(Re)Pinning Our Hopes on Social Media: Pinterest and Women's Discursive Strategies

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Abstract: Pinterest, the theme-based image-sharing website, has seen a predominantly female usership since its launch in 2010. Unique in both its design and its demographics in the US, the site has generated distinctive patterns of use, posing new questions about how women are claiming this particular spot in social media as their own. Supported by both feminist linguistic and social science research, this article undertakes a discussion of Pinterest's implicit and explicit gendered protocols of usership, which result in what I argue is an emerging women's online rhetoric. Through the examination of images and accompanying comments taken from the site, I trace Pinterest's often conflicting outcomes. On one hand, its online community self-polices by discouraging its users from expressing dissent, thus frequently operating as a repressive mechanism. At the same time, however, the collaborative elements noted in women's speech—often criticized in traditional social linguistics as rhetorically passive—take on complex new meanings in the context of online communication. While still evolving, the discursive strategies evident on Pinterest have provided an alternative rhetorical zone for women engaging in social media.

Pinterest's Invitations and Affirmations

Following a short period of beta testing, co-founders Evan Sharp, Ben Silbermann, and Paul Sciarra launched the social-media site Pinterest in 2010. If its first public year saw uneven growth, the site's second year was nothing short of explosive, boasting 10.4 million users (Constine 2012) and crossover grafting to both Facebook's and Twitter's online communities. Pinterest functions as an image-sharing website in which users are invited to browse and, in effect, curate their own theme-based pinboards in scrapbook style. Users collect and trade content in such popular categories as Food and Drink, Home Decor, Architecture, DIY & Crafts, Weddings, Tattoos, and Fashion. More challenging to pin down, however, are the statistics on what percentage of the site's users are women. There seems to be no question that Pinterest has seen a predominantly female usership in the US, but recent articles have reported that number at anywhere from 60 to 97% (Odell 2012; Constine 2012) and the site's management team itself balks at answering direct questions regarding Pinterest's demographics.[1] Nonetheless, just as a headline in *Time* announced in spring 2012 that "Men Are from Google+, Women Are from Pinterest" (Wagstaff 2012), *Forbes* was offering "Four Reasons Pinterest Wins with Women (And Facebook Loses)" (Pitts 2012).

Such essentialism sets up one-size-fits-all assumptions about women's preferences and new media, and additionally fails to reveal more compelling information about the patterns developing from women's social-media use. Without belaboring the precise numbers of female users, I will explore how the booming female online community of Pinterest's structurally unconventional site has generated decidedly idiosyncratic patterns of use, revealing much about how Western women are forming cohesive social groups within this

particular niche in social media. Looking to both feminist linguistic and social-science research, I argue that Pinterest exhibits a unique traffic in visual and verbal codes—an emerging online rhetoric that allows the women users of Pinterest to establish personal networks, to express affinities and desires, and to create and regulate benchmarks of acceptable discourse within the parameters of social media.

Pinterest's protocol for new users serves as an apt starting point for a discussion of the site's gendered codes. Certainly no social-media site functions without some form of gatekeeping requiring new members to first apply and then agree to adhere to specific rules of behavior. In the case of Pinterest's first four years of limited-capacity operation (two years of beta testing and the first two of public access), the site required an "invitation," a word heavy with the implications of inclusion into a limited social group. While anyone could access the Pinterest home page to view the day's most frequently repinned content, Pinterest's use of an invitation-only policy fostered the appearance of exclusivity. Unlike Facebook or YouTube, user accounts were first vetted through the administrators (who then extended an invitation after a waiting period), or another preestablished user could issue a new prospect an invite, effectively making Pinterest the college sorority of social media. The clever semiotics of Pinterest's "invitation" not only generated the notion of welcome but also added the intensifying factor of social affirmation predicated on the exclusion of others.[2] In a parallel fashion, Pinterest "employs aggressive reengagement e-mails to notify users when their friends join" (Constine 2012). Unless members take steps to turn off such notices, users also receive word whenever another user begins to "follow" or watch one of their boards, as well as every time someone repins or even "likes" something in their collection. Quite beyond the initial invitation, then, Pinterest has a number of devices in place to foster a sense of belonging or, as I argue, of successful online social bonding.

