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Los Angeles

Social Media Selves:

College Students' Curation of Self and Others through Facebook

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in Education

by

David Michael Kasch

2013

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Social Media Selves:

College Students' Curation of Self and Others through Facebook

by

David Michael Kasch

Doctor of Philosophy in Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Robert A. Rhoads, Chair

This qualitative study used cyber-ethnography and grounded theory to explore the ways in which 35 undergraduate students crafted and refined self-presentations on the social network site Facebook. Findings included the identification of two unique forms of self-presentation that students enacted: a *curated self* and a *commodified self*.

The curated self was a digital self-presentation created through an ongoing curatorial process of organizing media elements within a Facebook profile to create a distinct digital embodiment of self that was both separate from and a continuation of a user's physical self presentation. This curated self included three layers of curation to address the multiple types of audiences students engaged through Facebook: a *personal curation* of content primarily for themselves, a *social curation* of content for connecting with acquaintances, family, and friends, and a *spectacle*

curation of content for strangers and authorities to assess. Linking these three layers of curation together were four uses of Facebook: as *entertainment*, as a *relational tool*, as a *pragmatic tool*, and as a *scrapbook*. These uses and layers of curation all existed concurrently with specific variations for individual students.

The commodified self was an amplification of the curated self as an identity surrogate that was a resource and object for production, consumption, and distribution. These commodified selves emphasized identity and self as forms of capital that one owns, rather than what one "is" or "does." Within the commodified self there were three major foci of activity: *self as commodity*, *others as commodities*, and *Facebook Citizenship*. Key findings for these foci include the treatment of profiles as disinterested resources, an articulation of a continuum of creeping and definitions of good and bad citizenship.

Discussion of these findings addressed curated and commodified selves as parts of the individually and socially constructed nature of Facebook, as well as opportunities for faculty and student affairs practitioners to help students develop greater critical awareness of their self-presentations on and uses of Facebook. Implications for practice and future research included suggestions for campus climate initiatives, the development of online learning environments, and the application of student development theory to self-presentations on Facebook.

The dissertation of David Michael Kasch is approved.

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2013

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PREFACE

This study is not about how students are bad Facebook users, and it is not about the problematic uses of Facebook. Those situations get plenty of coverage in media and news reports, particularly situations in which students use language and symbols to contribute to oppressive and hostile campus climates, or the potential liabilities of students spending an average 1-2 hours a day on Facebook. I doubt many readers will find grounds to argue in favor of those uses of Facebook, and yet these narratives seem to be the major message of where Facebook exists in the lives of college students.

Though I do touch upon some problematic uses that came up during the research, this study is largely about the seemingly hidden and exceptional ways that students use Facebook in mundane and unexceptional day-to-day life. The students in this study were typical of other research on college students and Facebook. They logged on to Facebook multiple times a day for brief bursts of activity totaling an average of two hours per day. Some of the students were very aware of their privacy settings, while others were lax and hopeful that it would not matter. Students all had profiles they used as digital representations of themselves, and they labored to make these representations rich with social meaning. Finally, maintaining and developing social connections with people they knew in person was a major focus of their Facebook use, as other studies have noted. And yet the ways in which students undertook this maintenance and development of sociality on Facebook held deceptive simplicity. It is here, in exploring the deceptive simplicity of identity and relationships, that I hope this dissertation helps to tease apart the interstice between making the obvious obvious, the obvious dubious, and the hidden obvious (Schlechty & Noblit, 1982).

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Abes, E. S., & Kasch, D. (2012). Queer theory. In S. R. Jones & E. S. Abes, *Identity development of college students: Advancing frameworks for multiple dimensions of identity* (pp. 191-212). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass

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Abes, E. S., & Kasch, D. (2007). Using queer theory to explore "lesbian" college students' multiple identities. *Journal of College Student Development, 48,* 619-636.

Reprinted in Pasque, P., & Nicholson, S. E. (Eds.). (2010). *Empowering women in higher education and student affairs: Theory, research, narratives, and practice from feminist perspectives.* Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Reprinted in Moore, N. B., Davidson, Sr., J. K., & Fischer, T. D. (Eds.). (2009). *Speaking of sexuality: Interdisciplinary readings* (3rd ed). New York: Oxford University Press.

SELECTED PRESENTATIONS

Confessional identity performatives: College student individualization on social network sites. Paper presented at the annual conference for the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. April 2012.

Everyday racism and the ubiquity of social media: An examination of cyber-microaggressions on college campuses (with M. P. Johnston). Paper presented at the annual conference for the American Educational Research Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. April 2012.

Patterns of development: Rethinking theories of college student development. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Charlotte, NC. November 2011.

Three models of direct-evidence STEM assessment (with M. Levis-Fitzgerald, C. Shapiro, A. Ho, E. Sanders). Panel session presented at the annual conference for the Association for Institutional Research. Toronto, Ontario, Canada. May 2011

Cultural politics in student development theory. Paper presented at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Indianapolis, IN. November 2010.

Multi-component, mixed methods assessments of programs designed to recruit and retain underrepresented students in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (with M. Levis-Fitzgerald, A. Ho, & S. Toma). Roundtable presented at the annual conference of the Association for the Study of Higher Education. Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. November 2009.

Research engagement among UC students in STEM: A comparison of upper-division transfer and native students (with C. E. Shapiro & D. S. Wolf). Paper presented at the annual Student Experience in the Research University Research Symposium. Berkeley, CA. May 2009.

CHAPTER 1: ABOUT – THIS STUDY

Under the overly bright light of a commercial ferry traveling in the twilight of late evening, Miguel, Angela, and Becky sat in the middle seats of a sparsely filled passenger deck. Miguel and Angela sat beside each other, and Becky, slouching and disaffected, sat a few seats away. Shortly after leaving port Miguel stared at his cell phone and then turned to Angela.

Miguel: I don't get Jeff. He is so weird. Has he friended you yet?

Angela: Yeah, last week.

Miguel: Me, too! I accepted his friend request last week and since then he keeps posting on my wall and trying to interact with me. It's like he actually wants to be friends. Why can't he be like everyone else and just look through my page and stop bothering me?

Angela: I know. It's weird.

Becky: (still slouching, still looking disaffected, had no response)

Miguel was frank, if not theatrical, in how appalling he found Jeff's actions: Miguel spoke with what seemed to be genuine disbelief and disgust. Angela echoed those feelings. Jeff may or may not make it back into Miguel and Angela's social graces; it may not matter. But their reactions raise compelling questions. How was it that Jeff's actions were so objectionable to Miguel? What role should Jeff have had with others on Facebook and how was he supposed to know? What does it mean that Miguel merely wanted Facebook friends who had access to him but did not interact with him?

The social network site Facebook has emerged as arguably the defining social force in the lives of college students. It plays a role in how students think about and organize virtually every part of their social, personal, and intellectual lives (Martínez Alemán & Wartman, 2009), and its

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influence only continues to grow as colleges and universities seek to include it as a platform for promoting student engagement (Gray, Vitak, Easton, & Ellison, 2013), supplementing classroom and learning spaces (Junco, 2012b), and developing long-term connections with students and alumni (Farrow & Yuan, 2011).

Since its introduction in 2004, Facebook has developed from a small unofficial intranet website for students at Harvard University to a global website with more than one billion users. Supporting that drastic transformation was Facebook's addition of numerous features that built the website into a comprehensive media platform in which users have rich social interactions through text, photographs, video, links to other websites, text chat, video chat, email messaging, and extensive integration with smartphone technology. With the introduction of each of these features, the functionality and appearance of Facebook has changed, and users have responded by changing the way they interact with Facebook and how they present their personal information through these features. These changes, however, have not been without complications. For example, the introduction of the News Feed in 2006 caused serious backlash over privacy concerns for large numbers of users (boyd, 2008a), and the introduction of the Timeline in 2011 created an "overwhelming negative" reaction from users over increased changes and potential reductions in privacy (Choney, 2012, January 27). At each change, issues of privacy, access, and social benefit have emerged. Nevertheless, for many users, these changes have simply become part of what Facebook is and part of what it means to have a profile, with partial or incomplete answers to the issues of privacy, access, and social benefit (see Appendix A for a selected history of Facebook).

Today's traditional-age college students have never known a social life without the Internet and they have had access to Facebook and social network sites since their early

adolescence, if not earlier. For these students, Facebook, digital communication technology, and

advanced Internet protocols that support active user participation and creation have been constant

elements in their lives, and these technologies have provided them with unparalleled degrees of

access to and information about virtually everyone around them. The ferry narrative noted

earlier touches upon this ubiquity of technologies and reflects two interests that shaped this study.

First, with the expansion of Facebook and social media as a vital and vibrant social space,

the meaning and use of social spaces are changing (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). This change in

sociality via cyber and online environments has been an area of excitement and concern for

scholars across a wide range of disciplines. As more and more people join and participate in

social media, the more social media come to influence how people socialize and relate to each

other in both cyber and physical social spaces (Baym, 2010; van Dijck, 2013). Research in this

area suggests that the more ubiquitous social media becomes, the more it becomes a fundamental

component of how people understand their social lives. As this shift toward ubiquity and

domestication occurs, it is unclear how the ability to catalog and access personal information

about friends, family, and strangers will change how individuals understand themselves and their

connectedness and relationships with others.

Second, I see social media reflecting or contributing to a deeper entrenchment of the

consumer and commodity culture present in contemporary, postindustrial society. As we (the

consumers) have collectively run out of viable objects to commodify and consume, we have

turned to an under-explored and abundant resource: our personal subjectivities. We are

increasingly approaching our experience of "self" (e.g., self-presentations, identities, and

subjectivities) as objects to produce, acquire, exchange, and consume. Hearn (2008) discusses

some of these ideas in her exploration of the promotion of self-marketing and self-branding

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through social media, but as the exchange between Miguel and Angela suggests, Facebook contains a very powerful element of entertainment for users, a way of being a discrete voyeur into the lives of people you do and do not know. This study is a step toward understanding how students are using Facebook as a way to create and express identities, personal subjectivities, and relationships as forms of entertainment and objects to consume. Beneath this consumption perspective lies an interest in teasing out how changes in sociality have, are, and will come to matter in higher education—for students, faculty, student affairs staff, and administration. So where does this shifting sociality come from and why does it matter?

Statement of the Problem

In the last decade, the rapid growth and expansion of participatory and social media, fueled by advances in information and computer technology (ICT), has brought new depth to the Internet as a viable social space (Baym, 2010; Jenkins, 2006; Rainie & Wellman, 2012). Within the larger category of social media, social network sites (SNSs) have emerged as a resource and a location for people to create digital representations of themselves and their social networks (boyd & Ellison, 2007). boyd and Ellison define social network sites as: "Web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections within the system" (p. 211). This definition provides important framing for these sites because it emphasizes how individuals interact with and produce virtual representations of themselves, their relationships, and the means by which they assess the same of others. What is not clear from this definition is the role of culture and social relations in framing the meaning of the larger social system within which these social network sites exist.

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Among the users of social network sites, college students have been noted as important early adopters and developers (Lewis, Kaufman, & Christakis, 2008) and targeted heavy users (boyd, 2007b). Current research estimates suggest between 90 and 95 percent of college students have and use a SNS account on a regular basis (Duggan & Brenner, 2013; Hargittai, 2008; Martínez Alemán & Wartman, 2009; S. D. Smith & Caruso, 2010). The prevalence and ubiquity of SNSs in college students' social lives suggest that SNSs could influence every part of a student's social experience in college: their psychosocial development (Cotten, 2008; Kim & Lee, 2011), campus climate for diversity and inclusion (Daniels, 2009), student learning and educational initiatives (Junco, 2012b), student engagement with the institution (Farrow & Yuan, 2011; Junco, 2012a), and students' development as educated and engaged democratic citizens (Kellner & Kim, 2010).

Given the potential social significance of these websites and their relationships to college students and higher education, researchers in the social sciences have started mapping out sociological, cultural, and psychological issues related to these sites. Major points of research include the influence of college student culture (Martínez Alemán & Wartman, 2009); profile content (Back et al., 2010); students' acquisition and exchange of social capital (Ellison, Lampe, Steinfield, & Vitak, 2011); student narcissism and self-promotion in SNS use (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Mehdizadeh, 2010); issues of privacy and profile access (Lewis et al., 2008; Waters & Ackerman, 2011); and the use of SNSs for academic engagement (Junco, 2012a; Salas & Alexander, 2008; Wang, Woo, Quek, Yang, & Liu, 2012). So far this research is missing a sophisticated analysis of how students are using this technology to produce and reproduce the society and culture around them, and what kind of society and culture they are producing and reproducing, particularly as it relates to students' lives in higher education. It is in this context of

developing a richer understanding of the role of social media in higher education that I was interested in examining how these social media are impacting college students and how college students are producing and consuming forms of identity and culture through Facebook.

Purpose of Study

The overall purpose of this study was two-fold: to capture an understanding of how current undergraduate students approach and interpret their self-expressions via Facebook and to contribute a critical perspective to the growing empirical knowledge base on the impact of Facebook on college students and higher education. Through a pairing of cyber-ethnography and constructivist grounded theory, this study explored how students created self-expressions on Facebook, how their Facebook profiles reflected, promoted, or inhibited identity as a social and cultural commodity (i.e., Côté's (1996) identity capital), how students manifested or contested forms of individualization and cultural reproduction through strategic Facebook usage, and what all of this self-expressive activity means for an increasingly media-reliant and technologically invested higher education.

A central informing lens for this study is Goffman's (1959) *Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*. In this seminal work, Goffman argued that individuals in social settings engage in a complex process of impression management in order influence the behaviors of others. Goffman described this impression management as the presentation of self, or self-presentation. As an analytic concept of social behavior, self-presentation has become a dominant framework for interpreting individual behavior on social media, particularly social network sites. It is particularly important to this study because it provides a general set of language with which to describe students' behavior on Facebook.

Related to the concept of self-presentation, this study deals with the concepts of self and

identity. These terms have multiple possible meanings and interpretations based on academic disciplines and epistemological orientations. As this study draws on multiple disciplines, particularly social psychology and sociology, I approach self and identity as related and similar concepts that depict an individual's perceptions of his or her own consciousness and being in a general way. Part of my operationalization of self and identity includes the interpretation that self and identity are neither fixed nor permanent and this is reflected in how individuals express their own awareness of their consciousness and being. Overall, I see self and identity as the content that individuals present or express to others through the concept of self-presentation.

Research Questions

In order to learn more about students' interpretations of their uses of Facebook and the socio-cultural influences that inform these uses within higher education, four research questions guided this inquiry:

(a) What forms of self-presentation do students create through Facebook?

(b) What strategies do they employ to create these self-presentations?

(c) How do they interpret the self-presentations created by themselves and their peers?

(d) How do students' self-presentations on Facebook contribute to positive and negative experiences within higher education as a social environment?

These research questions served as a broad foundation for understanding college students as active and passive participants within higher education.

Significance of Study

This study has broad significance. Social media and social network sites are already being used in campus-based and online coursework as a way to supplement or substitute the traditional classroom learning experience (Junco, Heiberger, & Loken, 2010; Wang et al., 2012).

At the same time students' behaviors online are receiving more and more attention for problematic academic and disciplinary reasons, including a 2012 appeal to the United States Supreme Court to determine the legal scope of institutional boundaries related to online behavior (Kravets, 2012, January 12). What becomes clear from the current literature on the Internet, social media, and social network sites is that students are using social media as a tool for organizing large portions of their lives, and this social organization is influencing the way they understand themselves, their roles as college students, their relationships with those around them, and the consequences of their online behavior in both cyber and physical environments. Current research on these issues is underdeveloped, and in an age where more and more colleges and universities express interest in pursuing online and virtual higher education platforms, more knowledge is needed about how students understand themselves and others in online spaces.

Understanding the impact of this technology on students' engagement with the world around them also has implications for how universities prepare students to be citizens and professionals in their post-college years. Across these general implications, this study offers some insight into how students use Facebook as a social and cultural tool for self-presentation, how they use Facebook in their relationships with peers within the college and university environment, and how they think of the social and moral consequences of their behavior in these cyber spaces. All three of these dimensions are vital components that inform some of American higher education's many purposes, such as human and societal development (Bowen, 1977).

Facebook Terms and Definitions

In order to assist potentially unfamiliar readers with the terminology and use of language on Facebook, I have put together a short list of key concepts and definitions of functional areas on Facebook that I reference throughout this dissertation.

Friends (required section of profile)—Friends is a list of all users connected to an individual user. The Friends list includes a variety of Friend categories, such as All Friends, Mutual Friends, High School [Friends], College [Friends], People You May Know, and Following (people whose pages the user is following). Like boyd (2007b), I make the distinction between upper case "Friend" as a designation of an official Facebook connection and lower case "friend" as a relationship between two people.

About (required section of profile)—The About section is a functional area of Facebook that lists a variety of personal details about an individual user. Potential areas of information include: work and education, location where living, contact information, family and relationships, birthday, relationship status, a free writing section: "about you," favorite quotations, gender, sexual interest, languages, religion, political views, and a personal history of significant events. All of the content areas in this section are volitional, so users are able to define the degree to which they do or do not post content about themselves. These definitions of terms reflect the design and function of Facebook as of April 2013.

Photos (required section of profile)—The most recent presentation of photos on Facebook separated out photos into three overlapping areas: Photos of [User], Photos, and Albums. "Photos of [User]" reflects all of the photos in which the user is tagged. "Photos" reflects all of the photos that user has posted to his or her account. "Albums" contains all of the separate albums the user has posted to his or her account.

Status Update—Status updates are content that individual Facebook users post to their own profiles to share activities, thoughts, and other media with Friends. Common examples of status updates include sharing exciting personal news, posting links to online news articles or

other websites of interest, posting links to online videos or music, and positing photos from a recent or current activity.

News Feed—The News Feed is a functional area that is different for every user of Facebook. The News Feed consists of status updates and photos posted by users connected to an individual user as Friends, Friends of Friends, or members of a user's networks. Facebook uses an algorithm to populate the News Feed with "stories" based on user preferences (e.g., identification of close relationships or exclusion of specific Friends), user behavior (e.g., more stories from Friends whose pages the user frequents), and the popularity of stories among a user's Friends. The News Feed also includes "sponsored stories" (i.e., paid advertising or stories another user has paid Facebook to give a higher algorithm value for Friends).

Timeline—The Timeline is a graphical layout of an individual user's activity on Facebook. Each user's personal page is sorted chronologically with most recent events first and oldest last. The Timeline is organized by month and year, allowing viewers to move to a specific time within a user's posts to Facebook.

Likes—Likes is a broad functional area that lists the interests that the user has identified as a "Like" by clicking the Like button related to that interest. Likes can occur for particular objects (e.g., people (real and fictional), activities, sports teams, businesses, locations/countries) or broad concepts (e.g., traveling, reading). Facebook disaggregates Likes for music, books, movies, and TV shows as separate areas. Note: Users are also able to click "Like" buttons on individual comments and photos; however, those Likes are not listed in this functional area.

Places—Places offers a map and a frequency count of the various locations that a user has posted status updates from or been tagged in for status updates. As of April 2013, Places

includes four labels: All Places, Life Events, Photos, and Recent. Each label redraws the map graphic with related location identifiers and frequency counts.

Notes—Notes is functional area where users can post any information they like. The structure of this section is free-form and users can post whatever they like, including text and photos. Common examples for study participants included poems they wrote, structured lists of "random" information about themselves, extended rants about personal experiences, creative writing musings, and course schedules for their Friends to see.

Games—Users have the ability to list the games they enjoy playing on or through Facebook.

Other Applications—Depending on what applications or websites users have linked to their accounts, other sections will appear on the users' profiles. Popular examples of linked websites and accounts include Tumblr (a blog website), Spotify (a streaming music website), and Instagram (a photo sharing website).

Organization of the Dissertation

In the next chapter, I offer a review of research literature related to the Internet, social media, and Facebook in higher education. Chapter 3 explores the methodology and methods used to conduct this study, as well as a discussion of the theoretical concepts informing this study. In Chapter 4 I present findings and a constructivist analysis of those findings, while in Chapter 5 I offer a critical analysis of related findings. The dissertation concludes with Chapter 6, in which I share a summary, discussion, and implications of this study.

CHAPTER 2: NEWS FEED – RELATED LITERATURE

Review of Related Literature

The research on social network sites in general and Facebook in particular emerges as a subset of research on the Internet as a sociotechnical structure that facilitates communication and information sharing, and on social media as an inclusive category of communication media using computer technology. Research on the Internet and social uses of the Internet provides the larger context for understanding what social media are and how they fit into the college and university context. This research spans a wide range of disciplines from sociology, psychology, economics, computer science, information studies, linguistics and semiotics, and mathematics. For the purposes of this literature review, I narrow my discussion to research from sociology and psychology and their disciplinary applications to the Internet, social media, social network sites and Facebook, and research specifically related to college students and higher education.

The Sociology of the Internet: The Networked Society

Within the analysis of the Internet as a social space, researchers began charting a sociology of the Internet. Five major points of discourse on this sociology are relevant to the present research project: (a) Rheingold's (1993) notion of virtual community, (b) Castells's (1996) concepts of a networked society and me-centered networks (2001), (c) Wellman's (2001) networked individualism, (d) Turkle's (1984, 1995, 2011) research on human-computer interaction, and (e) Sundén's (2003) virtual materialities. These five points of discourse all stem from empirical research on human use of technology; however, they each heavily emphasize philosophical and theoretical considerations for understanding and explaining an emerging sociality on the Internet. The first two frame the social connection of the Internet, and the final

three frame the construction of self on the Internet. In this section of the literature review, I will map out these five key concepts and the relationships they infer to social media and Facebook.

Research on the sociology of the Internet dates back to the late 1980s and early to mid-1990s (Castells, 1996; Reardon & Rogers, 1988; Rheingold, 1993; Turkle, 1984, 1995; Wellman et al., 1996). In the early days of the Internet, access was limited and the primary users were scientists, academics, and avid amateurs (Baym, 2010). Among the early research, Rheingold's (1993) study of the Internet as a place for virtual community stands out. Rheingold argued that through websites such as WELL (Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link) people were able to use their computers to connect with other people around the world to create a virtual community in which they formed social, personal, and emotional bonds with others, were able to seek out answers to personal questions, and were able to form a sense of "real" relationships with people whom they had never met face-to-face. Participants on WELL used the website as an electronic bulletin board in which they could post questions on any topic of interest and receive real-time answers from the other users. Rheingold discussed an example of needing late-night medical advice after his two-year-old daughter was bitten by a tick. Within minutes he got an answer from a doctor who was a member of WELL, and the problem was solved.

Although WELL was not the first instance of virtual community and rich cyber-relationships (Baron, 2008), Rheingold's (1993) study was one of the first and most complete of Internet usage beyond niche users such as scientists, academics, and technology connoisseurs. In fact, Rheingold's work in many ways marked the beginning of broad adoption of the Internet as a social space. Though it would be years before this social space was widely used by a large percentage of the global population through computers and cell phones, this early study nonetheless suggested the coming possibilities for the social space of the Internet being a

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ubiquitous, mundane extension of non-virtual social spaces. One of the key affordances of the

early Internet that interested Rheingold was the ability of people from across the country and

world to connect with each other without ever having met in person. In the case of his

daughter's tick bite, he knew nothing more about the doctor who helped him than the doctor's

screen name. This access to strangers represented a novel feature of the Internet that would

come to mark one end of an emerging continuum—spanning from social bonding with total

strangers to social bonding with familiar acquaintances—framing the Internet and social media

as utopian or dystopian social spaces with the supporting ideologies for those points of view.

In contrast to Rheingold's generally utopian portrayal of the Internet, Castells (1996)

offered a more critical view based on a Marxist read of human exploitation through the Internet.

In *The Rise of the Network Society*, Castells argued that changes in information and

communication technology (ICT) constitute a technological revolution that was radically

restructuring the material basis of contemporary societies. He described this shift as the

emergence of a network society in which community membership no longer relied on geographic

and cultural proximity but rather communities emerged from the linking together of individuals

from multiple geographic and cultural locations to form a network. Because geographic

proximity was no longer essential, individuals in the network society may be connected to

multiple simultaneous communities. In this radical restructuring of society, Castells argued an

oppositional relationship between the self and networked society in which forms of

communication and social relations experience debilitating stress in the form of alienation.

Through attention to the role of the state in mediating the relationship between technology and

society, Castells linked this emerging social structure to informationalism, postindustrial society

based on information exchanged as a commodity or "informational capitalism." As a new social

structure, informationalism contained new relationships of production, experience, and power in the global distribution of information as a source and form of capital, which in turn serve as the foundation for culture and identities for a given space and time. It is important to note that Castells was not arguing for technological determinism, in which society, culture, and identity are solely crafted by the use of technology. Instead, Castells favored the view that technology influences social relationships and the global integration of information networks, which create a new emphasis on individuals as nodes of activity within a networked "informational society."

A second take on the idea of how ICT was creating a shift in how individuals connect to communities was Wellman's (2001) networked individualism. Wellman argued that the perception of community being a reflection of group membership was incorrect. Instead, communities emerged out of individuals networked together around similar interests and experiences. This shift in perception from community based on groups to community based on networked connections was a positive one because it allowed ever-increasing diversity within a community, greater degrees of personal and social freedom, more permeable group boundaries, and a flattening of social hierarchies. In networked individualism, individuals had the ability to be simultaneous members of and contributors to multiple communities, which decreases an individual's dependence on any one community while providing for more opportunities to draw social and personal benefits from other groups. As more autonomous actors within a network, individuals experience themselves as more of a locus for network activity, or the focal point from which other networked relationships emerge. This work drew on Granovetter's (1973) study of social ties and network theory to suggest that in the emerging social structure facilitated by the Internet, individuals are well positioned to take advantages of the complex matrix that occurs between strong ties (direct connections) and weak ties (indirect connections) within a networked

society. With networked individualism, individuals must be increasingly accessible through ICT and adept at navigating the dense and complex information networks represented on the Internet and through communications technology.

Castells (2001) also addressed the issue of networked individualism to articulate how individuals experience this networked society as "me-centered networks;" however, where Wellman (2001) sees networked individualism as largely positive, Castells argues that me-centered networks are potentially very problematic. For Castells the shift to me-centered networks was profound for its difference in social perception and the distribution of information. As a shift of social perception, individuals were primarily able to see network activity as it relates to them, instead of a broader spectrum of general network activity, or a de-centered view in which they were part of a network. Similarly, individuals may only gain exposure to information preferred by affinity groups or connected others, thereby limiting access or exposure to information with which the individual may disagree. Where Wellman argued that networked individualism serves as a foundation for individuals to experience meaningful forms of community and connectedness, Castells argued that this ability of me-centered networks to distort social structure increasingly insulates individual users of the Internet and threatened some of the egalitarian potential of the Internet.

Turkle's (1984, 1995, 2011) contribution to the sociology of the Internet involves research on people's relationships with computers. It reflects a trajectory of avid support for the potential for computers to deeply enrich the social lives of people in her early work, and then shifts to viewing computers as a disruptive force in developing healthy relationships. In the first of Turkle's (1984) work, *The Second Self*, she argued that computers constituted an important extension of people's lives and were changing human culture through a new science of mind.

For Turkle, computers were tools that allowed people to explore the essence of what it means to be human as they recreated human life through computers. By *Life on the Screen*, Turkle (1996) was beginning to see problems and challenges that computers and this recreation of life were creating for their users. In particular she saw the Internet as providing users with a simulation of reality with which they interacted, rather than an extension of reality. As a result, users were experiencing new forms of identity crises in which the concreteness of physical life was shifting into a space of multiplicity and incoherence. The extension of life in *The Second Self* was giving way to a synthetic or simulated substitute for life. Finally in *Alone Together*, Turkle (2011) argued that human-computer relationships had reached a point where people were displacing their intimacy with others to intimacy with machines. Even when people were using computers to connect with others, they were still using computers as a mediating platform for communication and connection, which meant that they were interacting with and engaging computers before the people on the other end. For Turkle (2011) the basic consequence of these displaced relationships has been that individuals need to examine how we use computers in our day-to-day lives: what role do they play as tools to help us live more productive lives and what role do they play in disrupting those lives? The answers to these questions have important consequences for the future uses of computers as a ubiquitous means of communication and connection.

A final important interpretation of human activity in cyber-environments is Sundén's (2003) concept of virtual materiality, stemming from her research on a MUD (massive user dungeon—a text-based, real-time virtual world for multiple concurrent users). She defined virtual materiality as the process of "typing oneself into being" (p. 3). In essence, Sundén argued that the cyber and online social space depends on individuals actively writing and posting

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content about themselves in order to create some material representation of who they are. All expressions of self or attempts at embodiment are constructed, whether cyber/virtual or physical, and depend on prior experience and knowledge with interpreted physical embodiments. For Sundén, the elements of individual identity (what she called human subjectivity) reflected in these online selves both express and depend upon forms of physical bodies for symbolic and interpretive meaning. For example, when a person lists "female" as her gender on Facebook, we use our previous experiences with physical (or material) expressions of gender to associate an idea of female or feminine to that person's self-presentation. This idea of relying on physical or material bodies is important because it serves as the foundation of how people interpret the representational meaning of identity as other people list or express various forms of identity. Sundén's virtual materiality then provides a complex approach to interpreting expressions of human subjectivity in cyber/virtual environments as dependent on human bodies and physical subjectivities that are always necessarily interpretive constructions. Sundén's work is appropriately seen as an extension of Haraway's (1991) notion of the cyborg, a hybrid of human and machine, as a productive possibility for late 20th century social politics. Though written well before the Internet and social technology were widely accessible, Haraway argued that the blending of human and machine offered important potential as a way to challenge the social oppressions of capitalism. Sundén's virtual materiality concept foreshadows later research on how individuals became so "connected" to their information and communication technology that, like Haraway's cyborgs, it became a part of who they were (e.g., Christensen, 2009; Papacharissi, 2011).

These four sociological renderings of the Internet lay a foundation for understanding the foci on communication technology that would evolve into social media technology—computer-

mediated communication and ICT that allowed and emphasized active participation, rich digital embodiments, and rapid change and adaptation by a user network without central or coordinated leadership.

Social Media: Convergence and Personal Connection

In connection to the development of the Internet as an increasingly available resource, new forms of information and communication technology emerged, mostly notably social media. Expanding on the technological affordances of the Internet to provide large volumes of data to large populations across the world, social media emphasizes the role of individual participants in decentralized creation and distribution information and ideas through ICT. Other common names for these media are new media (Gane & Beer, 2008), participatory media (Jenkins, 2006), and Web 2.0 (Harrison & Barthel, 2009). Some of the major forms of social media present today include web logs (or blogs), video sharing, photo sharing, bulletin board systems (or BBSs), group chat environments, and comment sections embedded in specific webpages (Rettberg, 2008; Senft, 2008). As the technology and computer resources connected through the Internet grew in sophistication and complexity, higher rates of data transfer became possible and by extension more complex, data rich media environments emerged. These new data rich environments facilitated social interactions that were progressively more similar to face-to-face interactions, raising questions about the consequences of these media on traditional understandings of society, sociality, and sociability. For the sake of space, I will narrow my present discussion to the work of five scholars: Jenkins's (1996) concept of a convergence culture, van Dijck's (2013) connectivity culture, Joseph Walther's (1996) research on hyperpersonal interactions, Baym's (2010) research on personal connections in digital environments, and Turkle's (1995, 2009, 2011) research on human-computer interactions.

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Jenkins's (2006) concept of convergence culture provides important framing for understanding the group and community potential for social media. As Jenkins describes it, convergence culture reflects a fundamental shift in the relationship between media consumption and production in which media consumers are active participants who both consume and produce content for others to consume and produce. The idea of a convergence culture points to the interrelationship between three informing concepts: media convergence (the linking of content across multiple forms of media), participatory culture (the active participation of media audience), and collective intelligence (the use of small pieces of information from a large group of individuals to produce complex and accurate knowledge). One of Jenkins' examples of this convergence culture is the phenomenon of Harry Potter fan fiction and writing support groups. Jenkins describes how amateur and semi-professional writers extend the Harry Potter universe by writing short stories, novellas, and books that develop new plot lines for minor characters in the Harry Potter series. Through online writing support groups, these authors collaborate to ensure these new sub-plots accurately and coherently link into the larger official Harry Potter texts penned by J.K. Rowling. These fan fiction pieces occur with the blessing of J.K. Rowling and provide fans a way to feel more connected to world of Harry Potter. The concept of the convergence culture lays an important foundation for understanding the potential of social media to connect and empower individuals in a new rendition of media that is collaborative and bi-directional as opposed to former types of mass media that were only able to disseminate information to passive recipients. In the culture of social media, the traditional boundaries of audience and broadcasters are no longer so distinct.

An interesting update on Jenkins's (2006) analysis is van Dijck's (2013) argument that the culture of convergence has transformed into a culture of connectivity in which the focus has

shifted from individual participation in media and content creation to connections with other users as the major purpose of social media activity. Van Dijck also calls this "platformed sociality," meaning that social media serves as a formal or organized platform for social relationships rather than a loose network of social connections. Part of what makes van Dijck's analysis so compelling is her tracing the history of social media from small startup companies and passionate amateurs trying to share content to large corporations and availability for a wide audience of potential users. In both Jenkins's and van Dijck's analyses, the primary issue of interest is that users are able to link together mediated content and communication in interactive and emergent forms. The lack of firm boundaries for how communication can happen and between whom is fundamental to understanding the power of social media.

The rich interactive relationships that constitute a convergence culture or connectivity culture reflect affordances in computer-mediated communication that allow users to develop a wide range of relationships through specific strategies for information sharing and collaboration. Walther (1996) is one of the early researchers to study the impact of computer-mediated communication (CMC), the basis of new media, on communication and information sharing for social groups. In his research on the forms of personal relationships that develop in CMC work environments, he found three distinct, and sometimes competing, patterns of CMC use: impersonal interaction, interpersonal interaction, and hyperpersonal interaction. The first pattern, impersonal interaction, is most prevalent in short-term social settings when the focus is on achieving a task for a one-time work/project/social group. For example, in impersonal interaction, an individual will exchange the personal information needed to get a task done (e.g., name, contact information) but not details about personal history or personal interests. The second pattern, interpersonal interaction, occurs in long-term social settings and is time intensive.

Walther found that participants in long-term social groups actively engaged in creating strong

social ties and the interactions between people in these groups focused as much on developing

bonds as actually completing work. For example, individuals will share details about personal

history and personal interests, as sharing this information will facilitate group rapport. Group

interactions might also start with discussion of personal topics before work topics as part of

group bonding and cohesion. Finally the third pattern, hyperpersonal interaction, reflects the use

of CMC to develop relationships in which people share more personal information than in their

traditional face-to-face relationships. For example, individuals might share more with this group

than they do with close friends or loved ones. In hyperpersonal interaction, individuals share

their most intimate personal information. Walther attributes this hyperpersonal sharing to a lack

of perceived judgment about what is shared and the relative increase in anonymity of the person

sharing. For Walther, these patterns suggested that individuals were able to develop rich and

complex relationship through CMC, and that in some instances individuals developed more

intimate relationships than through traditional face-to-face settings. Walther is also careful to

point out that each of these patterns has a particular use and none of them are inherently better or

worse than the others.

Developing the idea of interpersonal relationships further, Baym's (2010) most recent

work considers the role of the Internet and social media as mundane technology in the lives of

contemporary Americans. This mundane aspect is something that van Dijck (2013) also points

to as a reason that social media culture has shifted from convergence to connectivity: the

ubiquity of access and interfaces. Placing CMC technology in the same light as the telephone,

radio, and television, Baym argues that the novelty of new media has begun to fade and people

are finding ways to incorporate this technology into their everyday lives. Marking out a

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continuum between technological determinism (technology forcibly changing people's lives) and social constructionism (people changing technology to suit their lives), Baym argues that a process of domestication is helping individuals experience new media as the mutual influence of technology changing lives and people changing technology to suit their lives. The ultimate thesis of Baym's work is that despite the apparent differences between new media and traditional media, people are finding new and robust ways to develop personal connections and that the technology is secondary to the people. She challenges the singularity of face-to-face communication as the most meaningful form of communication, instead arguing that as people incorporate new media and new technologies into their lives they are finding ways to use them for their own social purposes. Baym also found evidence to support the idea that one of the functions of new media is to allow individuals to use the technology to feel emotional safety in potentially threatening situations, such as arguments and disagreements or flirtation and sexual rejection. This finding echoes Walther's work from almost 15 years earlier. It is also worth noting here that this ubiquity of social media is different than the ubiquity of the Internet. Studies and research on the Internet as an everyday technology date back to the mid-late 1990s and early 2000s with significant contributions from Kellner (1995), Jones (1998), and Wellman and Haythornthwaite (2002).

In contrast to the perspective of new media being a mundane neutral technology, Turkle (2009), who studies human interaction with computers and robots, argues that new media are potentially problematic simulacra and simulations of real relationships and are not as neutral as Walther and Baym may suggest. This is a pointed shift in Turkle's research. In her early work, she was a strong advocate for the potential of computer technology to extend human experiences and relationships with others (Turkle, 1984). However after decades of research on how people

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interact with computers and computer technology, such as young children assigning personas

and identities to robots (Turkle, 1984) and form of self-representation through the Internet

(Turkle, 1995), Turkle (2009, 2011) has come to find that part of the phenomenon that

individuals experience when they interact with others via computers is a synthetic reality that

creates social and relational distance from physical lives. This is not to say that users experience

a false reality, per se, but the reality that they experience in and through a computer is a likeness

of a physical reality, rather than an actual physical reality. The sum result is that users are in

essence recreating synthetic lives and relationships with the computer rather than augmenting

and extending the ones they already have. In her most recent work, Turkle (2011) argues that

CMC impose either a false sense of the real that seems more real than the physical reality it

represents or simply places an additional barrier within direct communication between individual

users. Turkle's stance opposes Baym's and suggests that new technology and new media are

making people more isolated and creating barriers to deeper connections with other people

(Turkle, 2011). Instead individuals are developing deeper connections and investments to

simulacra of relationships or relations, and individuals are creating more robust social

relationships with machines and computer technology, rather than other people. Her research

points to some of the potential issues that emerge from increased interaction and even reliance on

computer-mediation of communication and relationship development.

Collectively these authors argue that the foundation of the Internet and social media as

computer-mediated communication depends heavily on the social and structural affordances

made possible by computers, and that this communication also suffers from the limitations

introduced by those same social and structural affordances. For example, video chatting

technology such as Skype has made it easier and cheaper to communicate across the world than

ever before, but Skype also introduces barriers and challenges to communication such as delays

between video and audio content, reduced verbal and non-verbal communication, and a potential

reliance on that technology as a substitute for in-person communication. The sociological terrain

laid out by these authors is that CMC technologies have positive and negative potential

consequences for self-presentation, communication skills, and relationships. There is not

inherent goodness or badness in CMC and its uses, but there are consequences for how

individuals use this technology. Like Baym (2010), I favor an interpretation of CMC that we

influence the social purposes of this technology, just as this technology facilitates new and

potentially different social purposes. In the next section, I consider how some of these

technologies come to social purposes for social network sites, and where SNSs create

opportunities and present barriers for self-presentation, identity, and sociality.

Social Network Sites: The Flattening of Social Context

As noted in the introduction, social network sites (SNSs) are web-based, bounded

systems in which users have public or semi-public profile pages that they link together to

articulate social relations for others to see (boyd & Ellison, 2007). One of the major framing

ideas with SNSs is that they create a flattening of social contexts. Donath and boyd (2004) were

the first to articulate the idea that SNSs create only one level or degree of articulated social

relationship. Users only have a single profile with which to connect to members of social

contexts such as work, family, and friends. Instead of being able to communicate in particular

ways with each of those groups, and even with individual members within each of those groups,

users are limited to only one form of communication with all users across all social contexts.

boyd (2007b) offered the example of Stokley Carmichael, a Black civil rights activist of the

1960s who would adopt different rhetorical styles and messages when he addressed Black and

White audiences. This approach was successful until advances in television broadcast technology made it possible for both Black and White audiences to see Carmichael speak at the same time. Carmichael was forced to choose one rhetorical style over the other and thereby alienate part of his audience: Carmichael experienced the collapse of his Black and White social context. Social media suffers some of the same issues, in that users are only able to craft profiles and communication for one mass audience, rather than a series of separate audiences. This collapse of social context has important consequences for how users develop profiles and interpret who is their audience.

