The Productivity of Online Fans," *Television & New Media* 9, no. 1 (2008): 32.
37. See Kearney, *Girls Make Media*, 5. Kathryn Montgomery echoes this notion in her work on youth, digital media, and civic engagement, where she argues, "Interactive technologies have created capabilities that alter the media marketing paradigm in significant ways, extending some of the practices that have already been put in place in conventional media but, more important, defining a new set of relationships between young people and corporations." Montgomery, *Generation Digital*, 26.
38. See Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*; danah boyd, "Social Network Sites as Networked Publics," in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community and Culture on Social Network Sites*, ed. Zizi Papacharissi (New York: Routledge, 2010), 39–58; and others.
39. "I kissed a girl," July 25, 2008, YouTube.
40. Burgess and Green, *YouTube*, 2.
41. *Ibid.*, 6.
42. *Ibid.*, 5.
43. Of course, my focus on girls' postfeminist self-branding on YouTube indicates that I am looking at only one kind of production practice out of the multitudes that take place via digital media and only one subgenre of video that is posted on YouTube. There are many different kinds of girls' media production in online spaces, as well as on YouTube itself, so user interactivity and the space of the Internet as one of possibility need to be analyzed in particular, specific terms.
44. Erica Rand, *Barbie's Queer Accessories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1995); Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001).
45. For more on the idea of scripts and technological imagination, see Anne Balsamo, *Designing Culture* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).
46. Stern, "Expressions of Identity Online."
47. Andrejevic, "Watching Television without Pity"; Schiller, *How to Think about Information*, 2006.
48. Andrejevic, *iSpy*.
49. Jodi Dean, "Communicative Capitalism: Circulation and the Foreclosure of Politics," *Cultural Politics: An International Journal* 1, no. 1 (2005): 51–74.
50. *Ibid.*
51. Andrejevic, "Watching Television without Pity."
52. "13 year old Barbie Girls," YouTube.
53. McRobbie, *Aftermath*; Dean, "Communicative Capitalism."
54. See McRobbie, *Aftermath*, for more on this new social arrangement.
55. Kaputa, *U R a Brand!*, xvi.
56. McRobbie (borrowing from Deleuze) situates these processes as "luminosities": "Within this cloud of light, young women are taken to be actively engaged in the production of self. They must become harsh judges of themselves. The visual (and verbal) discourses of public femininity come to occupy an increasingly spectacular space as sites, events, narratives and occasions within the cultural milieu." McRobbie, *Aftermath*, 13.
57. Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs* (New York: Picador, 2000).
58. Jeremy Rifkin, *The Age of Access: The New Culture of Hypercapitalism, Where All of Life Is a Paid-for Experience* (New York: Tarcher Press, 2001); Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*.
59. Arjun Appadurai, *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). On material culture, see also Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2010).
60. Terranova, "Free Labor," 33–58; Maurizio Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 132–146; Andrejevic, *iSpy*.
61. Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor," 132.
62. Terranova, "Free Labor," 38.
63. Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor."
64. Alison Hearn, "Meat, Mask, Burden: Probing the Contours of the Branded Self," *Journal of Consumer Culture* 8, no. 2 (2008): 197–217.
65. Kaputa, *U R a Brand!*, xvi.
66. Lazzarato, "Immaterial Labor."
67. See Laurie Ouellette and James Hay, *Better Living through Reality TV: Television and Post-welfare Citizenship* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 9. The rise of reality television, for instance, in the past several decades is a demonstration of the normalization of the self-brand, where, as Ouellette and Hay discuss, reality television offers a venue for the entangled discourses of citizenship, visibility, self-representation, and self-branding. Brenda Weber, in her discussion of makeover reality television (which promises the transformation of the self), situates the construction of citizenship within what she calls the "Makeover Nation": "In its emphasis on progress, its desire to provide access to restricted privileges, and its insistence on a free-market meritocracy, the project of citizenship imagined across the makeover genre comes deeply saturated with Americanness and this, in turn, imports neoliberal ideologies, which position the subject as an entrepreneur of the self, who does and, indeed, must engage in care of the body and its symbolic referents in order to be competitive within a larger global marketplace." See Brenda Weber, *Makeover TV: Selfhood, Citizenship, and Celebrity* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2009), 38–39. Reality television, including makeover shows but also life narratives such as *The Hills* and MTV's *Real World*, are one way that individuals can access and experience a particular kind of self-narrative—the self in these programs is situated as both a process and a commodity, and the labor that is performed (and the makeover shows centrally feature labor on the self as a defining narrative) is decidedly immaterial. Reality television is clearly dedicated to self-presentation and the constructed nature of identity, both key in animating the normalization of the practice of self-branding. Reality television

is also a site in which gender constructions are continually discussed, debated, and made normative. Though certainly men are as engaged in self-branding as women, in this chapter I focus on the self-branding practiced by young girls and women within the context of postfeminism.