The Pinterest Site: Shaping Discourse through Visual Design

For the sake of discussion, it is helpful to divide the distinctive interface of Pinterest into its visual and textual components, the former being the breakout element of the site. Pinterest abandons the top-to-bottom, linear scrolling flow of Facebook (a format primarily suited for reading text), as well as the grid format of the photo-sharing site Flickr (a uniform block arrangement designed for efficient visual sorting), and instead adopts its own mosaic system of content display. Once a Pinterest user has logged in, the screen fills fully in an irregular pattern with different-sized visual tiles representing the most recent pins from the boards of those members the user has chosen to "follow." Each white-framed tile holds one pin, a space for comments below—although comments tend to be minimal—and "repin," "like," and "comment" buttons across the top.

When viewing the optic fervor of the homepage, one is struck by a fundamental paradox at the heart of the site: while Pinterest's vibrant and ever-shifting tiles suggest a social-media world full of options from which users (we may again presume a majority usership of women) are invited to browse, the site just as frequently asks its members to identify and embrace homogeneity. Because users begin by selecting their preferred themes, it is not uncommon for especially popular content to be repinned by multiple members and thus be repeated in a number of tiles on a user's home board. In fact, the website Internet Marketing has calculated that approximately 80% of the content on Pinterest is repinned (Oxford 2012), a testament to Pinterest's primary utility as a source for sharing and trading content, as opposed to disseminating new material.

Similarly, the main board inevitably reflects back the user's own recent pins, an affirmation that literally surrounds the user's specific affinities, hobbies, and preferences with the taste culture of like-minded people. Here, this recurring premise of affirmation takes hold in the site's visual design. Pinterest

encourages affinities through the use of its signature "repin" button, thus allowing the circulation of an idea or theme that moves from one user to many. Facebook's thumbs-up "like" is one-upped in the sentiment-heavy Pinterest universe, where the "repin" function is represented by a heart icon. Pinterest parts ways with Facebook, however, in its choice to disallow the "like" option in each tile's separate comments section below any given pin. Social-media theorist danah boyd has written on the value of "comments" (as opposed to private messages, e-mails, or texts, for example) among teens, observing that they "are often valued for lightweight conversations when it is acceptable for the interaction to be 'overheard.' Furthermore, because of the public nature of comments, comments are often used as a tool for marking and negotiating status" (boyd 2008, 113). In allowing for comments but making no specific provision for other members to "like" them, Pinterest has effectively shaped the rhetorical standards for its usership. In the larger universe of social media, to withhold a "like" is a firm declaration; similarly, to add a "like" to a post is to potentially move from admirer to partisan supporter, and in so doing to reframe that post into one side of a charged argument.[3] In the Pinterest sphere, the application is arranged so that one may cast one's "like" vote on the pin itself—external content—but there is no mechanism to cast or withhold such a vote within the *internal* content of the comments of Pinterest members themselves, a subtle but savvy move toward community building by way of discouraging divisive partisanship.

If Pinterest does not *explicitly* enforce this culture of affirmation, the site's "Pin Etiquette" page certainly underscores the implicit expectations of its members, offering "suggestions to keep our community positive." The first of its five short rules reads as follows: "Be respectful. Pinterest is a community of people. We know that individual tastes are personal, but please be respectful in your comments and conversations" (Pinterest 2013). Indeed, in the *Forbes* article describing why Pinterest has been more successful than Facebook with women, author Melissa Pitts points to a streamlined design resulting in a positive user environment. She explains:

> It's relaxing. Pinterest creates a curated experience for its users in a fairly anonymous way. No constant updating of feeds, no overload of people's lives. On Pinterest it's about enjoying your hobbies—not having to like someone's status or wish anyone a Happy Birthday. It lets users share experiences in a negative-free zone, briefly comment and move on without the weight of Facebook etiquette. (Pitts 2012)