Research on social media and social network sites is beginning to develop as a substantive body of sociological and psychological research. Within this emerging literature, four major areas are particularly relevant to this project: discussions of the structural affordances of social media (what the physical and data architecture enables SNSs to do), self-presentation and narcissism (how individuals create digital representations of themselves), social capital and the digital divide (who has access to the resources of social media and how they use them), and privacy and personal information sharing (who can access what personal information). These four topics cover a wide area of social media and contain a number of overlapping ideas and issues. Nonetheless, this disaggregation of ideas is the most useful because it spans three important, separate layers of SNSs: a macro view of what SNS technology allows users to do and not do (structural affordances), a micro view of individual user experiences of SNSs (narcissistic self-presentation, privacy and personal information sharing), and a link between macro and micro (social capital, digital divide: differences in access, use, and skills).

Networked Publics: Social Space of Social Media

Behind the complexity of the Internet as social space lies the physical architecture and design of the hardware and software that supports social interaction on the Internet. According to boyd (boyd, 2008b) this interaction of technology and social interaction on SNSs is best understood as networked publics, which boyd defined as "the space constructed through networked technologies and the imagined community that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology, and practice" (p. 1). Network publics in essence reflect the ways in which SNSs provide for a public and semi-public social space through the connection of multiple SNS profiles and communication between individual users of those profiles.

Among the scholars currently studying SNSs, the work of boyd and associates (boyd, 2007a, 2008b; boyd & Ellison, 2007; boyd & Heer, 2006; Donath & boyd, 2004; Marwick & boyd, 2011) stands out for both its breadth and depth in demarcating what social network sites are and discussing the forms of social connections they promote and discourage through their structural affordances. By structural affordance, I mean the physical and virtual constraints imposed by the hardware and software architecture of SNSs (e.g., the physical layout of an SNS website and profile pages, how many degrees of connection an SNS allows a single user to access, or the number and type of connections an SNS allows). Within this set of literature, the most compelling structural elements are SNSs as public displays of connection (Donath & boyd, 2004), SNSs as networked publics (boyd, 2007b, 2011b), and the context collapse that occurs from linking multiple social connections through the single context of an SNS (Donath & boyd, 2004; Marwick & boyd, 2011).

Donath and boyd's (2004) *Public Displays of Connection* was one of the earliest pieces to formalize the idea that SNSs provide public displays of social relationships and to identify some

of the major problems and issues with SNSs. Other work, such as that of Barry Wellman
(Garton, Haythornthwaite, & Wellman, 1997; Wellman, 2002; Wellman et al., 1996), discussed
online social networks as groupings of social connections, but this work pre-dates the
contemporary form of SNSs in which lists of connections figure prominently. Drawing from
their research on SNSs such as Friendster, LinkedIn, and MySpace, Donath and boyd (2004)
discussed how SNSs serve as a vehicle for individuals to express to others who their social
relations are for the purpose of networking with strangers to expand an existing social network.
Through the use of signaling theory, they argued that the strategy of public displays of
connection provides users with an economical means of verifying their identity and the
trustworthiness of the information posted on SNSs to facilitate networking (or making new
connections with other users). This signals "a willingness to risk one's reputation" (Donath &
boyd, p. 76) on the accuracy of information posted, and as such, SNSs serve as self-regulating
communities, removing the burden of verifying the accuracy of strangers' profiles.

Donath and boyd (2004) also identified two social liabilities of early SNSs that continue
to be challenges, limitations and defining characteristics of SNSs: the reduction of privacy and
the combining of social contexts into a single context. Taken together, Donath and boyd marked
out many of the most important structural issues within SNSs, particularly ways in which
connections or links on these websites are mutual, public, un-nuanced, and decontextualized.
Later work by boyd and others has expanded upon these structural issues, developing the nuance
suggested by this early piece to areas of social interest such as race and racism (Nakamura &
Chow-White, 2012), social surveillance and voyeurism (Lauer, 2012; Marshall, 2012; Taekke,
2011), and opportunities for social activism (Castells, 2012)

Building this early idea of SNSs as public displays of connection, boyd (2011b) explored how SNSs serve as networked publics—social spaces "constructed through networked technologies…that emerges as a result of the intersection of people, technology and practice" (p. 39). Here in place of SNSs being sites for demonstrating social connections, SNS became sites for creating networked social spaces. That is, public social spaces that "allow people to gather for social, cultural, and civic purposes" (boyd, p. 40). This shift in perspective, though somewhat subtle, has significant implications. SNSs through this framing constitute a series of connected, or networked, social spaces that serve more general social purposes (e.g., something akin to an virtual market square) rather than a location for individual pages that are accessible to the public, (e.g., a private space made public). Within these networked publics are three framing components: properties, affordances, and dynamics control. Properties constitute the architectural features of SNSs, and boyd identified four properties of interest: profiles, lists of friends, public commenting tools, and stream-based updates. Structural affordances include data persistence, replicability of content, scalability of content and networks, and searchability of uploaded content. The four SNS properties and four structural affordances work in tandem to generate the central dynamics of how SNSs work—the potential/actuality of invisible audiences, the collapse of social contexts, and the blurring of private and public content and social boundaries. Though a scholarly piece in nature, boyd suggested some implications from her own research and stated that these properties, affordances, and dynamics are not deterministic, but rather they create a framework in which networked publics exist and individuals within those social spaces generate strategies for navigating and managing the potential limitations of SNS architecture. One of boyd's major messages was that networked publics are dynamic and do not hold a constant or immutable definition of social grouping.

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The strategic use of SNS as social resources suggested by boyd (2011b) becomes more significant in discussions of self-presentation, social capital, and privacy concerns, but for the moment, boyd's framing of this idea provides a tool for interpreting SNSs as complex public spaces that require invested attention to behavior and observing others on the part of users. One might also infer implications for these networked publics to be a site of social surveillance. Though not addressed in this study, boyd and others visited this idea in more depth elsewhere (e.g., boyd, 2011a; Livingstone & Helsper, 2008; Taekke, 2011).

Returning to an idea found in Donath and boyd (2004), Marwick and boyd (2011) studied how SNS users (on Twitter) managed the collapse of separate social contexts (e.g., friends, family, work, fans) into one universal social context and what strategies they employed to synthesize multiple contexts. Marwick and boyd framed this collapsed social context as audience management and discussed ways in which SNS users negotiate their relationships with multiple audiences. These strategies included targeting writing for strategic audiences, exercising self-censorship to avoid negative consequences, and creating an authentic and consistent portrayal of themselves. Marwick and boyd also identified three types of audiences that occur in SNS usage: the writer's audience (an intimate audience that blends an imagined and actual group of people to whom the writer communicates), the broadcast audience (a mass audience who receives a generalized message), and the networked audience (an audience that is connected and participatory). This last audience pairs the intimacy of the writer's audience with the distribution potential of the broadcast audience, and was the dominant type of audience to whom the SNS users in their study wrote. This approach of writing to a networked audience emphasizes the tension of SNSs being simultaneously private and public spaces. In lieu of excluding potential audience members or writing separate content for separate audiences, the

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majority of participants in Marwick and boyd's study favored posting content that addressed multiple audiences at once and opted to restrict what they posted to content that would not generate negative consequences to their core audience.

boyd's scholarship on SNSs points to some of the important implications of organizing social bonds through CMC. First, these social bonds are governed by the logic and structure of computer network systems—participants are decentralized as only one of many connected to a system. Second, although unique networks emerge off of each participant in the system, the collective whole represents a larger social system that may exert influence on the individual user, with or without that user being aware. Finally, the notions of privacy and social context take on new meaning in SNSs as SNSs provide limited controls for who makes up the public that can access an individual's profile or personal information. These structural affordances also have implications for how users present themselves to others through SNSs. Strategies of self-presentation, as evidenced in Marwick and boyd (2011) where Twitter users created flexible self-presentations that could address multiple audiences and contexts simultaneously, include attention to privacy and identity ambiguity in light of the presence of multiple audiences.

Psychological Impacts: Self-Esteem and Narcissism

The research on the psychological impacts of SNSs has emphasized two major foci—self-esteem and narcissism—as two poles along a continuum of positive and negative impacts of Facebook and social media. The discourse on self-esteem and narcissism through SNSs links how individuals create self-presentations in digital media and how they use these self-presentations to connect with others in their networks. Social network sites and other online communications depend heavily upon individuals broadcasting, or "pushing," their personal information out to others (boyd and Ellison, 2007). One of the concerns raised by researchers is

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that this type of self-broadcasting resembles forms of narcissism with its one-directionality and heavy emphasis on one's self, seemingly at the expense of attending to others (Mehdizadeh, 2010). The implication being that SNSs may provide a medium that contributes to or promotes narcissism in the heavy emphasis of individuals posting information for others to read and see. Others frame this same self-expression as an opportunity for self-awareness and careful crafting of online identity (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). With SNSs individuals sit at the center of their digital social networks, meaning they experience a unique version of an SNS in which they are the social center of information and relationships within that social network. In the language of network theory, individuals experience themselves as the hub that links together the other members of their social networks (Barabási, 2011). This is a false perception, as a defining characteristic of most networks is that they are decentralized and do not have a singular focal point or central hub (Barabási & Albert, 1999).

The research on Facebook and self-esteem has explored the connections between popularity (Utz, Tanis, & Vermeulen, 2011), social capital (Steinfield, Ellison, & Lampe, 2008), selective self-presentations (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011), social enhancement (Zywica & Danowski, 2008), and predictors of students' behavior based on self-esteem (Zhang, Tang, & Leung, 2011). Overall, these studies have found positive correlations between the way in which students' SNS use contributed to self-esteem and their sense of popularity and belonging, as measured on factors of number of Friends and frequency of communication with those Friends, as well as self-awareness leading to selective self-presentations. Gonzales and Hancock, for example, found that students who used their profiles to create selective self-presentations that emphasized the positive experiences in their lives were more likely to possess higher levels of self-esteem. Gonzales and Hancock attributed this outcome to students' abilities to create their

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profiles over long periods of time and develop greater self-awareness in the process of generating their digital self-presentations.

In contrast, studies on narcissism on Facebook have found strong correlations between extroversion and narcissism through Facebook and that photographs play a vital role in assessing and interpreting narcissism or narcissistic self-presentations on Facebook (Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Kapidzic, 2013; Mehdizadeh, 2010; Mendelson & Papacharissi, 2011; Ong et al., 2011; C. Rosen, 2007; Ryan & Xenos, 2011; Utz et al., 2011). For example, Buffardi and Campbell (2008) studied the Facebook profiles of 129 college students to assess the degree of self-promotion students exhibited in their profile text and photos, and by extension the degree of narcissism in those profiles. Buffardi and Campbell defined narcissism as "a personality trait reflecting a grandiose and inflated self-concept" (p. 1304). This assessment included measures for: self-promoting personal information, self-promoting quotes, entertaining quotes, physical attractiveness of photos, sexiness of photos, self-promoting photos, provocativeness of photos, and fun reflected in photos. From these nine measures, students received scores that suggested relationships between profile content and narcissism. Students who rated higher on the narcissism scale tended to have self-promoting main photos, attractive main photos, and a higher quantity of social interaction. Buffardi and Campbell used these characteristics to argue that SNSs were likely to over represent narcissists because narcissists will have more social connections and interactions. Findings from this study suggested that narcissism on SNSs is similar to narcissism in non-virtual environments.

Another study examining SNS narcissism for college students is Mendelson and Papacharissi's (2011) study of narcissism within students' Facebook photos. Mendelson and Papacharissi conducted an in-depth analysis of the type and function of photographs that college

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students posted to their Facebook accounts. They found that one of the primary roles of photographs on Facebook was to demonstrate and reinforce social connections. Much like the list of friends noted by boyd and others (e.g., boyd, 2007b; Donath & boyd, 2004; Ito et al., 2009), photographs on SNSs served to highlight social relationships and emphasize how individuals were connected to each other. The most common example of this phenomenon was the recurrence of individuals posting photographs to their Facebook profile in which they appear in the photograph and they "tag" (identify the name of) the other people in the photograph. By appearing in the photograph and tagging the other people in the photo, an individual was able to visually demonstrate a relationship to the other people in the photograph, as well as link the Facebook profiles of the people tagged through the photo album function of Facebook. Mendelson and Papacharissi expanded this analysis of photographs to suggest that in the majority of photographs in their study students were not demonstrating narcissistic, self-aggrandizing behaviors, but rather they were finding ways to express and reinforce social links they have with other Facebook users. A secondary finding of this study was that students de-emphasized context in their photographs (through taking pictures at a close distance that obscures the location of the photograph) and "validated the sense of a *real* college experience" (Mendelson & Papacharissi, p. 270). This notion of a "real" college experience is an effort to valorize behaviors that suggest belonging and success in college social settings.

The findings of Buffardi and Campbell (2008) and Mendelson and Papacharissi (2011) have been echoed by more recent studies such as Kapidzic's (2013) study of profile picture selection. In that study, Kapidzic found differences in the motivations behind Facebook use based on the degree of students' narcissism and that narcissism was a significant positive predictor of selecting profile photos that emphasized personality and attractiveness. Narcissism

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was also positively correlated to the amount of time that students spent using Facebook and their overall self-esteem.

Collectively these studies on narcissism suggest that students shared self-presentations that emphasized attractiveness, favorable personalities, and social ties to other users who are attractive and have favorable personalities. However, it is important to note that these studies did not suggest that Facebook promoted or contributed to narcissism, but rather that narcissistic students offered self-presentations that reflected and emphasized their narcissism. Within all of these studies, this was an important distinction because of the seemingly negative connotations about social media being "me-centered" networks and the implied inference that these networks were necessarily self-centered or self-aggrandizing.

Privacy: Sharing Personal Information

One of the hallmarks of Facebook is the sharing of personal information. Whether through status updates, biographical/demographic information in the About Me section, or photographs posted to a profile, individuals actively share personal information about themselves. The volume of this sharing raises questions about privacy and the safety of personal information. In 2006, Facebook enraged a wide cross-section of its members through a change in the privacy policy of the site and the introduction of a News Feed function that collected information from people's individual profile pages and posted it on a unique News Feed page for each user (Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, & Hughes, 2009). Users balked at what they perceived to be a violation of their privacy because information they posted to their profile was now being widely shared with members of their Friend network. One of the issues that this sudden awareness of privacy on Facebook unveiled was the ways in which Facebook collected and shared profile information with third-party vendors for targeted marketing and advertising (Debatin et al.,

2009). After much member uproar, Facebook modified the privacy policy to give users new

controls over who had access to their profile information; however the News Feed remained and

Facebook continued to collect profile information under their terms of service. As Facebook

argued, the News Feed only reflected information that was already available when users visited

individual pages, so there was not a violation of privacy but rather a change in how users were

able to access this information. This change in the privacy policy and News Feed brought users'

attention to what and how much information was available to other people in the networks (boyd,

2008a; Chew, Balfanz, & Laurie, 2008).

Researchers looking at the issue of privacy and sharing of personal information for

college students have framed it in two ways: privacy as a flexible form of preference (Lewis et

al., 2008) and privacy as a private/public balance (Sloop & Gunn, 2010). Lewis et al., in an

analysis of privacy as preference, argued that college students adopted different strategies for

making personal information private on SNSs based on personal incentives (e.g., level of SNS

activity, safety concerns, and style of self-presentation) and social influences (e.g., peer

encouragement to share, popular types of sharing). Their analysis examined privacy as a

dichotomous variable—either students' profiles are visible to all users in their network (public)

or have limited visibility to some/all members in their network (private). In their analysis, they

found four predictors of higher privacy: having friends with private profiles, being more active

on Facebook, being female, and preferring music that is generally popular.

Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn, and Hughes (2009) extended this idea of privacy as preference

in which they examined the level of awareness students have about the privacy settings of

Facebook and who has access to their personal information. In an analysis of survey data for 119

students, they found that a majority of students perceive themselves to have a reasonable

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understanding of their privacy settings of Facebook, but nevertheless allowed large groups of friends to have unrestricted access to their personal information and were almost entirely unaware of the ways in which Facebook aggregated and shared their profile information with third-party vendors. Additionally, they found that students were more likely to be aware of the risks to privacy of others than to themselves, and that students were more likely to change their privacy settings if they reported invasion to their privacy rather than an invasion of someone else's privacy. In follow-up interviews with survey participants, Debatin et al. found that students perceived Facebook to be a walled garden with limited access and that students underestimated Facebook's importance in their lives. Debatin et al. suggested that gossip and rumors played a major role in students' Facebook usage and that students primarily saw violations of privacy as problematic when it happened to them rather than other people.

Another approach to depicting privacy on Facebook and social media was to emphasize information sharing as a balance of private and public. This approach involved two basic forms: openly sharing personal information to a select group or restrictively sharing personal information to a large group. In a study on YouTube disclosure Lange (2008) called these two forms "privately public" and "publicly private." In this study, she explored the type of content that students posted and the size and composition of network with which they shared that content. Her general findings suggest that students were intentional and strategic in what they shared and with whom. Students who shared more personal information were more likely to share that information with a closed network of people they already knew. Conversely, students who shared personal information to a network of people they did not already know were less likely to share as much personal information. The key issue for participants in this study was audience awareness: they modeled their disclosure on who they thought could and would access their

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shared information. This awareness of audience parallels Marwick and boyd's (2011) disclosure

findings for Twitter in which users balanced what and how much to share with an audience based

on calculated awareness of who was in that audience.

The pervading finding in studies on college students' Facebook privacy settings has been

that students exercised poor control over their privacy on Facebook: they disclosed a high

volume of personal information, they were inattentive to their privacy settings, and they were

unaware who could access their profile content (Debatin et al., 2009; Lewis et al., 2008; Sloop &

Gunn, 2010; Timm & Duven, 2008; Waters & Ackerman, 2011; Wessels, 2012). Audience

awareness played a vital role in how students approached privacy in these studies; however,

unintended audiences and accidental disclosure were recurring issues for what students shared

through social media and Facebook. One of the areas in which unintended audiences and

accidental disclosure has been the most disconcerting for students was with potential future

employers. Students have expressed deep concern about future employers gaining access to their

SNS profiles and seeing problematic content (e.g., photos of drinking and drug use, offensive or

objectionable wall posts and status updates) (Bohnert & Ross, 2010; W. P. Smith & Kidder,

2010).

Access: Social Capital and the Digital Divide

Research perspectives on college students' use of Facebook and SNSs are not limited to

the micro-level analysis of individual accounts. In this same body of literature, researchers have

investigated what SNS usage looks like from a macro sense. Some of the more prominent

scholars in this field of research are Ellison, Lampe, and Steinfield (Ellison, Hancock, & Toma,

2011; Ellison, Lampe, et al., 2011; Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007; Lampe, Ellison, &

Steinfield, 2006; Steinfield et al., 2008). As a research team these three scholars (and associates)

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have conducted a number of research projects exploring how college students create and maintain social capital through SNSs. In their research they have defined social capital as "the benefits that can be attained from connections between people through their social networks" (Ellison, Lampe, et al., 2011, p. 127) and emphasized three types of social capital: bridging, bonding, and maintained. Their discourse on social capital in SNSs has drawn heavily from social network theory and Granovetter's (1973) work on social ties. Granovetter argued that networks exist with two types of ties: a strong tie (a direct connection between two people) and a weak tie (an indirect connection between two people through a common connection). Bridging social capital reflects weak ties; it connects two people together through a third connection and represents more distant relationships. Bonding social capital reflects the strengthening of strong ties; it connects two people together directly and represents a close relationship. Maintained social capital reflects the maintenance of existing ties, either strong or weak. As Ellison, Lampe et al. (2011) have found, SNSs are an excellent tool for facilitating both bridging, bonding, and maintaining social capital, as well as a means for individuals to make use of "latent ties" (potential links between networked users that are not readily apparent). An example of a latent tie is two individuals who do not know that they share a common acquaintance (i.e., an unknown weak tie). Through the list of friends on an SNS, those two individuals might realize that they have a friend in common and thereby create a more direct connection to each other.

Consistent with other research on the topic, Ellison, Lampe, et al. (2011) found that students use SNSs to extend their in-person relationships into cyberspace, creating hybrid relationships of online and in-person (offline) social exchanges. They also found that the intensity of Facebook use (measured as frequency of use and emotional investment in Facebook use) predicted all three types of social capital. In the area of communication patterns, Ellison,

Lampe, et al. (2011) found that students exhibited three types of communication patterns: initiating new ties, maintaining current ties, and seeking information on current or potential ties. Of these patterns, only information seeking proved to be a statistically significant predictor of bridging and bonding social capital. Finally, Ellison, Lampe, et al. (2011) identified five mechanisms of Facebook for generating social capital: (a) Facebook facilitated maintaining a larger set of weak ties, (b) Facebook made "ephemeral connections persistent" (p. 138), (c) Facebook reduced the time and effort costs of maintaining weak ties, (d) Facebook profiles made it easier to find commonalities with others, and (e) Facebook made it easier to seek out information on others. Through each of these five mechanisms college students were able to use the networked data of personal information on Facebook to decrease the individual effort needed to maintain or expand a network of strong and weak ties, thereby facilitating the accumulation of more social capital.

Related to the idea of social capital is research on the digital divide and typologies of social media use. In basic terms, the digital divide is the difference in access, skills, and use of digital technology among users from different socio-cultural backgrounds (e.g., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, nationality). Hargittai and associates (Hargittai, 2007, 2008; Hargittai & Hsieh, 2011; Hargittai & Litt, 2011; Hargittai & Walejko, 2008) have conducted extensive research on the existence and persistence of differences in access to digital technology, including the Internet and CMC. Her more recent research work has looked at the differences in access and usage of SNSs. Hargittai (2008) found that SNS use and usage of particular SNSs was not evenly distributed across lines of race/ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic status. The key factor for differential use of SNSs came from background experience with and frequency of use of the Internet. Students who used the Internet more were more likely to use SNSs,

regardless of which SNS; however, differences in access to the Internet suggested differential adoption of services and digital inequalities. She found that almost all students had Facebook accounts and that statically significant differences occurred for the other SNSs in her study (i.e., MySpace, Xanga, and Friendster). For example, Hispanic students were more likely to use MySpace than their White peers, that Asian students were less likely to use MySpace than their White peers, and that students whose parents had college degrees were more likely than their peers to use Facebook. It is worth noting that the SNS preferences and uses of students from Hargittai's studies may also reflect social trends at that time. This distinction is less significant than the fact that students had differential use of SNSs by socio-cultural groups, which reflected different forms of social and cultural capital.

In a later study, Hargittai and Hsieh (2011) offered a typology of SNS usage that expanded on Hargittai's earlier work to identify four different types of SNS users according to frequency of use and number of SNSs used: dabblers, devotees, samplers and omnivores. Dabblers use only one SNS infrequently; devotees use only one SNS frequently; samplers use multiple SNSs infrequently; and omnivores use multiple SNSs frequently. Consistent with earlier research, Hargittai and Hsieh found a statistically significant relationship between Internet experience and SNS usage: students with more experience using the Internet were more likely to use more SNSs and more frequently. Other findings included women were more likely to use SNSs than men, and students not living with their parents were more likely to use SNSs intensely. One limitation of this study was the intense focus on use of SNSs from a desktop or laptop computer, rather than from mobile technology such as smart phones. According to Junco, Merson, and Salter (2010), students from minority racial and ethnic backgrounds are more likely to use social media through mobile technology than their White or Asian peers. This difference

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may relate to the easier availability and access to mobile technology over more expensive computer technology (S. Jones, Johnson-Yale, Millermaier, & Pérez, 2009). However, this distinction between the use of computers and mobile technology is misleading because mobile technology now includes smart phones, which have as much or close to the same Internet functionality as social media on traditional desktop and laptop computers, and users across all demographics are more likely to use mobile technology and smart phones than computers (comScore, 2012).

Collectively the literature on social capital and the digital divide suggests that students were using SNS to initiate, maintain, and develop their relationships with others, and that the venue for these relationships at times depended on socio-cultural background characteristics. However, given the very high numbers of students who had and used Facebook accounts in these studies, Facebook was likely to be a robust social environment where all of these students are present. What may differ were the ties (strong, weak, and latent) that existed between these users. As boyd (2011c) suggested, SNSs were strongly divided along socio-economic and racial lines. These boundaries of digital divides have also been well documented by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (Zickuhr & Smith, 2012).

Facebook and Higher Education

In addition to the research that studies college student participation in SNSs in general and Facebook in particular, a small group of researchers have begun exploring college students' use of social media and its relationship to higher education. At this time, three distinct areas of interest have emerged in the study of social media in higher education: academic uses of social media, student culture on Facebook, and institutional uses of social media.

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Studies on academic uses of social media reflect some of the most recent research on social media in higher education. This research focuses on the effects of social media on students' academic performance (Junco, 2012b; Kirschner & Karpinski, 2010) and engagement (Junco, 2012a; Junco, Heiberger, et al., 2010), and faculty credibility on social media (Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007; Veletsianos & Kimmons, 2013). Overall the findings on academic impact have paralleled previous research on academic engagement: time spent devoted to academic activity correlated positively with academic success and time spent on non-academic activities had the potential to reduce academic success (Astin, 1993). The positive or negative effects of Facebook and social media depended on the degree to which it was used to reinforce and enrich academic experiences and the degree to which students used it as a diversion from academic work.

Kirscher and Karpinski (2010), for example, found in a study of 102 undergraduate students that Facebook activity had a positive correlation with lower GPAs; as Facebook activity increased students' grades decrease. Students in this study were using Facebook concurrently with academic activities for social and non-academic purposes. As a result, their time and attention to their studying and academic work was reduced and less focused, presumably contributing to lower GPAs. Junco (2012b), in a study of 1,839 undergraduate students, found a similar relationship between Facebook activity and lower GPAs when students used Facebook for non-academic reasons. He also noted that these findings reinforced previously studied relationships between time spent on academic engagement being predictive of academic success (Astin, 1999). Other similar studies on academic performance and Facebook use have all pointed to the negative impact of time using Facebook and SNS for social purposes on course grades and overall GPA (Chen & Tzeng, 2010; Jacobsen & Forste, 2011; Paul, Baker, &

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Cochran, 2012). Social media use was not always predictive of negative academic performance. For example, Junco, Heiberger, et al. (2010) found that using Twitter to augment course work contributed to statistically significant increases in engagement and higher course grades. The key difference between this study and the previous studies of Facebook was the explicit use of social media as part of the course work. Collectively these studies suggest that while Facebook and social media could contribute to academic engagement, the overall pattern was one of disruption. The strengths of Facebook lay in its ability to promote and maintain social connections, and these strengths offered the bulk of potential benefit in bringing Facebook into the classroom (Grosseck, Bran, & Tiru, 2011).

In the area of social media and college student culture two studies stand out: Martínez Alemán and Wartman's (2009) study of college student culture on Facebook and Birnbaum's (2008) study on student culture through self-presentations. Martínez Alemán and Wartman's study was one of the first of its type to address the relationship between culture and students' use of SNSs and includes students from institutions across the U.S. They were particularly interested in assessing how college students used Facebook to extend their on campus and off campus social networks and what role Facebook played in shaping the unique campus culture of the institutions where students were enrolled. Consolidating data from ethnographic interviews, Martínez Alemán and Wartman presented their data and findings through a discussion of four representative participants. Through these students' narratives, Martínez Alemán and Wartman framed four categories of findings: use-consciousness (awareness of content posted online), campus culture (role in student interaction), identity factors (expression of social identities), and voyeurism and impression management (looking at others' profiles for personal information).

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Martínez Alemán and Wartman found that across institutions, students experienced several cultural elements in common and that what varied were minor campus traditions, which students incorporated into Facebook through status updates and comments on Friends posts. For example, all four of the student profiles presented suggested that students actively crafted and attended to a digital representation of themselves through their Facebook profiles, used Facebook to extend their social relationships rather than meet new people, and "stalk" the activities of friends, family, and sexual partners with some interest in gaining personal information that would be difficult to get in non-anonymous settings (Martínez Alemán & Wartman, 2009). What little the study did reveal about particular campus cultures had more to do with Facebook as a tool to organize participation in unique campus activities. None of the findings related to campus culture portrayed the idea that one campus used Facebook in a way that was inconsistent or different from the next school. Implicit in Martínez Alemán and Wartman's findings was an implication that Facebook culture was a consumer culture; however, the effects of that consumer culture were not attended to in the scope of their study.

The other extensive study of student culture on Facebook came from Birnbaum (2008). In an ethnographic study based on an undergraduate residence hall at one institution, Birnbaum focused on students' Facebook profiles as social performances of students' perceived expectations of who college students were and who they thought they were supposed to be. Birnbaum conducted participant-observation of students' Facebook profiles as well as semi-structured interviews with photo elicitation to have students assess other students' profiles and their own strategies for self-expression on Facebook. During the interview, participants responded to a set of photographs that Birnbaum selected with key informants to capture the range of common photos students posted to their profiles.

Using Goffman's (1959) concept of self-presentations, Birnbaum (2008) found that students enacted six different "fronts" or forms of self-presentation: partier (a student who regularly attends parties and drinks to intoxication), social (a student who had friends and enjoyed spending time with others), adventurous/risk-taker (a student who engaged in adventures and risk-taking), humorous/funny/silly (a student who was enjoyable to spend time with), part of larger community (a student who posted symbols connected to larger institutions), and random/unique (a student who was quirky or broke the mold). These fronts served as interpretative tools for students to signal key aspects of their identities or interests to other students, and students used these fronts in series or combination to signify multiple layers of self. In addition to discussion of these fronts, Birnbaum argued that much of what students posted to their Facebook profiles was intended as humor and as such might be misunderstood or misread by faculty and administrators who saw content as objectionable or offensive. Students in this study approached their profiles as mediated objects for their peers.

The final major area of social media use in higher education is institutional uses of social media. These uses include student's social transition and engagement (DeAndrea, Ellison, LaRose, Steinfield, & Fiore, 2012; Gray et al., 2013) and maintaining relationships with alumni (Farrow & Yuan, 2011). The study by Gray et al. (2013) collected survey data for 338 first-year students to examine the role of Facebook in supporting students' transition to and persistence in college. They found that the number of Facebook Friends at their college and their use of Facebook to collaborate with classmates had positive correlations with measures of social adjustment and persistence. Their research also yielded a statistical model that found Facebook was a useful tool to support first-generation students and racial minorities in their successful transitions to college. These findings were closely related to an early study by DeAndrea et al.

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(2012) that focused on university use of social media to promote students' sense of connection to their university. In the study, DeAndrea et al. found that the university's focused use of social media to convey academic expectations and help promote residence hall connections had positive correlations with students' academic self expectations and ability to connect with other students, both of which were likely to promote students' positive adjustment to college. Related to these studies on promoting students' connections and engagement while undergraduates, Farrow and Yuan (2011) found that Facebook was an effective tool for universities to stay connected with students after they graduated. Participants in their quantitative study reported stronger feelings of connection to the university and more frequent communication as alumni. These behaviors also reflected higher rates of volunteerism and charitable gifting toward their universities.

The overall body of research on social media and higher education points toward emerging opportunities for universities to use social media in general and Facebook in particular to help students develop stronger connections with their faculty, peers, and institutions in ways that contribute to academic engagement, social inclusion, adjustment and persistence in college, and ongoing relationships with their institutions. For many of these studies, the body of research knowledge was still nascent and under development. More research was needed to test longitudinal outcomes and what the net effect of Facebook and social media was for students' overall academic success, persistence toward graduation, and ongoing involvement as alumni. In particular the research on academic engagement was quite mixed. Facebook and social media appeared to be disruptive of students completing their academic work while also quite productive in students connecting and collaborating with their peers.

An Important Gap in the Literature

Looking across the current state of knowledge on how college students use and understand SNSs, an important theoretical and research gap exists. The theoretical gap is the use of critical theory to analyze students' Facebook behavior and activities, and the research gap is a study of students' perspectives and interpretations for how they use and engage Facebook.

The majority of research and writing on college students' use of SNSs reflects a post-positivist explanation of the social functions of SNSs or a constructivist articulation of the role that SNSs play in students' lives. Neither of these approaches offers a critical perspective designed to empower students and institutions as users of Facebook and social media or plumb more depth behind students' interpretations of their uses of Facebook. The extant research has provided some major categories with which to think about SNS use and the roles of social media in higher education; however, more depth is needed for interpreting the meaning and application of these studies.

The work on psychological impacts relies heavily on frequency counts of how much or how often students post certain types of content. In the case of Buffardi and Campbell (2008), their research used a traditional definition of narcissism and was not sensitive to differences between online self-presentations and in-person self-presentations. Nor did their research account for differences in socio-cultural expectations and practices in those two separate environments. The research on profile privacy and information sharing is largely quantitative and focuses heavily on whether or not users have technical knowledge of how to restrict access to their profile pages. These quantitative analyses do not include, and do not seem capable of addressing, the deeper reasons behind why students would restrict access to their content, for whom, and how students form their understandings of profile privacy.

Within the literature on social capital Ellison, Lampe, et al. (2011) noted the forms of social capital that students produce, but do not address why students form this capital or what the functional outcome of this capital was beyond maintaining connections with peers. In fact, Ellison, Lampe, et al. appear to ignore the core notion of capital (as a resource that one produces for use in some system of exchange) in their analysis of social capital, opting instead to frame social capital as another way of describing a social network or a system of network connections. The notion of social connections as a form of capital with use and exchange value is missing entirely from their analysis. In essence, they have taken a theory rooted in Marxism and stripped out the Marxism to provide a value-neutral analysis of patterns of connection.

Hargittai's (2008) work on the digital divide raised issues of power and exclusion; however her studies have drawn on a large quantitative data set and primarily focused on likelihood of membership to specific SNSs along lines of socio-economic status and racial/ethnic groups; however, these analyses do not also address the fact that the vast majority of participants all belong to one SNS, with some students belonging to more than one; and that students' belonging to more than one SNS accounts for much of the perceived difference in membership statistics. Her analysis does not address differences in what students do on these sites or how they use these sites that may differ among racial/ethnic, class, and gender lines.

Across the current research literature there is an important gap in the use of critical theory to explore how college students are using and making sense of their uses of Facebook. Informing this need for a critical theory analysis of Facebook is the power and potential for social media to be a productive and destructive tool in students' lives. It is clear that Facebook and social media are and will continue to be an important part of higher education for the foreseeable future. But if Facebook has such a range of uses and potential, what does it look like

from the students' side of higher education? How do they make sense of and interpret their uses of Facebook and the role of Facebook in their lives? Some researchers have begun to address these questions, notably Birnbaum (2008) in his study of college students' self-presentations at a public university in the Southwest, and Martínez Alemán and Wartman's (2009) in their study of college student Facebook culture at institutions across the country. These studies are excellent in their contributions of knowledge to the field; however, the field currently lacks a critical analysis of students' behavior on Facebook, as well as theoretical tools designed specifically to address college students' approaches to Facebook as a social medium.

In order to address this gap in current research, I offer the following study on college students' activities on Facebook, their discussion and interpretations of those activities, an analysis of some of the meaning and implications of those activities for college students and higher education, and a set of analytic tools to consider how other students beyond those in this study experience and interpret their Facebook uses. At the heart of this qualitative study is a gentle curiosity for how students interpret the value of Facebook in their lives and an inquiry into students' uses of Facebook as a response to the world around them.

CHAPTER 3: TIMELINE – METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

The meanings and implications of Facebook for college students and higher education are dense and complex. The explosive growth and the extensive use of Facebook among undergraduate students makes a compelling case for the need of a deeper understanding of the social and cultural phenomena at work within this social media. The present study has taken on that need as a germinating precept for inquiry.

Four research questions guided this inquiry: (a) What forms of self-presentation do students create through Facebook? (b) What strategies do they employ to create these self-presentations? (c) How do they interpret the self-presentations created by themselves and their peers? (d) How do students' self-presentations on Facebook contribute to positive and negative experiences within higher education as a social environment? These research questions helped me address the dual purposes of this study: to capture an understanding of how current undergraduate students approach and interpret their self-presentations via Facebook and to contribute a critical social science perspective to the growing empirical knowledge base on the impact of Facebook on college students and higher education.

Research Design

Building on the grounded theory model of Charmaz (2006), the overall methodology of this dissertation pairs cyber-ethnography and grounded theory. I drew on cyber-ethnography to guide my primary data collection methods such as participant observation and document analysis, while grounded theory formed the basis of my data analysis, particularly the emphasis on concurrent data collection and analysis and the focus on emergent theory from the study data. Because I opted for a grounded theory approach to this study, each method of data collection was

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used both to collect data and generate data analysis that informed the next method of data collection.

Cyber-Ethnography

To capture a rich range of data and contested understandings of how college students use and make meaning of social network sites, I used cyber-ethnography (Hine 2005, 2008) as a template of research methods. Hine (2008) defined cyber-ethnography as the ethnographic study of online communities. Drawing on the work of Rheingold (1993) and others, Hine contended that the major differences between virtual or cyber-ethnography and traditional ethnography was that the field site was virtual rather than physical, that researchers needed to account for the links between online sociality and non-cyber sociality, and that cyber-ethnography had some particular implications for participant observation methods, authenticity and trust, and ethics related to privacy and confidentiality.

In this study, I took advantage of the unique nature of social interaction online and data collection affordances, such as rich archives of personal information, access to durable or persistent self-presentations that individuals can edit and refine, simultaneous synchronous and asynchronous exchanges of information and social interaction, and the dependence on a computer as a technological mediator of communication. Hine (2008) argued that these unique characteristics of cyber-ethnography do not change the fundamental character of ethnography, but rather require a change in data collection methods. Throughout this study I engaged in prolonged participant observation through Facebook, document analysis of previous Facebook profile content as complex mediated documents, and a series of formal, semi-structured interviews with knowledgeable Facebook users. To organize and interpret the data generated through my cyber-ethnographic methods, I employed a constructivist grounded theory analysis.

Constructivist grounded theory

Constructivist grounded theory is a research methodology that builds on an open and interpretive analysis of study data to generate new theory grounded in the evidence of the study data (Charmaz, 2006). This methodology emphasizes rigorous analysis through a constant comparative method in which potential findings are interrogated for credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness through multiple successive stages of coding. Grounded theory is not a singular or prescriptive research methodology, and the grounded theory used in this study was an adaptation of Charmaz's (2006) interpretation of grounded theory.

Charmaz's grounded theory emerges and diverges from prevalent forms of grounded theory such as Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original positivist description of grounded theory and the updated pragmatist interpretation of Corbin and Strauss (1990). In place of the positivism of Glaser and Strauss and the pragmatism of Corbin and Strauss, Charmaz's interpretation emphasizes a constructivist approach that recognizes a researcher's awareness of previous research and theoretical work and allows that awareness to help inform the exploration, interrogation, and analysis of data used to construct a grounded theory.

As a constructivist grounded theory design, I used an iterative approach to creating research questions informed by sensitizing concepts. This approach led to successive stages of data collection (survey, participant observation, and interviews) with processes of initial coding between data collection and focused coding during data collection. From this coding, I developed a set of categories that outlined major elements of a potential theory. These categories were then compared against raw study data to ensure analytic coherence and accuracy and to explore alternative interpretations. These theoretical categories were also presented to participants to assess their analytic value. After these stages, I began writing a first draft of

findings that I discussed with academic colleagues to further critique their credibility, originality, resonance, and usefulness and seek additional alternative interpretations. The explanation of methodology that follows provides a more detailed description of this iterative design.

Sensitizing Concepts

The theoretical framework of this study is not a theoretical framework in the conventional sense. Instead, I used a set of theories as sensitizing concepts (Blumer, 1986) as suggested by Charmaz (2006) and Corbin and Strauss (Corbin & Strauss, 2007). Sensitizing concepts are ideas that serve as conceptual tools, or a loose framework, to guide initial development of research issues and questions (Blumer). For this study, I used a set of four sensitizing concepts to inform my definition of the research problem, research questions, and data collection protocols, as well as during the process of data analysis as a way to question the potential meaning of data and to add greater depth to the grounded theory of this study. The four sensitizing concepts informing this study were *self-presentation*, *individualization*, *identity capital*, and *critical media/cultural studies*. I took this approach in order to conduct an analysis of the data that was both inclusive of college students' interpretations of their usage and critical of potentially problematic forms of these interpretations (e.g., forms of alienation or oppression based on social identities and cultural knowledge). Specifically, I was not trying to explicate or explicitly analyze my data and the study phenomena through these theoretical frames.

This use of sensitizing concepts is consistent with grounded theory described by Charmaz (2006). According to Charmaz, constructivist grounded theory historically has rejected the inclusion of a priori theory as part of the grounded theory analysis, and that this was a limited interpretation of grounded theory. Instead, prior knowledge and prior research can and should influence new grounded theory work because these ideas already influence researchers'

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interpretive frames of reference, whether we make them explicit in the research process or not. In the spirit of this interpretation of grounded theory, I have used my sensitizing concepts as a research tool to help explain the findings that emerged out of the grounded theory of this study.