68. http://www.ehow.com/how_2059779_be-star-youtube.html.
69. <http://www.businessinsider.com/meet-the-richest-independent-youtube-stars-2010-8>.
70. *Vanity Fair*, February 2011.
71. YouTube.com, press release on YouTube Partner Program, April 25, 2011.
72. Ibid.
73. Alex Hawgood, "No Stardom until after Your Homework," *New York Times*, July 17, 2011, 1, Style section.
74. Ibid. Hawgood discusses how very young girls—thirteen to fifteen years old—are achieving success on YouTube through such videos. He details Megan Parken, a fifteen-year-old video blogger with a makeup tutorial site, meganheartsmakeup, who became so successful as a YouTube partner that she dropped out of high school in the ninth grade and is now taking online courses. Her mother is cited as saying, "The financial opportunity is incredible....She has saved enough money to buy her first car and has put away money for college." Hawgood, "No Stardom."
75. Randall Stross, "A Site Warhol Would Relish," *New York Times*, October 14, 2007.
76. Marc Andrejevic, *Reality TV: The Work of Being Watched* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004), 61.
77. Ibid., 195.
78. Ibid., 198.
79. Kaputa, *U R a Brand!*, 68.
80. <http://www.youtube.com/user/ijustine#p/search/7/8jEoGWIOuy8>.
81. Jessica Guynn, "It's Justin, Live! All Day, All Night! S.F. Startup Puts Camera on Founder's Head for Real-Time Feed, and a Star Is Born." *San Francisco Chronicle*, March 30, 2007.
82. An example of this is Ezarik's most viewed video, "I Gotta Feeling' Black Eyed Peas SPOOF" which was posted in August 2009; as of December 2009, it had received almost 5 million views. The video has also received more than 17,000 comments and eighty video responses from fellow YouTubers. In the video she sings, "I gotta feeling, that tonight's gonna be a profile pic," to the tune of the popular 2009 Black Eyed Peas song, and dances around in a sexy, low-cut dress.
83. See Eva Illouz, *Oprah Winfrey and the Glamour of Misery: An Essay on Popular Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).
84. Harris, *Future Girl*, 128.
85. See Justine Cassell and Meg Cramer, "Hi Tech or High Risk? Moral Panics about Girls Online," in *Digital Youth, Innovation, and the Unexpected: The MacArthur Foundation Series on Digital Media and Learning*, ed. Tara MacPherson (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 53–75.

86. Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," in *Feminism and Foucault: Paths of Resistance*, ed. Lee Quinby and Irene Diamond (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1988), 77; Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Random House, 1975).
87. "Foucault, Femininity and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power," 77.
88. Harris, *Future Girl*, 16.
89. For a very useful discussion of girls' media production, see Mary Celeste Kearney, *Girls Make Media*.
90. McNally and Speak, *Be Your Own Brand*.
91. Alison Hearn, "Variations on the Branded Self: Theme, Invention, Improvisation and Inventory," in *The Media and Social Theory*, ed. David Hesmondhalgh and Jason Toynbee (New York: Routledge, 2008), 207–208.
92. Dobson, "Femininities as Commodities"; Ashley D. Grisso and David Weiss, "What Are gURLS Talking About?" *Girl Wide Web: Girls, the Internet, and the Negotiation of Identity*, ed. Sharon R. Mazzarella (New York: Peter Lang, 2005), 31–50.
93. Susannah Stern, "Virtually Speaking: Girls' Self-Disclosure on the WWW," *Women's Studies in Communication* 25, no. 2 (2002): 224.
94. Sandra Weber and Claudia Mitchell, "Imaging, Keyboarding, and Posting Identities: Young People and New Media Technologies," in *Youth, Identity, and Digital Media*, ed. David Buckingham (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2008), 27.
95. boyd, "Why Youth (Heart) Social Network Sites," 123.
96. Hearn, "Variations on the Branded Self."
97. Kevin Driscoll, personal correspondence.
98. www.compete.com, accessed November 2009.
99. In other words, the postfeminist self-brand is a slippery slope: one primary aspect of postfeminist culture, empowerment through the body, is sustained and validated through what Ariel Levy critiques as "the mainstreaming of pornography," a normalized "raunch culture" symbolized by *Girls Gone Wild*, adult film star Jenna Jameson's *New York Times* best seller *How to Make Love Like a Porn Star*, the normalization of bodies on constant sexual display (fitness clubs offering strip classes, stripper poles in houses and hotels, fashion calling attention to the sexualized body), and replacement of "beauty" with "hotness": "Hotness has become our cultural currency, and a lot of people spend a lot of time and a lot of regular, green currency trying to acquire it. Hotness is not the same thing as beauty, which has been valued throughout history. Hot can mean popular. Hot can mean talked about. But when it pertains to women, hot means two things in particular: fuckable and saleable." See Ariel Levy, *Female Chauvinist Pigs: Women and the Rise of Raunch Culture* (New York: Free Press, 2005), 25. Women's bodies on private and public sexual display (home sex tapes, amateur videos on YouTube and XTube, sexting, booty shorts) used to be called "objectification" in the old days of feminism. But as many have argued, the emphasis is on "old."