In her assessment of Pinterest's appeal to women, Pitts evokes the familiar language of Pinterest positivity in its "negative-free zone." What I find more compelling, however, are the ways in which her appraisal is focused on the site's discursive structures, ignoring its signature visual format. Pitts notes that the bare-bones interface of Pinterest offers a respite from the expectations of etiquette (responding to friends' status updates, acknowledging birthdays, ringing in with "likes" to signal one's own online presence), expectations that fall predominantly to women in the *offline* realities of their lives. By extension, Pitts highlights the site's rejection of restrictive archival standards employed by other social media. Unlike Twitter or Reddit, which take on the more rigid lines of documented discourse, Pinterest comments are neither time-stamped nor do they occupy the singular position of the center-screen scroll. Surrounded on all sides by unrelated pins, Pinterest comments have a pluralized and unregimented flow like a conversation. Mirrored by the Pinterest logo in stylized red curlicues more akin to handwriting than to a formal typeface, users "speak" into a warmer, friendlier e-sphere, where engaging with other pinners feels decidedly ephemeral, and where the stakes are lower. To be clear: this is not to suggest that women are daunted by the more formal posting protocols of mainstream sites like Facebook or Twitter. Instead, I wish to point to Pinterest as a site of symbiotic resistance to those protocols, in which both the site and its usership collaborate to invent and regulate alternative means of discursive exchange within social media.

Learning the Language of Pinterest

Feminist discursive psychologist Ann Weatherall underscores that merely discerning difference in the linguistic patterns of men and women is neither sufficient nor particularly helpful in advancing the investigation of how language reflects and amplifies gendered power structures. Further, the overemphasis on difference often has the unintended effect of reifying the status quo (Weatherall 2002, 7). In this exploration of the demographics and use of Pinterest, my goals fall squarely in line with Weatherall's suggestion that feminist practice look for the more social-constructionist implications at work in the systems of discourse: "Important questions for gender and language research are asking how gender is produced and sustained through patterns of talk, through the organisation of social interaction, through social practices and in institutional structures" (Weatherall 2002, 7). To extend this reasoning on women's discourse to social media, recent feminist scholarship makes plain that practices of engagement vary dramatically from site to site. Ednie Kaeh Garrison's transformative work on third-wave feminism among young American women at the turn of the millennium considers how the emergence of online communication created alternative space for girls and young women new to feminism to express opinions outs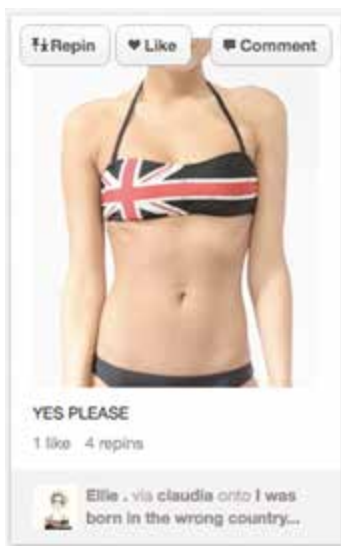ide a format traditionally monitored by adults (Garrison 2000, 152–53). Elaborating on that same principle of rhetorical freedom, Julia Schuster's investigation of feminist activism in New Zealand looks at how women make use of forums such as Facebook, blogs, and Twitter. Schuster argues that, as a readily accessible and low-cost venue of self-expression, social media create the possibility of safe parameters for women to speak out on traumatic subjects such as rape and sexual harassment as they move toward articulating a more fully formed online presence (Schuster 2013, 12).