Self-Presentation

The first sensitizing concept for this study was Goffman's (1959) concept of self-presentation. Self-presentation has been one of the most prevalent theoretical frameworks for thinking about and analyzing social network sites and social media behavior to date. This frequent use undoubtedly comes from the concept's focus on symbolic action as the basis for human behavior (symbolic interactionism) and the parallels between cyber sociality and physical sociality. Framed as a dramaturgical approach to analyzing "social establishments," Goffman argued that individuals in social situations use their language, appearance, environment, and behavior to engage in acts of impression management in order to influence the behavior of an audience. These expressive elements constitute an "expression given off" that holds symbolic and dynamic meaning in the form of presentation, as opposed to a literal and static meaning in the form of representation. In essence, individuals perform a character within a setting where an audience imparts a "self" to the performer based on audience interpretation of the character performed. The audience then reacts and responds to the self that the performer has presented. This whole interaction is the presentation of self or a self-presentation. These self-presentations rely on three key elements: an individual performer, an audience, and stage (or setting) for the performance.

Goffman's (1959) self-presentation reflects a number of ideas in Mead's (1967) theory of the social self, namely that the meaning of an individual's identity emerged from that individual's location within a society. Goffman argued that these self-presentations were

intentional constructions of "self" and that they did not necessarily represent who a person was. Instead, these self-presentations represented what individuals wanted others to see as their selves, and these self-presentations were successful only to the degree that the audience interpreted the intended self, not an accidental self. For Goffman, there is an inherent sense of falseness to self-presentation. Though an individual could create a self-presentation that was meant to be authentic and accurate to how that person saw himself or herself, the self-presentation still depended on getting an audience to believe the performance.

The complete framework of self-presentation includes nine major elements: social establishment (the setting of the performance), team of performers (who assist in creating the self-presentation), an audience (to view the performance and impart a self to the performer), back region (where a performance is prepared), front region (where the performance is presented), regulated separation of front and back regions (to preserve the setting of the performance), a tacit agreement between audience and performer (that they have defined roles in this social partnership), disruptions to a performance (in the way of unmeant gestures, social faux pas, and accidental contradictions in behavior), and techniques for saving the show (loyalty, discipline, and circumspection) (Goffman, 1959). Collectively these elements offer a dynamic mapping of how individuals create self-presentations for and through an audience within the bounded context of a setting or stage.

Goffman's (1959) articulation of presentation versus representation is important and bears a minor elaboration. The selves reflected in self-presentations lack inherent meaning. They gain all of their meaning from how an audience interprets them. For example, when a sports fan wears a jersey with the name and number of their favorite player on it, someone seeing that person (as an audience member) is unlikely think either that the jersey the actual jersey of

that athlete or that the person wearing the jersey is that athlete. Instead, the act of wearing the

jersey will convey the symbolic meaning that the wearer is a fan of the team and/or a fan of the

athlete. This distinction between literal representation and figurative presentation has important

implications for the study of self-presentations through social media, which I will address in a

later chapter.

Individualization

The second sensitizing concept for this study, individualization, comes from the work of

Beck (1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), Bauman (2000, 2001), and Giddens (1991) and

describes a process by which individuals experience a compulsory social force that requires

individuals to assume total responsibility for their social and economic lives and a need to

differentiate themselves from those around them. Beck (1992) has argued that individualization

was a twin concept to the emergence of a risk society in which social risk has been redistributed

from community and larger social structures to individuals, such that, "The individual himself or

herself becomes the reproduction unit of the social in the lifeworld" (p. 90). By this, Beck meant

that individuals in the late 20th and early 21st century faced unprecedented degrees of self-

reliance, where they could no longer rely on community and social institutions as the organizing

elements of society. Instead it fell to individuals to determine their life courses and the

consequences therein. The redistribution of risk reflected a society that no longer offered strong

social support for individuals. That support must now come from within.

This internal self-society came in the form of individualization. According to Bauman

(2001), "'individualization' consists in transforming human 'identity' from a 'given' into a

'task'—and charging the actors with the responsibility for performing that task and for the

consequences (also the side effects) of their performance" (p. xx). Bauman's emphasis on

identity as a task is important because it shifts the interpretation of identity from a state of being and belonging into a state of doing. In this state of doing the emphasis falls to individuals as actors whose identity or self is a performance for which they are solely responsible. This performance framing is slightly different, however, from Goffman's (1959) in that self or identity relies on the task of performance, not on the interpretation of that action by an audience.

Working across discussions of individualization, Yan (2010) offered a summary of four key issues at work within individualization: differentiation and disembedment (or dissociation) from the social (Bauman, 2000; Giddens, 1991); compulsive and obligatory self-determination (Bauman, 2000); living a "life of one's own through conformity" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 151); and cultural democratization (Beck, 1992). Differentiation and disembedment from the social describes individuals' experiences of relative isolation and disconnection from traditional tight-knit social structures such as family or cultural community. Compulsive and obligatory self-determination reflects the social pressure individuals experience to be proactive in determining the course of their lives without the benefit of protection or support previously offered by social structures such as family or community. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's living a "life of one's own through conformity" refers to individuals' reliance on social institutions for definitions of meaning and biography despite the appearance of greater individuality and autonomy, which foster a false sense of control over one's life. Finally, cultural democratization depicts the internalization of democracy as a cultural value that organizes relationships and everyday life.

Each of these four elements reflects the forced social isolation and imposed social obligations of individuals to create lifestyles and life patterns that approximate re-embedment (or re-association) without actually reconnecting to stable social groupings. In other words,

individualization forces individuals to render themselves in socially and culturally relevant and intelligible ways that mimic previous forms of social order but ultimately reinforce a type of isolated individualism. This isolated individualism carries with it the burden of responsibility for the consequences of identity performances across all of an individuals' social contexts. This burden is an aspect of individualization that I develop later, in Chapter 5.

Identity Capital

Linked to individualization is the third sensitizing concept of identity capital, which comes from the work of Côté (1996, 1997, 2002). According to Côté, identity functions as a resource that individuals acquire and exchange through social interactions as part of maturating into adulthood. This maturation relies on the process of individualization in which people must "'individualize' their life projects by embarking on self-styled career/lifestyle trajectories based on their own personal preferences and choices" (Côté, 2002, p. 118). Côté (1997) found two separate and distinct forms of individualization that young adults adopted as part of their maturing to adulthood. The first version was *default individualization*, in which young adults assembled amalgamated forms of individual and community identities that lack coherence in identity, direction, and purpose. The second version of individualization was *developmental individualization*, in which young adults had formed an individualized sense of self through a prolonged and diligent process of human development and needs articulation.

Drawing on works from sociology (Beck, 1992; Gergen, 1991), social psychology (House, 1977), and psychology (Erikson, 1959/1980; Marcia, 1966), Côté argued that culture provided a social context in which individuals formed their identity, that cultural context facilitated or constrained the types of identity individuals formed, and that late 20th century society created tremendous social and psychological ambiguity in how individuals fit into their

cultural contexts, best described by the concept of individualization (Côté, 1996, 1997, 2000; Côté & Levine, 2002). He saw individualization as the larger driving force behind adult life in the late 20th century; full participation in society required the development of mature adult and community identities (Côté, 1997).

Côté (1996) argued that at its most basic level "'identity capital' denotes what individuals 'invest' in 'who they are'" (p. 425). A more complex rendering of identity capital suggested that identity capital consists of tangible resources (e.g., knowledge and skills, economic wealth, cultural knowledge, social networks) and intangible resources (e.g., personality, the wherewithal to meet social challenges, a developed sense of self) which individuals use and exchange as part of the tasks of developing a mature adult identity and a mature community identity (Côté, 1997). Côté was particular in identifying adult identity and community identity as necessary for individuals to live psychologically and economically productive lives; however, Côté also clarified that individuals did not necessarily have to adopt an authentic or coherent set of adult and community identities to achieve adult status, creating greater degrees of freedom in forming and expressing identity that conferred greater social and economic benefits. The ability to adopt inauthentic and incoherent adult and community identities is important because it allows individuals the ability to express identity in ways that garner them the most benefit based on situation and context.

Critical Media/Cultural Studies

The final theoretical perspective informing this research project was critical media/cultural studies and its connections to education. The interpretation of critical media/cultural studies that I employed combined critical theory, critical pedagogy, cultural studies, and media studies from Kellner (1995, 1998, 2000, 2003, 2009), Giroux (2001, 2002,

2003, 2009), McLaren (1995, 1999, 2007), Kincheloe (2007), and Buckingham (2003). I focused on their examinations of the ways in which media culture has (re)enforced a social curriculum of commercialization and commodification of people and cultural resources. Kellner, for example, has argued that critical media/cultural studies is needed to resist the strong influence that media culture has on our society—from valorization of a military culture to repressive constructions of Black men as threat and malice (Kellner, 1995, 1998, 2003) As a way to operationalize this theoretical lens for the context of Facebook, I used Kellner's (2009) critical media/cultural studies model and focused on students' production and reproduction of culture through Facebook. Kellner's model consists of three interrelated components: the production and political economy of culture (the materiality of culture), culture as text (textual analysis of culture), and audience reception (use of media culture).

The production and political economy of culture deals with treating culture "according to the logic of commodification and capital accumulation" (p. 9). This component of the model closely resembles traditional Marxist analysis of the modes and relations of production, and aligns closely with Horkheimer and Adorno's (2002) idea of a culture industry in which media and culture serve primarily as material goods with use and exchange value and reflects rather than objects with primarily social value. With culture as a form of industry, culture represents an economic good and as such is subject to commodification, standardization, and massification— cultural artifacts that are produced explicitly to be exchanged and consumed. In short, culture becomes a tangible object that can be mass-produced and exploited for profit.

The second component of Kellner's (2009) model—culture as text—prioritizes the ideological elements of culture and addresses culture as a type of text for semiotic analysis. This component of the model emphasizes the written and symbolic forms of culture present through

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media. Mediated culture is laden with rich imaginative content that carries multiple layers of

implicit and explicit meaning, and these layers of meaning reflect the social power relations of

the context in which they were written. This perspective of culture is heavily shaped by critical

semiotic scholars in the mid- to late-twentieth century, such as Barthes and those in the

Birmingham School, who argued that contemporary culture contained a taken-for-granted quality

that hid or obscured underlying forms of oppressive or exploitive power. Barthes (1957/1972),

for example, called this a false obviousness that hid problematic symbolic messages in mundane

cultural exchanges. Others, such as scholars from the Birmingham School, framed these issues

of power and contested power as forms of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic culture. Hebdige's

(1979) analysis of sub-cultural style in 1970s London is an excellent example of counter-

hegemonic culture contesting dominant cultural norms through clothing and music that violated

cultural norms in order to reject forms of social and economic exploitation during a period of

high inflation and massive unemployment.

The final component of the model—audience reception—emphasizes how an audience

"reads" and acts upon or uses media culture (Kellner, 2009). Audience reception is where much

of the activity of critical media/cultural studies happens. Through their responses to mediated

culture, individuals engage that media to reproduce and perpetuate cultural texts in their lives, or

offer oppositional readings of media that contest problematic messages and how they contribute

to the production of culture as a material entity. Hall (1980), in an effort to complicate the

positivism of communication studies, discussed audience reception as a process of decoding and

encoding messages. As Hall argued, audiences decode or read messages based on their

knowledge and experiences. This process of decoding and encoding relies on the audience's

ability read the symbolic content of the message and not just the literal content. Like Hall,

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Kellner (2009) argued that an audience needs a critical social theory to engage the "dialectic of text and context" (p. 20) to articulate the underlying forms of social, economic, political, and cultural power conveyed through media culture. The better equipped an audience is to interpret the symbolic meanings between text and context, the better that audience is able to resist or challenge problematic uses of that media culture.

As sensitizing concepts, these theories were not universally applied in the analysis of data in this study. For example, self-presentation was more prominent in the findings of Chapter 4 in which I emphasized a constructivist analysis of students' uses and interpretations of Facebook. Whereas individualization, identity capital, and critical media/cultural studies were more prominent in the findings of Chapter 5, in which I emphasized a critical social science perspective of students' uses and interpretations.

Data Collection Procedures

Data collection in this study occurred in two phases using three primary methods. The first phase of data collection included a use and demographics survey (See Appendix F) and a combination of participant observation and document analysis of students' Facebook profiles through profile observation and screen capture (See Appendix G). The second phase of data collection featured semi-structured one-on-one interviews over Skype (See Appendix H). In the following section, I offer detailed descriptions of the research site, participants for both phases of data collection, and the three primary methods of data collection.

Site

The research site for this study was the social network site Facebook.com. At the time of the study, Facebook was the most populated social network site in the world with roughly 700 million users. Facebook was also the most prevalent SNS among college students, with

estimates that more than 90% of college students were active users (Duggan & Brenner, 2013). I also chose Facebook as a site for ethnographic research because it was one of the most comprehensive SNSs available at the time. Users could post a wide range of text, photographs, videos, and audio to the website. Using these four forms of media, the website allowed individual users to create pages with extensive personal information, the ability to link to the pages of other users as Friends, the ability to create private and public "group" pages that linked several users together for focused interaction, instant-message-style chat features, private messaging similar to email, the ability to post photographs and identify other Facebook users in them, the ability to post comments directly onto other users' profiles, and the ability to post hyperlinks to other content on the Internet (e.g., videos, news articles, audio files). As a research site, Facebook provided a data-rich environment for observing and interacting with participants through a combination of synchronous and asynchronous interactions.

Participants

All of the participants in this study were undergraduate students over the age of 18 and currently enrolled in at least 6 units at a 2-year or 4-year college or university in the United States. Participation was open to students enrolled in public or private institutions, as well as non-profit and for-profit institutions. A separate recruitment process occurred for each of the two study phases—(a) survey and profile observation and (b) semi-structured interviews—with participants from phase one serving as a recruitment pool for phase two. Participants who completed the use and demographics survey as well as connected with me as Friends for profile observation had the option of receiving a $10 gift card of their choosing or being entered into raffles for $50 gift cards. Participants who completed phase two did not receive any form of compensation. Students who completed phase two selected or approved pseudonyms to identify

them. For students who only complete phase one, I assigned them numerical data identifiers.

Throughout this study, I have redacted the names of cities, states, colleges, universities, or

cultural landmarks that might help in the identification of students. Despite the scale of

Facebook, I wanted to ensure that the participants in this study remain as anonymous as possible

while allowing me the greatest degrees of freedom in sharing details from their surveys,

Facebook profiles, and interviews.

Phase one

Recruitment of participants for phase one occurred during the summer of 2012 through

notices posted to Facebook, recruitment emails sent to student affairs professionals throughout

the United States, and Facebook posts and mentions by me and my personal network of friends

and colleagues. One of the tools to help promote this recruitment was the use of a WordPress

website: http://facebookstudy.org/. This custom website provided potential participants with a

welcome page, information about me (See Appendix B), information about the study (See

Appendix C), documents related to the study (such as the IRB approved study information sheet)

(See Appendix E), and a means of contacting me to volunteer as a participant or inquire for more

information (See Appendix D). When potential participants completed the contact and

information request form, the website sent an email with that information to my UCLA email

address. The contact and information form asked for students' email addresses and Facebook

page URLs. As I received this information from potential participants, I emailed a hypertext link

to the use and demographics survey and placed a Friend request on Facebook.

I used this website as the filtering method for enrolling users in this study as part of my

efforts to be consistent in my communication and interaction with potential participants, and to

make sure that participants did not feel any coercion to participate. When a potential participant

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submitted their interest email from the website, I responded with an invitation to complete the survey and a Friend request on Facebook. The use of this website also provided participants with a durable means of accessing information about the study in a way that was consistent with their experiences as Internet users (e.g., an interactive, digital record that allowed them to repeatedly access information at their convenience). The website also made raising awareness or sharing study information with friends and peers much easier. Rather than having to share extensive digital files or emails, I could direct interested people to the website with a simple web address.

Purposeful sample selection occurred for phase one with some attention to deviant case sampling, maximum variation sampling, and homogeneous sampling (Patton, 2002). Maximum variation sampling was the guiding strategy; however, I also sought student participants that represented deviant cases as well as clusters of participants to address issues of institutional or social identity influences. This approach of multi-layered purposeful sampling is a bit unorthodox, but in constructing this study I knew that purposeful cross-sections of participants would be helpful for deeper and potentially more representative analysis.

A total of 41 students expressed interest in phase one of the study with 39 students completing the use and demographic survey and providing me access to their profiles as a Friend. Of these 39 students, three students were graduate students or had completed their undergraduate study, and were excluded from the present study. For the remaining 35 students, I verified their status as current undergraduate students through a combination of college and university student directories, finding academic information posted to their Facebook profiles, and conducting Google searches that listed participants as students affiliated with their college or university (e.g.,

news articles about campus organizations or activities that identified the participants by name).

All of these students were verified as currently enrolled undergraduate students.

The verified study participants represented a wide range of social identities, geographic locations, and institutional types. There were also a number of clusters of students from the same school, which allowed for potential analyses within single institutions. Table 1 provides details on the demographic characteristics of the participants for phase one, and Table 2 provides the use characteristics of participants from phase one.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics for Phase One Participants

Participants	Age	Institution Type	Geographic Region	Year in College	Race/Ethnicity*	Sexual Orientation	Gender
Andrew	21	Public, Research	Midwest	Junior	White	Queer	Male
Kelly	24	Public, Research	Midwest	S. Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female
Tiffany	21	Private Research	East Coast	Junior	White, Taiwanese	Heterosexual	Female
Kristin	20	Public, Masters	West Coast	Sophomore	White	Heterosexual	Female
Jennifer	23	Public, Research	South	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female
Bruce	23	Public, Masters	West Coast	S. Senior	White	Heterosexual	Male
Sasha	22	Private, Liberal Arts	Midwest	Sophomore	White	Queer	Female
Franny	21	Public, Research	West Coast	Senior	Japanese, Mexican	Heterosexual	Female
Alice	22	Private, Liberal Arts	Midwest	Junior	Vietnamese**	Heterosexual	Female
Amanda	22	Public, Research	Midwest	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female
River	20	Public, Research	West Coast	Freshman	White	Heterosexual	Female
Reed	22	Private Research	Midwest	Junior	White	Queer	Male
Maddy	23	Public, Research	Midwest	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female
Hannah	22	Private, Liberal Arts	East Coast	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female
Jeff	22	Private, Liberal Arts	Midwest	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Male
Dora	23	Public, Research	South	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female
Liz	21	Public, Masters	West Coast	S. Senior	White	Asexual	Female

Table 1 Cont.

Pikachu	19	Public, Research	South	Freshman	Hispanic	Heterosexual	Male
Melinda	20	Public, Research	South	Sophomore	White	Heterosexual	Female
James	20	Public, Research	West Coast	Sophomore	White	Heterosexual	Male
Turtle	22	Private, Liberal Arts	East Coast	Junior	White, Asian	Heterosexual	Female
Molly	22	Private, Liberal Arts	East Coast	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female
John	21	Private, Liberal Arts	East Coast	Junior	White	Heterosexual	Male
Jill	22	Public, Research	South	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female
Patrick	23	Public, Research	South	Senior	White	Gay	Male
4	23	Public, Masters	West Coast	Senior	African American	Heterosexual	Female
6	21	Public, Masters	West Coast	Senior	Filipino	Heterosexual	Male
16	21	Private Research	East Coast	Junior	White	Bisexual	Female
19	22	Private Research	West Coast	Junior	White	Heterosexual	Female
21	21	Public, Research	Midwest	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female
30	20	Public, Research	South	Sophomore	White	Heterosexual	Female
34	21	Public, Liberal Arts	South	Sophomore	Cuban, White	Heterosexual	Male
36	21	Public, Research	West Coast	Sophomore	Hispanic	Heterosexual	Female
37	22	Public, Research	Midwest	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Male
40	23	Public, Research	Midwest	Senior	White	Heterosexual	Female

* Race/Ethnicity labels reflect students' written responses, rather than predetermined categories.

**Alice was also an international student.

Table 2

Use Pattern for Phase One Participants

Participant	Years on Facebook	Hours /Day	Visits /Day	Update Status	Add photos	Remove photos	Add Friends	Remove Friends
Alice	5	3.5	5	5	4	2	5	3
Amanda	7	2.0	15	7	5	1	5	7
Andrew	5	1.5	10	7	4	1	4	2
Bruce	4	8.0	20	7	3	1	7	1
Dora	5	2.5	10	4	1	1	5	2
Franny	5	4.0	20	6	5	6	7	3
Hannah	6	5.0	10	6	5	2	5	2
James	3	2.0	30	4	3	2	4	2
Jeff	7	0.5	5	7	5	3	6	3
Jennifer	3	2.0	10	6	3	3	9	3
Jill	5	2.0	20	6	6	6	7	3
John	4	0.5	4	3	2	3	7	1
Kelly	5	1.0	4	6	3	3	5	3
Kristin	3	4.5	5	7	5	3	5	2
Liz	4	2.5	10	5	3	1	5	2
Maddy	6	1.0	5	6	5	3	6	2
Melinda	5	1.0	7	5	3	1	4	4
Molly	6	1.0	15	6	5	2	5	2
Patrick	6	1.0	10	7	3	1	5	3
Pikachu	4	1.0	6	6	5	2	4	2
Reed	4	4.5	40	7	4	3	4	5
River	4	1.5	10		7	5	5	2
Sasha	6	2.0	50	2	3	4	6	2
Tiffany	3	1.5	6	5	7	1	8	1
Turtle	4	2.0	7	5	5	2	4	2
4	4	1.5	10	7	5	5	7	4
6	6	1.5	10	7	6	3	7	6
16	5	2.0	7	7	3	2	6	3
19	5	2.0	6	8	3	2	4	2
21	5	1.0	5	5	3	3	5	3
30	4	1.0	4	5	3	1	4	3
34	3	1.0	20	7	5	4	7	5
36	3	3.0	5	5	6	4	7	4
37	4	2.0	15	5	3	5	5	2
40	5	1.0	6	7	6	2	8	7
Average	4.66	2.11	12.06					
Mode	5			7	3	1	5	2

Coding for Status, Photos, and Friends Variables: 1 = Never, 2 = Once or Twice per Year, 3 = Once Every Few Months, 4 = Once a Month, 5 = Several Times a Month, 6 = Once a Week, 7 = Several Times a Week, 8 = Once a Day, 9 = Several Times a Day

The institutional breakdown of the phase one study sample in Table 1 included 35 students with a strong representation of public institutions: 18 from public research universities, five from public master's universities, one from a public liberal arts college, four from private research universities, and seven students from private liberal arts colleges. These students attended 21 schools in 11 states: California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Virginia. The student population was weighted toward advanced students with an average age of 21.6 and a breakdown of three second-year seniors, 15 seniors, eight juniors, seven sophomores, and two first-year students.

The social identity characteristics of phase one participants reflected a majority of students who identified their race as White, their sexual orientation as heterosexual, and their gender as female. The racial breakdown of the sample was 26 White students, two Hispanic students, one African American student, one Filipino student, one Vietnamese student, and four mixed-race students. The sexual orientation representation of the sample was 29 heterosexual students, three queer students, one asexual student, one bisexual student, and one gay student. Finally, the gender distribution of the sample was 24 female students and 11 male students. (There were two transgender students in the sample and both of them identified with their gender of transition rather than transgender. Table 1 honors that identification.)

The average number of years of Facebook use for phase one participants was 4.66, with an average time per day of 2.11 hours and 12.06 visits per day. Table 2 also shows that most students updated their status "several times a week"; added photos "once every few months"; removed photos "never" or "once or twice per year"; added Friends "several times a month"; and removed Friends "once or twice per year." The overall pattern reflected students' likelihood of adding content to their profiles and an unlikelihood of removing content. This meant that most

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of students' activity on Facebook focused on adding and modifying content, rather than reducing personal content on their pages.

Phase two

Recruitment for phase two drew on the participant pool of phase one and occurred over an extended period of time, as I engaged in theoretical sampling (Charmaz, 2006) from phase one participants to ensure that I was capturing data saturation on key themes that emerged during the interview process. During phase two I interviewed a total of 25 students in order to ensure data saturation and representativeness of phase one participants. The participants from phase two are identifiable in Tables 1 and 2 by their pseudonyms.

Use and Demographics Survey

The first step in data collection for this study was a use and demographics survey, which I sent to students when they completed the interest form to sign up for the study on the study website. With a participant population spread across the United States, I created and administered the use and demographics survey through Google Drive (an Internet-based document service provided by Google.com). Google Drive is an encrypted web service, ensuring that participants' answers were protected from other Internet users through a secure database. The use of Google Drive as a web application allowed me to invite individual participants to complete the survey through direct emails from the Google Drive application or by including a hypertext link in emails to participants. The survey was set up to allow users to complete and revise their answers at their own discretion. Most participants completed the survey within a day or two of receiving the survey invitation.

The survey itself consisted of three major sections: patterns of Facebook use (12 items), general and identity information about participants (40 items), and open-ended questions about

Facebook's strengths and weaknesses (3 items) (See Appendix F). Questions on students'

patterns of use explored how often they used Facebook, how much time they spent on Facebook

per day, and how often they did certain tasks such as posting photos and statuses. The general

information questions covered age, university, year in school, major, and hometown. The

identity questions focused on several social identities (religious, racial/ethnic, political, sexual

orientation, nationality, gender, and romantic relationships). These social identities were chosen

as categories that both overlap with Facebook content and areas that Facebook does not include

in its About Me section. In order to provide students with maximum degrees of freedom in

defining their identity, social identity questions were a combination of open-text fields allowing

students to define each aspect of identity in their own words, scales to rank the personal

importance of that identity and the importance of that identity to their relationships, and an open-

text field to discuss group memberships involving that identity. The final section of the survey

offered open-text fields for students to discuss what they liked most and least about Facebook

and what they felt was missing from Facebook.

The use and demographics survey provided data for basic descriptive statistics of

participants, created a baseline of information to confirm or disconfirm data (Patton, 2002) from

the profiles and interviews, and allowed me to capture simple descriptive data without having to

take time away from the interviews. The survey also provided a foundation for talking about

Facebook and building rapport with students during the interview process.

Facebook Profiles

Students' Facebook profiles were a complex and extensive source of data. My approach

to their profiles was to treat them as locations for ongoing participant observation and as media

documents for document analysis. I gained access to students' profiles when they accepted my

Friend request. It is important to note that students were able to set whatever access and privacy restrictions on me that they wanted. At the time of the study Facebook allowed users to set restrictions on access of an individual user or categories of users to single items on a profile (such as a photo), groups of items (such as a photo album or albums), and entire sections of the profile (such as all photographs). As a Friend viewing a participant's profile, I had limited ways to know what types of restrictions if any they had set on my access. However, the degree to which I had or did not have access did not restrict my ability to observe participants' profiles and collect meaningful and robust data on each participant.

As forms of media documents, Facebook profiles contained types of formal documentation (e.g., content added by the participant to his or her own profile: demographic information, interests, status updates, photographs) and informal documentation (e.g., wall posts, picture tags, and comments on status updates). Owing to the archival potential of digital content on the Internet, the students' profile content constituted a documented representation of individuals and their social interactions, and their Facebook profiles reflected an ideal type of what Miles and Huberman (1994) call material artifacts.

Given the potential for profile change and modification, I adopted a process of recording students' Facebook profiles through screen capture software on my computer to ensure that I had stable and accurate data for analysis. During this process, I recorded screen captures of all posts and comments related to the observation protocol (See Appendix G): Timeline/Wall Posts, About Me, Friends, Photos (as albums and individual photos), Favorites/Likes, Maps, and Notes. These data varied from student to student depending on overall Facebook activity and length of time on Facebook.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Prior to the start of the one-on-one interviews, I confirmed with participants that they understood the rights and privileges listed in the Study Information Sheet (See Appendix E). Interviews were semi-structured, one-on-one interviews, lasted 60-90 minutes, and occurred over the video-chat software Skype. I chose Skype because it allowed me to include students from across the country at minimal cost and to further contain this research project in cyber-technology. Skype also created a more secure, personal, and intimate long-distance interview experience. Participants selected their interview location and could see and react to my non-verbal cues just as I could see and react to their non-verbal cues. By using semi-structured interviews, both the participants and I were able to influence the direction and content of the interview in more open and explicit ways (Fontana & Frey, 2005; Patton, 2002). I entered the interview with a modest set of possible questions in key areas that allowed new topics and foci to emerge as the interview progressed (See Appendix H). The specific questions that I asked varied from interview to interview, and throughout the interview process I modified questions to address key areas and themes that emerged from previous interviews. My selection of using semi-structured interviews also came from the ethical considerations of interviewer and interviewee power relationships present in framing interviews and interpretation (Fontana & Frey, 2005; S. R. Jones, 2002; Wolcott, 2002).

Data Analysis Procedures

Data analysis in this study followed a constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006). Charmaz argued that the grounded theory is a set of principles and practices to guide qualitative research that examines processes, emphasizes a study of action, and creates abstract interpretive understandings of data. The guiding practice for data analysis in grounded theory is

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the constant comparative method in which data collection and analysis occur concurrently. For this study, I used successive efforts of collecting and analyzing data as opportunities to seek evidence that confirmed or disconfirmed interpretations from preceding analyses (Patton, 2002). As a grounded theory approach, I focused on the process of students creating their self-presentations, the action created or reflected in their processes of self-presentation, and the broad links of meaning and purpose that resulted from the act of creating self-presentations.

Grounded theory was a vital analytic approach for this study because the data involved students' self-presentation that are simultaneously an underdeveloped area of study within the uses and applications of social network sites, and the iterative nature of these self-presentations to change with new interpretations of meaning associated with them. As such, the aims of this data analysis were to contribute new knowledge and interpretations of how students use social network sites as part of their college lives and to capture the range of self-presentations and associated meanings that students enact through SNSs. One of the tools that I used to pursue these aims was to use the constructivist analysis of the first findings chapter as the foundation for the critical analysis of the second findings chapter. This layering of analyses was an effort to problematize some of the students' assumptions and raise questions about some of the social power disparities that emerged as subtle issues in the earlier rounds of coding and analysis.

Coding

Following techniques for qualitative research suggested by Charmaz (2006), the process of data coding and analysis began prior to formal data collection with early reflective journaling to identify initial assumptions, areas of personal interests, and potential biases that might influence the later data collection and analysis processes. These reflective journals served as

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foundation for code development and data analysis as I collected data through surveys, profile observations, and semi-structured interviews.

Data from the use and demographics survey was copied into Excel for variable recoding and organization. Short answer and Likert-style questions were compiled to generate basic descriptive statistics of frequencies, ranges, and means/modes/medians. Open-ended data were copied into the software package Atlas.ti 6: Qualitative Data Analysis (version 6.2.28). In Atlas.ti I developed a separate set of codes for each of the open-ended interview questions. These questions and codes were useful in informing my interpretation and analysis of students' Facebook profiles.

Each profile included data from an average six years of Facebook activity (beginning from when they first got accounts until the time of screen capture) and took approximately 6-8 hours to collect per profile. These six years of data amounted to roughly 5,000-15,000 posts or comments (by the student or Friends) per student. In reviewing their profiles I looked at what was posted and by whom; who were the people in the participant's network(s); what kinds of content participants shared and did not share with their network; what participants posted to other people's profiles; and what content participants "liked" or commented on from other people's pages.

For the sake of the current study, I focused my attention on the academic year 2011-2012 to capture the social ebbs and flows of the traditional academic year, have a set of similar potential cultural markers (e.g., references to popular films, music, and news events), have participant data that was most closely related to their current experiences and self-presentations, and have a consistent set of data between participants. After harvesting each profile I wrote memos on key areas of interest that stood out during the data collection process and I used

computer software to redact names from screen capture images and stored the profile data in folders labeled with each participants' numeric identifier. These memos helped inform what questions I asked during the semi-structured interviews, which influenced both the data yielded from the interviews and the use of interviews for data saturation on major themes present in the surveys and profiles memos.

The audio from each interview was recorded and transcribed verbatim. Immediately after interviews, I wrote extensive memos and field notes. In these memos and notes, I captured unique and compelling themes and ideas from the interview, noted connections to survey and profile data, and identified gaps or important ideas to explore in future interviews. These memos and field notes then served as a foundation for my process of formal coding of interview data.

Similar to the open-ended survey questions, I copied these transcripts into Atlas.ti 6: Qualitative Data Analysis (version 6.2.28) for coding and analysis. Using a variation Charmaz's (2006) suggested approach for grounded theory coding, I conducted three rounds of comparative analytic coding: initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding. During the initial coding stage, I assigned basic codes to individual lines and events within the transcript data and the open-ended survey questions. In the focused coding stage, I used Atlas.ti 6: Qualitative Data Analysis to group the initial codes into emerging themes that captured major areas of interest or importance from the interviews and surveys. With the final stages of theoretical coding, I linked together the thematic elements and relationships revealed through the focused coding that served as a foundation for the findings and development of the grounded theory in this study. The stage of thematic coding occurred through a combination of grouping codes in Atlas.ti 6: Qualitative Data Analysis and grouping focused codes through analytic writing. The initial and focused

coding process generated 180 focused codes in 35 categories that reflected the way students used and interpreted personal and peer self-presentations on Facebook.

Convergent and Divergent Thematic Analysis

As I noted earlier, one of the ways in which I was using the constant comparative method was seeking out confirming and disconfirming data for themes within the study. To formalize this process, I used convergent and divergent thematic analysis (Patton, 2002). The code counting function of Atlas.ti software was particularly helpful in identifying and emphasizing potential moments of convergence and divergence. Convergence occurred when multiple participants expressed similar ideas or answers to interview and survey questions, forming repeated patterns within the data. Divergence occurred when one or two participants expressed an idea that was unique from or in conflict with the patterns and forms of convergence expressed by other participants. The moments of divergence were often particularly telling of Facebook and self-presentation phenomena and instrumental in challenging or revealing potential analytic errors contained in theme convergences. These moments of divergence were also an area that I found to be under or poorly represented in extant research.

The convergent and divergent thematic analysis served as a powerful way to locate the findings of this study against the existing and growing body of research literature on how undergraduate students use and interpret Facebook use, as well as pointed out areas that other research has not yet captured. This thematic approach also provided a way to use my sensitizing theoretical concepts (self-presentation, individualization and identity capital, and critical pedagogy) as informing interpretive tools within a grounded theory to challenge and confirm current interpretations and assumptions about the meaning and value of students' extensive relationships and self-presentations on Facebook.

Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness in data collection and analysis is vital to conducting robust qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to ensure the rigor of data collection and analysis in this study, I incorporated Lincoln and Guba's (1986) four suggested criteria as a measure of trustworthiness: *credibility* (the truth value of the research), *transferability* (the applicability of the research to similar contexts), *dependability* (the consistency of data and analysis), and *confirmability* (the relative researcher neutrality in interpreting data and presenting analysis). These four criteria for trustworthiness provided a scaffolding to reinforce the strength of my analysis at all stages of this project.

Triangulation

The first major component I employed to ensure trustworthiness for this project was triangulation. This triangulation contributed to credibility, dependability, and confirmability. According to Patton (2002) there are four types of triangulation that can "contribute to verification and validation of qualitative analysis" (p. 556): *methods* (the use of multiple methods), *data sources* (the use of multiple sources within the same method), *analyst triangulation* (the use of multiple researchers to confirm findings), and *theory/perspective triangulation* (the use of multiple perspective to interpret the data).

I began this study with triangulation in mind. I designed the two phases of participant recruitment and data collection to be progressive, so that I would have multiple forms of data for each student (method triangulation) and multiple participants for each data set (source triangulation). Method triangulation allowed me to compare and contrast students' self-presentations in multiple formats to find patterns and discrepancies for each student. For example, I incorporated an in-depth range of ways for students to describe various social

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identities into the use and demographics survey as a way to capture information students may not have specifically written on their Facebook profiles (such as sexual orientation or religion). I then used this information to help me interpret the dense complex of self-presentations they made through Facebook. For example, considering ambiguous references to sexual orientation or religion as a way to see how sexual orientation or religion might have influenced the nuances of their self-presentation. I addressed data source triangulation by having all of my participants in each phase complete the same data collection method, with the participants in phase one completing two of three major methods, and participants in phase two completing all three. This approach facilitated comparing data and findings between students and their experiences.

I also employed theory triangulation, by emphasizing two different theoretical frameworks in my data analysis. For Chapter 4, I employ a constructivist framework to analyze and describe students' interpretations of their behavior on and uses of Facebook. In conducting this analysis, I tried to be as faithful as possible to the forms of interpretation that students presented in their discussion of sociality and self-presentation through Facebook. This chapter draws more heavily on Goffman's (1959) model of self-presentation and less on identity capital and critical media/cultural studies. In Chapter 5, I applied a critical media/cultural studies framework that drew heavily on individualization and identity capital to challenge and interrogate issues of power and consumerism based on similar data from Chapter 4. My intention was to put these two theoretical perspectives in conversation with each other to offer insights that address the strengths and weaknesses of the other.

Prolonged and Persistent Engagement

One of the major ways in which I addressed credibility in my analysis was through prolonged and persistent engagement. I conducted formal fieldwork from June 2012 through

December 2012, with follow-up assessments between January 2013 and April 2013. Guba and

Lincoln (1989) argue that prolonged engagement is necessary to "overcome the effects of

misinformation, distortion, or presented 'fronts'…to facilitate immersing oneself in and

understanding the context's culture" (p. 237). During this same time period, I also engaged in

persistent observation through regular and frequent viewing of Facebook profiles and my News

Feed. Lincoln and Guba argue that persistent engagement "adds depth to scope that prolonged

engagement affords" (p. 237). As a pair, prolonged and persistent engagement allowed me to

address issues of credibility and dependability in my analysis.

Member Checks

Member checks or respondent validation are an important part of ensuring the credibility

of qualitative analysis (Merriam, 2009). I conducted member checks as part of my process of

concluding interviews and through interview transcript review. Many participants were curious

about my interpretations and findings during the interviews, so I also used time at the end of

interviews to share my interpretations and findings and seek their feedback. Students were

helpful in suggesting new interview questions or issues to address in future interviews, as well as

challenging or confirming my initial interpretations. I also asked students to review verbatim

interview transcripts to make sure the interview captured both what they said and what they

meant by their statements. I encouraged participants to offer notes for any corrections or

clarifications that they wished to have included in the study. These member checks were

valuable in confirming the accuracy of participants' ideas in the transcripts as well providing

them with additional agency and voice in directing the data and study.

Peer Debriefing

Throughout the research process, I conferred with academic peers to discuss the progress of the study and my initial and tentative findings through the process called peer debriefing (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). These colleagues asked me challenging questions about my projects, offered me notes and critiques on my interpretations, suggested alternative interpretations, and recommend additional published research to consult. Although none of these peers were experts on students' use of Facebook, all of these peers were familiar with Facebook as active users and had worked with college students for several years. As such they were in a unique position to draw on professional and personal experiences to offer feedback and critique to my analysis as it unfolded.

Reflective Journaling

As part of my role as a researcher, I engaged in reflective journaling throughout the entire research process as a way to address researcher reflexivity (Guba & Lincoln, 2005). Reflective journaling allowed me to record my thoughts about the study and data as it developed, experiment and think through potential interpretations of the study data, and bracket my potential biases about and interpretations of the data and Facebook. Guba and Lincoln argued that researcher reflexivity is an important part of ensuring research credibility and confirmability in qualitative research where the researcher is the instrument of data collection and analysis.

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Limitations

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As multiple qualitative researchers have argued, a way of seeing is also a way of not seeing (Eisner, 1998; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 2009). The research design, data collection, and data analysis of this study was no different. The choices I made throughout the course of this study created ways of seeing and not seeing that served as limitations to and for the

study. I highlight some of those limitations here to help readers as they interpret my findings and analysis.

The first limitation of this study is transferability of the findings from this study to the complete range of diversity in higher education. Despite reaction data saturation for the major findings in this study, I was not able to recruit students from all variations of socio-cultural and institutional diversity in higher education. For participants in phase one, gaps exist in the data and sample for students who are older than 18-22 years old, students who work full-time, or students at community colleges. The absence of these students is noteworthy because they represent some of the fastest growing and most poorly represented populations in the research literature (Dowd, 2003). For phase two, another gap exists among the students who identified as African American. I made thorough efforts to encourage representative participation across the phase one sample but was not successful. As such the data and findings presented in this study capture the experiences of the study participants, but may not address the experiences of a broader range of undergraduate students in higher education. It will have to remain for future research to explore if and how the findings from this study are transferable to a different cross-section of students.