100. As McRobbie, Ariel Levy, and others have pointed out, the visibility of women of color and working-class women within a postfeminist context is typically not focused on "hotness" but rather on consumption behaviors and everyday practices that are pathologized, such as early pregnancy, drug use, and unemployment.
101. Depending on one's privacy settings, different people will be able to see different features.
102. Facebook guidelines.
103. <http://www.iandavidchapman.com>.
104. Kaputa, *U R a Brand!*, xv.
105. Examples include *16 and Pregnant*, *Teen Mom*, *Bad Girls Club*, talk shows, reality television like *bad girls club*, scripted TV like *Skins*, and others.
106. McRobbie, "Notes on Postfeminism and Popular Culture."
107. Judith Grant, *Fundamental Feminisms: Contesting the Core Concepts of Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1993); Boston Women's Health Book Collective, *Our Bodies, Ourselves*, 40th anniversary edition (New York: Touchstone, 2011); Linda Nicholson, *The Second Wave: A Reader in Feminist Theory* (New York: Routledge, 1997); Mary Celeste Kearney, *Girls Make Media* (New York: Routledge, 2006).
108. Jean Twenge, *The Narcissism Epidemic: Living in the Age of Entitlement* (New York: Free Press, 2010).
109. Of course, there are many DIY media examples of creating a media channel with few resources, but few on the scale of lifecasters.
110. Twenge, *Narcissism Epidemic*.
111. Burgess and Green, *YouTube*, 57 (emphasis in original).
112. Ibid.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

1. In this chapter, street art is defined as art in the historical tradition of graffiti, murals, and tagging, that is, painted, stenciled, stickered, or on public spaces—walls, trains, fences, and so on.
2. *Exit through the Gift Shop*, directed by Banksy (2010; Paranoid Pictures), DVD.
3. Ibid.
4. See Melena Ryzik, "Riddle? Yes. Enigma? Sure. Documentary?" *New York Times*, April 13, 2010. Of course, with this reply, Banksy does not answer the question about how corporate culture might in fact devalue his own work.
5. Banksy, *Wall and Piece* (London: Random House, 2005).
6. Ibid.
7. David Ng, "Banksy Identity Auction Removed from eBay—Was It a Hoax?," <http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/culturemonster/2011/01/is-the-banksy-identity-auction-on-ebay-for-real.html>, January 18, 2011. Like Natalie Dylan's virginity discussed in the previous chapter, apparently there are some things that are not appropriate for auction on eBay.

8. Sarah Banet-Weiser and Marita Sturken, "The Politics of Commerce: Shepard Fairey and the New Cultural Entrepreneurship," in *Blowing Up the Brand*, ed. Melissa Aronczyk and Devon Powers (New York: Peter Lang, 2011), 263–284.
9. Shepard Fairey, "Obey Manifesto," accessed June 2009, <http://obeygiant.com/about>.
10. Man One, "How Does Street Art Humanize Cities?" (lecture, Zocalo Public Square, Los Angeles, CA, January 13, 2011).
11. Angela McRobbie, "Everyone Is Creative: Artists as Pioneers of the New Economy?," accessed November 2009, <http://www.opendemocracy.net/node/652>.
12. Miriam Greenberg, *Branding New York: How a City in Crisis Was Sold to the World* (New York: Routledge, 2008).
13. Karal Ann Marling, *Wall-to-Wall America: Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982); Allen Cohen and Ronald L. Filippelli, *Times of Sorrow and Hope: Documenting Everyday Life in Pennsylvania during the Depression and World War II* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2005).
14. Joe Austin, *Taking the Train: How Graffiti Art Became an Urban Crisis in New York City* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2001); Gregory J. Snyder, *Graffiti Lives: Beyond the Tag in New York's Urban Underground* (New York: NYU Press, 2009); Jeff Chang, *Can't Stop, Won't Stop: A History of the Hip-Hop Generation* (New York: Picador Books, 2005).
15. Austin, *Taking the Train*.
16. For just one example, Cadillac has recently partnered with the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, and hired street artists, including Shepard Fairey, to create street murals that exemplify the "spirit of Cadillac." The ad campaign, called "Art in the Streets," featured three public murals by Fairey, Retna, and Kenny Scharf on the exterior walls of the new West Hollywood Library in Los Angeles. The campaign states that for Cadillac, "it was also an extraordinary opportunity to bring to life its core ideologies: bold creativity that surpasses all conceivable expectation, recognition of great risks as opportunities, and daring ingenuity that breaks down all barriers." *Vanity Fair*, November 2011, 61.
17. Retna, "How Does Street Art Humanize Cities?" (lecture, Zocalo Public Square, Los Angeles, CA, January 13, 2011).
18. For instance, the Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (MOCA), featured the first major US museum exhibition in the history of graffiti and street art, *Art in the Streets*, which ran from April 17 to August 8, 2011, before it traveled to the Brooklyn Museum.
19. Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," in *Walter Benjamin and Art*, ed. Andrew Benjamin (London: Continuum, 2005).
20. Richard E. Caves, *The Creative Industries: Contracts between Art and Commerce* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000).
21. Ben Sisario, "Looking to a Sneaker for a Band's Big Break," *New York Times*, October 6, 2010.