By contrast, Pinterest is not notable for dynamic range of expression. Within its homogeneity, however, the expectations and protocols for expression reveal much about its usership. Shifting focus from the site's design to the textual content of Pinterest's comments interface, we might begin by observing that the only thing more prevalent throughout the site than the iconic "pin" is the exclamation point—Pinterest users' punctuation of choice. Following years of Internet snark and sarcasm, the exclamation point (an inverted pin, after all) makes the poster's sincerity transparent. Regarding the exclamation point in electronic communication, Jonathan Nolan writes, "A sentence without one is suspect. Slippery. Ambiguous. 'Thanks.' But a sentence suitably equipped becomes honest, enthusiastic, courageous. 'Thanks!'" (Nolan 2013, 98). Underneath a photography-studio portrait of a newborn, a Pinterest member comments, "Ahh!! I LOVE this!!!," the row of exclamation points after each utterance underscoring the commenter's enthusiasm (Knipstein 2013).[4]

When a pinner posts an outfit from the retailer Anthropologie and comments, "Leadlight Cropped Top & Skirt: Love the cut out bib!," other exclaimers add: "Amazing!" and "I'd love it a little shorter like me! Fabric is beautiful!" (Wang 2012).

In the above examples, the user-generated content echoes the site's environment of affirmation and positivity, amplified by exclamation points and emoticons. Laura Jeffries's 2011 study of teenage girls' homemade shopping commentaries on YouTube, known as "haul" videos, suggests that this other social-media outlet shows similar tendencies in terms of carefully patrolled female discourse—what Jeffries calls "the familiar smiling face of American 'nice girl' culture" (Jeffries 2011, 62). Jeffries laments a missed opportunity in these exchanges, however, for teen girls to take advantage of a largely self-directed social-media site like YouTube as a forum to reclaim control of "the personal image landscape which has been designed by corporations and imposed through popular media" (62), noting that the comments section is disappointingly devoid of thoughtful social exchange. Specifically, Jeffries points to the fact that within the comments sections on "haul" sites "there is no productive questioning, no broaching of important issues—instead, there are pages and pages of compliments, thank-yous, and genuinely empty catchall positives and intensifiers such as the ubiquitous 'soooo cute'" (Jeffries 2011, 62). In the Pinterest sphere, those intensifiers tend to reveal the lingo of a slightly older usership, but one still eager to codify a lexicon of affirmation and in-group discursive play, as in the comment posted below an image of a French bulldog: "Totes totes adorbs" (Weber 2013).

Totes totes adorbs.

photoforum.com

YES PLEASE
1 like   4 repins

Ellie . via claudia onto I was born in the wrong country...

Sociolinguist Janet Holmes has pointed to the use of compliments and "positive politeness strategies" among New Zealander women as a means to offer explicit approbation on encouraged behavior within a social group and, further, to conscribe the benchmarks of sanctioned conduct (Holmes 1995, 117–18). Following the trail of exclamation points throughout the comments section of Pinterest, a constellation of such benchmarks becomes clear: fitness and health, a style-conscious appearance, savvy budgeting of money and time, and in a more broadly defined final category, tasteful aspiration and desire. This final benchmark takes a number of shapes, beginning with the materialistic pining over luxury goods. The all-purpose catch phrase "Yes, please" has become the common articulation in the comments section of a whole range of desires on display in Pinterest, from the iPad to Hugh Jackman, an immaculately decorated dining room, or a perfectly toned bikini-clad body (in some cases, the nature of the desire being circulated is decidedly vague; are the women of Pinterest expressing desire *for* the body in the image or to *have* a body like the image?) (Ellie 2013).

However wry, the politesse implied in the tag phrase "yes, please" implies the pinner's aspirations to belong, to participate in enjoying whatever it is that has not yet been enjoyed. Of course, by sharing and trading the aspiration itself among a closed group of like-minded people, by displaying artful and enviable combinations of consumer goods without having to suffer the pains of the price tag, the pinner has already succeeded in belonging in the Pinterest sphere—the "yes, please" articulation of the desire becomes in and of itself a fulfillment.