A second limitation of this study is the rapidly changing environment of Facebook and social media. The pressure to create newer and better social networking tools is constant, and even during the process of data collection for this study, Facebook was implementing changes in how the website presented and displayed users' profiles and personal information. Wherever possible I adapted to these changes to create consistency among the data that I collected; however, minor discrepancies do exist in the physical display of data for two profiles where students opted not to use the Timeline feature on their profiles. It is not clear if these changes to

data display had an impact on the type or quantity of data. One could argue that any change

carried different interpretive and symbolic value because students crafted their profile pages

based on how others would see their profiles. Any change in how information displayed meant

that students changed how they approached what information they posted on Facebook. For

example, in Facebook's early years students' wall posts were treated as individual events, rather

than part of a stream of conversation. Students were only able to post single comments on a

Friend's wall, and then have that Friend post a reply on the first student's wall. The result was

that individual pages had single fragments of conversation posted by other users, but not the

whole conversation or stream of comments and responses. In the present study, it is possible that

the minor changes in display during this project had some impact on the absolute consistence of

data between profiles but not within profiles.

Finally, this study was ultimately about Facebook. Readers must exercise caution in how

they transfer the findings of this study to other social media. This limitation is commonly noted

with qualitative research, but it bears repeating. I selected Facebook because it was the most

comprehensive form of social media at the time of the study, as well as the most used by college

students. Being a study of only Facebook means that the findings of this study may not readily

transfer to other forms of social media where the social norms and the uses are different.

YouTube, for example, is a social medium in which users post videos and have the ability to

comment on their own and other's videos. Being video based, the site does not include

photographs and self-descriptions in the same way Facebook does, so the forms of self-

presentation are understandably different. It is possible that some of the findings of this study

transfer in whole or in part; however, additional research will need to demonstrate the

trustworthiness of transferring these findings to other social media.

Terminal Assumptions

In constructing this study, I have embraced Guba and Lincoln's (1989) argument that research is always a political act that represents some ideological stance. In an effort to be explicit about my biases and interests, I wish to lay bare four terminal assumptions within this project that guided how I approached data collection and analysis.

First, this project assumes that the hardware and software infrastructure of the Internet provides a viable social space for people to interact and negotiate social experiences with other people connected to the Internet. This assumption stems from the extensive body of empirical sociological and psychological research of the Internet that appears to validate and confirm the viability of the Internet as a social environment (e.g., Boase, Horrigan, Wellman, & Rainie, 2006; Hampton, Sessions, & Her, 2010; Haythornthwaite, 2005; Meyen, Pfaff-Rüdiger, Dudenhöffer, & Huss, 2010; Papacharissi, 2002; Rheingold, 1993; Royal, 2008; Wellman & Haythornthwaite, 2002; Wellman et al., 2003). Despite the growing research tradition that argues this assumption as valid and reliable, it is never the less a sine quo non assertion, and I constructed this study with the a priori interpretation of the Internet as rich social space.

Second, I use the terms cyber, virtual, and online interchangeably. Although each of these terms has a particular history stemming from its introduction and use in academic and popular literature (Bell, Loader, Pleace, & Schuler, 2004), the differences of those particular histories are largely irrelevant to this project. More important than their separate histories is the common reference to the use of the physical Internet infrastructure as something beyond hardware and software. Each of these terms facilitates the use of the Internet for social space, and it is from this common usage that I will employ them in this project. I believe this concept of the Internet as social space closely resembles Dewey's (1934) discourse on psychical space in

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the interpretation of art in that the social space itself is constituted through perception and psychical engagement rather than purely tangible forms. This interpretation emphasizes a symbolic interactionist framing of the Internet.

Third, this project assumes that all Internet and wireless social interactions make use of computer-mediated communication (CMC), which is the use of computer technology to send and/or receive information to other people. As such, computers serve as an ever-present intermediary object through which all communication must pass, exerting powerful force on how information is encoded and decoded by senders and receivers through both technical and social coding processes. This transduction process has potentially important cultural and social implications in the use of CMC.

Fourth, this project assumes that as CMC becomes less expensive and more readily available, it also becomes more ubiquitous and more mundane. A key feature of this domestication process of CMC (Baym, 2010) is that technology gains a taken-for-granted quality where it is neither unique nor exceptional. Barthes (Barthes, 1957/1972) described this same quality as "falsely obvious," and I believe that the ubiquity and mundaneness of CMC camouflages the cultural and ideological activity and functions of CMC.

Role of Researcher

I entered this research as an existing participant in social media and a personal history with social media. I started college in the mid-1990s when access to the Internet was becoming less expensive and more ubiquitous. From my first days on campus, I had and used access to email, instant messaging (IM), and chat groups. Throughout college, I continued to use email, IM, and chat groups, and I also began playing multiplayer video games with college friends. My first contact with social network sites was in 2003 when a co-worker introduced me to Friendster,

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but it was not until 2005 that I actually joined an SNS. I was in graduate school working in an office of residence life and my undergraduate residents were regularly encouraging me to create a Facebook profile. I was vaguely aware of what Facebook was at the time, but I had not tried to be part of it. Over time I developed my profile to reflect who I was personally and professionally at the level of information that I wanted to broadcast across the Internet. In creating my profile I tried to craft something that was appropriate for professional and personal use alike. I continue to exercise care in crafting my profile, favoring to say less rather than more.

My professional life has included work in higher education at five institutions through student services offices (office of the registrar, campus activities, residence life, student conduct, and dean of student affairs office) and as an instructor (undergraduate courses in music recording, graduate courses in higher education). In each of these roles I encountered students and or used social media to connect with students, and I have found social media to be both a valuable personal resource and a potential source of distraction. All said and done, though, I think that Facebook and other social media offer tremendous value to their users and represent a technology that can and will continue to change to meet the needs and expectations of users, as well as change the needs and expectations of users.

In conducting the present study, I knew that it would be important to be "real" for the students of this study and I allowed them the same level of access that I allow other students, friends, and peers. During the course of this study my own level of awareness about access and uses of Facebook increased and my sharing on Facebook has decreased. Spending hours upon hours looking through Facebook profiles and my News Feed has left me with a feeling of the enormity of information on Facebook and social media and more questions than answers about how we use social media and for what purposes. I know in my own case, I have posted fewer

status updates and ideas because I have found myself asking more questions about why I am posting it and what purpose it serves. I certainly see the influence of my study participants here—in the excellent questions they asked of themselves (and the sometimes lack of questioning they had before they posted content). Looking forward, I can well imagine a time in which I again actively post to Facebook and even seek ways to make Facebook even more useful in my professional and personal life to be and stay connected to family, friends, and colleagues. If nothing else, I now feel an increased responsibility to be a good role model as a social media user.

CHAPTER 4: LIKE, COMMENT, SHARE – THE CURATED SELF

One of the serious challenges that participants in this study encountered was how to craft an expression of self or identity as a means of interacting with others. This need to create a self-presentation has been well documented throughout research on the social uses of the Internet and computer-mediated communication (CMC) (e.g., Walther, 1996; Wellman et al., 2003) as well as research on SNSs (e.g., Birnbaum, 2008; boyd, 2008b). This need emerges from using the Internet and SNSs to communicate and interact with other people. In this study, I found that students developed a specific form of self-presentation, what I am calling a *curated self*, which allowed them to feel a sense of privacy and control while simultaneously encouraging semi-public access to an unknown audience on Facebook.

The curated self is a digital self-presentation created through an ongoing curatorial process of organizing (assembling, revising, refining, and editing) media elements (photographs, text, video, and visual endorsements) on a Facebook profile in order to create a distinct digital embodiment of self that is both separate from and a continuation of the user's physical self-presentation. These digital embodiments involved three separate layers of curation that corresponded to three different sets of audiences. In crafting each layer of curation, students made use of Facebook's technological affordances to endlessly modify their user profiles and posted content to produce a relatively focused and targeted self-expression.

Within the definition of the curated self, there are four important components: (a) curated selves are digital self-presentations that have meaning in cyber and physical environments; (b) digital self-presentations are an ongoing process of digital embodiment; (c) digital embodiment emerged out of organizing media elements (i.e., assembling, revising, refining, and editing photographs, text, video, and visual endorsements and not prior to this activity); and (d)

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individuals curated their digital self-presentations for social benefit across cyber and in-person environments. I call these self-presentations "curated" because students intentionally, and sometimes quite thoughtfully, crafted digital surrogates of themselves to simultaneously serve as extensions and disruptions of who they saw themselves to be in physical or in-person environments. Much like the curation of a museum, students crafted digital self-presentations that reflected an arrangement of content that imparted rich symbolic and literal meaning to viewers.

The findings in this chapter reflect a constructivist analysis of study data from use and demographic surveys, one-on-one interviews, and multi-media document analysis of students' Facebook profiles. Across all these data sets, a unifying concept emerged that students were engaging in ongoing and active processes of creating digital self-presentations that balanced restricted and expansive representations of themselves in order engage the social world of Facebook. This division was the difference between complete and incomplete disclosure of thoughts, feelings, and daily activities. As the participant Jeff told me, "In Facebook, there are two kinds of Facebook profiles. There are the kind that are accurate histories, and there are the kind that are curated histories…which in my case it's careful curation more than anything else." His curated history was an intentionally redacted summary of his life. It was a symbolic presentation of self (a curated history) that conveyed major ideas rather than a literal representation of self (an accurate history) that shared every detail.

Students created these digital self-presentations as curations of their thoughts, personalities, and interests with selective and intentional gaps between who they were on Facebook and who they were in-person as a way to exert more control over their digital social lives through Facebook. Participants in this study were aware of the curatorial function and use

of Facebook and for most, if not all participants, the idea of curating a self and self-presentation played a significant role in how they weighed what to share and not share, what to post and not post, and how to engage and ignore others.

Curated Between Digital and "Real"

I have previously discussed Goffman's (1959) concept of self-presentation as a constructed form of "expression given off" to some audience. According to Goffman's framework, self-presentation was the result of an audience imparting a "self" onto a performer within a bounded context, and that self-presentation relied on a careful separation of front and back region performances. Self-presentation only occurred when an audience did not have access to seeing a performer prepare for a performance.

The concept of the curated self links the characteristics of impression management in Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical self-presentation and the creation of an embodied online subjectivity in Sundén's (2003) concept of virtual materiality, which she defined as the process of "typing oneself into being" (p. 3). Sundén's virtual materiality extends the idea that self is constructed to argue that all expressions of self or attempts at embodiment are constructed, whether cyber/virtual or physical. She goes further to state that the elements of individual identity (what she calls human subjectivity) reflected in these online selves both expresses and depends upon forms of physical bodies for symbolic and interpretive meaning. For example, when a person lists female as her gender on Facebook, we use our previous experiences with physical (or material) expressions of gender to associate an idea of female or feminine to that person's self-presentation. This idea of relying on physical or material bodies is important because it serves as the foundation of how people interpret the representational meaning of identity as other people list or express various forms of identity. Sundén's virtual materiality

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then provides a complex approach to interpreting expressions of human subjectivity in cyber/virtual environments as dependent on human bodies and physical subjectivities that are always necessarily interpretive constructions. In other words, Sundén bridges the gap between Goffman's physical self-presentations and the complexities of online identity performance.

The ideas behind the curated self appear to echo ideas of self-presentation discussed in other analyses of SNSs (e.g., boyd, 2007b, 2008b; Papacharissi, 2002), with two key distinctions: (a) the curated self emerges from an unending process of interpretation and reinterpretation as content is added or removed and (b) the curated self serves as a mediated object that is distinct from its creator. Each change to a profile (e.g., new photo, status update, comment) has implications for the interpretive meaning of the individual's entire self-presentation and no change is permanent. Indeed, each change reflects the art of curating a self-presentation. Where Goffman (1959) argued that self-presentations reflect a coherent or stable performance of self, allowing for potential inconsistencies from lapses and errors in performance, curated selves incorporate those lapses and errors as part of the symbolic social meaning ascribed to digital self-presentations. In essence, the curated self is an approach to infuse stability in the otherwise dynamic and unstable context of Facebook. This changing and dynamic quality of Facebook meant that students' profiles and News Feeds were never the same twice, which in turn means that there was always new content to view, assess, and respond to. As a result, students engaged in frequent cycles of "checking in" to see what is new on Facebook.

In both the interviews and the use and demographics survey, students described the endless nature of logging into Facebook; it was a constant part of their lives. The survey data painted an overview of students (n=35) logging in an average of 12 times a day for a total usage time of two hours. While in interviews, students detailed their daily rituals for checking

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Facebook: keeping smart phones next to the bed; checking their profile first thing in the morning, in between classes, during classes, while waiting for buses, while with friends, while watching TV or movies, and right before they go to sleep. There was almost no part of their daily lives in which checking in on Facebook was not a part. The sum effect of this constant Facebook engagement was that students were constructing lives on and through Facebook that extended and disrupted conventional interpretations of the "expressions given off" by students' self-presentations.

Elements of the Curated Self

For students in this study, five elements of Facebook stood out as the most important for creating curated selves on Facebook: photographs, status updates, comments, Likes, and About Me pages. Among these, photographs and status updates were defined as the key indicators of who others were and what students focused on the most when they were on Facebook. Students also used comments, Likes, and About Me information as secondary elements to confirm or complicate the information found in photographs and status updates. Collectively these elements were the primary tools through which students created, recreated, visited, and revisited expressions of who they were among their Friends and in their networks.

Photos

On Facebook, all roads lead to photos. No other element was as interesting for or as talked about by participants. Photos were the crucial part of how students expressed who they were and what they wanted others to know about them, as well as what students relied on most to learn about others and to make judgments about who people were. Activities like communicating and connecting with Friends were important, but all of that activity builds on a foundation of how students present a physical and social self on Facebook through photos.

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Photos were the fundamental tool that students used to make meaning of self and identity on Facebook. For interview participant Jill, photos served as her primary point of reference for thinking about and remember her Friends' profiles: "Facebook has become almost most[ly] about the photos…Like if I think of a random friend of mine, I can think of the pictures they posted, or the past photos they had up as their profile picture, or whatever photo before I remember their last status update." As Jill was implying here, photos served as their own form of social currency on Facebook, simultaneously representing access to one's personal life and allowing access into the personal lives of others. Other recent research has echoed this idea of photos as social currency (Rainie, Brenner, & Purcell, 2012).

In talking about the role that photos played in their Facebook lives, students repeatedly emphasized the idea that photos capture how you want others to see you. Bruce expressed that idea in his thoughts on photos: "When people post a picture on Facebook, you make a statement and you're saying, 'this is how I want to be portrayed' type of thing." As key expressions of who students are, photos functioned as a tool to express self to others and to assess who others were. Students walked a fine line in deciding what photos they posted or allowed others to post to their profiles. They wanted to be sure that photos felt like authentic expressions of who they saw themselves as, but they also wanted to make sure those were favorable self-expressions, such as looking good, being professional, capturing their personalities, and showing something significant in their lives.

Students used photos to show their relationships with others through who appeared in their photos with them and who posted photos of them. The idea that students preferred photos of themselves with their friends is well documented in other research on the use of photos on Facebook by college students (e.g., Buffardi & Campbell, 2008; Mendelson & Papacharissi,

2011). As expressions of relationships, students used photos to convey friendships, their general

sociability, and that they were "fun" to be around. The idea of relationships also extended to

who took and posted the photos, as most students relied on others to post photos. Posting

pictures of oneself without others in the photo was an important signal for students. Those who

did so were considered at best "lame" or "weird" and at worst "pretentious" or "narcissistic."

Photos were not typically of everyday activities. Students talked about how they wanted

photos that captured unique or interesting events in their lives and showed their lives in a

positive way. This included avoiding or deleting photos of themselves doing what they

considered to be mundane activities (e.g., studying, informal meals with friends, etc.). Having

photos from unique events and activities also influenced how students prepared for situations in

which they thought someone might take pictures (e.g., wear a specific outfit, put on more

makeup, leave their own camera at home).

Overall, students approached photos on Facebook like they approached much of the

content on their pages—photos should reflect the subjects in a positive light and display their

unique or favorable life experiences. Photos were an opportunity to demonstrate the best

experiences, best aspects, or most noteworthy elements of a student's life. In essence, photos

were the best tool students had to differentiate themselves and be individual on Facebook.

Students saw photos as the only way to stand out on Facebook, or the only way to be different:

"You can't be the same as everyone else because then you'll just be lost on Facebook" (Jill).

Photos were a performance tool, par excellence, that added depth to the symbolic

meaning of students' curated selves. They provided students with records of previous,

successful performances of self-presentation, and as a set of performances, students could add,

arrange, and delete photos in order to give off new expressions of themselves to their Friends.

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Status Updates

Important but slightly less vital, status updates were the other major source of information students used to assess Friends and strangers. While photos revealed key pieces of who Friends were, what they did, and who they knew, status updates offered insight into how Friends thought, and were a platform for promoting news and ideas to Friend networks. Creating and posting status updates had its own set of rules for preferred types of updates. Participants were often very intentional in what they posted as status updates, going so far as to write and rewrite status updates before posting them, as well as having another friend read the status before they posted it. This form of profile editing and revision was common on all levels of participants' pages, but status updates were the area in which students most frequently talked about the editing and revising that went into their posts.

Through status updates students tried to promote conversation or provide readers with engaging material. These updates were preferably not too personal, were directed at a broad audience (rather than one or two people), and had material that almost any viewer could understand (e.g., not inside jokes among friends). For example, students talked about creating status updates that exposed Friends to new information, such as news articles, new music, and video clips. These types of status updates were likely to spark conversation and earn the students some Likes and favorable comments (which I address shortly).

Students also posted status updates that emphasized pictures, mentioned other Friends and events, and focused on positive experiences. Whereas photographs served as the heart of identity on Facebook, status updates were the part of their profile that carried some of the most important weight in attracting comments or attention from other Friends in their network, the hand that drew Friends to a user's page. Other criteria for good status updates were that they did

not happen too frequently and focused on sharing information of some substance with Friends.

For example, Reed talked about his various strategies for posting status updates as a tool for

sharing information with his Friends: "There's sharing funny things that I think my friends will

like…There's the actual practical means of sharing events for the office that I work in…There's

sharing things that I think people need to know or might be interest in knowing." These

approaches to sharing were a major part of how Reed organized his posting activity on Facebook.

He rarely posted without trying to evaluate what function the post served and how it conformed

to one of these two or three forms of sharing.

In contrast, students avoided updates that were overly emotional, consisted of only song

lyrics, were overly negative or frequently complaining, or were too targeted in their audience

appeal. Interview participants described these types of updates to be ones that they made when

they were younger (i.e., in high school or when they first got a Facebook account) and they

characterized these updates as childish or immature. The pervading implication of students'

critiques of problematic updates was that they were not constrained enough. For example,

students interpreted overly emotional updates as either forms of fishing for social validation or as

a source of too much interpersonal drama between friends or groups of friends. Students saw

song lyrics as vague and cryptic, where a more direct statement of thoughts or feelings would be

easier to understand. Participants also commented that the intended audience for the song lyrics

was either very narrow or too ambiguous and therefore did not need to be posted as a public

status update. In either case students thought that these overly emotional updates or song lyric

statuses were more or less blatant calls for attention. Their responses to people who frequently

posted these kinds of statuses ranged from blocking those users from their newsfeeds or simply

un-friending those people because they were not seen as desirable Friends in the first place.

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One of the interesting aspects of how students post status updates is that they infrequently deleted them. Although they had the ability to delete any of their posts at any time, many chose to leave them up indefinitely. Situations in which students did remove status updates were humorous status updates that did not elicit any response from peers, status updates that contained typos, or status updates that might have triggered interpersonal conflict (e.g., name calling, angry statuses). The failed jokes and typos were occasionally deleted only to be reposted with corrections or revisions.

Comments, Likes, and About Me

Supporting the major elements of photos and status updates were a group of secondary elements: comments, Likes, and About Me pages. Each of these secondary elements worked to confirm or augment photos and status updates and provided additional depth to the major curatorial elements of students' profiles. In a practical way, students expressed varying degrees of interest and emphasis on the use of comments, Likes, and content in the About Me section. This variation in interest and emphasis reflected both how students used those elements for themselves and how they weighed the ways in which others used them.

Comments were an important form of social affirmation and communication on Facebook; however, their value depended on the relative significance students attached to who commented on their photos and updates and what those comments were. For some students, comments were of little interest and not something they spent time reading or creating on Facebook. For others, comments were the most important public interaction on Facebook. For example, Jennifer posted a status update about graduating from a leadership program at her university. On this post, she found comments from supervisors and mentors deeply meaningful as personal and professional feedback.

The use of Likes on Facebook had two major forms for students. One division was the use of Likes to express interest in a general topic or activity, such as "liking" a band, a movie, a book, or a company. The other form was the use of Likes to express interest in a specific comment, activity, photo, or post by someone else in their network. Students described the former category as a superficial, but potentially useful way to assess who other people were. Though students were often quick to note that they did little to revise these lists of interests over time, so they were likely unreliable sources of information about who someone was or what their current interests might be.

In a totally different way, the use of Likes for specific comments, activities, photos, or updates was a way for students to affirm their peers or to let others know that they had seen what was posted to that person's page. Students described different ways in which they interpreted these Likes when other people posted them to their photos and status updates. In all cases, students hoped to get Likes for what they posted and this had some influence in what and when they posted content, and what they deleted from their pages. For example, Alice expressed herself by using Likes to support other people's posts that echoed her thoughts and opinions: "I'm usually more of a person who Likes other people's things because I think they're cool and that's how I express my viewpoints rather than posting them myself." And for John, Likes were a way of keeping Facebook interactions congenial rather than expressing his thoughts and opinions: "I don't really post. I'm more of a liker, that's the real thing. I'll like stuff, but it just worries me to post things, I guess…Anything remotely serious I usually don't like. I guess I'm just trying to keep my opinion. I'm not trying to start an argument on Facebook or anything like that or have someone think differently of me because I like something on Facebook. I just think that's dumb."

The About Me section was the least vital to how students assessed who others were. Although the About Me section may contain some novel information such as favorite quotes, a list of family members, or contact information, this material is not something that all users consistently post and it is not information that users consistently update. As a result, some participants used the About Me section with skepticism and doubt compared to virtually anything else on Friends' profiles. More often than not, students saw the About Me information as sort of a basic listing of personal information on Facebook and not content that really gave much insight into who people were or what was important to them. Jeff, for example, saw the About Me section as a source for contact information: "I don't view it as a place in which to express my identity. I view it as a tool for communication and I view it as a tool for dissemination of information. My contact information is up to date. My 'About You' stuff I haven't edited in two to three years." In contrast, Alice had an About Me section that was heavily edited by friends: "A lot of my profile is written by my friends. But I think that's also part of my profile. My main identity is someone who doesn't care that much about if my friends are altering my Facebook profile…They're putting information in for me, a lot, and I don't mind it." As Alice's statement reflects, the About Me section was an unreliable source of detailed information on students. Nonetheless, students would use it to confirm what they knew or learned on other parts of a person's profile, sometimes as a way to raise more questions about who the person was. For example, James looked at favorite books to gauge a person: "I'm making this up—this is of a type that I've seen—where they really like Ayn Rand and Walt Whitman, and I'll be like. 'Well, what are you getting out of both of these?' That's not necessarily drawing conclusions, but what I find interesting." As James suggested, these

additional pieces of information may have raised more questions than insight, but were helpful in

rounding out an impression of who others were or how they wanted others to see them.

Layers of the Curated Self

In the preceding section I highlighted contributing elements students use to curate their

self-presentation on Facebook. In this section I will use those elements to explore three key

layers of curation that students enacted on Facebook: a *personal curation* in which Facebook was

a digital/personal archive of relationships and experiences, a *social curation* in which users

created a digital self-presentation for interacting with others, and a *spectacle curation* in which

users curated a self for others to overtly and covertly view. The layers of the curated selves

students created were not forms of self or identity per se, but rather they combined to form a

social construct that students used to address and manage the collapse of social context discussed

by boyd and associates (boyd, 2008b, 2011b; boyd & Heer, 2006; Donath & boyd, 2004;

Marwick & boyd, 2011). Readers may find it helpful to think of these layers of self curation as

three specific ways in which students approached contextualizing their self-presentations or

expressions of identity. These layers of the curated self exist concurrently and collectively

represent a more or less complete presentation of curated self on Facebook. Figure 1 provides

readers with a graphic overview of the major components of the curated self and the basic

relationships between them.
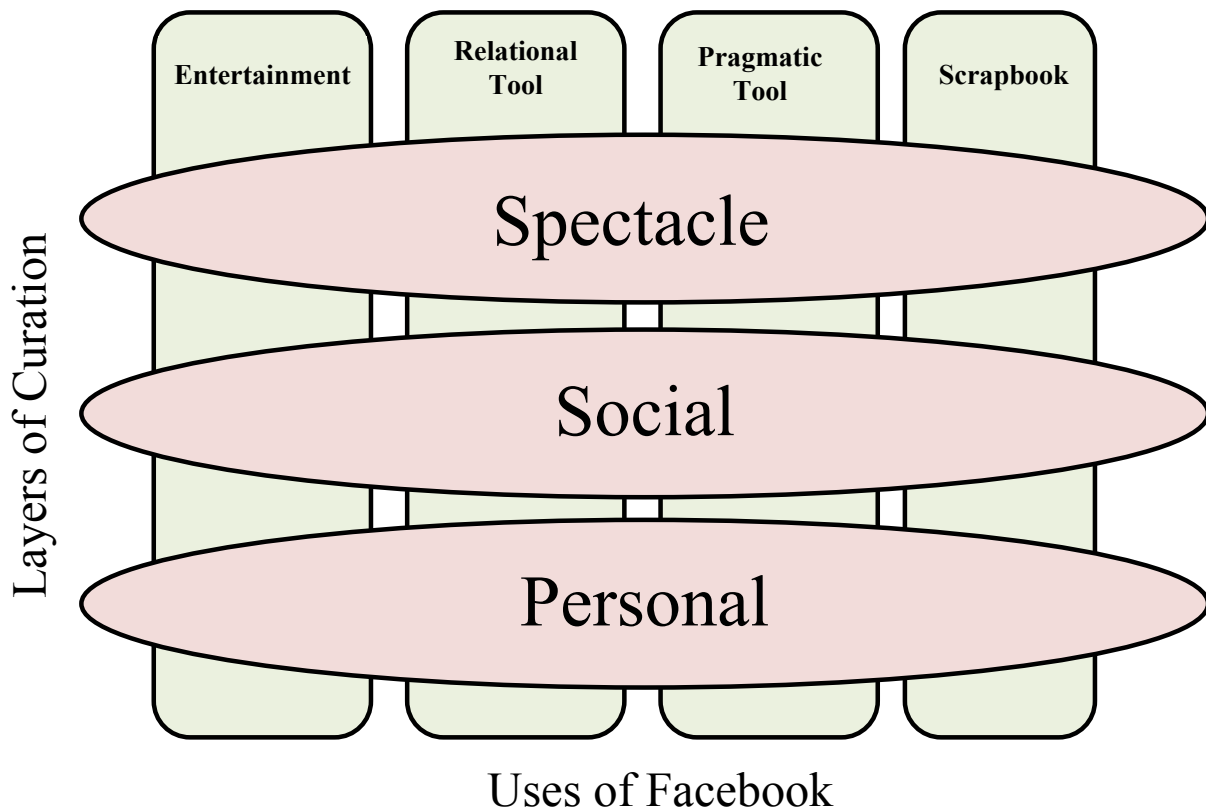
Figure 1. The Curated Self.

Readers may note from Figure 1 that the layers of curation were also linked together through four separate, and also concurrent, uses of Facebook. I address these four uses in depth later in this chapter. In the meantime, I begin with a discussion of the three layers of curation demonstrated by students in this study.

A Personal Curation: A Curation for Oneself

This form of curation was one students used to engage Facebook as a space for themselves and their own interests. Despite the social and connected nature of Facebook as a social network site, students found it useful and meaningful to make Facebook a space that felt personal and their own amid their efforts to connect and share with others. One consequence of this personal curation was that students talked about Facebook as a record of their lives, and this record was one way in which students felt more personally grounded in their self-expressions

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through the site. Interview participants even described Facebook as a personal scrapbook, where they could record content just for themselves, and by extension curate a personal self via Facebook.

Students used photos, statuses, comments, Likes, and About Me information that reflected personal interests and investments to create their personal curations. These personal curations were the intellectual or emotional spaces in which students reflected on who they were, expressed or experienced intrapersonal development, or simply realized that Facebook had an impact on how they perceived themselves. These personal curations were also the most tenuous of the three curations, given the prevailing "networked public" structure of Facebook (boyd, 2007b).

As a personal curation, the photos, statuses, and comments students posted to their pages were seen as a record of their lived experiences and friendships. In this way, students expressed little interest or concern about others being able to see these photos, statuses, and comments. They employed a mixture of approaches to privacy, from allowing others to access this content without explaining that it existed for their own interests to making this content private so that even their closest friends might not have access.

Jill used Facebook as a personal scrapbook, and did so in two key ways. The first was as a personal log that she would edit or revise later: "I've written myself a few messages on my own wall and just kept it private, just for me…Or like when I'm publishing an album and I have five photos to add now. I know there will be ten later so I just keep it private and then I make it public when I add everything." The second was as a photo archive, where she could use Facebook to protect her photos. Jill experienced a computer crash in which she lost all of her photos that were not on Facebook. As a result, she has opted to use Facebook as a way to have a

back-up of photos, and as a way to record all of her photos from her study abroad experience. One of the aspects she struggled with in using Facebook for photo storage was privacy: "I don't know how much privacy I should put on there. It's also nice to be able to show people like 'Hey, I've been to this place in Europe before. Check out my album.'" Jill primary interest was in using Facebook as a personal storage site, but one that had considerations for if and how to share with others.

As Jill's comments show, Facebook can be used as more than just a social network site. For her, she used the accessibility of the website to log personal thoughts and to back up her photo collection. There were potential implications for her use of Facebook in these ways, especially in the areas of copyright and privacy, but she was less worried about copyright and privacy threats coming from Facebook than she was about capturing her ideas and keeping her photos safe. Although there were other readily accessible online storage options, Jill's focus on Facebook was not uncommon. For many of the students in this study, Facebook served as a de facto Internet aggregator—a one-stop place to get all of their communication, news, and social exposure. Several students expressed the idea that Facebook was often the only reliable way to communicate and connect with peers, especially for student groups or peers for whom they did not have email addresses.

The personal curation exemplifies students' dispositions to see Facebook as a personal resource. For many students this was the major reason for continuing to use Facebook, or at least not deleting their Facebook account. Students described periods in which they temporarily stopped using their accounts or deactivated their accounts (made the account unavailable to other users), but students would not consider deleting their accounts entirely. For example, during the course of this study, Kelly chose to deactivate her account for a short period of time post break-

up with her boyfriend because she was having trouble not looking at his account and finding reminders of the relationship in her daily life with Facebook. She approached this deactivation with a specific plan: be absent from Facebook for one to two months and return once she had gotten past the initial painful stages of her break-up. Kelly felt as though she had too much invested and too many photos, conversations, and personal records to delete her account entirely.

Dora was another student who described her experience of deactivation. For her it was an effort to reduce the distraction of Facebook:

I have deactivated my Facebook when I felt that I was spending too much time on it. I wanted to see what my life was like without Facebook for a bit. And I think I went two weeks once without using it, and it wasn't a big change. It maybe felt kind of nice to not stare at a computer screen all day, but I don't know if two weeks was long enough for there to be significant change in my happiness levels, or how I went about my life or anything.

Dora reported that deactivating for a couple of weeks did not make a large difference in her happiness, but she was aware of the difference in how she went about her day. On the use survey, Dora stated that she spends roughly 2.5 hours a day using Facebook. That is a significant portion of the day to spend on other activities. Other students talked about campus approaches to deactivation or temporary non-use, such as "Facebook Free February," in which students did not use their Facebook accounts for the month of February as an effort to disrupt their habituated use of the site. Again, these approaches were always intended to be temporary and students reported some short-term reduction in use when they returned to the site, but nothing long lasting.

These temporary deactivations also had unintended consequences. For example, Franny deactivated her account for several months and found that her social connections through

Facebook were very different when she reactivated. What stood out about her return to

Facebook was that she felt like Facebook was "stupid" but "a necessity" for her life as a college

student. Franny talked about how not being connected to Facebook for that period of time meant

that she was disconnected from her student groups, which made learning about events and

resources on campus more difficult. Franny also found this reconnection with her audience to be

liberating and empowering because it made Facebook a more socially useful space for her; she

reconnected with people who were more intimate or supportive Friends and felt that what she did

on Facebook from then on had more value to her. Franny's return to Facebook also included an

extensive reorganization of how she presented herself on Facebook. She began focusing on

politics and music, which led her to connect with new Friends and new group pages. Franny's

break from Facebook was one way to affect the personal meaning of Facebook in her life. It also

allowed her to shift her focus from Facebook as a personal repository of photos and one's own

history to Facebook as a tool for developing social bonds she felt had more substance. Franny's

experience with losing her sense of connection to previous Friends on Facebook and feeling like

she was starting over is a good reflection of the next form of curated self: the social curation

A Social Curation: A Curation for Interacting with Friends

Through the social curation of Facebook, students emphasized their profiles as tools to

communicate, bond, and interact with others: the social curation. This form of curated self is

perhaps the most conventional interpretation of who people are on Facebook, and it was the

curated self that students emphasized when they talked about connecting with friends, family,

groups, and classmates.

The importance of this social curation should be noted, as the majority of research on

Facebook and social media so far has focused on the social or interactive aspects of social media

for which this form of curated self accounts. For the students in this study, Facebook was a significant organizing mechanism of how they developed and maintained relationships with people in their physical social networks. Students saw Facebook as indispensable to connecting with and staying connected with others. On these points, my data and findings relating to the curated self are in line with previous research on the uses of Facebook to communicate or connect with others. However, this ability to stay connected and develop relationships was not without consequences, and students were not in agreement about the links between their online interactions and their in-person interactions. Students saw their profiles as continuations of their in-person selves, distinct digital self-representations, or links between their digital and in-person selves. These interpretations of what version of the self Facebook represented had important consequences for how students attempted to curate their social self-presentations on Facebook and even what they perceived as useful or possible via Facebook.

Curated social selves were meant to be reflections or continuations of students' physical or in-person selves. Patrick frames this potential divide of person (physical) and persona (digital) as something that can be a congruent self-presentation.

I would say [my profile] is as close to my real physical self as possible. I have a very conscious awareness of that digital self and I used to have it where I had a very different persona online back in the days of AIM [AOL Instant Messenger]. During that time I made an effort to conglomerate all the different kinds of group personalities that I had into one. And so, it's been very important for me to focus on the real world, person and persona, which in essence is kind of letting the digital self just be a reflection of that.

Patrick previously spent a great deal of energy developing and maintaining a physical person and a digital persona. In the early days of his Internet use, he found the digital persona approach to

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be an effective tool for connecting and communicating with peers; however, as Patrick matured, he found more value in spending his time and energy on maintaining a more unified person/persona. During our interview, he continued to assign some value to having these separate self-presentations, but it was important to him that they be connected or congruent.

In contrast, other students saw their digital self-representations as distinct, where these social curations came across as either caricatures of themselves or simply stereotypes of who they were as real people. Hannah talked about how her social identities on Facebook seem to form a caricature of who she is: "It's a very typical lineup of: Jewish atheist, loves public radio, lives in [large city], goes to [university]. It probably is a bit of a caricature, whereas I think I'm a little more complex than that." Hannah's caricature came from her list of Likes and About Me content, as well as her focus on public radio and news articles in her status updates. Her photos also captured a type of narrative about her life as a student and resident advisor at her university. In high school, some of these same caricature elements played a vital role in her acceptance as a co-worker in a new job:

> My freshman year in high school, I worked at this restaurant. It was a really cool organic, local, hipster restaurant. I'm a pretty quiet person when I first meet people or in personal work environments. So I don't think anyone really knew me well….then I friended the restaurant on Facebook, and they were so much nicer to me. I think it's because my Facebook embodied the kind of person who would work at that restaurant.

Even as a caricature, Hannah's Facebook profile was a tool to validate who she was for her new co-workers and help her build relationships. In a basic way, her profile fit the stereotypical interests of workers at that restaurant, which served to verify her credibility as someone who belonged there.

For students who emphasized this social curation, their unifying interpretation was that Facebook was in essence not real and not serious but necessary in order to be an active participant in their academic and social environments. This sense of Facebook as a social necessity was a source of lamentation for some. Franny held a bittersweet relationship with Facebook, which I noted earlier. On one hand she found it invasive and pervasive, while on the other hand she could not effectively be a part of her campus community without it.

> It's a lot easier to reach people on [Facebook] sometimes than their own phones. Or just like in some cases, like academics, groups that aren't familiar with one another can still meet up online and use Facebook as a way of updating because email is for some reason an unpopular form of communication.

Franny offered some resistance to the social necessity of Facebook, but ultimately relented because not being connected to Facebook meant that she missed out on too much of the social life at her university. Franny, like many students in this study, used Facebook as a default method to link their many social worlds together in a manageable and convenient way. This linking function became even more important as colleges and universities began to use Facebook as a way to communicate with students.

The ability of Facebook to link together social worlds paralleled its ability to help students link digital and in-person self-presentations. Social curations served as a way to connect the many facets of students' lives into what felt like a more coherent whole. Kristin, for example, wanted a Facebook self that was "her":

> I just want them to see me. I know that it sounds vague, but I don't post anything to make me sound better than what I am or to make people want to talk to me. You know, I just post things that are significant in my life. That's just who I am.

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Across her photos, status updates, comments, and Likes, Kristin strove to present what she thought was an accurate and authentic depiction of herself and her interests. Kristin also described her approach to Facebook as reserved, but the content that she did post reflected her love of her pets, her career aspirations in nursing, and her leadership roles at school. These were the parts of her life that she was most passionate about and so they were the foundation of how she curated her relationships with others on Facebook. Kristin used her profile to offer Friends what she saw as a distilled version of herself.

Students who favored the social curation of self-presentation disliked what they saw as a made-up or overtly constructed quality that undermined Facebook's potential to be a true continuation of who students were in person. This was consistent with their interests in using Facebook as a vehicle for developing relationships, as it provided a more trustworthy foundation for those interpersonal connections. The not real or not serious aspect of Facebook seemed to closely relate to the degree to which students were aware of and careful of their privacy on Facebook. I will address privacy in more depth later, but in terms of social-self curations, students were wary of posting anything overly personal or emotional on their profiles because they held the belief that anything posted to the Internet was ultimately not private or could not be kept private. As a result, personal or private content could have negative social implications. For example, Bruce talked about the problem of posting gossip in status updates or comments; the content gets around and harms social relationships: "People will post gossipy things and it will get around to people—the inappropriate photos, the status updates of you doing inappropriate things, and employers can get to those and your family can get to those. And they're gonna hold that against you in some way most likely." Bruce was a classic example of a

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student who strongly favored Facebook as a social medium and someone who framed his self-presentation in terms of social benefit and social liability.

The problem of posting too much was also related to the problem of posting too little. For example, Turtle talked about the problem of posting too little with a classmate who had a Facebook profile that overemphasized superficial content and excluded important parts of her life that were not necessarily private.

> The one girl that I do know that takes a lot of selfies, I don't really know her at all….I just realized that she is engaged. She's engaged but there are no photos of her fiancée and her on Facebook, and I don't know why that is. I don't even know if he goes to this school. I don't really know anything about him and you would think that if he was such a huge part of your life, why wouldn't he be on your Facebook? So, I don't really know what's to be said about that, but I don't buy it. Like, you post an engaged status and you have a ring. Like, I see photos of your ring, I see you in person. So I do believe that you're engaged, I just don't believe that he's a big part of your life.

For Turtle, her classmate's exclusion of photos and statuses about becoming engaged and the inclusion of numerous photos of herself, taken by herself, raised questions about who this person was, how authentic she was, and by extension how trustworthy she was.

Turtle's concerns about her classmate reflected common criticisms among my interview participants: it was problematic to post too many photos of yourself, especially "selfie" photos (i.e., photos where the person takes a picture of herself/himself by holding the camera at arm's length), and was problematic to post too many comments or updates about other people (which students associated with future interpersonal drama and conflict). These informal "rules" or norms for what to post and not post suggest that students are well aware of the collapse of social

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contexts on Facebook. As danah boyd argued, one of the challenges of SNSs and social media in general is that they feature a collapsed social context (boyd, 2007b; Marwick & boyd, 2011) and users are only able to portray one version of themselves to all of their Friends. Students were well aware of this collapsed context and were intentional in how they curated their social self to address the possible range of Friends or audiences for their self-presentation on Facebook. For many, this collapsed social context simply meant excluding any content that was too personal, too idiosyncratic, or too differentiating.

