

# Identity Project

I would like to revisit the ideas on identity that i had a few weeks ago. This is not really a final idea, but more a smattering of thoughts around a theme...



I was playing around with how to textually represent a person. This funny image is what happened when i tried photoshopping a person on my laptop. I hope it makes sense all the same.

What i am really interested in is how a representation of a person can come about. From my vantage point, i see three primary elements to building someone's identity:

- intentional. What one intentionally conveys to the world through dress, action, language, etc. The component of performance that is molded by the performer for the outside world.
- unintentional. There are a couple of components to the unintentional (and it often bleeds with the intentional.) First, there are identifying features that one has no control over - sex, racial type, age markers, etc. Second, there is "leakage" or the information that a performer gives accidentally - eyes darting off, smirks, etc.
- read. The next component to one's identity is how people read the intentional and unintentional components performed. This has both a group and individual component - what everyone reads into someone's identity and what each individual reads into that person, based on history, experience, etc.

The read components are done on an individual level and are usually metnally mapped (by the reader) to the performer's face or other elements that allow the individual to easily compare and remember the performer. This is extremely difficult to do online since there is little that distinguishes people.

My imagined interface allows a user to convey all three components. To convey the intentional, a user should be able to affect hir presentation through visual as well as textual means. Although not as effective, some unintentional information is conveyed by reusing previous messages, conveying the text out of context or control of the user. Finally, people who interact with this user should have the ability to modify the representation of other users both publicly (group opinions of sorts) and privately for their own purposes.

Sadly, i have yet to figure out how to make this work visually.

In time meantime, i will comment on the questions of the week:

*Is there a notion of "truth" in the representation - does it use assessment signals? conventional signals? both*

There is no actual truth in the representation (mostly because i don't think that's possible - what is truth anyhow? <grin>). Although i feel as though assessment signals are far more useful, i am not sure how they can be maintained and useful; most of this idea is based on conventional signals. A huge weakness of this idea is that anyone is able to modify your public persona - graffiti of all types.. coming up with a way of making people accountable for this would be quite useful (and that gets into reputation systems...) Plus, there is still too much focus on the intentional information, even with the unintentional popping up... Figuring out how to really add unintentional information would be key.

*Who controls this representation - the person represented? the system? other people?*

This should be a combination of the person represented (intentional), the system (unintentional) and the other people (read).

*Are there rules governing the representation or is it more freeform?*

I really like the idea of freeform representation - modified as needed and based on one's interest. But i am also worried that technology limits. For example, if you let people draw their representation, you will run into the problems of most avatar systems, where most people are represented generically. But if the system automates everything, it is less freeform.

*How do the objects and images used in the representation get their meaning - from the real world? from a rulebook?*

Back to same problem. My gut says that the system should generate the images based on past and actions and input information, etc. Hmm.. definitely weakness.

*Is the representation "readable" to all or only a select few?*

Every representation is readable to everyone, but what they see differs. This is partially because other users are able to markup people they encounter for personal (and public) purposes.

*What does it look like? (and/or sound like, feel like)?*

This is the big weakness....

*Does it change over time? How? Why?*

Yes. The user can change hir identity. The system affects the image based on time and activity. And users can mark them up at their leisure.

*How is this representation used? Does it require active control?*

Users are able to actively change components of the image, but they don't have to.

*Does it tie with a real world identity?*

Ideally, yes. Because this is based primarily on people inputting their own information, it becomes difficult. How to relate the two other than by accident, i don't know..