In the world of women's online rhetorics, Pinterest is home to the gendered discourse commonly known as "upspeak." First documented and discussed in Robin Lakoff's 1973 *Language and Women's Place*, this

feature of women's speech in which statements are rephrased or intoned as questions gives the impression of a speaker unwilling to seem dominating or negative (Lakoff 1973, 55–56). The user-generated comments section of Pinterest continues to validate these gendered speech trends, as seen in the ubiquitous question-comments, "How cute is this?" or "Could it be any easier?" These constructions are technically what linguists call "hedging," in the same category with the words "like," "kind of," and that juggernaut of pin labels, "sort of." Without question, gendered hedging discourse is alive and well in Pinterest, but requires some careful study when put into context. John Skelton has suggested that hedging functions as a rhetorical softening device to brace for dissent or disapproval, inserting an appreciable difference between what the speaker says and what the speaker actually thinks about the matter (Skelton 1988, 38). How to understand the social-media ramifications of the hedging comment in the Pinterest sphere? Labeling her pin as "sort of retro" instead of simply "retro" conveys that the Pinterest user is unwilling, for whatever reason, to identify the dress in the image within the bounds of a specific style or period (Mehelich 2013).

sort of retro

bravissimo.com

Back stage at the burlesque club, circa 1950

25.media.tumblr.com

A few interpretations present themselves. The addition of "sort of" to the descriptor of "retro" absolves the pinner of making any firm pronouncements, and thus short-circuits the possibility for discord on a site that clearly favors positivity. Conversely, "sort of" also allows for the parsing of details, and certainly for out-and-out agreement. While Skelton's assessment of hedging as a means of sidestepping conflict may be part of the story in the case of this particular variant of Pinterest lingo, "sort of" performs other work as well, creating common conversational space for the broadest possible spectrum of discursants.

The rhetorical device of rephrasing a declarative utterance into a question is equally thorny. It is a fair argument that lapsing into the interrogative form—not "This is brilliant" but "Isn't this brilliant?"—reveals a weaker rhetorical stance. However, as Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet have argued, contextual cues frame the appropriate interpretation of any utterance, and there can be a wide range of motivations for engaging in hedging speech (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 2003, 157–62). "How cute is this?," when posed in the Pinterest sphere, has none of the unsure qualities of someone unsteady in her own opinion; even in the act of posting it, the member has plainly articulated her judgment. When couched in the interrogative, the phrase does, however, invite collaborative commenting and the same affirmation that defines the Pinterest ethos. More often than not, those comments posed in interrogative-style upspeak are the ones most likely to receive exclamation-studded agreement; additionally, their interrogative titles serve as an invitation to be repinned.

Articulating Dissent: Throwing Down Online

On rare occasions, Pinterest's user-generated comments do reveal disagreements, and I will briefly discuss one recent thread that illustrates how criticism and discord are handled internally—that is, by its own predominantly female members—within this specific social-media site.

The pin above shows a black-and-white image of a burlesque dancer (Monét 2012). The dancer being

ostensibly unaware of the camera, the photo captures the incongruity of her appearance in an extremely revealing costume, one breast exposed except for the sequined pastie covering her nipple, while she absentmindedly flips through a French newspaper. In the spring of 2011, much-followed Pinterest member Asia Monét posted the image on her board, "Inspiration"—she added none of her own commentary to the pin—and, immediately, the controversy began. In highlighting a few of the posts relating to the pin, what I hope to underscore is not the particular politics of each side, but how conflict is managed rhetorically as a means of bringing to light the ways of navigating dissent in the Pinterest sphere.