Sasha found it easiest to create a profile that was a little narrow, or intentionally left out information that was too quirky or too mundane:

> [The missing part is] the part of me that sits on the couch all the time and doesn't do anything. And watches really terrible TV and hangs out with friends. Although I think there's also the part that's says I'm a really good person, and gives great advice, and is really nice to others, and is caring and picks up trash off the street. I think there's that big genuine emotional compassion part that Facebook just does not provide and can't.

Sasha saw Facebook as limited in how she could interact with others or what insight others could get into who she was. As a result, she favored a somewhat stripped down profile that allowed her to interact with particular Friends and did not convey too much information about her to people who did not know her well to prevent those people from judging her for her quirkiness and because she found Facebook to be a poor platform to share certain types of information, such as the sincerity behind behavior or feelings.

For others this constraint of what to post had more to do with the inability of posting everything that happened during the day because there would be too much to post and not enough time to post it, so they needed to post only the most important or interesting. Several

students talked about how they specifically crafted their profile to share content that they thought others would be interested in and that would not be misleading. Andrew tried to present the "Reader's Digest" version of himself: "I guess it's hard to describe, like, 'here is my Internet self in some words.' I'm very transparent as a rule in my life, and so I don't post anything that would be misleading about me, or that is untrue or that is exaggerated or something." He wanted to give others a quick snapshot of his personality and interests so his profile felt like it had some personal depth. This personal depth was particularly important to Andrew because he was involved in a number of transgender groups where he connected with Friends from across his state and whom he might not be able to meet in-person. The Reader's Digest version helped give him a profile that facilitated those long-distance relationships.

A final aspect of the social curation of self was crafting a self-presentation that resonated well with a specific audience. Kelly for example, crafted her status updates and comments to connect with her close friends. She framed this as: "I don't really post useless information." Useless information in this context was posts that were not of interest to her friends. Students discussed how comments and Likes provided rich and immediate feedback on the curated social self that they were offering to their Friend networks. This feedback was important and unsuccessful posts were removed or changed, further curating the profile to be more socially endorsed or endorsable. Kristin, for example, had a post that she thought would be well received that she later deleted: "I think after a day or two, nobody commented on it, so I just took it off…I just felt like it doesn't need to be on there because obviously nobody cares about it." Students used the curated self to engage with others and solicit social endorsement, making the curated self the keystone of self-presentation and social interaction. Closely related to this engagement with others was the way Friends viewed students' profiles.

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A Spectacle Curation: A Self for Others to "Creep On"

The spectacle curation is the third and final form of curated self that participants described. Spectacle curation is related to personal and social curations, but takes on an important differentiation. Whereas the personal curation is the form that students valued regardless of how others perceived them, and the social curation was the form that students used to engage others, the spectacle curation is an intentional self that participants created explicitly for others to view. In the parlance of my participants, this is the curated self for others to "stalk" or "creep on."

One way to think about this form of curated self is as a superficial symbol of who students were. This spectacle curation was what media and research discussion of narcissism on and through social media addresses. This was a curated form intended for strangers or people of recent acquaintance to explore for visual meaning. For all of the interview participants, they described their own experiences of "creeping on" or "stalking" the profiles of new Friends or new potential Friends. In this context, students used the terms creeping and stalking as metaphorical, rather than literal, descriptions of others viewing their profiles anonymously to learn more about them, and not necessarily harassing or invasive violations of privacy. These new Friends were acquaintances from class, friends of friends, or people who were romantic interests. Students described a complex culture of stalking or creeping on profiles of others, part of which I will address with more depth in the next chapter of findings. For the moment though, it is useful to note that students knew others would view/stalk/creep on their profiles, so they designed their profiles as media objects to be viewed. Jill framed this as the voyeuristic aspect of Facebook:

I like to see in people's lives, but that's what Facebook is. Facebook is a creeping tool. If you post it on there, it's fair game to creep on. What I post, I make sure it's fair game. I want someone to see it. I guess I do, I want someone to see it. I'll be honest, I want someone to see this picture. That's why I put it up there. I'm not gonna post a picture of me in my bed doing my homework because I don't want people to see me when I look like this.

Jill's comment reflected the intentionality behind the spectacle curation: students post photos and statuses because they want others to see them and explore their profiles.

The spectacle curation was more or less the sanitized form of self that participants were willing to let parents, potential and current employers, and university staff see. One of the interesting overlaps of this spectacle curation and creeping is that students made distinctions between employers looking at their profiles and Friends creeping their profiles. Despite the fact that they describe the same type of behavior by both parties—a thorough review of photographs, status updates, Friend lists, and group affiliations—students were resistant to the idea of authority figures looking through their profiles for almost any reason.

The key difference between how employers reviewed and how Friends stalked was that students perceived employer reviewing to carry higher or more significant consequences in terms of lost jobs or lost job opportunities. This in part speaks to the ways in which students prioritized economic benefits/consequences of social media and the intense messaging they have received about how social media can harm them professionally and financially. For Maddy and her friends, this amounted to a waiting period on posting photos:

We all have a rule, you can only post pictures the day after, so that any time in the here and now, you can have a chance to think about, "Do I really want this on Facebook?"

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"Who do I really want to view this picture?" Because I think for my generation we really

need to be cautious of the employers checking into us, and so for when we are applying

for internships and jobs, they can find almost everything. Even if you block it, they can

probably find it. So I'm pretty frugal with what I post.

As these comments reveal, today's generation of students were not oblivious to the serious

ramifications of their online behavior. This awareness of authorities and the potential liability of

Facebook for professional life led students to curate profiles that could and should be viewed by

future employers. The perceived threat of future employers viewing profiles had profound

impact on how students thought about what to post on their profiles. Much more than

unintended peer audiences, students commented time and time again on avoiding any photos or

status updates that would hurt them in their future job searches. Students expressed little concern

that their behaviors were actually wrong or inappropriate, but rather they worried that they would

be punished for these behaviors by authorities and potential employers. These concerns reflected

years of being told by parents and adults that anything posted on the Internet is permanent.

Ironically, the spectacle curation was also the form of curated self that students enjoyed

the most about Facebook, particularly looking through the profiles of peers. Students were rarely

interested in the minutia and fine details of other people's profiles. Instead they sought the

entertainment value of looking at photos and reading quips and comments by their friends. This

spectacle of Facebook profiles was more often than not what they talked about or thought about

when they discussed other people's profiles. So while they saw their own profiles as having

importance as a form of social self to engage others, they saw others' profiles as having

importance for what could be learned about each person until (or unless) they had close,

developed relationships with those people. After they established relationships with Friends, they were relatively disinterested in looking through their profiles with much depth.

As a set of layers of the curated self, these three layers reflect a continuum of personal intimacy to public persona. On one end is the personal curation, which represents the most intimate and sometimes unshared version of Facebook that users described. On the other end is the spectacle curation, which represents a public persona that may or may not contain any personally meaningful information about the user. Finally, the social curation occupies the wide middle of the continuum and links the two extremes together. Readers might think of the social curation as the glue of social media that binds personal meaning and value to branding and marketing of a packaged or manufactured self.

These three curated selves were all concurrent selves for participants in this study. As curated selves, they functioned as layers of self-presentation. Some elements were symbols meant for just one layer of curation, while other elements applied to all three. This is an important distinction because it reflects the ways in which students were negotiating the collapsed social contexts of Facebook. Students knew all too well that Friends and strangers were able to access some or all of their Facebook profiles, and students developed language and cultural queues to work against the potentially invasive or exposed nature of Facebook. Ultimately students created a social and cultural space that was capable of supporting and maintaining a range of self-presentations for multiple audiences.

Uses of the Curated Self

The four uses of the curated self outlined in this section are particular applications of the three layers of the curated self. These uses reflect the ways in which students made use of their curated selves (personal, social, and spectacle) to gain some outcome or benefit. For all of the

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students in this study, Facebook was a fundamental part of their day-to-day lives, but what students got out of Facebook or what they wanted to get out of Facebook varied greatly. How students used Facebook depended in no small part on their personality and their levels of trust in how secure and private Facebook was for the information they posted. The pervading understanding participants expressed, both implicitly and explicitly, was that Facebook was a tool for enriching their lives, and so the ways in which Facebook enriched their lives depended on what students hoped to get out of Facebook.

Students' uses of Facebook can be captured in four major categories: Facebook as endless entertainment, as a relational tool, as a pragmatic tool, and as a private scrapbook. Readers may already notice that there is some potential overlap with the layers of curation in the preceding pages. This overlap is a reflection of the close alignment between students curating self-presentations for specific intentional outcomes and students achieving specific accidental outcomes because of how they curated their self-presentation. Among the 25 interview participants in this study, none of the students relied on only one form of curated self or employed only one use for Facebook. Instead, students enacted multiple concurrent layers of curated selves for multiple concurrent uses.

Facebook as Endless Entertainment

All of the interview participants approached Facebook as a means of entertainment or distraction. This is the use of Facebook that seems to be the most vexing for faculty and researchers (e.g., Junco, 2012b). For some students, Facebook was primarily a form of entertainment. For other students, Facebook served as just a diversion from doing something else—a way to spend time between classes, during classes, or to avoid engaging with people around them. For the students who primarily used Facebook as entertainment, Facebook was not

seen as serious or particularly meaningful, either at the level of their own profiles or the profiles of others. They saw Facebook as a set of photos and status updates that other people posted to gain attention or share experiences and ideas with others, but not as a way to build a sense of connection with others. Facebook, in effect, was a superficial activity to pass time.

The entertainment factor of Facebook was also apparent in the "always on/always open" approach students had with access to Facebook. Dora, for example, described common computer use among participants in this study: Facebook was always in an open browser on her desktop:

> I get on it when I get home, and it's something that just stays in an open tab whether I'm looking at it or not. And then whenever I get bored of whatever I'm doing. Like maybe I'm working on a homework assignment and I'm like, "Oh, I just need a break for a second." So I switch over to the Facebook tab and scroll through it really fast before I go back.

This switching back and forth from Facebook to school or work tasks was the most common way in which students used Facebook. Few students spent long, drawn-out periods of time on Facebook. Instead students favored burst activity on Facebook to check in on their News Feed, message and event notifications, or to post a quick status update. As noted in the use survey, students (n=39) logged on an average of 12 times a day for a total of two hours of Facebook use each day. As Dora described above, those two hours were not two hours of continuous use, but rather two hours of Facebook activity throughout the day.

When probed deeper into the ways in which Facebook was entertaining or how participants entertained themselves via Facebook, they described an asymmetric relationship in which they consumed vast amounts of information that others posted compared to the limited

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amounts of information that they produced or contributed to Facebook. Jennifer was typical of participants in updating her status once a week and mostly focusing on other people's updates:

> I'm mostly on News Feed. I only change my status—I don't change it every day, maybe once a week. If it's been a month or more I'll have the same one, it's only if something is really important to me. But I'm mostly just reading other people's information, back home or here at [university].

Jennifer enjoyed this asymmetry, which reflected an underlying interpretation or expectation that personal networks on Facebook were about consuming what others put forth, and that one of the key benefits of Facebook networks was that they provided a seemingly endless parade of photos, status updates, links to other websites, and news updates that saved users the time and energy of finding any of that information on their own. It also underscored an anxiety of having to post content to keep up with peers and avoiding posting too much content so as to not "burden" peers with too many updates from one person.

For users who emphasized the entertainment use of Facebook, they focused most of their time and energy on their News Feed. In fact, when students talked about the entertainment value of Facebook, they often noted that they did not leave their News Feed, and if they did leave, it was to check their messages and notifications from other users but not to go to other pages specifically. Kelly noted that she goes to other pages when prompted, but not typically: "Outside of my News Feed, I don't go to a lot of peoples' individual pages unless someone either tells me to look at something or for whatever reason something interests me to look at their page." For most students, the News Feed was the focusing structural element of their Facebook experience, all with virtually the same approach and experience. Hannah, for example, used strikingly similar language to talk about how she uses Facebook: "I usually go on and just scroll down the

News Feed in a kind of mindless stupor. And that's pretty much what I do. Sometimes I'll look at a close friend or a family member's profile specifically, but usually I'm just scrolling through." This "just scrolling through" captures both how students engage Facebook as a diversion and entertainment, as well as partially explains how they end up spending so much time in periodic bursts on Facebook.

Another major focus of entertainment on Facebook was creeping (extensive looking) through the pages of other users, which I will address in more depth in Chapter 4. However, as a form of entertainment, Facebook creeping represented a sort of "anything is fair game" mentality on what participants should have access to and how they were able to assess the personality and personal details of others. Some students went so far as to say that creeping/stalking was the purpose of Facebook and the only reason they had a profile, so they could have access to the profiles of others. Creeping and stalking profiles, like reading News Feeds, is emblematic of participants using Facebook to consume information, often emphasizing the spectacle selves of other users.

One unique form of entertainment and profile as spectacle that came out during interviews was the removed stance of watching "Facebook fights" unfold through status updates and response comments. For example, Kelly and her friends would coordinate to watch fights unfold on Facebook.

> It's usually random people that we went to high school with that were not actually like we were friends with. But my friends will text me, be like, "Oh my god, so and so is like fighting on their Facebook comments." And people will just be fighting on Facebook about people being liars or people stealing stuff, or just people accusing people of stuff and then they'll be fighting. And sometimes it's interesting and funny.

For Kelly and her friends, these fights were entertaining and sometimes shocking. Falling in the

pattern of reality TV, where this type of publically private discourse is entertainment for others,

Kelly and her friends' spectator role and coordinated viewing in these fights helped emphasize

the sort of reality entertainment quality that Facebook had for users. The phenomenon of

Facebook fights is becoming increasingly important, with references to Facebook rising in recent

divorce filings in the U.S. (Bialik, 2011, March 11).

Of course, as students managed multiple types of curated selves and distinct purposes for

their profiles, they also used Facebook for multiple purposes simultaneously. For example,

Amanda saw Facebook as both entertainment and a way to coordinate group activity:

> It serves as more of an entertainment. Well, I guess it's really split actually. Half the time
>
> it's for entertainment and half the time it's about those organizations and groups and that
>
> type of stuff. But, honestly, when I'm posting on my friend's wall or on my own wall it's
>
> not necessarily really important information. It's like, "Hey, check out this funny video!"

The split between entertainment and group organizing that Amanda pointed out here all involved

more or less the same group of Friends. She used Facebook to post funny content for her Friends,

who were also the people in her groups and organizations. What is interesting about Amanda's

differentiation is her split in the use and function of Facebook to get separate types of

information to the same group in order to manage her relationships.

Facebook as a Relational Tool

For students who saw Facebook as a relational tool, the abilities to connect and stay in

contact with others were key factors for Facebook having value in their day-to-day lives. This

group represented a majority of the participants in this study. Numerous studies have noted the

value that users place on Facebook for allowing them to stay connected or maintain connections

with distant or previous friends (e.g, Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2010; Raacke & Bonds-Raacke, 2008; Rainie, Smith, & Duggan, 2013; Ross et al., 2009; Stefanone, Kwon, & Lackaff, 2012) However, for students who used Facebook as a relational tool, the website did more than just keep them connected. Instead, Facebook was a means through which they actively developed their friendships/relationships with others. This is a difference in both degree and type. Jill described the ways in which she used Facebook to actively develop her relationships with others, especially while she was abroad.

> It's also a way for me to feel like I'm still friends with my friends at home because it's so hard to be over here. I Skype with them maybe once every two or three weeks, so I can hear about what goes on. But it's easier to see the pictures and I can put my pictures on… I put a lot of pictures up now because my family's on Facebook, my office where I work is on Facebook, all my friends are on Facebook. So it's easier than emailing them each individually and saying "this is what I did."

As part of her study abroad experience, Jill used Facebook to stay involved the lives of her family and important friends. This type of connection was more than just keeping tabs on friends and family, as many participants described. Instead, she was actively sharing and finding ways to help her friends and family feel like they were are part of her time abroad.

Students who used Facebook as a relational tool were also typically active users of the "group pages" or their own pages served as a type of group page in which a small network of friends would frequently posted on each other's profile pages. Kelly actively used groups pages for a small group of friends as a way to stay connected while they attended different universities:

> I'm in a group of my co-workers from the pool I work at. There's like a bunch of us that have all worked there for a long time. We're all like a group together and we'll talk and

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that's private and we'll contact from there. And then I'm with a group of my cousins. But

we usually end up not using the group and just messaging privately back and forth.

Kelly's use of a group page for high school and college friends was somewhat common. More

often, students used group pages for college-sponsored groups, but as Kelly noted, using a

group's page for her small group of friends made it easier to share information with all of them

in a continuous way in one place.

All of the activity on Facebook as a relational tool revolved around connecting with or

sharing with other users. For example, these students expressed the highest degrees of interest in

posting status updates that promoted conversation with other users. Patrick, however, struggled

to balance his online relationship development with "real life interaction," which he preferred:

> I definitely have noticed that [Facebook] takes up more time than I would like and it's not
>
> necessarily something that I can change because, to a degree, yes, I do it, but also I think
>
> my friends do it a lot more and they neglect the interaction in the real world. So often
>
> they will post a link and have a conversation online, which makes them feel like they've
>
> satiated that friendship requirement. When for me, I am a very immediate person, so I
>
> need that real life interaction. While I recognize it's not for everyone, it bothers me when
>
> someone does it and we live right across town where we walk to each other's places or
>
> something.

The group of friends that Patrick referenced in this passage were friends who attended the same

university, so the ability to have in-person or "real life" connections was very possible. However,

as Patrick points out, Facebook adds a level of convenience to relationships: users can have brief,

possibly focused interactions in spurts without having to make a greater effort to schedule time

or physically go meet those friends.

As part of trying to develop relationships through Facebook, these users are also the ones to be the most selective or careful in what they posted to their profiles. Status updates, for example, were a good launching point for connecting with Friends by offering updates or links to articles that would benefit others. Students in this group also displayed high levels of intentionality in posting updates that reflected their own views or beliefs. For example, Hannah enjoyed posting links to news articles that captured her perspective of pressing current events and that she thought would contribute to the knowledge and understanding of Friends within her network. Hannah also used the status updates of others to build a sense of connection with those people. For example, she talked about having a co-worker who posts uplifting and thought-provoking status updates that make her feel more connected to him:

> They are these really interesting observations about the world and about [university]. I mean usually they're about the [university] community, but they're just very thoughtful and things I hadn't really thought of before. One time he posted about, we have this very dramatic greeting of the freshmen in the fall... it's glitter and musical theater and people are dancing on the sidewalks. And it's great because there's a lot of people who like that here. There's also a lot of people who don't and are very shy and are totally terrified…And it was something like, "I was just thinking maybe it's as exclusive to have such a glittery show-tunes-y greeting of the freshmen as it would be to have a very conservative greeting of the freshmen because there are some people who are totally terrified by that and think, 'I'm not going to fit in at all.'"

Hannah continued on to describe how that particular status update received a large number of comments and started a whole conversation among a wide range of people about how they, as student leaders, could help the university feel more inclusive for students who are terrified by the

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"show-tunes-y greeting." For Hannah and her group of friends, this status update was a way to

connect and bond over shared experiences at the university.

Figure 2. Priority Registration.

Figure 2 offers an example of what Hannah was talking about as a bonding experience.

Here we have a group of students debating and lamenting the differences in priority registration

for resident assistants (RAs) and orientation leaders. The original poster is clearly frustrated at not getting classes he wants and that conversation turns to his displeasure that RAs get priority registration. Readers can see below the original post that this conversation got 11 Likes and several of the comments within the conversation got their own Likes. Here Likes serve as a way of expressing endorsement of a particular idea. As this conversation has turned into a light argument, those Likes serve as a way for students to align themselves within the friendly debate.

Students also demonstrated their interest in using Facebook as a way to connect through posting status updates that were links to outside sources, such as news articles or YouTube videos, and status updates that expressed an opinion about a broader topic than what was happening in their life that day. In Figure 3, the original poster has put up a link to a blog and specifically stated that he wants his Friends to open the link and read the blog. This student favored a use of Facebook to share content that Friends may or may not already have access to. For him, Facebook was a place to engage in thoughtful conversations, especially about cultural and social issues. The underlying issue in the post is the use of pepper spray on protesters at the University of California, Davis. The case received national attention and sparked a great deal of debate at UC Davis and across the country. The conversation thread has several different commenters and a total of nine comments and 10 Likes. Given the poster's original intent to have others view the blog and engage in serious conversation, this post was clearly a success.

Figure 3. Be True to Your School.

Facebook as a Pragmatic Tool

As a pragmatic tool, Facebook served an almost endless range of uses that depended on

users' interests or the particular tasks they felt Facebook could accomplish. Within this type of

use, there was not any single use that typified Facebook as a pragmatic tool. Some examples of

pragmatic uses included: advertising for student groups, promoting student government

campaigns, event planning and calendaring, and small-group coordination for coursework.

Students who saw their profiles as primarily pragmatic tools often viewed their profiles as

largely public, regardless of privacy settings, and expressed higher levels of skepticism about

how private content on their pages can ever really be. Reed captured this sentiment well: "If

there was something that I wanted to keep private it wouldn't go on any faction of the profile."

As a student government representative, Reed was very familiar with the pragmatic uses of

Facebook. He used his profile extensively, even exhaustively, during his campaign to put up

campaign promotions and advertisements: "I'm pretty sure what won me the election was just a

constant bombardment of the same exact photo for probably 10 days straight. Other than that

there's really no photos [on my profile]." Once elected, he found uses for his profile to

coordinate and organize student government activities and further advertisements about campus

and university activities. Reed's approach to a "public" Facebook profile was echoed among

other student government officers and resident assistants that I interviewed. These students saw

their Facebook profiles as an effective and efficient way to carry out their job duties, especially

given the communication tools of Facebook.

    In the cases where students used Facebook to promote student groups or their student

government campaigns, they described a shift in how they interpreted what their profiles meant

as self-presentations. In essence, they saw their profiles as less personal and more functional.

Often these shifts were temporary and students used language akin to reclaiming their profile

after the promotion or marketing was over. Bruce used his profile extensively during his student

government campaign, but felt like that disrupted his ability to use it afterward: "There was a

time when I was running for student government and my friends were telling me how sick they were getting of me, like, posting all the time because I was using that as a campaign tool. And so ever since then I've been really hesitant about being overbearing with my posts." Bruce still used his profile actively, but he described himself as more of a consumer on Facebook now, rather than a contributor or producer. Facebook had become a different tool for him post-election.

Students who saw their profiles as pragmatic tools were also the most cautious in what personal information they posted to Facebook, and they were the most personally removed in talking about the value of the content on their pages. That is not to say they did not value the content on their pages, but for them that content served self-presentation purposes more akin to self- or group-marketing. Maddy, for example, was another student who was actively involved in campus leadership through a student events group, and she used her profile extensively for that role:

> I do a lot of advertising, but then I try not to spam people, so I try to reel it back in. "Check out [university group]'s link on Facebook or check out our upcoming event, [event name]." A lot of differing, "Check this out! This band is coming here, you should go see them." Or like, "I really want to go here, let's all go to [restaurant] because they are having a giveaway."

Maddy talked about how it was sometimes a struggle to keep some boundaries between her Facebook profile as her own and one that served her student events group. This came in part because she was regularly asked to use her profile to advertise for her group, making her profile seem less like something she directed and controlled.

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One of the impacts of using Facebook as a tool to get a message out was that Facebook ceased to be an intimate or close self-presentation. Instead students created very constrained self-presentations. Though the content was perceived as accurate, it was not personal enough to make the students feel vulnerable or exposed by being on Facebook. For example, Jeff saw his profile as an entirely public location for sharing his photography and connecting with others in his student group. Part of Jeff's approach to Facebook as a public space stemmed from Facebook's privacy and copyright policies, which he found largely problematic.

When Facebook had its first copyright lawsuit was when I started changing how I posted. When people started suing them for copyright infringement and stuff, which is a big deal, and Facebook is still not very good about acknowledging copyrights. At that point in time I sort of went to, "I'm only going to post it if I want to be public and grant the corporation legally can use that stuff" which is very, very little, non-serious work and so on. At that point in time there is nothing that I have up there from after that cut off, which was 2008, that's not completely publically available on the Internet and other places. It's just aggregated.

Jeff still found Facebook to be a useful place to publish some of his photographs, but only as a type of advertisement for his other work. For a brief period of time, Jeff had a second Facebook account for more personal use, but he opted to stop using that one and just use his "public" account.

Facebook as a pragmatic tool seemed to be where most higher education functions fall for students. Some students resented being asked to use Facebook for coursework, while others saw Facebook as a useful tool to help coordinate the distribution of work and communication on group projects. With the use of Facebook for classes, there was some potential overlap with

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Facebook as a relational tool; however, students primarily saw the use of Facebook for classes as an academic expectation so relationship building was secondary to the class objectives it served (e.g., coordinating on assignments, sharing class notes). This was similar with student affairs uses. For example, resident advisors who used their profiles to gather information for hall programming were connecting with their residents; however, those relational bonds were a secondary outcome or a concurrent outcome of trying to plan effective and relevant hall programming. Hannah talked about the usefulness in creating a residence hall program:

> I think it's a great tool, especially for RAs. I guess email would work, but it's a great way to get people. I wanted to have a program and I didn't know if people wanted it to be at 11:00 AM or 2:00 PM on Saturday so people could all come and say which would work for them, and that was awesome. We can share each other's programs; if there's something happening on another floor, I can share with my floor, so I think it works really well that way.

Over the course of our interview, Hannah expressed some surprise at how much she used Facebook as a resident advisor and all of the ways in which it helped her fulfill those duties (e.g., program planning, staff communication, connecting with residents).

Classroom uses of Facebook were slightly different; Facebook allowed students to coordinate group projects and cut down on group meetings. Classroom use of Facebook also seemed to favor group projects in physical and life sciences, rather than the humanities and social sciences. For example, Jennifer had a group project for a microbiology class where the group used Facebook to coordinate a group poster and research project:

> We're doing different parts. Some people are part of the abstract and some people had to go into the lab and do stuff. They were like "Oh, here's that." And then we could just add

the attachments or pictures of the specimens and stuff. In the end whenever we actually

all got together to make the poster it was all drag and copy stuff.

In comparing this process for a group project to more frequent one-on-one meetings, Jennifer

found Facebook to be more efficient and effective.

There were also limits to these functional goals that students were able to achieve through

Facebook. As James talked about his experiences and concerns with Facebook as a platform for

activism, he talked about Facebook as an excellent tool for awareness building, but a weak tool

for follow-up:

In terms of activism on the raising awareness axis, Facebook is awesome because it's

really easy to get a lot of people to pay attention to something pretty quickly. It's not

good at follow up because there is no way to follow from like, "I'm now aware of it.

Funding is an issue in schools." Okay what'll you do? And what you have to do is get off

of Facebook and do something.

James's comments here partially echo Patrick's comments earlier about the limitation of

Facebook as a relational tool: students were able to connect with each other but tangible action

was not always a functional outcome.

Facebook as a Scrapbook

One of the real strengths of Facebook from the perspective of students was the ease in

which they could share their lives with friends and Friends, and in many ways Facebook served

as a public record for others to enjoy. Students framed these personal records as something akin

to a scrapbook or notebook that could be personal and private or they could be private among a

small group of Friends. Facebook as a scrapbook was the least common use of Facebook, but

one of the most unique. The use of Facebook as a scrapbook spanned personal and group uses,

and reflected the ways in which students were able to use Facebook as a way to record their lives and their relationships with others. Common examples of scrapbook types included group notebooks (private messaging among small groups), personal notebooks, storage of photo backups (in public and private albums), and study abroad and vacation travel logs.

The perception or use of Facebook as a scrapbook was not always immediate or intentional for students. For some of my participants, this scrapbook use emerged over time as students looked back over earlier content in their profiles and realized that they had inadvertently captured a snapshot of their life at that time. This was the case for Hannah, who in preparation for our interview had taken a quick look at her early use of Facebook. Hannah described this somewhat pleasant and funny experience:

> Facebook got that stupid timeline thing, so I went through and like saw some of the stuff that I was talking about when I was like 14, 15, 16. And it's very embarrassing…there's stuff like people would post on my wall about like, "Hey, vagina, what's your day like?" It's just like people didn't know how to communicate. And all of it was very, it's typical of what high schoolers were talking about.

For Hannah this use of Facebook as a digital notebook never factored into her wall posts with Friends. She was just communicating with them in a way that was convenient, but the result of using Facebook for these communications is that they continue to exist and are available for anyone who has access to Hannah's page. Hannah could remove these posts if she wanted, but she specifically decided not to remove them in order to continue to preserve those memories and experiences from her youth. In effect, Facebook became a digital version of a paper notebook that students might have passed around in high school. Several students made this reference to Facebook as a surrogate notebook to pass notes to each other.

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Kelly's discussion of her friends creating a small group for private messaging (from earlier in this chapter) is another excellent example of Facebook as a group notebook. In that case, Kelly and her friends used Facebook as a private notebook, so they could share more personal content with each other. But the basic function was the same: they were using Facebook as a way to capture and record their experiences with each other. The archival nature of Facebook turned these series of private chats into a durable record of their relationship(s) over time. One of the advantages of this digital notebook is that Kelly and her friends can all access the group's notebook whenever they want, wherever they are.

Students also found Facebook to be useful as a personal scrapbook. Not as a journal per se, but as a place to write reminders and notes to themselves or as a place to keep track of the people and experiences in their lives. This private scrapbook is more or less a basic function of Facebook, as all of the activities that go on with users' profiles serve as semi-public records of their lives. Intentionally or not, students used Facebook to record important experiences, thoughts, and relationships that happened throughout their lives, at least in ways that were connected to Facebook (i.e., specific friends, messages, wall posts, etc.). The potential for Facebook to serve as a scrapbook for users is strong, and it goes further to reinforce the idea of a curated self-presentation. In this case, the personal notebook is just a reflection of that curated self-presentation and its changes over time. One limitation of this type of notebook is that it reflects the ways in which students use Facebook, so it is a very specific curation that may not represent a more meaningful personal archive for students who curated away from posting more personally meaningful content.

Another application of the Facebook scrapbook was as a backup location for storing photographs. Jill described using her Facebook profile in this way as an accident, but when her

computer crashed and she lost all of her photos, she decided to use Facebook more intentionally as a place to store photos: "I lost every single one, except on Facebook. So that's one of the reasons I put everything on Facebook because it's a storage place for that. But I don't know how much privacy I should put on there. It's also nice to be able to show people like, 'Hey, I've been to this place in Europe before. Check out my album.'" The last part of Jill's comment also incorporated her other use of Facebook, as a travel log for her study abroad experience.

All of the students in this study who were on or had been on a study abroad trip talked about how they used Facebook to document their time abroad. As a travel log students were able to keep family and friends up to date on their travels and experiences, especially when communication was difficult (due to time differences, poor Internet connections, or a lack of telephone) or when they were busy with school and travel and could not make their schedules line up. Students found this use of Facebook to be a way to make their study abroad more immersive for their Friends. It also provided them with the social cache of having unique content that I discussed earlier.

Figure 4 is an excellent example of a dual-use image. This particular image was a profile picture for a student. The photograph comes from a trip to Haiti after the 2010 earthquake, and it reflects both the student's personal history of having made the trip to support a local community there as well as documents her activity for others. The comments below the profile picture are all very positive of the student who posted the photo, and there is little to suggest the more challenging aspects of being in Haiti a year after the earthquake. The colors of the photograph are bright and cheery. The three people in the photograph seem happy (which has been slightly obfuscated by the blur on their faces), emphasized by the younger boy tickling the woman in the photo. Readers will note that the photo received nine Likes and four comments, plus a note from

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the original poster about the context of the photo. Adding that note helps to reinforce this image as an element of her travel log to Haiti during that time.

For the students who saw Facebook as a scrapbook/scrapbooking tool, they had higher levels of comfort in posting personal content to Facebook and often perceived their personal content to not be especially private. These students were most likely to not frame their photos and statuses as a form of vulnerability that could be exploited if an unintended audience were to see their pages. These students also made frequent comments about the "fair game" quality of Facebook and having "nothing to hide" on their profiles. For these students privacy was not a strong concern, and they often saw their profiles as something akin to celebrations of their life experiences. As a group, these students were the least cynical about the use and value of Facebook and they were also fairly comfortable with the role of Facebook in their lives. For them, Facebook had value as an ongoing tool, but was not a source of obsession or anxiety.

Figure 4. Loooooooooove.

A Note on Privacy

One important finding from this study is that students possessed much higher degrees of awareness, caution, and concern about their privacy than noted in previous research. Popular depictions of students' awareness of Facebook privacy settings suggest that students are either unaware or apathetic to the consequences of personal disclosures on Facebook (e.g., Debatin et al., 2009; Lewis et al., 2008). Certainly there are examples of students posting problematic photos and status updates that get them unwanted attention or in trouble with administrations and/or the law (e.g., photos of underage drinking, photos of racially themed parties); however, for students in all parts of this study those issues were a low concern because they were aware, if not also knowledgeable, of the semi-public nature of Facebook. As a result students conveyed a common sentiment that Facebook is not the place to post anything you want to be private. Molly captured this sentiment in describing her approach to what she is willing to post to Facebook:

> I figure if it's on the Internet someone's gonna see it if they really want to see it. So I don't even know what my privacy settings are anymore. I think it's like friends can see me or basic stuff like that. But employers or whatever, they're gonna see who I am eventually, so why not just throw it out there already. I'm kind of not too private with my Facebook stuff. I probably should be more private with it, but either way, if a hacker really wants it, they're gonna find a way to get it.

While Molly admits that she could be stricter with her privacy settings, she approaches Facebook and the Internet as fundamentally insecure or public, so she is unwilling to post something to Facebook that she does not want others to be able to access—with or without her permission.

It is entirely likely that this change in privacy attitudes reflects increased exposure both in personal lives, where formal coaching has occurred by parents or authority figures, and in media

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reports of privacy problems on Facebook. This lack of true privacy on Facebook was very

present in how participants talked about what they posted, with an eye to both intended and

unintended audiences. Unintended audiences were almost entirely forms of authority (e.g.,

university administrators, parents, future/current employers), and the content that students did

not want them to see typically involved alcohol or substance usage. Concern over authority

figures was not necessarily concern about punishment, but rather about not offending or

upsetting those people, as Bruce described:

> Anytime somebody takes a picture and there's a drink in my hand or I look blatantly
>
> under the influence of something, I don't like those to go on Facebook because you know,
>
> I am friends with my boss on Facebook. And there's the family members, they don't want
>
> to see that. So I don't like those photos on there.

Bruce expressed some concern about the presence of alcohol in photos, but his primary concern

was not to expose family and supervisors to photos that would be upsetting or put them in a

situation where discipline might be needed. For students like Bruce, there was a separation

between the behavior (e.g., drinking or being under the influence) and publicizing that behavior

(e.g., posting photos to Facebook). It was common for students to move past concerns about the

behavior and move directly to the problems of advertising this behavior on Facebook. These

students expressed more concern about reputation management than about their behavior being

problematic.

Where students held caution about what their peers saw was more typically sexual or vain

in nature. Students were wary of the degree of sexual explicitness of their photos, and all of my

participants were careful to not post photos or comments that they thought were physically or

intellectually unflattering, except when it involved family. Vanity was a common concern for all

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of the students. For example, Reed was very intentional about what photos and statuses he posted to his profile; however, he made exceptions when it came to family and friends and photos where other people looked good or was a special event (e.g., Christmas photos).

Sexually explicit or provocative photos came up as a concern more with female participants, but these concerns often linked to ideas of choosing flattering photos and updates. Jennifer was generally open to a wide range of photos being posted of her, but she served as a campus mentor for first-year students and wanted to role model appropriate behavior for them and her two teenage brothers. As a result, Jennifer was critical of other students who did not share that same caution and reserve:

> I'm not going to put any pictures of me drinking or sexual pictures, nothing revealing myself.   Because people will put up stuff I can't believe they put up there. I go to class with them, you know what I mean? They're the same age as me, same gender. I mean in my opinion, they're slutty pictures. I'm like, "What are you doing?"

Jennifer's response to "slutty" photos was not unique. Among the interview participants, most of them grouped sexually explicit photos in the same category as photos with alcohol: do not post them anywhere near Facebook.

One of the complexities of photos on Facebook was that students only had control of the photos they uploaded. Other Friends were able to upload potentially compromising photos, which students would then have to untag or ask that the photos be deleted altogether. This tagging and deleting of photos was part of the burden of uploading photos to Facebook, as Bruce described:

> There were a couple of, like, clubs and organizations I was in where I was the only person with a camera, and I would literally post all of the pictures from our events. Good

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photos, bad photos, people picking their nose in the background, and I would tag

everybody I saw. And then so many people would get mad at me. Like, "This is a

horrible picture. Why did you tag me in this?" "This is so ugly. Delete it." So, I don't

really post those pictures anymore, and I don't tag a lot unless it's like clearly a good

photo, and I can tell that that person would want to be in it and then I'll tag them.

Through a process of trial and error, Bruce uncovered some of the unwritten boundaries of what

others are willing to have posted to Facebook. For Bruce this was a discouraging process that

ultimately ended in him not posting photos to Facebook.

Students reported varying levels of success in getting other students to remove photos

when asked, and students always had the option of simply untagging themselves from the photos

so those photos were not directly connected to their own profiles and would require more

extensive digging by others to be found. Often students opted to use the Facebook setting that

required they approve the mention of their name in any tagged photos or status updates. This

was not a fail-safe method, as the photo or status update may still exist but is not directly linked

to the student's profile. Jill expressed some frustration with even this level of control where the

student can only remove the tag, not the content: "There have been times where [tagged photos]

just come up and people start liking them and just "Oh, you already saw it" and you can't delete

it once people have already seen it." Another privacy strategy was to selectively block Friends

from seeing content. This approach had the advantage of being able to share photos and statuses

with some friends, but it also had the liability of potential exposure to other Friends.

Others were less cynical and simply assumed that anything they posted might be seen by

unwanted eyes because of changes to Facebook's privacy rules or by accidental disclosure

through creating the wrong privacy settings on their accounts. Students frequently framed this

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attitude as: maintaining extensive privacy on Facebook was a lot of work that was bound to have accidents or errors, similar to John's reason for not having differential levels of access and privacy on his account (below). Overall, students were aware of privacy issues with Facebook and most often adopted a strategy of not posting anything they would not want available to almost everyone they know. Participants had peers who did not exercise this same level of caution and there was a sense that it was only a matter of time before that approach backfired on those people. John, for example, adopted the philosophy that he should avoid posting content he might want private because he was bound to make a mistake and expose that content to unintended audiences:

> I just feel like if I had stuff on my Facebook that I wouldn't feel comfortable with everyone seeing, then I'm gonna make mistakes sometime and, like, show it to my friend's mom and be like, "What were you doing?" So I just keep that stuff off completely. I think that's a pretty common thing with my friends: just keep anything risky off completely. I've gotten so many lectures about, "Anything that's on the Internet stays on forever." All right, calm down. I'm fine.

John's final comments about "lectures" was another common refrain among interview participants. They have heard the message about exercising caution with what they post on the Internet loud and clear, and the strategy they have adopted is simply to not post it. As I suggest earlier, students deciding to not post content has no real connection to whether or not they engage in behaviors that authority figures might see as problematic, but it does mean that they were getting more selective about the attention they drew to that behavior.

On the whole students demonstrated much higher levels of privacy awareness and control than previous research suggests; however, this difference in awareness also depends on

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perspective of privacy. Many, if not most, of the interview participants were unaware of what their current privacy settings were on their account. However, these privacy settings were somewhat irrelevant to them because they were exercising more care and caution in what they posted to their accounts, so that allowing others (both Friends and strangers) access to their account was of little consequence. That being said, most students were able to confirm that their privacy settings were set to allow their Friends almost complete access to their profile and non-Friends could only see the Facebook minimums for profiles (e.g., profile picture, cover photo, and account name).

Between the Curated and "Real"

As a self-presentation, the curated self is an odd entity. It contains the same aspects of created and performed self-presentation that Goffman (1959) originally described in his theory, but it adds to that theory an aspect of being an object that is simultaneously separate from and connected to the person. For Goffman, the presentation of self was a thing that inherently relied on the perception by an audience of the individual making the performance within a bounded context. There was no self-presentation beyond a physical being within a physical space. However, with Facebook, the characteristics of performance have changed drastically. There is no longer a physical space in which to perform, and the performance is no longer governed by synchronous time. Instead, there is a virtual space in which the audience will experience the performance as a series of asynchronous, and potentially achronological, events. The defining lines of bounded context have blurred drastically, and the students in this study have adapted to those blurred contexts with aplomb.

With the confluence of intended and unintended audiences, of known and hidden observers, students in this study were unable to produce a self-presentation for each audience or

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set of audiences. Instead, they had to rely on layers of curation in their self-presentations to attend to multiple audiences at once. These layered curations allowed students to express a range of symbolic meaning for their audiences. Framed within a generally positive and engaging performance, students curated messages and expressed for intimate Friends beneath a broader more ambiguous performance for more public audiences. In some ways, these layered curations of self were a reintroduction of front region and back region performances. Students were able to veil or keep private back region performances through restricted access to group pages, group messaging, personal messaging, and selected photo albums. Although students found Facebook's privacy tools untrustworthy, they nevertheless used them to help create some boundaries of private and public on their Facebook profiles. These boundaries in turn made the setting or context of Facebook interactions less blurry; however, given students' general distrust of Facebook security, they still overwhelming opted to avoid posting anything on Facebook that they would be uncomfortable with anyone else on Facebook seeing. In an ideal sense, anything restricted as private could be part of Goffman's back region content, but students were suspicious that something like a back region existed. Instead they used curation of content in the front region as a way to quietly or subtly prepare their performances of self. Sometimes this was trial and error in posting content. Sometimes this was posting content as private until students could refine or complete the content to be a better self-expression, as in the case of Jill posting photos or messages to herself.

Because these digital self-presentations existed as durable forms of performance, students were able to treat their curated selves almost as objects "out there" in the world of cyber-space, a form of performance or self-presentation that occurred on its own or existed on its own. Ultimately this ability for curated selves to be durable expressions of subjectivity is what makes

them such useful relational tools. Students used Facebook profiles to create pseudo-surrogates of themselves to share thought and feelings and information about their lives with their Friends through a mass-broadcast medium, which then allowed Friends to respond to those thoughts, feelings, and information at their convenience (or with time to reflect and craft a response over time). If for nothing else, the ability of curated selves to decouple social interaction from synchronous time afforded students an ability to redefine the ways in which they were audiences for other students' performances and the ways in which those students were audience members for theirs.

CHAPTER 5: PROMOTE – THE COMMODIFIED SELF

The constructivist telling of curated selves offers some useful insight into how students perceived themselves and their uses of Facebook, but it only tells one portion of the story. Missing from these discussed perceptions are underlying issues of social and cultural power that inform the benefits and consequences of the various layers of the curated self that students create. In this findings chapter, I break from a strict constructivist grounded theory read of students' Facebook use to incorporate the critical perspective of critical media/cultural studies in order to draw attention to some of the issues of power underlying students' self-presentations and curated selves on Facebook.

Re-examining students' curated selves in an analysis informed by the sensitizing concepts of individualization, identity capital, and critical media/cultural studies, a new picture of Facebook emerges in which students curate their self-presentations to be unique and individual and to employ identity as a capital resource on and through Facebook. One of the defining characteristics of this focus on identity as capital is the treatment of personal self-presentations and the self-presentations of others as objects for production and consumption. I am calling self-presentations for consumption *commodified selves*.

The commodified self amplifies the curated self as an identity surrogate to become an object for production, consumption, and distribution. Commodification in this use is more metaphorical than literal, as students are not necessarily using their commodified selves for the creation of financial profit, and I did not explicitly study the ways in which students used their identities and self-presentations on Facebook to generate financial profit or gain. As a metaphorical from of commodity, though, students were quite adept at using their self-presentations to gain social prestige within the realm of Facebook, generating higher EdgeRank

ratings (Bucher, 2012) through posting comments and likes that generated high numbers of Likes and comments, thereby contributing to the scale relative influence of their posts appearing in the News Feeds of their Friends. Students in this study demonstrated an acute mindfulness of the social benefits of positing content that other users would want to see and experience, and that through this content their profiles had more value as a type of social commodity.

The bulk of the production of the commodified self comes from students creating curated selves and then focusing on making that curated self something Friends and peers will consume and redistribute among other Friends and peers. At the heart of this commodification of self, and emphasis of identity as a form of capital, are students' efforts to have their profiles stand out among their Friends' curated selves and to resolve the overwhelming amount of personal and social information available on Facebook. Through the process of commodification, students assigned values to different types of self-presentations and assess the relative value that they and their Friends represented according to these values. In short, students created these commodifications of self and others as a way to resolve the social pressure toward individualization—Facebook served as both a medium and an expression of individualization.

In explicating this idea of the commodified self, I return to the discussion of sensitizing concepts in Chapter 3, particularly individualization and identity capital. Readers may remember that the concept of individualization describes the social force that requires individuals to assume total responsibility for their social and economic lives and a need to differentiate themselves from those around them. I quoted Bauman's (2001) argument that identity was a task for which actors were responsible for the consequences of their performance. These responsibilities could be found in Yan's (2010) summary of four major characteristics of individualization: differentiation and disembedment (or dissociation) from the social; compulsive and obligatory

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self-determination; living a life of one's own through conformity; and cultural determination. Collectively these four elements reflect the forced social isolation and imposed social obligations of individuals to create lifestyles and life patterns that approximate re-embedment (or re-association) without actually reconnecting to stable social groupings. In other words, individualization forces individuals to render themselves in socially and culturally relevant and intelligible ways that mimic previous forms of social order but ultimately maintain an individualism that isolates them from others.

Côté's (2002) theory of identity capital—identity as a social resource—further augments this understanding of individualization to apply it to the area of identity and self-expression. Côté argued that individuals must create individualized self-styled life trajectories that employ identity as a resource in their relationships with others as part of their maturation into adulthood. For the participants in this study, their uses of Facebook to create and curate selves can be interpreted both as expressions of individualization through SNSs and as efforts to generate or control identity capital among a wide range of audiences. These efforts to generate identity capital are particularly important because they address some of the fissures between authentic and inauthentic curations of self that students struggle with, as noted in the previous chapter.

Finally, the sensitizing concept of dialectic between text and context from critical media/cultural studies helped to link together the ways in which both individualization and identity capital played roles in students' use of Facebook to produce and consume identity. As a way to tease out the concept of commodified selves, I address three related areas: *self as commodity*, *others as commodities*, and *Facebook citizenship*. Collectively these three areas encompass several ways in which students participated in Facebook as identities in flux, and

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address the challenge of crafting a commodified self-presentation in the dense sociality of SNSs.

Figure 5 provides readers with a graphical representation of the commodified self.

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┌─────────────────────────────┐
│                             │
│     Commodified Self        │
│                             │
└─────────────────────────────┘