Within the comments, Sandy Reeves was the first to raise a red flag at the image of the burlesque dancer, and not only criticized the content but appealed to Monét to delete the pin: "not appreciated! Please remove!" The posts in reply to Reeves overwhelmingly echoed the following, by Natalie Caroline: "If you don't like it, don't repin it." Here, the notion is that detractor Reeves was in the wrong on both counts: the Pinterest community tolerates neither censorship—appealing to remove the pin—nor individual negative feedback. While many comments went on to bemoan the small minds of the judgmental, as well as the ease of "unfollowing" a board if the content is not to one's liking, a slim few continued to rally for Monét to remove the pin, arguing that the image was pornographic. A new argument emerged, predicated on the premise that one should not have to see offensive material in the first place before opting to unfollow it, especially on a "protected" site like Pinterest. Pinner Mechelle Horst took this stance, both explaining her own position and questioning the validity of her detractors' opinion:

> As for "don't like it, don't look" comments, that is exactly what I am trying to do, unfollow her and remove this. However, I will not be able to remove this from my brain…. It is not easily forgotten and when it pops up on my screen, I don't get to choose whether to look at it or not. I have to look at it to decide… Believe me, I am anxious to remove this. I have teenage girls and boys living in my home and I want this off my screen. My opinions are just as valid as yours. How is [it] that you can insult me and my beliefs but I am not entitled to disagree with yours. I have seen things I don't like and quotes I disagree with and have never made a comment or a big deal but in my value system, this is crosses [*sic*] a line I cannot tolerate. (Monét 2012)

While some replies to Horst provided respectful directions on how to unfollow a board on Pinterest, more were in the form of contemptuous posts calling for a vocal defense of both the female body and free expression. Natalie Caroline revealed that she herself performed burlesque, and offered this rebuke to Horst and those who called for censorship of the image:

> Mechelle, people aren't upset by your opinion, they're upset by the way you're choosing to deliver it…. And as for your kids, I can understand not wanting to subject underage children to nudity… I am the first person to advocate that my performances are NOT for children, however, as an adult in a technology driven age, you are responsible for knowing how to safeguard your children from those things without being so rude to others about it. For instance, log off your profile on the comp so that there's no way your kids can accidentally bring up your Pinterest account should anything like this "horror" should [*sic*] show up pinned by someone else. Finally, at the risk of sounding the [*sic*] like the "trash" you condemned myself and other incredibly talented artists like me to be, grow the fuck up. (Monét 2012)

What interests me about the controversy one poster called "Pastiegate" is that, in truth, neither side makes much room for genuine critical discourse. While the anti-burlesquards like Mechelle Horst see the site as a "protected" space, and thus justify their calls for censoring offensive material, the burlesquard faction stands resolutely by the Pinterest creed of encouraging each individual pinner's right to choose her own content. To criticize or express displeasure at that content, even within the bounds of civil discourse,

is called out as rude, although we should note that one pinner ended her pronouncement on manners by telling the critic in question to "grow the fuck up." Ironically, both sides of this controversy are ultimately embroiled in the same policing of the Pinterest borders. When the unhappy Darla Kilhoffer writes, "Well, I guess my opinion of art is different from yours. A woman's body should be respected and not degraded like this. But whatever…. Just trying to live a life with purity and standards that seem to be slipping away in our world… they're called morals," a post immediately follows from pinner Em Em, who replies, "Haha and I thought I escaped drama from Facebook" (Monét 2012). Pinned up behind the pastie, then, is the actual conflict: both camps seek to repel intrusions into this corner of the Internet, but each with a very different understanding of what defines the positive, women-centric experience of the Pinterest sphere.

Some Final Cross Talk on Why Pinterest Matters

Melissa Gregg contends that social media produces what she calls a "broadcast impulse"—a context in which users are encouraged to adopt a new form of online literacy specific to that particular site, permitting them to not only express themselves readily and repeatedly but to cultivate and maintain a positive image (Gregg 2008, 207). As argued here, the broadcast impulse generated by Pinterest clearly teaches a discourse of affirmation, positivity, and community in the exchange of both the images and the preferred language used to describe them. Gregg and boyd concur that the great promise of social networks to transmit our voices beyond the limits of our day-to-day spheres has chiefly gone unfulfilled; instead, social networking sites tend to be chosen in such a way as to replicate class and affinity markers, effectively reinscribing one's real world community in similarly structured ways online (Gregg 2008, 207–8; boyd 2008, 106–7).