       Roles of Commodified Selves

┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐  ┌──────────────┐
│   Self as    │  │   Others as  │  │   Facebook   │
│  Commodity   │  │  Commodities │  │  Citizenship │
└──────────────┘  └──────────────┘  └──────────────┘
```
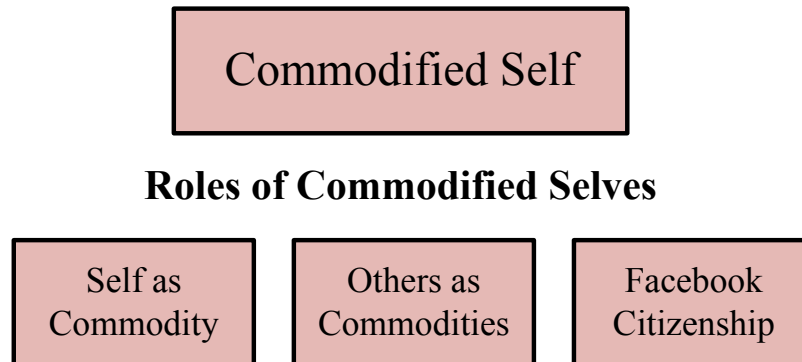
Figure 5. The Commodified Self

Self as Commodity: Expressions of Individualization and Identity Capital

The idea of "self" as a form of commodity is not a new idea. Hearn (2008) offered a compelling argument of how individuals use Facebook and social media for self-promotion and self-branding to generate economic value through marketing for goods and services. Hearn argued, "the self becomes reified – a brand in and for itself, a promotional object" (p. 214). But this idea can and should be pushed further in its implications, and more depth is needed in how we think about which "self" is the focus of branding and commodification for college students. Self is not a reified construct but rather a reflection of actual identities to which individuals assign social value. As such, students in my study were not simply trying to develop a branded self or a self as brand; through individualization they were laboring to generate self-presentations as a product that had inherent and real social value and distinguished them as individual from others. Their digital self-presentations were, in Hearn's (2008) neo-Marxist language, objects that held use-value and labor-value.

Across the interviews and surveys, students expressed a recurring perception that they needed to create and express self-presentations that appealed to their Friends and helped them

stand out as those same Friends scanned through their News Feeds. As Amanda put it, "I interpret my Facebook profile as it's simultaneously an expression of me and also kind of an advertisement. I don't put everything that goes on in my life or whatever up there because I know that the purpose of posting up there is for other people to see it." Amanda's framing of her profile as a self-expression and an advertisement is compelling because she was suggesting that she felt the need to appeal to an audience, even when that audience is made up of intimate connections such as friends and family. Amanda was in no way alone in her expression.

The feelings Amanda expressed point to an important characteristic of students' individualization through Facebook: students actively tried to create profiles and self-presentations that appealed to their peers through a best-self approach that overemphasized unique experiences while simultaneously muting mundane and common experiences that may be more likely the basis of social bonds with their peers (e.g., time spent studying, academic and financial pressures, emotional turmoil in intrapersonal and interpersonal development).

Students were direct when talking about how it was appealing to have others exploring their profiles and that this was part of why they created them—they wanted to be more accessible to others, to provide other users with an ongoing narration of their lives and major events in their lives. Based on the findings of the previous chapter, the ideas of self and self-presentation on Facebook are anything but simple. Students were engaging in complex constructions of who they are and how they present themselves via social media, and a discussion of how they promoted or marketed that self to others has important implications for how we interpret the larger social value of those commodified selves. For students in this study, their commodified selves were an integral part of how they used and ultimately exploited Facebook as a resource to access the lives

of their Friends without an interest in building relationships with those Friends or more careful

regard for boundaries of privacy and invasiveness.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, students used their Facebook profiles to parallel

their physical lives and the profiles of their peers; however, students were also simultaneously

differentiating and individualizing their profiles so that they stood out among the din of content

that floods Facebook News Feeds. This is important because the user is the content in social

media. To paraphrase McLuhan (1964) *the user is the message*. If the curated self was about

how students craft self-presentations, then the commodified self is about how students use these

crafted self-presentations to generate social value. There were essentially three ways that they

generated this social value: being interesting without being personal, listening to social feedback

via comments and Likes, and revising self-presentations to accumulate identity capital.

Being Interesting without Being Personal

The first and most present way in which students sought to individualize themselves

through Facebook was through "being interesting." What it meant to be interesting varied from

student to student, but the unifying concept was that Facebook profiles were only as valuable as

the interest they held for others, and the path to being interesting was to stand out. Students were

casual in their descriptions of trying to post content to Facebook that caught the attention of

others, but their descriptions nonetheless emphasized that they were trying to post content that

others would find interesting.

> I put things up that I think are interesting and that maybe have something to do with me
>
> but also that other people would be interested in. So if it's a status update, it's usually
>
> something that doesn't happen every day perhaps, something that's somewhat novel to
>
> which other people might relate and think it was funny or something like that. And then

same with pictures and stuff. It's at the same time what I think is cool and what I think

other people might be interested in. Because I don't think it's fun if you're like, "Oh yeah,

I went to school today." "Yeah, I got this test back today."   No one cares about that, and

I think there's plenty of little trivial things that go on that I can talk with a friend over

lunch about. But you know, if they're just reading one sentence about me I'd rather have it

be something interesting. (Amanda)

Amanda captured the spirit of being interesting without being personal. In crafting a profile and

an identity that appeals to her Friend network, she intentionally sought to put up content that will

resonate with others. She inserted some of her own voice in posting content that she finds

interesting, but ultimately that personal interest got weighed against what will appeal to others.

This approach implies that if profile content does not hold interest for Friends, then it is

something to avoid.

Students often used humor to help their profiles stand out. For example, Figure 6 is a

screen shot of a student using humor and popular culture to connect with Friends. The student

included a reference to Michael Cera and the TV show Arrested Development as a way to spark

engagement with his Friends.

Figure 6. Meeting Michael Cera.

The effort worked, as Figure 6 reflects, and his Friends responded with eight Likes and four

comments, several of which also used humor in kind.

Tiffany talked about how she focused on photos as a way to stand out from peers—she

had photos no one else had, and she felt that they made her profile interesting.

I really feel that the only way to [stand out] is through photos, because the format of

Facebook is the same for everyone compared to something like MySpace, where you

would choose your colors and choose your, whatever, letter scheme and what to show

first. And I think that was a lot easier to, I guess, differentiate yourself. Whereas

Facebook is very standardized format, so when it comes to that, there's not very much to

differentiate yourself besides your pictures and, maybe, what you like, what information you included or not, like whether you have your phone number there or something. But I feel that there's not that many avenues to really differentiate yourself, I guess.

Tiffany's comment about MySpace was one that other participants noted as well. On MySpace, users were able to modify the HTML code that governed the appearance and design of individual profile pages, so users could make pages that were completely similar or wildly different from others. On Facebook, this is not possible because Facebook allows users to modify only the content entered into a restricted structure (e.g., photo albums, demographics, interests). This creates a need for students to find ways within a restricted structure to put forth an individualized profile. Photos, then, become one of the most valuable ways students can do that.

Students found it difficult to figure out how to best differentiate and individualize not just their profile, but their life experiences: to live a life of one's own. Jill explains that when she considered where to study abroad, others' experiences were part of her decision making:

Facebook is the same way like, "Oh, she's going to Spain and he's going to Denmark, but I'm going to Finland." "But she's doing this, why can't I do this?" It's hard because there's no answer to that perfect Facebook profile. It's like living life is your own idea. It shouldn't be what your friends are doing, but it's hard to know how much to take from your friends.

Jill wanted to have a unique experience abroad and she also wanted to have unique content to be able to post when she was abroad. Using a group of Friends—and particularly Friends of Friends—as a point of reference, she ultimately picked a path that would stand out from her peers while still being similar (i.e., studying abroad in Europe).

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Although the definitions that students offered about what was interesting differed greatly, the students did tend to adopt two opposing foci within the general framing of what others would find interesting: (a) content that accounted for the *perceived interests* of Friends and (b) content they thought *should be* of interest to Friends. As criterion for what to post to attract the attention of others or to use Facebook as a medium for connecting and communicating with others, these two foci have important implications in how students constructed their Facebook profiles, and what types of identity capital they developed through being interesting to their Friends. Students used these intentional methods of being interesting as their ways to connect with Friends and to have shared experiences with members of their networks. Where these ideas of sharing and connecting became difficult was in how students perceived what would be interesting to their Friends.

Some students tried to focus on events occurring in their lives as a way to push information out to Friends. For example, Andrew often posted information about upcoming music performances of which he was a part. Other students tried to focus on events that involved Friends as a way to pull those Friends into their pages. For example, Amanda included the names of Friends when posting about having dinner with them. In both cases, students were careful to avoid what they perceived to be bragging about accomplishments via their profiles, which created a difficult balance of sharing about life events without seeming narcissistic or self-interested.

Jill, for example, does extensive community service work and has many professional achievements, but she avoids using her profile to share those experiences because she does not want the experiences she sees as significant to lose personal meaning by being accessible to

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semi-strangers via Facebook. She also finds posts about personal achievement to be "braggy" and a way to show off:

> It's some of those things that you just don't brag about. I've built bridges in Haiti, I've designed schools in Rwanda. I can tell you this, and as a friend you already know these things, but on Facebook I guess I can't say it…When I posted this Facebook status that I got awarded product architect for this bridge, people from my high school started liking it, that I would never talk to. It hurt me because I hadn't told my grandparents yet, but this girl from my high school I didn't care about had appreciated it. It's a weird feeling. So I'd rather keep my most personal things to myself. My more personal interactions, one-on-one interactions, I can tell it to them then because then, that's when I feel like it can be the most appreciated. If it's on Facebook it's just like "Okay cool, next."

Jill had a long list of accomplishments to be proud of and activities that are meaningful to her, but as she noted, she did not want to diminish the personal value of those activities and achievements by sharing them with people who were not close to her. This is an excellent example of the concept that students repeatedly talked about: being interesting without being personal. For Jill, these activities and achievements were too personally meaningful to share with everyone. So while they were some of the most interesting elements of her physical life, she was strongly averse to bringing those into her digital life. The desire to be interesting via Facebook was in constant conflict with the idea of not being too personal. This was an important tension for all students in this study. One of the most immediate ways to offer a differentiated or individualized Facebook profile was to use Facebook as a platform to share more unique personal details. At the same time, students were wary of sharing too much via Facebook because of the lack of differentiation between social contexts on Facebook.

As I discussed in the previous chapter, students saw Facebook as a problematic place to post content that was too personal because they were unconvinced that anything on Facebook stayed private. In response to this ultimate lack of privacy, students described a delicate social dance of posting material that allowed them to connect with other users (i.e., by being interesting) without really sharing thoughts, feelings, or experiences that they felt were deeply personal or more profoundly authentic to who they were as people. Their efforts to avoid being too personal also came to bear as students were trying to create Facebook profiles that appealed to their peers. Here students were, in part, avoiding being too personal because that made their profile seem to be self-congratulatory, as Jill commented above.

The quest to be interesting without being personal generally became an important issue for students when they were experiencing serious life events. For example, Jennifer was comfortable sharing comments about small events in her life such as speaking at a leadership program or wishing people "happy birthday," but she specifically avoided any mention of a serious family illness that weighed heavily on her. This separation between interesting and personal reflected her wariness of Facebook for self-presentations that she thought were more authentic or accurate. "I don't post, like, personal stuff...my grandma's in the hospital right now and she's waiting for a transplant. I don't post stuff like that. I feel like I post more about my campus involvement and things I've accomplished." In effect, Jennifer was posting to be personable without being personal. She was careful to create a separation between who she wanted to be on Facebook and how that related to her day-to-day life.

Similarly, Kristin was happy to post content about her school experiences and relationships with friends, but she was careful not to post anything about her plans to potentially transfer to a different university: "I'm not necessarily happy with my decision to stay in [city],

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but I'm not posting it up for everybody to see or I'm not posting up the idea that I'm planning on transferring or things like that just because I don't want people to know those things if I don't know what's going to happen." Kristin's rationale for not sharing is reasonable; she did not want to raise expectations or disappointments among her Friends until she had reached a more final decision about transferring to a different college and moving to a new city. But it is noteworthy that she did not find Facebook to be a safe or appropriate place to share her uncertainty. In essence, this was part of how she created a safe or compelling Facebook profile, by not putting up content to which others might react strongly or raise concerns.

Both Jennifer and Kristin reflect how students purposely carve out important and deeply personal content from their profiles as a way to exert control over Facebook and the self-presentation they offer to their Friends. While still trying to craft and package a profile that is engaging and stands out, they excluded content that they deemed to be vulnerable or intimate. In this way, Facebook profiles became an easy tool for allowing others to stay connected and up to date with students' lives without revealing too much. These public disclosures of safe content also allowed students to post status updates to their pages in place of telling all of their friends individually about those experiences. This meant that Friendship and staying connected required minimal effort. Students expected that their peers would visit their profiles periodically to check up on what they were doing in life and save them the trouble of having to share these details in person.

Another approach to the balance of being interesting without being personal was to post content that was personally interesting or reflected political and ideological perspectives without overtly stating personal opinions. Hannah exemplified this approach by posting news articles

about the Israeli-Palestine conflict that favored her interpretation of the conflict without her specifically stating her thoughts.

> My parents will always say this, because I feel like they accuse me of being super political on Facebook. And I'm always like, "I never say any opinions, I just post a link and then include a quote. Purposely so that no one can say I have a certain opinion." And I don't, I stopped listing political affiliations on Facebook. But it's totally obvious from my articles I post which side I'm on. Like me and my parents, I mean I'm very sympathetic to, like, the Palestinian side of the situation in Gaza. And my parents were like "They might not hire you like in, at public radio jobs if you're like so vocal about 'here's the thing in Palestine.'" And I was like, "Yeah but I never say anything. I just post an article and include a quote and they can take that for what they will."

By posting articles without direct statements of opinion, Hannah believed she was able to share content that she was passionate about without being more overt in her feelings. Hannah also tried to post content that informed others and that she thought they should know, without being only about her and her life. Hannah's approach to posting was restrained and very much not one size fits all, which she hoped garnered her more authority or importance in her Friends' News Feeds. For example, when she wanted to entertain, she emphasized humor and posted content that was short, topical, and focused on what she thought others would enjoy. When she wanted to inform, she emphasized news and politics and focused on what she thought others should find interesting.

Hannah's political postings reflected an attempt to be subtle while still being suggestive. Reed adopted a similar approach in sharing his views through links to news articles that he felt

others should be aware of. Reed framed these posts as a way of "filtering" his opinions while still sharing his interests with others.

> One of the ways that I filter myself is I'll put up an article from the *New York Times* or illuminate an issue that I have a strong opinion about but I'm not going to say what the opinion is. One really big thing on Facebook right now is the increased Israeli-Palestinian conflict, so posting articles about that is what I do to sort of maintain a boundary between my big mouth and then, like, showing what I want other people to see.

Reed described these articles as ones that "tip his hand" without directly stating his interests, which paralleled Hannah's approach of not directly stating opinions. Reed, like Hannah, demonstrated a popular approach of posting personal opinion without directly stating personal opinion, especially about controversial topics. Again, students were actively seeking ways to be interesting without being personal, which often involved redistributing the ideas or views of others as a proxy or surrogate for personal views.

Participants created their profiles for others to see with an intention that their profiles were for an audience, either vague and broad or specific and narrow. Alice, for example, crafted her profile with the idea of making parts of it conspicuous to invite others to click on it.

> I edit my profile based on what people would see first. So it's going more in the other way around. Like my cover picture tends to be something conspicuous or something because it's there. Because it's part of your profile and someone clicks on it. The cover picture and the profile picture is the next. And then I don't think people actually will look through your wall a lot. I try to make my actual profile, like the information section interesting, or what I actually believe in, especially with my favorite quotes.

Alice approached her profile specifically with the idea that others will view and consume it, and she wanted to make that process easier for others based on what she thought they would want to consume. She has created a hierarchy of which pieces should be eye catching and which elements should be interesting or accurate to who she is and what she believes. Her efforts at making a distinction between elements of her profile through a hierarchy is an excellent example of how students approached their profiles as something they produced.

How students interpreted the idea of being interesting was a moving target, which resulted in actively changing self-presentations that maintained fluid boundaries of personal and public information. One of the methods students used to assess these ever-changing self-presentations was the social feedback that students received via comments and Likes for what they posted.

Social Feedback through Comments and Likes

Likes and comments on Facebook presented important tools for students to give and receive social feedback. As a tool of giving social feedback, students were able to help shape and change the self-presentations of their peers—either directly through comments and Likes that appeared on their Friends' pages or indirectly through the impact that Likes and comments had on how their Friends curated their self-presentations. This was not unlike Cooley's (1902) looking glass self with an update from in-person engagement to the dense structure of mediated interaction through Facebook. Student relied on their Friends to provide them feedback about how those Friends saw them with students engaging in some efforts to re-curate their profiles to garner better responses to their profiles. Though the looking glass self of Facebook did not necessarily translate to a different sense of self outside of Facebook, students still felt tremendous social force to present an identity that encouraged comments and Likes.

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Students found Likes and comments to be powerful forms of affirmation (or tacit disapproval when not posted). Students enjoyed the idea that other people could and would access their pages and their content to post Likes or comments on photos and status updates. They attributed a degree of agency and a basis for deeper interpersonal connections to these comments and Likes. Likes and comments provided students with basic feedback that other people had read their posts and that their Friends enjoyed their profiles. They also allowed users to assess how Friends interpreted what they posted to Facebook, which contributed to their sense of connection and connectedness through Facebook. For example, Reed tied a sense of success to the feedback he got from posts:

> A successful [post] would be when a lot of people like it. Just sort of acknowledging that they see it because it's great feedback. I love it when they share the same image or photo that I did. And, you know, you get the update "This person shared your photo" or whatever. Commenting in it is kind of fun but... I don't know, I don't really pay attention to those as much.

Reed's differentiation between Likes and comments was not unusual. Some students favored feedback in the form of Likes because it provided them with a clear quantifiable assessment of whether or not people liked the post. Other students preferred comments because they involved more thought and could be more specific about what their Friends enjoyed about the post. These uses of comments and Likes were a good example of how students were engaging in living a "life of one's own through conformity" (Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p. 151). Students were reliant on using behaviors that were socially endorsed or favorable as a way to express themselves on Facebook. Most students describe their behavior as their own unique approach, and yet were also able to reference how and where they got the idea to do what they did or how

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what they did was like what their Friends did. Students had a do-it-yourself attitude despite a reliance or conformity to relatively pre-established forms of behavior.

Students were careful to separate the value they placed on Likes and the value they placed on comments. Some students preferred the quick affirmation of Likes, while others preferred the more in-depth potential of comments.   In general Likes were seen as pleasant or perhaps slightly innocuous. (By design Facebook only allows users the positive form of "Like" versus an option to "Dislike" content, which undoubtedly contributes to this perception.) Comments, on the other hand, allow users to script their own feedback, from positive to negative and from short to long. Comments were an area where students engaged in rich and complex interaction with each other. Some of this engagement was supportive and encouraging. For example, Figure 7 (below) reflects students' positive engagement with a status update, comments, and Likes. The post and conversation are truncated for space, but each of the color boxes represents a different person commenting on the photo. The conversation is seemingly about eating beer and hotdogs at a favorite restaurant; however, the photo and conversation carries the subtext of all of these students sharing the same cultural knowledge of this restaurant and what the experience of eating there is. Judging from the comments of the Friends, the photo conveys a sense of joy for getting to enjoy the beer and hotdog. The post also includes the original poster inserting a mini conversation between the other people who commented on the post—mimicking a conversation about the conversation pattern of the Friends (note the parallel structure of the conversation, as emphasized by the color bars).

Figure 7. Happy Hump Day!

Some of this engagement was functional or pragmatic, such as using Facebook updates to draw attention to an event of interest. In the case of Figure 8, the student who posted the first status knew that his Friends would be interested in it and were likely to respond through comments and or Likes, starting a conversation among a group of Friends with his status update.

Figure 8. Basshunter.

In this example, the original post about an event quickly turns into planning for the event, including looking for lodging and assessing the logistics of a proposed hotel. This style of post into planning conversation was common for this student and most of her posts follow some sort of similar pattern. Part of the way in which she was intentional in her posting was to post statuses that triggered this type of response from one or two close Friends. The information at the top of the screen shot reflects that the post was directed to one student from another (note the color boxes separated by an arrow) and then a long back-and-forth of 99 total comments between the two Friends. This conversation could have just as easily been a private one through Facebook's messaging feature, but instead these students chose to make this conversation public for their other Friends to see all of the details. Readers might note that at the bottom of the screen shot, the conversation starts to turn away from the first topic. The length of this Facebook exchange ultimately makes several turns in conversation, with an occasional return to the original topic of Basshunter in Seattle.

Likes and comments were in many ways a form of social currency. Students described the positive experience of receiving a large number of Likes or comments and the overall feeling of social capital that affirmation engendered. The desire to gain the social currency of Likes and comments influenced how and when students posted content to Facebook. Many interview participants talked about specifically planning what and when they were going to post content to ensure that they had the highest chances of getting attention or being seen in the News Feeds of their Friends. Some students went so far as to write down status updates in advance when ideas occurred that might not get the maximum amount of visibility. Andrew, for example, was very strategic in terms of when he posted because he knew other users were more likely to see his posts at certain times of the day.

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Since the idea behind me posting things on Facebook is that other people will see them, there is some sort of response I hope to get. Which is why I usually don't post anything too late, like one or two o'clock even if I'm up. I recognize that probably most of my friends probably aren't up. And by the time they wake up there'll be twenty more things that are on their Facebook wall and they probably won't see it. So if I post something and it doesn't get any Likes or comments or anything I just assume that either no one saw it or no one cared about it, which makes me kind of sad.

Andrew's comments address the inherent value that Likes and comments hold for the content that he posts to Facebook: non-responses constitute an unsuccessful post and engender negative personal feelings. This focus or interest in comments and Likes also speaks to an often implicit underlying purpose for posting content to Facebook: to have others endorse your thoughts and ideas, and by extension, socially endorse you.

Another way to help ensure positive or active response to posts was to post content for targeted and engaged audiences. Patrick, for example, posted content that involved or would specifically interest his family and friends, increasing the likelihood that those people would see and respond to the post.

I tend to post things that I think need to be said, so I use Facebook as a voice more so for political posts, engaging questions, or announcing something that I find really special in my life, like some big event that happened that I want to share with my family and friends and the discussion will usually start from there. I found that by doing that I tend to get more conversations started and more Likes than most people seem to.

Prior to this comment, Patrick talked about how he saw Facebook fundamentally as a tool with specific purposes. He was clear that he disliked the use of Facebook just to post statuses and

photos and that Facebook needed to have some larger benefit beyond merely posting content

without meaningful intent, though he admitted that at times he posted just to be funny. This

interest in posting for specific purposes comes through in his efforts at posting for targeted

audiences that were likely to respond to his photos and statuses.

Kelly also adopted an approach that focused content for a targeted audience. Though her

posts tended to be more personal and relational in nature, compared to Patrick's interest in

political and topical posts.

> If it's a status, I'm usually posting about something that I said that I know my friends will
>
> be interested in. I usually expect, I'm usually pretty sure that some of my girlfriends will
>
> comment on it, or like it. That's... I don't really post useless information or personal
>
> opinions, because you don't want no feedback, but then you don't want negative feedback.

Here, Kelly was careful to state that she avoids useless information, by which she meant

information that her Friends would not be interested in and would therefore find useless. Across

the participants in this study, the definition of what was useful or valuable to post relied entirely

on who students thought would or should view their profiles. They had well-developed, though

often tacit, understandings of creating and posting content that appealed to a preferred audience

to garner social endorsement.

In some instances, Likes and comments were the *raison d'etre* for what and why students

posted on their Facebook pages. They imparted a sense of success or value to posts and helped

students develop an even stronger presence on Facebook as posts with high comments and Likes

factor into how posts appear in the News Feeds of Friends and Friends' networks (Paek, Gamon,

Counts, Chickering, & Dhesi, 2010). Students had varying definitions of success, but they all

held some standard for what made good posts (i.e., what got others to notice them). A common

standard was the number of people who liked the post. Bruce, for example, defined success with specific numbers of responses.

> I have a basic rule that it was a good status if I get at least 15 Likes. So I at least want people to find my post interesting. I don't want to be that guy that posts a bunch of random boring thoughts that no one really cares about. So I'm trying to get at least 15 Likes when I post something, that way I know I'm not wasting everybody's time. So whether it be a funny post or an angry post, political post or whatever, I'm trying to at least get people to be interested in it.

For Bruce, getting at least 15 Likes is an easy way to gauge whether others found his posts interesting and, by extension, cared about his posts. His criteria for posting began and ended at how interesting others found it, which he described as "not wasting everybody's time." This secondary comment by Bruce, about not wasting everybody's time, also suggests that users expect their Friends to view what they post and that they need to make that content worthwhile. Most interview participants used their News Feeds as an initial step in finding content to read and explore on Facebook. In looking through their News Feeds, these students said they tended to look first at who posted the content, followed by what the content was. Bruce's comment speaks to this need to maintain a type of credibility as someone who posts content worth viewing, especially in an environment where Friends rely on reputation for deciding whose posted content to explore.

Figure 9 is an example of a student using a somewhat cryptic and dramatic status update to share a major life event (an accident from drunk driving) to call attention to her profile, which ultimately resulted in 46 comments by a large range of Friends and 13 Likes.

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June 29, 2010

hopes everyone ALWAYS wears their seatbelts. That shit saved my life last night. No lie. ♥

Like · Comment   👍 13 💬 46

13 people like this.

RIP Pilgor.]:
June 29, 2010 at 10:35am · Like

you ok?
June 29, 2010 at 10:46am · Like

Yeah, I'm just happy to be alive & functional! [:
June 29, 2010 at 10:46am · Like

wooo, that's a relief then 🙂
June 29, 2010 at 10:50am · Like

what happened?
June 29, 2010 at 10:55am · Like

Mmm fell asleep at the wheel, car flipped, crawled out, police came, got a DUI, got arrested, went to jail... and now I'm at home. 😊
June 29, 2010 at 10:56am · Like

Oh no what happened!?
June 29, 2010 at 10:56am · Like

oh lordy. i guess i can only be as happy as u then azula. im glad ur safe.
June 29, 2010 at 11:01am · Like

i'm gonna hope that you were just joking when you explained what happened. at least you're in one piece though.
June 29, 2010 at 11:05am · Like

Lol, no joke! I promise! I have a seatbelt burn to prove it, buut the reason I am so happy is because I am in one piece. Thanks for your well wishes!(:
June 29, 2010 at 11:13am · Like

glad to hear youre okay zugey!
June 29, 2010 at 11:20am · Like

im glad you are all rite:)
June 29, 2010 at 11:28am · Like

ZUG! omg. Good to know you're okay !
June 29, 2010 at 11:40am · Like

damnnn. had me trippin.. but im happy ur okay, mentally nd physically. its good we on the same page forreal u aleady know wsup
June 29, 2010 at 11:53am · Like

wow. Thank God you are okay...
June 29, 2010 at 12:04pm · Like

Sorry to hear about that ading, glad to hear your okay..
June 29, 2010 at 12:04pm · Like

Zoogs ♥ You do not understand how happy I am to know that you are okay. I couldn't sleep last night until I heard your whereabouts. ♥ ♥ Let me know if you need anything. Keep your head up.
June 29, 2010 at 12:51pm · Like

please don't ever drink and drive ever again. ever.
June 29, 2010 at 12:52pm · Like

It wasn't even the drinking though. 😒 even though that's what fucked me over. 🙁 i remember everything except that last left turn then i was upside down!

Figure 9. Hopes everyone ALWAYS wears their seatbelts.

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Likes and comments were not always the driving force behind what students posted, but they certainly factored into how students approached what they should or should not post to their profiles. For the students in this study, Likes and comments were one of many tools they used to make meaning of how they wanted to curate their self-presentation on Facebook. These efforts at self-presentation are relevant to how students perceived themselves as objects their peers could and should consume for entertainment or social value. Specifically, this focus on Likes and comments as an important consideration for what and how to post speaks to the ways in which students were able to use their profiles to reinforce their social networks and thereby develop their social capital.

Others as Commodities: Accessing and Assessing Others

A close correlate of presenting ones' self as a commodity for consumption is perceiving others as commodities to consume. For most of my interview participants, this consumption took the form of looking through others' pages, which was a defining appeal of Facebook. While students talked initially about getting an account because other people (either specific Friends or an aggregate group) had them, the conversation of the appeal of Facebook invariably turned to the ability to "creep on," or "stalk" others—to look at the pages of others. In some cases this was a light-hearted look at a photo or two, and in the extreme, it was an invasive search through all of the personal content available from others' pages and through the pages of their Friends.

The primary focus of "creeping" was Friends' photos. As mentioned in the last chapter, students saw photos as the primary means of assessing who other people were and what occurred in their lives (i.e., what was worth noting). This voyeuristic aspect of looking through other

students' photos was a basic benefit of Facebook and had implications for all users. As Jill

discussed, Facebook voyeurism meant that everyone was viewing and being viewed.

> Sometimes I want to see someone...maybe it's very voyeuristic that I like to see into
>
> people's lives, but that's what Facebook is. Facebook is a creeping tool. If you post it on
>
> there, it's fair game to creep on. When I post, I make sure it's fair game. I want someone
>
> to see it.

Jill's comment about being fair game is a sentiment that most students held, and it was a defining

characteristic for many of the ways in which they curated the self-presentations discussed in the

previous chapter. However, this pattern of looking at other's profiles reflected a much larger

focus and use of Facebook: creeping to consume other's personal information.

The Continuum of Creeping

One of the most prevalent themes to arise in talking with students about how they explore

other users' pages was the idea of creeping. Throughout my interviews, a basic scale or

framework emerged for how students approach "creeping" on others' pages, how far is too far,

and what is seen as socially acceptable or appropriate behavior. Students often used the terms

creeping and stalking interchangeably; however, they also suggested a particular hierarchy to this

behavior. As Patrick explains, "I know we stalk people, but you are a creeper. You're not a

stalker because stalkers are the ones that cross the line." Students were careful to preserve a

sense that being a stalker on Facebook was akin to being a stalker in person, which was

considered problematic behavior in either context. Students added careful inflection in how they

described stalking as a general concept and stalking as a problematic result of being invasive as a

Facebook stalker. From students' descriptions of degrees of intrusiveness and acceptability, a

basic scale for creeping behavior emerged. Using the language they offered during their

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interviews, I have constructed a Scale of Facebook Creeping to help readers better interpret the "creeping" behaviors of students in this study (see Figure 10.). This creeping scale has four basic positions from least intrusive to most intrusive: looking, exploring, creeping, and stalking.

Looking   Exploring   Creeping   Stalking

Figure 10. Scale of Facebook Creeping.

Students also framed this scale as moving from non-creepy/non-stalker like to creepy/stalker like. The least intrusive form of viewing another's profile was called "looking." In looking, users click through several profile pictures and a sampling of the other person's photo albums, possibly read over a small number of status updates, and look at a list of common Friends. Students described looking as good-natured and harmless, and something that they expected all of their Friends to do. "Exploring" is a more intense version of looking. Here users described exploring a larger number of photographs, status updates, and other various elements of a profile. Similar to looking, exploring was seen as harmless and mostly a reflection of curiosity and interest in another person's life. The third level of the scale is "creeping." In creeping, users look through most or all of another users' photographs (both profile pictures and photo albums), read status updates and wall comments extensively (including early Facebook posts), and click through the other profile pages such as About Me, Music, Likes/Favorites, etc. For students, creeping represented the boundary area between acceptable and problematic examination of a profile. When an interest was mutual and students expected another person to be looking through their profile extensively, this type of intensive perusing was okay. When

students were not interested in the other person and were not expecting the other person to access their profile, creeping became too invasive. This invasive version of creeping took the form of "stalking." Like creeping, stalking involves extensive looking through all of the content posted to another user's profile; however, stalking also involved repeated, almost obsessive visiting of a person's page to re-examine photographs, status updates, comments, and interests for any changes to the profile or to gain more familiarity with the person's profile. The intensity of stalking also included the connotation that this was unwanted and potentially invasive behavior. Students did not always know when someone was stalking their profile, but interactions that reflected potential stalking, such as new comments on a photograph from several years ago, made them uncomfortable.

On the whole, students described the first three positions of this scale (looking, exploring, and creeping) as relatively harmless and common activity, especially when meeting someone new. For example, Melinda talked about how she creeps through the pages of people she has just met:

> I'll go through their profile pictures or their tagged pictures, and it's not like a stalker-ish type of thing like where I need to know more about this person and become creepy about it, but it's more "let me see what you have on this social networking site. I'm interested to see what you share with people. We haven't been friends longer than like ten minutes, so I'm going to see what you posted for the last while." It's usually pictures and then I'll scroll a little bit through their actual profile but not very far.

This type of creeping was common for most interview participants when they first connected with new Friends. Creeping through profiles was an easy and efficient way to get to know basic details about that person, as that person presented them. Creeping through profiles was also very

common for checking up on potential romantic interests for themselves or their friends. Kelly

talked about how creeping was a social activity for her and her friends, particularly around

romantic interests. "Me and my girlfriends will definitely creep on guys or girls that are either

involved with our exes or we'll be, 'Oh, he's in a relationship, but then it's like, let's creep on his

girlfriend.' I think mostly just my friends and I will look at people together." In these situations,

creeping romantic interests served the same purposes as creeping new Friends: to learn more

about the person and see who they are on Facebook. Stalking was also potentially less

problematic in these situations where a romantic crush might be mutual and both people wanted

that attention.

The fourth position (stalking), however, was seen by all of my participants as negative

and problematic behavior, whether or not they had engaged in that level of viewing other

people's profiles. James offered a description of stalking based on the degree to which one

person knows the other: "I think it gets creepy if you make yourself an obvious presence to the

person you're Facebook stalking. If you are going through every single picture they posted,

going back to 2007, that might become creepy. I also think it gets creepier the less you know the

person." As James suggested here, the qualitative difference between creeping and stalking

hinged on the obsessive quality and the use of stalking as a proxy for a mutual or interactive

relationship with that person. Much like stalking behavior in a physical setting, students

described this type of Facebook stalking as intrusive and a violation of the other person's privacy.

Again, students held these feelings about stalking in this way even if they previously engaged in

stalking one or more people in the past. The objects of this type of attention were almost

universally romantic interests, either potential future partners or ex-partners.

Students had a certain level of comfort in discussing their looking at others' pages as "stalking" or "creeping." These terms both signaled that this was behavior that often occurred without any direct knowledge by the person whose page they were looking at, as well as that this was behavior that bordered on socially inappropriate, or at least would be inappropriate in another venue. But the availability of personal information via SNSs has led to new social patterns about how students access and assess the lives of their peers, and students expressed a high degree of general comfort that others were looking at their pages in these same ways and that this was a major function or value of Facebook as a whole.

Creeping in Practice

Looking at photos did not have to be extensive, but it emerged as a prerequisite for how students approached consuming the profiles of others. For example, Jeff talked about how he used "creeping" to establish a sense of connection with new Friends:

> In my case when it comes to how far back I am willing to go on things, I frequently look
> at pictures of people. I will go back until I find one that I like and stop. When it's, "this
> is this person, here's a picture of them" I will go back as far as necessary to find a similar
> looking picture and sometimes that involves like really far back. Sometimes it's like two
> in. When it comes to posts I don't tend to read people's back posts at all. I'm not
> interested in what's been happening in someone's life 6 years ago.

Jeff used creeping in a very focused way. Throughout his interview, he made several references to "Facebook as a stalking tool" but his own creeping activity was constrained to looking only deep enough into profiles to feel like he found a good depiction of that person as he knows them.

Most of my participants framed creeping behavior as "getting to know" the other person or "learning about" who the other person is. Strikingly none of my participants framed this

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learning and exploring behavior as an invasion of someone else's privacy, even when they did

not know the other person and may not have had direct Friendship access to the information on

that person's Facebook profile. Similarly students framed this stalking behavior as a complex

interchange between the person who posted the content and the person who views it as a "stalker,"

and they struggled to define boundaries of what constituted appropriate and inappropriate access

to other peoples' Facebook profiles.

Amid the confusion of appropriate and inappropriate "stalking" most students held an

attitude of "it's fair game," in which any content they could access was okay to look through.

Tiffany struggled with this approach, but still found it to be acceptable based on the logic that

people wanted others to access their profiles and look through their information and therefore

that information would not exist if this is not what others wanted:

> Well I would say Facebook stalking is something that I do around my friends because I
>
> think everyone inherently is a Facebook stalker whether or not you want to admit it. If
>
> you're on Facebook and you're looking at someone's profile, you're essentially stalking
>
> them. But at the same time, they've put that stuff online. You put it online, so you're
>
> offering it for other people to look at. So it's kind of like a funny term and kinda sounds
>
> more severe than it is. But it's definitely like an inherent process. I think that it's okay to
>
> [creep], obviously if it's on your News Feed or you happen to come across it. If I'm like
>
> tapping on a bunch of links like, you're gonna look at someone's pictures or you might
>
> see comments that someone made. And so I think that's not bad. Like it's there.

Tiffany was divided between the idea of having access to content and whether or not someone

else would actually want her to access that content. She was aware of how the terms she was

using sounded bad and that they might give off an impression that the behavior was

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inappropriate. But ultimately, she justified her creeping through people's profiles on the basis of being able to access the profiles. In this sense, profiles and all of the content on them was there specifically to be consumed by other people on Facebook.

Even on the point of being invasive or obsessive, Tiffany favored a relativistic, judgment-free approach:

I think when it gets to the point where you almost know way too much about someone, almost like you're looking at their profile every day. You know what they did for the last like three weeks. Stuff like that gets a little bit creepy. A little bit like, okay, you need a little bit more time. Or you need, you have too much time on your hands. You need more of a life. I think that's where you draw the line. It's just kinda not really a line. It's more of like a grey area of that you were just way too bored recently. I think surface level knowing of what someone's doing is okay. It's like, "Oh, I saw you went to, like, dinner with your mom yesterday." That's kinda weird, but whatever. She posted a picture about it, so it's a very much of a grey area of what's appropriate. And I think also, it depends on how close you are to that person in real life. That would definitely be a huge distinction, whereas like if I knew everything that was on my very best friend's profile, I don't think that's weird, but if it's like some random guy that I met yesterday and I know everything, that's really weird, so I think there's a lot of ways to measure that.

Tiffany took the idea of access and framed it as a grey area. Rather than making specific or critical assessments about what was ethical or appropriate, she deferred to what was possible. This line of logic was very common among the interview participants. This moral and ethical relativism might be reflective through different models of human moral and cognitive

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development (e.g., Gilligan, 1977; Kohlberg, 1984; Perry, 1970), but it still reflects the pervading interpretation of how users can and should access other profiles.

Further justifying behavior that the participant found potentially problematic was Sasha. Sasha's dominant attitude was that "people should know better," suggesting that they deserved to have people access their profile for not knowing better. Sasha described her Facebook creeping as frequent:

I'm pretty efficient. I'm pretty good at it. I think it spawns from mostly real conversations with people and then someone will come up and then "Oh, my God, I don't know them," they're the butt of some controversy or drama on campus or something. And then you look them up and if you can't find them then you look up one of their Friends and you go through their Friends. And you know, it's a whole thing.

This pathway of finding profiles through Friends of Friends when there was not a direct connection was also common among interview participants. They described various ways of seeking and finding a pathway of links, typically through photographs, to find other Friends' profiles that had access to a profile or simply had additional content on a person that was beyond that person's immediate control.

This approach to accessing profiles through Friends included both students and faculty. Sasha continued her description of accessing profiles to include how she uses Facebook to access pages on her faculty.

Yeah, you can look up teachers and look up other teachers through teachers—it goes on. Everybody is on Facebook. It's terrible, it's really awful. If your profile is public, it's your own damn fault if I'm looking at it. Rarely do I feel like I've crossed the line when I'm looking at, say, a professor's profile and weird baby pictures and family reunion

photos come up if they're not protecting them from my weird prying eyes. They are a

professor and they should know how to handle their Facebook privacy settings.

Sasha's interpretation of accessing teachers' profiles was that she was likely violating their

privacy, but that violation was permissible because she was able to find a way to access to those

profiles and therefore she was not accountable for accessing them. Undergirding Sasha's use of

creeping to access Facebook profiles of distant connections is an attitude of gamesmanship:

Facebook creeping was a type of game for her. Could she access the page? Could she find a

way around seemingly apparent access obstacles? The ability to find access was a type of

personal victory.

None of the participants in this study offered a perspective of stalking others that was

particularly different than the students noted above. The overarching sentiment among

participants was that anything posted to Facebook was fair game and that someone else would

not have posted it if they did not want other people to see it. My participants offered no grey

area for the ideas that those people might not have posted the content for everyone to see, that

the content might have been posted beyond the control of the person being stalked (i.e., a Friend

posted the content), or that the participants might have found a way to access the content that the

poster did not intend.

Participants made numerous comments expressing concern about what other people could

potentially see on their pages and the desire to not have just anyone access their profile,

especially if they were not Friends directly. For each of the "fair game" statements that students

made, they made an equal number of "but not my profile" responses to whether or not they

would want people stalking their pages in the same way they stalk others. Many of the interview

participants addressed this issue when talking about their privacy settings. Kristin, for example,

wanted strong control over her profile, preventing non-Friends from seeing much of anything: "I just don't like the idea of people just randomly clicking on it and seeing everything, especially if I don't know them. Because obviously you have to accept the Friend for a reason or then what's the point of having Friend requests if everybody can just [see your profile]." Kristin's sentiment and approach were common among other students: limit access to only a profile picture and cover picture (Facebook's minimum) and block the rest. With Facebook's privacy settings, it is largely possible to block unwanted viewers; however, as several participants noted, the secret to side-stepping those constraints is to explore the Friend network of a person of interest and find pathways to pictures and comments that might not be explicitly blocked to indirect access.

Despite the general fair-game attitude, students did think creeping was problematic when it was repeated, habitual, and involved a semi- or total stranger to the user. Repeated and habitual stalking of Friends and Friends of Friends was okay when you knew them; it was potentially problematic if you did not. Here creeping was seen as more legitimate forms of stalking, in which the user would spend several hours exploring the pages of an individual of interest and learn as much as they could about that person: Friends, interests, experiences, statuses. None of my participants described current invasive stalking, but some of them acknowledged previously conducting extensive exploration of other people's pages and photos – with and without the sense that the other person would be uncomfortable with this creeping. Jill described how stalking people on Facebook was affecting the way she saw people:

> I did it for a long time. I used to really Facebook-stalk people and then that ruined the way I saw people because I was seeing things that weren't there. I really appreciate the human interaction part. That's why I don't like to post "Oh, I'm the new project engineer with this bridge." I'd rather say it to my friends and have them say it to me.

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Jill's solution to this issue was similar to other participants: focus on having more one-on-one in-person contact with friends.

This extensive looking at/through other's pages also had pragmatic social consequences. Students talked about learning a vast amount of "personal" information about semi-strangers and needing to find socially tactful ways to bring that knowledge up in face-to-face conversations that allowed the other person to mention the information first. Then participants either asked additional questions to which they already knew the answers or they offered that they "thought they saw something about that on Facebook." Melinda, for example, preferred to wait for the other person to bring it up.

> I usually act as though I don't [know]. Unless, they brought up that I might have seen it on Facebook. Or, I'll maybe say, "Oh yeah, I think I saw something about that" if it was something that happened while we were friends on Facebook already. So somebody I'm friends with for a really long time, something happened where it was, "Oh yeah, I know, I've seen that." But if it's somebody I'm just friends with on Facebook, and in real life they're telling me about something that happened a couple of months ago, that's weird for me to tell them that I already know because I creeped on her Facebook. So they don't feel really violated and I feel kind of creepy about it. Usually I just don't tell people that I necessarily know. Usually they tell you more information than they've posted on Facebook, especially if it's a story or something like that, they'll give you more information. So, I just kind of don't really mention that I've seen that already.

As Melinda suggested, there is a simple scale of etiquette for managing information gleaned from Facebook: if it is obscure or personal information, pretend you do not know it until they mention it. If it is less personal information, you can acknowledge you saw it. This approach to

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etiquette allowed students to continue to creep and then make reasoned choices about sharing their knowledge when it would not prove embarrassing for either person. One major advantage of this approach was that it allowed students to ask follow-up questions and convert the privately learned information from Facebook into shared in-person knowledge that was part of their relationships with those people.

Students noted that this conversion of knowledge was a lot of work, but that it was also unavoidable as there were not yet socially acceptable ways to introduce Facebook knowledge outright. Once a friendship had been established, these social allowances changed and students were even expected to look at and be knowledgeable about the lives of their Friends on Facebook. For Alice, creeping on Friends' pages was a way to keep current and something she expected her Friends to do for her convenience.

> Well I imagine my close friends to look at my Facebook profile... and... well, people I
> talk to most and people I know. But it's really mostly about my close friends seeing my
> profile, I think. Or I expect them to see it but I would be, when I post something, I'd be
> happy if more people see it, you know? Because it's really about publicizing myself. Or
> my thoughts, at least. So I just hope, like, the more people see it the better. Or the more
> people react to it the better.

Alice's interest in having others see her profile and react to what she posts speaks in part to the overlap that occurs between how people access others' pages and how people think of what they post for others to see. For her, having people bring up content from Facebook was not an intrusion, but she also offers the expectation that the people who are looking at her profile are mostly close friends and people she talks to. That framing is similar to the other two students

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who talked about the content they learned from Facebook – it is not threatening or awkward when you already know the person.

In all of these instances of creeping, students embraced the role of Facebook as a way to access other people's lives in a reduced form that rendered them into consumable objects. Students worked to interpret how best to access and make use of the information that they accessed, but in all of these situations, the issue in question was not about consuming their Friends as media objects, but rather how to navigate the technology affordances and barriers to make that consumption easier and more available.

Tied to this consumption of Friends' profiles was the issue of with whom participants were Friends. This was an area that changed the most for these students in how they used and thought of Facebook between when they first got their profiles and when I interviewed them (often a gap of 4-6 years). All of this suggests the importance of the ways students worked to manage their Friend networks and what implications that had for their treatment of others as commodities.

Grooming the Network: Friending and Defriending

As a social network site, the role and importance of Friends on Facebook cannot be understated. This is also the case when it comes to the idea of approaching others as commodities. Who is and is not on a Friend list has social and personal significance. In terms of social significance, the Friend list is a public or semi-public display of connections and relationships (boyd, 2007b, 2011b) that carries both social and cultural capital (Ellison, Lampe, et al., 2011). In terms of personal significance, the Friend list is part of how students orient themselves as self-presentations on Facebook: their Friends and Friends of Friends are the

audience to which they present themselves, as well as the core source of self-presentations for them to view and consume on Facebook.

For the interview participants in this study, the role and use of the Friend list had undergone a number of transitions since they first joined Facebook. Many students joined while in high school and their early efforts at Friending were focused on amassing as many Friends as possible. This meant sending Friend requests to almost anyone they could and providing access to their profile to that audience and beyond through those Friends' networks. Over time this approach to amassing Friends gave way to reducing and restricting Friendship to people they knew well, people they worked with or attended classes with, and people they saw as beneficial to be Friends with (e.g., access to another network of people for personal or professional reasons). Accordingly, students edited their Friend list to minimize the number of strangers or socially undesirable contacts and maximize the number of close friends and socially connected Friends.

Amanda talked about her early experience with Facebook and trying to "collect" Friends as a status symbol and how that changed as her uses and priorities changed:

> It's changed a lot, like, since I've come to college. I mean, in high school, if you randomly met someone or even had a ton of mutual [friends], I would accept them…And now I find myself deleting more than adding more people, especially on birthdays. I'll just use birthday lists, and I'll delete them, which is like, "Happy Birthday," because I never talk to them anymore.

As Amanda's comment points out, one of the major criteria for Friendship on Facebook was actively interacting in-person or through Facebook. This change is an important one because it runs counter to the "amassing of Friends" that has been the dominant narrative of how students use social media (e.g., boyd, 2007b; Kim & Lee, 2011; Utz, 2010). It is not clear if this change

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to more restricted Friend lists is particular to this group of participants, a matter of developmental shifts as students mature into adulthood, students gaining more advanced understandings of SNSs, or cultural shifts in how students think about and interpret Friend lists. It may also be an outcome of other avenues for massive Friend lists, such as Twitter, which has its own set of social customs and standards for what people post and how (e.g., Marwick & boyd, 2011).

For the students in this study, this shift to reducing Friends appears to come from students' privacy concerns and growing awareness of how much of their profile became available and unmanageable through larger Facebook networks. Privacy and access often came to students' awareness through Likes and comments, as students would occasionally receive Likes and comments from unexpected strangers, causing them to question or explore how those people had access to their content. With the awareness of unexpected connections or unwanted comments from semi-strangers, students sought ways to reduce their Friends list to only reflect people they wanted to be in contact with or people to whom they wanted to grant access. This reduction in overall connections emphasized that students were particular about how they developed their social capital on Facebook.

As a "real name" network, students used Facebook to replicate their in-person relationships, and even then they only retained Friends that offered some perceived benefit. For example, James talked about how he removed only the people with whom he did not want to stay in touch:

> When I graduated from high school I went through and unfriended everyone that I either did not want to continue talking to – not unnecessarily out of any animosity although

there were a couple of those – or I had nothing in common with you, I added you because

you added me and we were in the same biology class, which is all we had in common.

For James, he wanted a Friend list that reflected a group of people whom he wanted to have

access to his profile and the relative intimacy that implies. Friends who did not fit that basic

criteria were simply people he did not want in his network. The unfriending process that James

described here was one of a few popular approaches among students. Some students opted to

remove people on their birthdays, when Facebook sent birthday reminders, as Amanda

referenced earlier. Some students went through in periodic cycles, as James did. And some

students would unfriend when people appeared in their News Feed that they did not know, did

not remember, or to whom they did not want to be connected.

Related to this idea of keeping Friends who offer access to distant ties, students used their

Friends list to maintain friendships with minimal work. Arguably this is one of the greatest

benefits that students see of Facebook. In both the surveys and the interviews, staying connected

with distant and previous friends was what students felt like they most got out of Facebook.

James represented this sentiment well when he stated,

> It is definitely a great way to keep in touch with people I would not otherwise have an
>
> easy time keeping in touch with: my friends who went to college in far-off places. Again,
>
> people who live too far away to visit with any regularity. I think that's a benefit, a huge
>
> benefit.

This benefit of Facebook has been documented by other research that suggests that SNSs are

allowing users to create and maintain more complex and diverse social groups than ever before

(e.g., Ellison et al., 2007; Kim & Lee, 2011). However, based on the data from this study, those

diverse networks only appear to be part of the story. The part of the story that is missing is what

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students are doing with these more diverse Friend networks and what secondary benefits they gain from how they groom their Friends list.

Part of the reason that students develop more complex or diverse Friend networks is because they do not lose connections to previous friends when they experience life transitions (e.g., going to college, studying abroad, working in internships, moving cities). Instead, they are able to have some ties to people from those various contexts without significant maintenance effort. Two by-products of these now extended or enlarged social networks are social capital and cultural capital (Ellison, Lampe, et al., 2011) to know more people and to gain exposure to more frames of thinking. However, looking deeper into how students are grooming their Friend networks reveals that these diverse Friend networks offer students greater access to a wider range of Friends not just for social and cultural capital, but also for access to an extended list of profiles to look through and more opportunities to develop identity capital.

These additional benefits to students' groomed Friends lists are not inherently positive or problematic, but they could be either and were quite frequently both. For example, Amanda talked about how she was careful to keep connections to particular Friends because they were Friends with large Friend lists and they were good conduits to connecting to a large network on Facebook. Initially her motivation for this was to be able to look through profiles of strangers for entertainment or curiosity value; however, as time passed, she began to appreciate that the extended network also introduced her to a larger array of information, ideas, and interpretations of the world around her. This secondary benefit was an intense benefit for her, and she saw how it could be valuable in her post-college years.

In contrast, River talked about how she was reducing her Friend list to limit the access that old Friends had to her and her other Friends. Although she described it as "infrequently,"

she cycles through her Friend list three to four times a year to remove Friends that she does not

want to stay connected to. Often the Friends she removes are from classes or simply social

connections that she made in-person but has stopped talking to in the physical space.

> I pretty much just went through the list and just like, "Well, haven't talked to that person,"
> "I don't even know who that person is," just go through them. There were a lot of people
> that I'd just never really known or had a conversation with. Or like last year, coming to
> college, I accepted tons of Friend requests, because I met people for a second and then
> four months later never talked to them again…I actually do have a lot of maintenance on
> Facebook because I don't like people that I don't know to see what I'm doing. I usually go
> back every, probably three times a year and sort it out.

River was more methodical than most students, and her approach of systematically scanning

through her Friends list to remove unwanted Friends was one of the most time-intensive

approaches to maintaining a list of Friends. It was also the most effective for ensuring that

Friends were intentional connections.

> Another approach to removing friends was based on not recognizing people when they

appeared in a News Feed or when they posted unwanted content (e.g., too much or offensive).

Melinda used this approach because it required the least amount of effort:

> I have a lot of Facebook Friends and it's really time-consuming. And I don't think
> Facebook should be that time-consuming, that I should sit there and dread being on it. So
> what I've kind of starting doing is if they show up on my News Feed, then I'll block their
> stuff from showing up, like hide their stuff on my timeline or entirely unfriend them
> altogether.

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Melinda's approach to unfriending people offers clear insight to her general Facebook ethos: Facebook should be easy and fun and not require work on her part. This unfriending from the News Feed approach was more common with students who had a similar interest in Facebook being fun and entertaining.

Students offered a range of interpretations and understandings of the meaning behind how they were crafting or refining their Friend lists, and many students alluded to, but did not directly link, their curating Friends to their activities of creeping on Friends' pages. This is somewhat surprising given the overall focus that creeping and looking through Friends' pages was for their uses of Facebook. As a general friendship arc, students described a process of intensely exploring profile pages when they first met someone or wanted to meet someone and then visiting profile pages much less frequently as the relationship matured and developed. For their closest friends, they might revisit their pages more often, but typically they focused their energy on communicating with close friends rather than looking at the profiles of those friends. As a result, exploring or creeping through Facebook profiles was typically a focus on strangers, crushes, and favorite people who were not close friends.

The usual steps in that process involved meeting someone new in-person, connecting as Friends on Facebook, scouring his or her Facebook profile to look through all of the photos and at least some of the status updates and personal interests, developing a more serious friendship over time, and then communicating directly by posting comments or Likes on statuses and photos or sending Friends direct messages via the chat and private message functions. With rare exception, students would connect with someone on Facebook first, and in all of those cases, students did it because they were curious or interested in the person and wanted to look through

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their profile pages. (Note: This behavior of connecting with strangers often centered on romantic interest, either for themselves or to evaluate someone a friend was interested in.)

Facebook Citizenship

The final major area related to commodification that came up in this study is how students constructed the idea of and participated as citizens on Facebook. I use the phrase "Facebook Citizenship" to help emphasize the larger social context of Facebook use, both in how individual users are connected to a larger whole as well as the potential for Facebook usage to have an impact on forms of broader social engagement typically associated with the term citizenship. In my interviews with students, the idea of citizenship was often one they struggled to address directly. They were comfortable talking about positive and negative uses of Facebook, as well as uses of Facebook that contributed to a larger whole on Facebook, but many if not all of my participants did little to associate how they used Facebook as having social, political, or cultural importance beyond immediate Friend groups. In exploring the idea of civic engagement or Facebook as a civic system, students often needed me to rephrase questions about citizenship or the larger social context of their Facebook usage into smaller and more immediate terms of what were good and bad uses of Facebook, or examples of users who were good and bad users. Among the responses I received to these simplified renditions of citizenship, students emphasized many of the same characteristics of good and bad usage, regardless of if that usage was directly tied to the use or the user. Examples of good usage were users and uses that followed the social norms of Facebook as students understood them, though often framed in the negative: posting status updates that were not overly emotional, not too personal, not variations of song lyrics, not comments meant for single individuals. Bad usage and bad users were instances where social norms were violated or the use of Facebook was not for a larger

community. For example, posting racist or sexist comments and status updates, misusing person and location tags, and applying communication norms of other social media to Facebook (e.g., hashtags and @ symbols).

Students' observations collectively suggested that Facebook is more or less a space about being connected to or sharing with others. This observation might seem initially self-evident as Facebook is a social network site, but it bears noting that students approached participation in the Facebook community as a form of citizenship in which individual users package their self-presentation and communication in a way that is desirable and socially approved by the majority of people within their social networks. These self-presentations were in constant flux, both from the interpretive changes possible through addition and revision of profiles as well as students' ongoing changes in how they interpret what constitutes meaningful participation on Facebook. Here it may be beneficial to explore how students interpreted good and bad citizenship on Facebook and what that meant for how they used Facebook.

Good Citizenship

The defining characteristic of good Facebook citizenship was contributing content that benefited others. This content included posting comments that engage others, offering social feedback through Likes and comments, sharing and tagging Friends in photos, and posting links to articles and videos that others would find interesting. Students measured the goodness of citizenship by how much they felt like they personally gained from that person being a part of their Friend network. Almost across the board, students treated benefit as equivalent to interest, so that interesting content was what they saw as beneficial to them.

One of the simplest ways to be a good citizen on Facebook was to post photos from social events. Students described posting photos as a value and a burden. It was a value because

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it helped enrich their experiences of Facebook, it added more content and depth to their profiles, and it helped document shared experiences among Friends. At the same time it was a burden because uploading and tagging people in the photos was an involved task. Uploading also included adding titles and contextual information to the photos, which took creativity and time. Students were appreciative of the time and effort that went into this process, but they commonly stated that they were not likely to be the one to post and tag photos. For example, Bruce talked about how he used to post photos more frequently, but after getting criticism and complaints, he preferred to just look at the photos that other people post. Bruce's comment about being criticized was indicative of why other students did not post photos. Doing so was simply too much work, which in turn meant that students who did post photos were seen in an even more positive light. There was, however, a limitation to that positive light. In instances where students posted unflattering photos of their peers, they were likely to hear complaints that discouraged them from posting in the future. For students who did post photos more frequently, they talked about posting photos as a thankless task—that people expected the person with the camera to post photos, but others did not ever offer thanks for doing all of that work. Nonetheless, students saw their peers who posted photos as precious contributors to Facebook, even if they did not share that gratitude with their peers.