In this respect, Pinterest provokes engaging new questions. In watching the lightning-fast trades in pins, one quickly discovers an unexpected advantage to a site otherwise driven by affinity-group sorting: the collaborative and affirmation-centric style of Pinterest simultaneously creates spaces for marginalized and undersupported groups, such as vegans, parents of autistic children, and same-sex marriage advocates. To return very briefly to the site's design, the big-tent approach to self-curated boards means that even while the heavy-traffic pins (fashion, DIY tutorials) tend to dominate the homepage, the dynamic tile interface of Pinterest allows for a kind of haphazard interplay of even the more obscure pins to move across the site; it is the social-media equivalent of dinner-party mingling or, to use a metaphor that returns to our low-tech past, of browsing shelves at a bookstore. The effect of high-volume, unsolicited pins shifting from member to member opens up rudimentary lines of exchange. Here, among users and groups who would have no particular motive to seek each other out, lies the untapped potential while we are still in the early stages of Pinterest's development: the site's random visual format facilitates an unprecedented free flow of information, creating new pathways of networking among otherwise segmented groups of women.

Ultimately, I would argue that feminist scholars should turn their attention to Pinterest not because of the US site's strong demographic lean toward women, but instead because of the telling intersections of women's discourse with a rapidly evolving technology of social engagement. Like authors of a number of other recent studies regarding the transformative feminist potential of social media, however, I have come to fairly mixed conclusions about Pinterest. To return to the example of the haul-video online community, many of the same limitations and prohibitions on female user-participants that Jeffries describes carry over into the more mainstream Pinterest, curbing its users from articulating dissenting opinions or critical commentary. In this way, the site often functions as a repressive mechanism, recycling hegemonic notions of feminine politeness and capitalist-constructed heteronormativity that prevent women from articulating individual or critical thought. Gregg, however, sees an upside for sites such as Pinterest, arguing that

feminists should find value in the fact that social networking reflects broader recognition for the affirmative and real-time community-building skills that women have cultivated in day-to-day life (Gregg 2008, 208–9).

Still early in its development, Pinterest merits careful examination; as a social media site, its capacity to establish community begins with an environment that reflects back many of the communication styles of its predominantly female users. Beyond that, we might envision that Pinterest could have the potential to serve as a kind of clearinghouse in which women from a broad array of backgrounds could contribute and circulate elements of their lived existence. As such, the site would function as a useful tool for information sharing and alliance building among segments of women who might otherwise have remained geographically and ideologically isolated. As the site continues to evolve, Weatherall's work on language and gender seems all the more relevant, reminding us that social media is both an extension and a reflection of institutional practice. The emerging rhetorical strategies at play on Pinterest will continue to mark shifts in how women create online identities, engage with each other, and comment on the material world. In short, in terms of overall numbers, *Forbes* was perhaps correct that "Pinterest wins with women," but it is simply too early to know if we should be pinning our feminist hopes on Pinterest.

Notes

1. Pinterest's fledgling sites in Europe have initially shown a much more balanced gender distribution among its usership. At the close of 2011, men accounted for a slightly higher user rate on Pinterest UK than women, with the site's most popular pins relating to web analysis and blogging services. This initial demographic in Europe may well be attributable to Pinterest's "early adopters"—members from the technology sector already overpopulated by men—and analysts predict that, over time, usership will likely follow the gender precedent set in the US (Everitt 2012).

2. In August 2012, the site's own *Oh, How Pinteresting* blog announced the end of the invitation protocol and an open sign-up, most likely in concert with significant engineering upgrades to the site in May 2012 (BBC News 2012).

3. In parallel with this, consider Facebook's staunch refusal to add a "dislike" button to their interface (an addition that would have created the potential, for example, for members to dislike advertisers funding the site).

4. Each pin is cited from the poster's Pinterest board as it appeared on the day it was accessed to best reference both the image and the associated comments.

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