Similarly to the value of photos, participants highly favored users who introduced new or unique content and they were somewhat harsh about users who posted content similar to other users. For example, Patrick talked about the positive response he usually experiences to the articles and links he reposts through his status.

I think it's usually pretty engaging. A lot of friends will usually comment or at the very least "like," so I feel like I am a good source of interesting information or dissemination.

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So even though I'm a consumer of information, when I do reproduce, it's considered

highly weighted.

Patrick was particularly proud of his role as someone who brings good content to his Friend

network. He enjoyed the favor that it garnered among his Friends, and he also enjoyed being the

person in the know as an active user of Facebook.

Another example of good citizenship comes from Reed, who highly valued Friends that

exposed him to a variety of news articles or information: "On Facebook there's a really great mix.

I'm looking at the *New York Times* from one friend and NPR from another, and then a funny

video in the middle of somebody singing." Reed's position that this makes these Friends good

citizens hinged on the fact that these Friends were posting something that Reed felt was

personally beneficial. This may be particularly indicative of individualization, where the social

links between people strongly emphasize the autonomy of the individual.

Time and again students emphasized how good citizenship related to posting new or

unique content, which led students to craft their own profiles in order to be good citizens or good

contributors to their Friend networks. This striving to be unique was especially evident in

discussion of study abroad efforts. Of the many students who studied abroad, one of their

criteria was to study in a country that other people are not visiting, in part to have unique

photographs and stories to share with their friends while they are abroad and when they return

home. Students offered strong preferences to not follow the paths of their immediate peers, and

in fact would take cues from peers who were weak ties in their social networks and might not be

connected to any or many of their primary friend or acquaintance groups.

Jill sought to use her study abroad time to enroll in a program that none of her friends

were part of. This approach allowed her to study abroad without other students from her

university as well as have statuses and photos to share that her other Friends were unlikely to also have. In this way, Jill was trying to be a good citizen to her Friend network through her individualization.

If I go to [country], I could say—I didn't do this, but I know someone who decided to go to Switzerland, because she's like "I think I would have better pictures and nobody's ever done it and I think I could show cool things."…So, in a way, it's made it more exciting. Like people won't do boring things and post on Facebook but people want to post on Facebook to have a presence, so I'm gonna go do something exciting to show people.

Jill used her study abroad experience to do something unique that stood out among her Friend network and also provided her a way to "do something exciting to show people." Her going abroad was a way to do something that benefited her directly through the experience and created content that she thought others might also benefit from (e.g., seeing something exciting). Given her own experience in seeing someone else's study abroad photos that triggered her interest in studying in an uncommon study abroad location, Jill's interest in showing others something exciting becomes more understandable as a real effort to share something useful with her network beyond photos.

Another student who stands out for her effort at being a good citizen is Dora. Dora had a strong focus on local civic engagement and using her Facebook profile as a way to advance her work to help develop her surrounding community and non-profit groups with which she worked. She did not directly frame this as citizenship or civic engagement, but rather as something she is passionate about and tries to share with her Friends.

If someone learns something from a post I've made, I think that would be the ultimate good response. That's what I would want. I posted a status about the [museum] that's

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going to be built in [city]. And if someone didn't know about that before, read the article

I posted, and now is excited about the museum, wants to find out more, maybe wants to

work there or something, that would be the best for me. That's what I would want.

Dora's passion was clearly sincere and she saw Facebook as an ideal medium to bring more

attention to the challenges of the local community and what other people could do to help

improve the community as individuals and as a group. Part of this commitment from Dora

comes from her being a first-generation college student and feeling as though she has received

exceptional financial and academic support from this community. Her civic engagement is one

way to give back that generosity and support.

Participation as a good citizen on Facebook involved a balance of trying to be a good

citizen and trying to seek out good citizens. Admittedly, the definitions of good citizenship that

students offered were remarkably narrow. These definitions began and ended with notions of

what benefit they got from their Friends' actions. Little of the attention on good citizenship

addressed more traditional forms of productive civic engagement: volunteerism, challenging

social norms, helping communities or individuals in need. Instead, students approach Facebook

as a domain in which citizenship was about making Facebook a better place to be or a more

useful tool for entertainment, communication, connection with others, or exposure to information

and ideas. This gap in students' interpreted forms of good citizenship and conventional

interpretations of good citizenship suggests that there is some clear opportunity for helping

students explore Facebook for more civic depth.

Bad Citizenship

While good Facebook citizenship primarily emphasized contributing content that

benefited others, bad Facebook citizenship was more broad and complex. Bad Facebook

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citizenship included posting content that directly and indirectly harmed others (e.g., revealing photos from a party or posting bigoted comments) as well as using Facebook in ways that made it more difficult for others to use Facebook (e.g., posting status updates meant for one or two people, posting content that was better suited to other social media).

Acts of bad Facebook citizenship were reputation damaging in both mundane and novel ways. Students exhibited a sliding scale of recourse toward bad citizenship. Ever present in this recourse was the degree or amount of effort that students felt the bad citizen was worth. If the poor citizenship came from someone who was a close friend or someone deemed valuable to the student's network, then the student would reach out and note the offense. For example, Andrew talked about a friend who made fat-phobic comments in a status update and was willing to call the friend out on what was problematic about what that friend said.

> I found a couple people posting stuff that was fat-phobic or racist or otherwise stupid and
> just stuff that I wasn't interested in reading and signaled to me that that probably wasn't a
> person with whom I'm really interested in associating. And so for a couple of those
> people I actually deleted them and a couple other of those people, if I felt like it was more
> benign in intent, I would be like, "Hey, so this is actually kind of problematic and this is
> why." I guess I would just judge people mostly based on what they posted and if it's
> something that kind of appeals to me. They may have different interests than me, but if
> there's nothing that conflicts with me, then I guess in my eyes they're a good person.

Andrew's definition of good citizenship echoes comments from the previous section, and his interpretation of bad citizenship emphasizes bigoted posts. For Andrew and others, these bigoted posts were not necessarily grounds for unfriending a person, but could be.

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More often than not, students either blocked bad citizens from their News Feeds or simply unfriended the person entirely. For example, River talked about how she found one Friend too offensive to spend time offering feedback to.

> At my work, someone new started working. We friended on Facebook and all his posts were bashing a certain political party, all of [his posts]. It was really insulting and I'm conservative so they were – he was totally bashing conservatives and just making these ridiculous, almost comical ridiculous stereotypes about everyone. And it's just exhausting and I was really, he was really rude, so I just unfriended him.

Here, River saw this Friend almost as a negative force on her Facebook profile and she did not want to have to read his offending comments or see his problematic content on her own page. River neither challenged this user nor informed him of why she was unfriending him. Her approach is reflective of several other students who felt a strong need to clean or maintain their profiles through unfriending and deleting content they did not want to see in their News Feed.

These two cases highlight some differences in how students think about and treat bad citizenship. In both cases, the defining element was the degree to which the student thought that Friend was worth the time and effort to confront or share feedback with. Their approaches echo findings from the previous section on how students manage and resolve conflict on and through Facebook.

The pervading sentiment among my participants was that conflicts were easy to instigate in social media of all types, but very difficult to resolve through social media because various media formats lack strong non-verbal cues. For example, Franny relayed a recent experience in which one of her friends posted a status about how fans of Macs and PCs treat each other and the process of insults and name-calling that ensued.

Someone posting something, just posing a question or opinion or thought and someone takes it as an opportunity to strike at their vulnerability or Google as many facts as they can to prove them wrong. Just really condescending and trying to be right or trying to prove to everybody else that individual is wrong or their thought process is ignorant. When you post something on Facebook it's like you're opening yourself to fire; people who are looking for a fight or people who are really bored or people who continuously think that they're always right.

Throughout her interview, Franny returned to the idea that posting content to Facebook was a way of opening yourself up to being attacked, and she saw too few tools to really make positive resolutions to those conflicts. For her the smartest approach to Facebook posts was to post content that was un-controversial and non-objectionable. However, when conflict did emerge, one of the few possible, and more favorable resolutions, was non-engagement. If another person in her social network said or did something offensive, the easiest and most complete approach was to ignore, block, or delete the user from appearing in her News Feed or from being her Friend on Facebook.

In contrast to the markers of good citizenship, students were somewhat harsh about users who did not post content that was new, novel, or somehow personally relevant to them. Facebook was not seen as a place to simply post content of interest to the person posting. Instead, posters had to post content that others found relevant, and the determination of relevance or value always lay with the viewer. For example, Jill talked about a particularly colorful sunset in her home town that numerous Friends photographed and posted photos of. As a result, her News Feed for that day was littered with a large number of very similar photographs, which she considered to be a lack of effort and originality in posting content to Facebook.

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You have to post pictures when you do something abnormal. It's not, "I saw a tree in a

park where the colors were turning red." That's nice, but not every person, because the

other day there was a beautiful sunset in [city], and then the only reason I know this is

because, I'm not exaggerating, maybe ten or fifteen pictures of the same sunset popped up

on my Facebook. And they're all friends with each other. It's not necessary. You don't

have to do that. I think you can save that for yourself, and maybe a few people could do it.

But, you know, once you see a lot of people do it, it's just not necessary.

Posting the same or similar photos served to flood News Feeds with redundant content for some

users, which in turn reduced the value or benefit of Facebook for those users. In the framework

of "benefit to me," this redundancy meant those users were bad Facebook citizens. As an

alternative, Jill thought her peers should have looked to see if anyone else had posted a photo of

the sunset and simply "liked" that photo instead of posting a new one. What becomes interesting

in this example is that it shows the boundaries of being unique or individual. Although all of the

participants may be unique photographers and offer unique views or renditions of the sunset, the

general concept of beautiful sunset was demonstrated and somehow saturated by the multiple

postings. So while users appreciated unique content, they needed the uniqueness to be in both

degree and type. This helps to add greater definition to the forms of individuality and

individualization that students seek in their own pages and that they reward in their peers.

Ultimately good and bad citizenship were measures of whether users produced or failed

to produce content for others to consume on Facebook. Some of this content was about

themselves, and reflected the ways in which students were able to render themselves and their

experiences as commodities for their Friends to enjoy. Other parts of this content focused on

exposing their Friends to new sources of ideas and information that enriched their intellectual

and emotional lives. Students who failed to produce either type of content were seen as less desirable Friends, and as a result had lower level of identity capital among those who were not close friends. Being a productive contributor was vital to holding identity capital on Facebook and by extension having social power, represented by the social value peers assigned to a profile. For students who struggled to produce unique or interesting content for their Friends, their profiles were seen as deficient or problematic by their peers.

Individualization and Identity Capital

The issues raised by students' commodification of themselves and others, as well as their framing of Facebook citizenship on the degree to which their Friends produced desirable content, point back to the sensitizing concepts of individualization and identity capital. For students in this study, the commodified self was in essence the individualized self—it was the self that stood out among the din of Facebook to offer Friends engaging content and a rich personality. Other studies have noted the idea of selective self-presentation that favors a positive self-presentation (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011), but the commodified self is more than a positive self-presentation. It is a self-presentation that captures the interest of Friends to make that individual visible within the matrix of overlapping Friend networks and to do so in order for others to "consume" that individual's self-presentation. The technical mechanism behind this visibility or prominence is Facebook's EdgeRank algorithm, the tool that Facebook uses to prioritize users in the News Feeds of their Friends (Bucher, 2012; Kincaid, 2010). Students were knowingly engaging in the process of creating a profile and a self-presentation that explicitly appealed to others. Most of them were less concerned with presenting a curated self that was accurate and authentic, though some did. Instead, students tied their beliefs that Friends would visit their profiles more on the

premise that their profiles were novel and so they actively tried to post photos and status updates that made their profiles more novel.

Self as commodity has potentially far-reaching implications for the ever-increasing integration of digital lives and digital selves into physical and in-person lives and selves, as college students participate in ever-increasing layers of digital self-presentation for personal, social, and academic reasons, often in the same digital space. Students were quite willing to use Facebook in this way, both to see themselves as commodities and to have others see them as commodities. In Côté's (1996, 2002) model, this commodification is an approximation of the types of individualization that he argued young people experienced as part of their development into mature adult identities and community identities. These commodified selves as identities were functional forms of an adult identity on the individual level, and a community identity when the process of commodification involved peers who recognized the student as having a marketable identity as part of a group. An example of this kind of commodified group identity was students posting about their group involvement (e.g., student government activity, fraternity or sorority life, leadership groups, etc.) when that would garner them more views from Friends scanning their News Feeds.

The use of a commodity perspective in the construction of Facebook citizenship was more complicated, though still highly connected to individualization and identity capital. Students approached the idea of citizenship as what benefit their Friends offered as citizens in their Friend network. If a Friend was under-producing useful or interesting content, then that Friend was a bad citizen on Facebook. Here students were enacting their own version of individualization, where Friends who were not working actively enough to individualize were seen as less interesting or less desirable Facebook Friends. The point of interest in Friends on

Facebook was not necessarily the type or depth of personal but that a student had with those people. Those friendships might be more meaningful in person, but on Facebook the central interest was in what others were contributing to their Friends. This perspective was interesting in that students were less likely to assess what they were contributing to others as a measure of their citizenship, but when they did make that assessment, they were still very interested in expressing some personal responsibility to curate and present a self and identity that would appeal to others; hence, the frequently noted focus on creating a positive Facebook presence in the research literature (e.g., Birnbaum, 2008; Gonzales & Hancock, 2011).

The issues of transforming a curated self into a commodified self were not simple and not polarized. The same steps that helped students create a commodified self were the same steps that could lead back to a curated self. The major issue was students' level of critical awareness.

CHAPTER 6: STATUS – DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

In the present study, I explored the ways in which undergraduate students create and use their self-presentations on Facebook to enrich their social and academic lives while in college. This research was an effort to contribute to the growing knowledgebase on relationships between social media and higher education in a society increasingly focused on computer-mediated communication. In particular I sought to address the ways in which students use Facebook as a digital media to distinguish themselves from their peers and articulate strategic forms of identity through self-presentations that address the multiple audiences students connect with as Friends. Through this study, I raised questions about current interpretations and assumptions about students' use of Facebook as a fundamental platform for students' social lives. I also sought to provide two useful frames of reference for interpreting students' behaviors and self-presentations as reflections of larger socio-cultural trends involving consumer culture and students' perceptions of identity as a form of capital.

The overall pattern of findings in this study suggest that students were sophisticated participants and consumers of Facebook. They were attentive to a wide range of profile uses and ways to interpret the content posted by their Friends and third parties, such as their universities, advertisers, or future employers. The findings also identified the variety of awareness students had for who was viewing their profiles and how those audiences were using the information they learned from profiles. Findings also indicated that room remains for helping students develop clearer awareness and more intentional focus in how they use Facebook for personal and academic purposes. Accordingly, my intent in this chapter is to tease out the implications of these findings for the lives of college students and members of the higher education community.

Summary of the Study

The guiding purpose of this study was to capture an understanding of how current undergraduate students approach and interpret their self-presentations on Facebook and to offer a critical analysis of these self-presentations for the growing knowledgebase on Facebook's (and social media's) role in higher education. In order to realize these purposes, I sought to answer four primary research questions: (a) What forms of self-presentation do students create through Facebook? (b) What strategies do they employ to create these self-presentations? (c) How do they interpret the self-presentations created by themselves and their peers? (d) How do students' self-presentations on Facebook contribute to positive and negative experiences within higher education as a social environment?

General research on users of Facebook and social media has emphasized several important areas, such as opportunities for identity expression (boyd, 2008b), psychological impacts such as self-esteem, well-being, and disorders (L. D. Rosen, Whaling, Rab, Carrier, & Cheever, 2013; Zhang et al., 2011), privacy and sharing personal information (Lewis et al., 2008; Waters & Ackerman, 2011), and access to social capital (Ellison, Lampe, et al., 2011) and technology (Hargittai, 2008). The overall trends in this research suggest that Facebook is a valuable platform for self-presentation and relationship development. Trends also show that Facebook can contribute to positive self-esteem based on feelings of connectedness and belonging and to negative self-esteem based on perceived exclusion or unfavorable comparisons with others (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). Research studying the direct impact and relevance of Facebook and social media to college and university contexts has revealed some important applications for Facebook, including Facebook's impact on academic success (Junco, 2012b), use of Facebook to promote students' academic and social adjustment (Gray et al., 2013), and

Facebook as a tool for developing a sense of connectedness to the institution for both incoming students (DeAndrea et al., 2012) and alumni (Farrow & Yuan, 2011). Collectively, researchers found that Facebook was most productive for higher education when it was carefully implemented to augment rather than replace other institutional support for students.

The guiding methodology of this study was a constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) that made use of cyber-ethnographic methods for online participant observation (Markham, 2005) and semi-structured interviews (Patton, 2002). Using constructivist grounded theory emphasized the importance of shared knowledge and understandings created by the researcher and participants (Patton, 2002). Given the extensive social interaction involved in Facebook, approaching this grounded theory through cyber-ethnography was vital to gaining deeper social and cultural insight into the social norms and values of Facebook, the ways in which students enacted these norms and values through their profiles, and the connections between these norms and values to their lives in physical, non-cyber environments.

Four sensitizing theoretical concepts—self-presentation (Goffman, 1959), individualization (Bauman, 2001; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), identity capital (Côté, 1996), and critical media/cultural studies (Kellner, 2009)—helped challenge and inform my analysis and interpretations of Facebook and students' uses of Facebook. Self-presentation served as a basic framework for understanding students' Facebook activity as a form of social impression management. Individualization and identity capital provided ways to interpret students' efforts at creating unique complex self-presentations to reflect various forms of human, social, and cultural capital. Finally, critical media pedagogy informed my thinking about how students' self-presentations reproduced consumer behaviors as part of their relational activity on Facebook. Using these three sensitizing perspectives was a way to draw in previous research and theory

development while also allowing for new theoretical insights to emerge from the data collected in this study.

This qualitative study used the website Facebook.com as its primary research site, and focused on undergraduate students who were at least 18 years old and enrolled as part-time or full-time students at a 2-year or 4-year college or university in the United States. Recruitment for participants made use of purposeful sampling that emphasized maximum variation as well as clusters of homogenous participants, and data collection occurred in two large phases. In phase one, students (n=35) completed a use and demographic survey that asked a mix of open-response and fixed-response questions to establish general use patterns for Facebook, as well as allowing participants to describe and define their identities and demographic characteristics. Phase one participants also "Friended" the researcher to provide access to their Facebook pages for participant and document observation. Participants' Facebook profiles were treated as forms of mediated documents while their activity on Facebook was the focus of observation. Participant observation occurred over a period of six months, with an additional four months of intermittent follow-up observation to check and confirm emerging themes during data analysis. The second phase of data collection consisted of 25 semi-structured interviews through Skype video chat software. I recorded the audio from these interviews, which were later transcribed verbatim. Transcript analysis occurred through the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti. Analysis relied on a constant comparison method and included several rounds of coding.

Trustworthiness of the data analysis was an important concern in my methodology, and I used a variety of techniques to ensure greater analytic insight (Patton, 2002). First I used triangulation through multiple methods (i.e., survey, profiles, interviews) and data sources (i.e., multiple students from institutions across the country) to problematize and confirm information

emerging from single sources. For interview data, I asked each participant to review his or her

transcript to make sure the data accurately reflected their thoughts and experiences and to offer

notes and clarifications to their transcripts where needed. I engaged in peer debriefing, where I

discussed the emerging and preliminary findings with colleagues to seek feedback on strengths

and weaknesses of the analysis and to garner an outside perspective regarding the meaning and

implications of the findings. Throughout the research process I also engaged in reflective

journaling to explore my potential biases and to test emerging ideas for their representativeness.

The grounded theory approach of this study yielded findings under two broad categories:

students' self-presentations on Facebook as *curated selves* and *commodified selves*. Each of

these forms of self reflect new theoretical insight for students' use of Facebook and have

potential application to other forms of social media and social network sites. See Figure 11 for a

summary of the major elements of these social media selves.

Social Media Selves

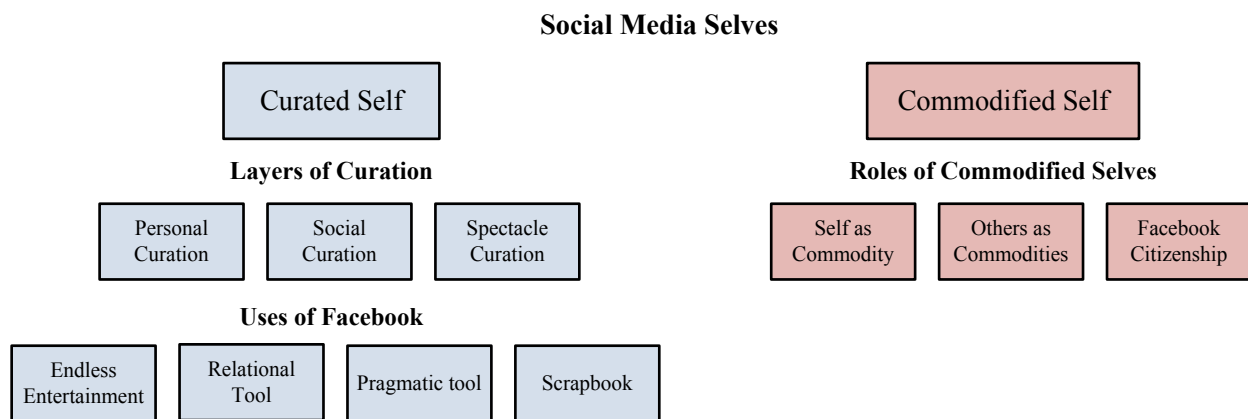| Curated Self				Commodified Self		
Layers of Curation				**Roles of Commodified Selves**		
Personal Curation	Social Curation	Spectacle Curation		Self as Commodity	Others as Commodities	Facebook Citizenship
Uses of Facebook						
Endless Entertainment	Relational Tool	Pragmatic tool	Scrapbook			

Figure 11. Social Media Selves.

Curated selves were defined as digital self-presentations in which students crafted their

expressions of self, identity, and relationships through an ongoing assemblage of narrative and

declaratory text, photographs, videos, and connections to other users. Students created these

self-presentations through three simultaneous styles of curation: a personal curation (for the individual user's interests), a social curation (for communicating with friends and acquaintances) and a spectacle curation (for semi-acquaintances, strangers, and authorities to view and assess). Students primarily relied on their photographs and status updates to generate their curated selves, though they also used comments, Likes, and the About Me section to reinforce or introduce nuance into the self-presentations they expressed through their photos and status updates. Students also demonstrated four particular uses of Facebook that related to their curation styles: Facebook as endless entertainment, as a relational tool, as a pragmatic tool, and as a personal scrapbook.

Personal curations occurred through students' use of Facebook as a resource to keep track of their lives through photos, events, and status updates. When students enacted these personal curations they made particular use of Facebook's ability to serve as a durable digital record. Students utilized the technology of Facebook to document the major and minor events, experiences, and relationships they had in their lives. Examples of these personal curations included using Facebook to store personal photographs as a backup to computers and cameras, leaving notes and messages on one's profile for later use, and simply being a record of life events to reflect on later.

Social curations were the most common use of Facebook and reflected the use of Facebook most often described in research and literature on Facebook. These curations emphasized using self-presentations to communicate, bond, and interact with others. A key characteristic of these curations was that they were meant to be online or digital continuations of who students were in physical or in-person environments. A useful way to think about these curations was that students linked a physical person with a digital persona to create self-

presentations that were consistent and coherent for members of their Friend networks. Social curations were also the form of self-presentation when forms of social identity came most into play and depicted how students and their Friends understood them as individuals. Another important feature of these social curations was that students were less concerned with being comprehensive in representing their interests and activities than they were with conveying a self-presentation that others felt was authentic.

Spectacle curations were the third form of curated self that students produced. The emphasis of the spectacle curation was a self-presentation that students created explicitly for others to view. The most common use of this self-presentation was for "Facebook stalking," or "creeping on" others, in which another user would look through the various pages of a student's profile to assess a student's interests, identity, relationships, activities, and character. Facebook stalking was a common occurrence when first connecting with new Friends, and something that would also occur intermittently with long-standing Friends when those Friends posted new status updates and photographs. Students often created their spectacle curations with privacy in mind, and shared photographs and status updates that they were comfortable with having a wide audience of semi-strangers being able to access. Of the three styles of curation, spectacle curations were the most superficial and manufactured. Students were attentive to posting content that would not be a liability for future employment, such as photos of them drinking alcohol, or reflect poorly on them if someone were to make a broad judgment based on the particular content.

Connected to these three styles of curation were four prominent uses of Facebook profiles: as entertainment, as a relational tool, as a pragmatic tool, and as a personal scrapbook. Facebook had a high entertainment factor for students, which was a driving force behind the frequency with which they logged on and the amount of time they spent logged on. As

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entertainment and diversion, students used their News Feeds to see what Friends were doing, to view new photos Friends had uploaded, and explore links to news articles and videos posted by Friends. As a relational tool, Facebook was the default method that many students had for connecting with friends and family. Students might also use text, phone calls, and email to communicate with others, but they especially liked Facebook as a hub for connecting with others and the ability of Facebook to serve as a directory for connecting with people for whom they lacked other contact information. As a pragmatic tool, students used Facebook to support student government campaigns, to coordinate group projects, to plan and organize student group activities, and to promote student groups or personal businesses. Students' pragmatic uses of Facebook often had a business-like feel and lay outside of building relationships and information seeking. The final use of Facebook was as a personal scrapbook. Within this use, students exploited the ability of Facebook to record and store conversations with Friends from over the years, Facebook's photo album storage, and Facebook as a pseudo-reflective journaling space. Each of these uses connected with at least one of the styles of profile curation, and often connected two or more styles together. For example, students linked social and spectacle curations when students connected to others via Facebook to maintain and develop their relationships (social curation) as well as demonstrate their social capital (spectacle curation).

The second major category of findings involved students' commodified selves. These commodified selves emerged out of students' treatment of curated selves as objects to exploit through production, consumption and distribution. Within this category of findings, students emphasized the role of commodified selves in three areas: themselves as commodities, others as commodities, and Facebook citizenship.

Self as commodity reflected the ways in which students approached their Facebook profiles as objects they wanted others to view and consume. Students placed importance on the entertainment value of their profiles and the interest that their profile could generate to attract attention from other people in their Friend networks. Students treated their self-presentations as a type of brand that they needed to market and make stand out among the din of other profiles in their Friend networks. To do this, students actively sought to have unique experiences or to post photos and updates of themselves doing activities that made them seem more interesting, individual, or exceptional. At the same time, students were careful not to delve too deeply into their personal lives for compelling content, and students struggled with maintaining some boundaries of privacy and security among potential strangers in their Friend networks. To help promote their profile and brand, students relied on providing and receiving social feedback to endorse or reject their curated selves by liking and commenting on content.

Part of the influence for students creating profiles for others to consume was their own consumption of their Friends' profiles. When students engaged their Friends' profiles as objects for consumption, they often did so by treating those profiles as a source for entertainment rather than connection or communication. Here, students relied on their Friends' profiles to provide voyeur-like access to profile content. One of the major considerations in objectifying and treating others as commodities was the use of Facebook to "creep on" others. Participants described a basic scale of stalking from mild, good natured viewing of profiles (looking) to more in-depth looking (exploring) to occasional intensive looking through most of a profile (creeping) to intensive and repeated viewing of another's profile (stalking). Sometimes this looking would take on an obsessive quality in which students used a network of secondary Friend connections to see additional photos of and comments by the person being "stalked." Students were

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generally supportive and embracing of Facebook stalking, though they also expressed concern about other people potentially working as hard as they did to gain access to restricted profiles.

The final major area of commodified selves was Facebook citizenship, which described participants' perceptions of their peers as positive and negative contributors to their Friend networks. Participants described their Friends as positive (good citizens) and negative (bad citizens) contributors to the degree that those peers made Facebook a more rich and compelling social environment for the participant. This assessment of good and bad citizenship was not about the social bonds between the participant and the Friend, but rather it was about the degree to which a Friend's profile was entertaining, thought-provoking, or culturally savvy and not overly emotional, abrasive, or mundane.

For example, students who actively aggregated and posted news and media links to their Facebook profile were seen as good citizens because their profiles had distinct potential value to Friends—students could rely on them for exposure to new or important media content. In contrast, students who only posted self-focused status updates or boring photographs were seen as bad citizens. Facebook users who also violated social norms around social media (e.g., using Twitter hashtags on Facebook) were judged to be bad citizens for their lack of understanding of Facebook culture.

Collectively the findings from this study suggest that students use Facebook in sophisticated ways to create self-presentations that are dynamic, nuanced, and layered in order to address a wide range of potential audiences, as well as generate and distribute social and cultural capital (in the form of identity capital). Several of the issues raised by these findings deserve additional discussion for their importance and implications for higher education and student affairs.

Discussion

The students in this study experienced complex social demands on Facebook and enacted complex forms of self-presentations as a response. One set of broad expectations emphasized recreating authentic and accurate forms of themselves to interact with a wide range of social contacts: family, friends, peers, employers, faculty, and university staff. Simultaneously they felt pressure to present a version of themselves that they felt reflected an edited "best" self—one that was intentionally incomplete or sanitized for broader appeal. Between these two expectations students struggled with an increasing perception that they needed to engage in self-marketing or approach their Facebook profile as a form of branded self for others to judge and consume. The tensions students felt from these expectations reflected tremendous social pressure, which in turn encouraged students to engage in multiple strategies of self-expression. The multiple strategies of self-expression that students enacted were one of the most clear demonstrations of Côté's (1996, 2002) model of identity capital. Students were trying to marshal their tangible and intangible resources to express an identity that others perceived as valuable or useful.

One of the most common approaches to self-presentation, as discussed in Chapter 4, was to create a curated self for use on Facebook. This curated self was both a stand-in for who the student was in person as well as a new form of self that was created specifically to address the multiple social contexts that converged through Facebook. As students discussed their efforts to create these curations, they expressed mixed reactions and feelings about their Facebook selves and the curations of self they offered through Facebook. For most students, their curated selves were a partial amalgam of who they perceived themselves to be. Students selected specific photographs or status updates to symbolically convey an identity that would register across multiple social contexts. The photos and updates chosen were both ambiguous and focused.

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Students were critical of content that was too ambiguous and ultimately difficult to read or interpret. This strategy of layered symbolism echoes boyd's (2008b) findings in her study of adolescents' identities and self-presentations on MySpace.

Participants looked at their Facebook selves as something less than fully real or less than complete self-representations, and they were engaged in a process of generating personas through an assemblage of media objects. As self-presentations, they were manufactured stand-ins for qualities and characteristics of the students and their lives that they wanted others to have knowledge about. Times in which those selves departed from controlled expression, such as other users posting unwanted photos or Facebook changing the format/structure of information on Facebook profiles, created frustration or anxiety and required the students' attention to address. In the case of unwanted photos, the student often requested that the photos be deleted or they simply un-tagged themselves from the photos. In the case of Facebook changing the format or layout of the website, students had no other options except to adapt their profiles to reflect a version of themselves that they were comfortable with others seeing, according to the new visual rules of Facebook. These counter-curations by other people or entities were disruptive of students' work to frame their profiles in the stylized way that addressed their specific needs.

Students, by and large, were not using Facebook to cultivate themselves or their social networks. Facebook was not a social space of growth and development as much as it was a place to refine and adjust the types of information available to members of personal networks. With the exception of students posting articles for others to read and learn about topics, there was very little emphasis on anything like personal development. Even in the case of interpersonal relationships, students often avoided engaging in conflict or difficult situations via Facebook because they felt that Facebook lacked depth in the verbal and non-verbal tools needed to

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meaningfully resolve interpersonal conflicts with others. Instead, students preferred Facebook as a space in which to display their social connections and modify the ways in which others were able to perceive those relationships (e.g., restricting or allowing access to Friends list, posting photos with friends/Friends, and directly identifying friends or relationships in status updates). In each of these instances, the emphasis was on communicating about relationships not developing or enriching relationships. Even in the case of Friends creating a group page to communicate and connect, students still preferred to have their most serious connections or discussions in formats other than Facebook.

One of the emerging uses or interests for using Facebook is in conjunction with academic coursework (e.g., Junco, 2012a); however, in the examples where students used Facebook for courses, they primarily used it as a tool to coordinate group projects. Among my 25 participants, none of them saw a particularly rich academic or learning use for Facebook beyond basic communication tools. Students did see institutional uses for Facebook, such as coordinating and communicating among student groups and disseminating information about upcoming campus events. These activities have some potential academic use, but students did not frame these uses as pedagogical tools or ways in which Facebook promoted learning and intellectual development related to course work. These findings are in line with other research on the academic uses of Facebook that has suggested Facebook's functional value was primarily limited to building or enriching social bonds among students (Junco, 2012a). Students also reinforced Junco's findings in their descriptions of Facebook as a distraction or alternative to class when they found the lecture or class discussion boring. Here, Facebook served as more of an impediment than a tool to promote academic engagement.

The findings from Chapter 5 that reflected the commodification of self and identity through Facebook play an important role in understanding some of the impact that the social pressure students felt to create and maintain a Facebook profile had on how they perceived themselves and their peers. Students' commodified selves reflected a certain dualism to Facebook profiles: students perceived their own profiles to be rough approximations of themselves and yet treated others' profiles as valuable tools for gaining insight into who others are. Students placed the most emphasis on photographs as a way to "learn" about others, but this learning also depended on those Friends posting unique photos that appeared to give insight into who they were. Students were clear that profiles with too little content were unacceptable, and meeting someone without a Facebook profile was akin to meeting someone who does not exist. The suspicion that students held for non-Facebook users reflected a deeper sense of reliance on Facebook as a tool for organizing their social world, as well as being able to surreptitiously learn about others on their own schedule (e.g., through asynchronous creeping through profiles). In a very real sense, students were wary of anyone whom they could not access or, in effect, possess through Facebook. Facebook profiles rendered individuals down to a set of recorded and repeatedly observable characteristics. Given the symbolic nature of profiles, these curations of self were not exactly objective, but students were able to treat profiles as media objects to read, interpret, and critique. The media object quality of Facebook is one of the website characteristics that makes it such a rich site for social science research.

Contained within students' curations and commodifications was also an inherent exploration of identity and self. In the midst of engaging in complex self-presentations on Facebook, students were working through the challenge of personal development. Whether framed through the lens of Côté's (1996) identity capital or Baxter Magolda's (2001) self-

authorship, the students in this study were actively enacting and interpreting the meaning of self and identity in their physical lives and through their Facebook profiles. This flux of self and identity created a source of complex tension as students addressed a state of constant change for self and identity across these two separate realms. Students had few concrete expectations for how to navigate these changes, and their digital and physical selves did not always align or coordinate. Given the involved task of curating a self on Facebook, students relied on their understandings of their physical selves to define their digital selves, but that did not mean that they were simply replicating those physical selves. Instead, students were engaging in something more akin to dual development: one physical and one cyber. Students were also somewhat seamless in their explorations of self and identity in digital and physical spaces. Having grown up with much of this technology already present in their lives, they did not necessarily see these challenges of engaging in dual development as a particular or unique task. It simply was part of how they lived their lives. But this constant flux of identity and self comes from the endlessly moving parts of our contemporary lives, and it is deeply reflective of living life in a society so reliant on technology and computer-mediated communication.

In total, students demonstrated strong perceived need to individualize themselves through their profiles. Students described the value associated with curating a unique profile that reflected an individual identity and offered clear benefit to Friends. A common refrain among students was, "I need to make my profile stand out." If we are thinking of profiles as a reflection of a personal identity or an authentic self-presentation to connect with friends and acquaintances, then it seems strange that students would need to stand out for these audiences. Presumably, these people are already interested in who a student is, as a foundation for their relationship with that person, so the need to stand out is a jarring attitude. Instead, the focus students had on

rendering themselves and their peers as objects for consumption (i.e., commodities) goes a long way in explaining an underlying interpretation of identity as a form of capital, or as Côté (1996, 2002) argued: a form of capital inclusive of social and cultural capital.

Related to these analyses of the curated and commodified selves, there is the potential to view the these two forms of self as part of a larger continuum of self-presentation on Facebook demarcating a range from a self-presentation that emphasizes rich personal subjectivity to a self-presentation that emphasizes profile objectification. Arranged along this continuum, the curated self would occupy the space from personal subjectivity into early forms of objectification while the commodified self would exhibit some overlap with the curated self and extend to solely objectification. The overlap between the curated self and commodified self is important because it emphasizes the latent potential of curated and commodified self to exist across a range of self-presentations through the ways in which students approach and arrange the content on their Facebook profiles. In other words, students have the ability to curate profiles with rich subjectivities as well as profiles that favor mild objectification and commodification. At the same time, students' commodification of self is not a strict binary of commodified or not. Instead, students actively approach their profiles as mediated objects for degrees of consumption, distribution, and reproduction. As the data in Chapters 4 and 5 reflects, students had varying degrees of comfort in others treating them as objects through their profiles, and these degrees of comfort were closely related to the context in which that objectification happened. For example, mild objectification of a new acquaintance through creeping in the early stages of a relationship was less problematic than that same mild objectification later in a relationship, especially when it came in the form of more extensive forms of creeping or stalking. Thinking of the curated and commodified selves as ends of a continuum of self-presentation hopefully allows readers to see

some of the ongoing challenges that students face in adopting more positive and negative forms of self-presentation within their relationships with others.

Conclusions

Despite the strong foundation that students appear to have developed for using and interpreting social media, the findings from this study suggest that students would benefit from some focused support for how they construct and employ their Facebook profiles.

1. Facebook is fundamentally a powerful tool that is neither an implicitly positive nor negative force in students' lives. It does, however, require care in handling. A vital element to students using Facebook in productive and empowering ways is the development of critical awareness of their Facebook use, particularly the purpose for using Facebook and the outcomes they want from using the site. Students in this study demonstrated varying levels of awareness and intentionality in how they constructed their Facebook profiles, and these varying levels of awareness had direct implications for the degree to which they were able to curate intentional and well-thought-out self-presentations as well as the degree to which they treated Facebook profiles as commodified selves. Students with higher levels of critical awareness offered more coherent and robust curations of self and were less likely to think of themselves and their peers as commodities. These students were also the most likely to think of their profiles as a way to enrich their Friend network as a community, rather than have that community enrich them. A final common characteristic of students with higher levels of critical awareness was that they had lower risks for privacy violations. By having more carefully thought out self-presentations, including attention to the implications of sharing their profiles, they reported fewer situations where they felt at risk of unwanted audiences

accessing their profiles or personal information. The key element to critical awareness was aligning behavior with a purpose. This purposeful and critically aware approach is something that can be seen or read into in other research on Facebook and social media in higher education. For example, Junco's (2012b) findings on the impact of Facebook on academic success reflect the ability of Facebook to be disruptive to students' academic engagement and task completion. Underlying this disruption is an inattention to the ways in which students are using Facebook to distract themselves and take themselves off course from studying or writing papers. These issues of critical awareness and intentionality are also at work in Carr's (2011) analysis of how Internet behavior is promoting bursts of shallow thinking on multiple topics, rather than sustained thinking for depth on single topics. The "shallows" that he frames is a form of Internet behavior away from intentional work on a single task and toward multiple concurrent tasks. In fact, Carr's analysis goes a long way to explain Junco's findings.

2. Caution is needed when encouraging students to use Facebook for self-promotion and self-branding. Branding and self-promotion are complex issues on Facebook. On one hand, a branding approach can be a thoughtful way to curate a coherent and meaningful self-presentation when the idea of the brand is not taken literally. Students in this study talked about branding as a metaphor for creating a unified self-presentation that was positive and accurate. In these cases, the idea of a "brand" reflected a focus on fit and connectedness among self-expressions. On the other hand, branding and self-promotion on a social network places an overt emphasis on self and identity as products and commodities to sell. Without exercising care, this approach to branding promotes an interpretation of people and their identities as objects to acquire and exchange. The

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branding and self-promotion approach also contributed to students' view of Facebook

activity as a form of commerce, in which they sought to exploit their network for

economic or social benefit. This tension in branding is similar to the tension in

discussions of social and cultural capital. As resources that help individuals live

productive and democratically inclusive lives, social capital (relationships with others)

and cultural capital (knowledge of a culture) have the potential to be very positive forces.

For example, this use of social capital is the bedrock of studies that suggest Facebook can

be a tool to promote academic and social engagement (Gray et al., 2013). In these studies,

students were able to use their connections and relationships through Facebook to feel a

greater sense of belonging at their colleges or universities. In contrast, negative uses of

social and cultural capital appear as an intervening force in many of the racist, sexist, and

homophobic activity on social media, such as the "Asians in the Library" YouTube video

(Lovett, 2011, March 15) or the recent Facebook threats and harassment at Dartmouth

(Schnoebelen, 2013, April 24). In both of these cases the harassing behavior of students

relied upon legacies of social and cultural capital that have fueled oppression based on

race, gender, and sexual orientation.

3. As a platform for social connectivity, Facebook has a great deal of untapped potential for

   promoting diversity and citizenship in higher education. The issue of citizenship came up

   as an important theme within this study. Facebook citizenship reflected the ways in

   which students defined the relative benefit of Friends as active and positive contributors

   in their Friend network. Students rewarded good citizenship with social endorsement

   such as comments and Likes for photos and statuses, and they responded to negative

   behavior or bad citizenship by removing people from their News Feed or unfriending

them. One of the challenges of social media noted by Castells (2001) is the issue of "me-centered networks" where individuals are able to groom and shape their networks to only reflect their interests, biases, and preferences. This network shaping has the potential to reduce the value of Facebook as a connectivity platform, which virtually every participant in my study did. However, the potential of Facebook to promote more inclusive forms of diversity and citizenship remains, particularly if students reinterpret the idea of citizenship to also mean the inclusion of diverse people and diverse perspectives. The weakness in how students framed good and bad citizenship in this study was their emphasis on the alignment between what they and others contributed and their own personal interests, biases, and preferences. A more expansive interpretation of citizenship would include a promotion and advocacy of diversity and engagement with ideas and content that students found objectionable. Several students talked about how Facebook was a poor platform to engage in difficult conversations or conflict resolution. This may be a factor of Facebook or it may be a factor of conflict avoidance noted in other research (Baym, 2010). Nevertheless, Facebook represents a rich and complex environment for students to have access to others with different experiences and interpretations of social phenomena.

These three sets of conclusions raise questions and opportunities in their implications for practice. The next section of this chapter delves into more depth for their potential contributions for faculty and student affairs practitioners.

Implications for Practice

All of the implications for practice that I discuss in this section relate back to a common theme: helping undergraduate students develop greater critical awareness of the purposes, uses, and consequences of their Facebook and social media use.

Across Higher Education

The most basic and beneficial approaches that faculty and practitioners can take towards promoting students' critical awareness of Facebook is to encourage students to think of and treat Facebook as a tool. For the students in this study, viewing Facebook as a tool was the most useful asset they had for understanding the role of Facebook in their lives and how they could use it in the most socially and academically productive ways. Readers might note that I use the term "tool" throughout my discussion of findings related to the style of curation and students' uses of Facebook. My rationale in that approach was that when pushed, students disaggregated their activity on Facebook into sets of uses and these uses are what linked together the various layers of curation. Having a critical awareness of Facebook and social media goes hand in hand with developing complex critical thinking skills called for in higher education (Association of American Colleges & Universities, 2002; National Association of Student Personnel Administrators & American College Personnel Association, 2004). Helping students achieve these critical thinking and critical awareness skills should be a priority for all members of the higher education community, as these abilities speak to the most fundamental purposes of higher education, whether it be for the life of the mind in the liberal arts or the pragmatics of application in professional fields.

A second basic task for faculty and student affairs professionals alike is to engage in their own development of critical awareness about the purposes, uses, and consequences of Facebook.

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The ability of faculty and practitioners to offer a critical analysis to decode and encode text and context in mediated culture is vital to their work with students. In Chapter 5, I noted students' attitudes that faculty should be knowledgeable and adept users of Facebook and social media, at least in the areas of privacy controls for areas of their lives they want private. If faculty and practitioners are going to serve as meaningful resources in promoting students' critical awareness, they need to possess some of that awareness themselves. As such, faculty and practitioners should labor to engage social media and think through the thorny issues of how to use these media, how to curate a self-presentation that addresses multiple audiences simultaneously, and how to be mindful of privacy and personal information sharing. I can say from personal experience with the students in this study and with my own students, allowing students some access to add depth to your academic or professional continence can be deeply productive. In my undergraduate years, I gained that insight into faculty or practitioners during office hours or during the moments before and after classes or meetings. Today, Facebook and CMC have taken the place of some of that office hour activity. Being a knowledgeable social media user provides yet another professional tool for connecting with and supporting students though a form of interpersonal access that is comfortable or intuitive to them.

As noted earlier in this chapter, faculty and student affairs practitioners should use caution in encouraging students to think of their Facebook activity as branding, marketing, or self-promotion. The terminology comes from commercial activity and carries inherent and unavoidable meaning as a form of commercial activity and objectification—as brands were originally used to burn a marker of ownership onto a product. In place of branding, marketing, and self-promotion, faculty and student affairs practitioners would be better served by focusing on coherence, consistency, and connectedness. For the students in this study, their metaphorical

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uses of branding to address these ideas of coherence and consistency separated them from students who quite literally described branding and marketing themselves as objects for their peers, faculty, and employers to possess and consume. This approach to self and identity fundamentally undermines a sense of humanity for oneself and others. Additionally, given the complex clustering of relationships on Facebook and the overall structure of collapsed social contexts, Facebook may not be the best venue for using social media as a tool for branding or self-promotion. There are certainly other websites such as LinkedIn or Twitter that can serve this same function—where students can use more than one website to help reinsert some separation between social contexts on the Internet.

Finally, Facebook needs to be explored for its potential as a resource to help students engage and work through positive conflict management and resolution. Too many of the students in this study talked about how they simply avoided any conflict on Facebook because they saw Facebook as a bad platform for resolving conflict. Part of this stance is pragmatic from experiences of trying to resolve conflict without success, and part of this is because I suspect that students lack the skills or knowledge to resolve conflict or avoid conflict in the first place through social media. As our society is increasingly computer and Internet based, it seems unlikely that students will leave college and not need developed skills for approaching and resolving conflict in reduced social-cue environments like Facebook (or email or instant messaging). Given the intensive social interaction of higher education, faculty and student affairs practitioners are especially well poised to help students work on and practice useful interpersonal skills adapted to social media and cyber spaces. For example, residence life staff might incorporate Facebook or social media interaction scenarios into residence assistant training,

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or faculty might emphasize written communication through email or social media as graded content for their course.

For Faculty

Faculty have additional areas in which they can and should support students' learning and social development as democratic citizens, and they have additional responsibilities to interrogate the potential use and value of Facebook and social media in their work guiding undergraduate students. I have already addressed some of the research underway to explore the potential academic uses of Facebook. In each of these analyses, there is a focus on how Facebook can be a tool that supports or extends classroom work. In these situations, Facebook provides a social platform through which students can develop potentially rich interpersonal connections with their peers, which in turn might benefit course discussions (both online and in class) and group project work. Students from this study who used Facebook as a social academic tool to coordinate and organize projects reported a mix of self-organizing on Facebook and faculty encouraging students to use Facebook, often noting how much easier or more enjoyable it made class. Students were receptive to Facebook as a connecting tool for classwork and they talked about how it helped them feel more connected to the course. At the same time, faculty need to exercise caution in deploying Facebook as an academic tool. As Wang, Woo, Quek, Yang and Liu (2012) have noted, Facebook has some serious privacy concerns for classroom usage. First and foremost is that Facebook is not a private space. In addition to giving copyright privileges to Facebook for any content posted, users also allow Facebook to sell their profile information and details about their activity and usage patterns to third-party vendors. Facebook is also able to harvest any Internet activity of users while a Facebook session is open. As a platform for classroom use, this means implicitly endorsing Facebook's use of students' data for

profit and data aggregation. This is an important consideration to resolve before using Facebook as a learning management system or a social addendum to classroom experiences.

Another implication for faculty is the resource that Facebook presents as a platform for adding experiential depth to academic discourse on diversity and inclusion. Through the networks made possible on Facebook, students have the potential to connect with virtually any member of the campus community. One of the issues that came up in this study was that students turned away from other users who they found to be offensive or too different. Faculty can also help students explore the ways in which they use Facebook as a medium to resist cultural norms they see as restrictive. For example, faculty might help students explore the ways in which racist or sexist comments are used on Facebook as a way for students from dominant social groups to question perceived threats to their social privilege. These comments on Facebook parallel the increase of white students hosting racially themed parties as expressions of "humor" that rely on racial and ethnic caricatures over the past years (Garcia, Johnston, Garibay, Herrera, & Giraldo, 2011). Higher education has a number of academic programs that explore these same issues of social oppression, and Facebook is an immediate, ongoing, and concrete source of these social and cultural expressions. Faculty can help students to use their Facebook profiles and Friend networks to address their own understanding and inclusion of diverse others in ubiquitous and mundane ways.

For Student Affairs Practitioners

Some of the student affairs uses of Facebook parallel the opportunities and liabilities noted for faculty. For example, practitioners should use caution in promoting student group use of Facebook for the same reasons of privacy and personal information sharing noted earlier. Facebook can serve as an exceptional tool for organizing and coordinating student groups, as

many of the students in this study commented on. The ability to do group planning and calendaring alone may make Facebook an obvious tool, but these tools are not without potential risks, and practitioners need to promote awareness of risks if they are going to promote use of Facebook as a resource.

Student affairs practitioners can also employ Facebook as a platform to promote intergroup dialog. One of the implications that stands out in this study is that the curation and grooming of Friend networks is a valuable activity for students. Students are gaining awareness and interest in identifying who they are friends with on Facebook. At the moment, students appear to be reducing their number of Friends to draw closer alignment between their Friends on Facebook and their friends in person. Research by the Pew Internet Project (Rainie et al., 2013) has found this to be the case, and it is certainly supported in the interview data of this study. According to my participants, this contraction of Friend lists has mostly to do with restricting access to their profiles and to general privacy on Facebook. The network of weak ties created by each additional Friend has the potential to expose a student's profile and personal information to successively larger groups, and without any clear immediate benefit. This contraction is in contrast to early efforts of students to accumulate as many Friends as possible as a status symbol of social capital. This realignment of Facebook networks within person networks is sensible; however, there is the potential for lost benefits in students cutting ties to students who provide them exposure to a greater diversity of students and worldviews. Allowing networks to remain large and diverse comes with two important caveats. First, it is still wise for students to exercise caution when it comes to privacy and sharing. Facebook continues to implement privacy and network controls that allow students to target their communication and sharing with sets of sub-networks to which they define and assign Friends. These new controls have the potential to let

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students keep their large networks for the benefits of exposure and greater connectedness while simultaneously keeping a core focus to whom and what they communicate. In essence, students have the ability to have the best of both worlds: a large extended network and a private intimate network. The findings from Chapter 4 relating to the curated self point to ways in which students can design meaningful and productive spectacle curations for these extended networks that limit privacy issues and promote inclusion.

Though full of potentially problematic uses, the ability of students to connect and be connected with a diverse social network may be one of the lasting and meaningful benefits of college, and Facebook can play an invaluable role in students developing those relationships and social capital that will serve them in the years after college. Some of this relationship development may serve simple uses, such as those noted by the Pew Internet Project (Boase et al., 2006) or Rheingold (1993) where people reach out to their online social networks to answer questions or get advice. However, I suspect that the more meaningful connections will be those that result in job opportunities, knowledge about current events and political issues, and exposure to unexpected opportunities. Student affairs staff, like faculty, are in unique positions to encourage students to work on their grooming of Friend lists to enrich classroom and co-curricular activity.

This "gained exposure" benefit is certainly a rosy assessment of potential Friend grooming. But not all potential outcomes are so positive. For example, students regularly talked about restricting their Friend network or blocking exposure to content they did not like. In instances where that content was bigoted (racist, sexist, homophobic), students more often than not did not confront the person. More typically, they simply blocked the person or the content that they found offensive and moved on with their Facebook lives. Their reasons for not

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confronting or challenging this bigoted content was that they felt Facebook was a poor medium for addressing or resolving interpersonal conflict; however, with the continuing expansion of physical lives into connected/parallel digital lives, there is a pressing need to address these forms of bigotry and harmful/hateful speech. Students' discomfort in this area suggests an important area for future developmental practice for educators in and out of the classroom. Managing interpersonal conflict is never easy, and it is all the more difficult when it involves challenging topics such as racism, sexism, or homophobia, but being difficult cannot be the basis for not seeking ways to address this problematic behavior. For the students who post this problematic content, they may not be aware of how their post was problematic or offensive. In a charitable view, they may simply be ignorant of the hurt their comments or ideas express. (This has the potential to be further compounded by the lack of non-verbal cues and context in online speech acts). By not confronting or even offering feedback about the problems of offending speech, students contribute to the negative behavior and don't disrupt the potentially long-standing impact of cyber-racism and cyber-microaggressions (Kasch & Johnston, 2012).

Implications for Future Research

Facebook and other social media are likely to have continued presence and influence in higher education, and there is a delicate balance at work here. Students in this study and others have favored Facebook as a social platform rather than an academic one, and Facebook is not well equipped to handle a full range of academic uses (Junco, 2012a). Researchers seem to be finding more and more agreement on basic uses of Facebook and social media; however, more research is needed on the meaning that students make of their lives through Facebook and particular applications of Facebook to higher education. Among these applications, I see four areas to focus on for future research: accounting for Facebook/social media as a campus

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environment, applications in student development theory, a communication tool in study abroad and international student experiences, and social technology supporting online education and MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses).

One of the major implications for future research is that researchers will need to take more account of social media in college students' lives. Facebook and social media reflect a parallel and embedded social space for students in higher education. Facebook can be a separate and connected environment through which students experience college, and researchers need to account for this when conducting any research on the environmental influences of college: campus climate, student engagement (curricular and co-curricular), student development, and academic outcomes. Given the ways in which students have woven Facebook and social media into their everyday lives, all of the research that attempts to account for students' day-to-day will also need to incorporate these influences.

For example, quantitative research on student outcomes might include research items that specifically address the number of hours that students use Facebook and social media as a variable on par with co-curricular activity, on-campus and off-campus work, hours spent studying, and on-campus/off-campus residency. Facebook and social media activity are distinctly different from other forms of out-of-class activities, and they are a vital social space that students actively pursue as part of their college lives. More can and should be done to account for the influences of social media on all other aspects of students' social lives. In ANOVA and MANOVA studies, this inclusion of Facebook as an environmental variable may work as a single item or factor variable, or Facebook and social media may need to be addressed as an interaction variable to reflect its connected influence. In other statistical modeling that emphasize nested variables such as HLM, researchers might treat Facebook as an environment

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nest unto itself. Qualitative researchers, on the other hand, may wish to include some awareness of Facebook and social media as a possible environmental influence on the primary phenomenon under investigation. For example, a study of gender and racial attitude formation from participation in student groups (e.g., fraternities or sororities) would likely benefit from an inclusion of Facebook as a data source because more and more study groups are using Facebook as an organizational and communication platform. A great deal of significant group social behavior now occurs through these media, and an analysis of student experiences or attitudes would be incomplete without accounting for the acculturation and messaging that is likely to occur through this communication.

Another rich area for future research is using Facebook as a resource for studying student development. With the complexity and volume of data present on students' profiles, Facebook represents an ideal data source for assessing students' development using existing frameworks or generating new theory. Current research has already found that the Internet and social media are changing the way people think about and engage their world (Rainie & Wellman, 2012). An important next step for higher education and student affairs will be to learn about how those changes are impacting students and what forms of student development are experienced through Facebook. Holistic models such as Baxter Magolda's (2001) journey toward self-authorship or Abes, Jones, and McEwen's (2007) re-conceptualized model of multiple dimensions of identity, seem best poised to capture and reflect the complex layers of development that occur for students in the networked environments of social media. Baxter Magolda's self-authorship, for example, offers three dimensions of development to examine changes in students' epistemological (cognitive reasoning), interpersonal (relationships with others), and intrapersonal (sense of self) domains as they shift from an external locus of control to an internal or "self-authored"

foundation for behavior. The three domains of Baxter Magolda's model address important elements of students' Facebook profiles and their uses. For example, intrapersonal and interpersonal development parallel personal and social curations, respectively.

The second holistic model, from Abes et al. (2007), approaches student development from the perspective of students' abilities to filter contextual influences (e.g., family relationships, persons of authority, culture) on students' social identities (e.g., race, gender, sexual orientation) and a core self (e.g., personality, interests). According to Abes et al.'s model, development reflects the degree to which students are able to control or "filter" the impact of contextual influences on how they make meaning of their lives and identities. As an alternate model, Abes et al. provides a vehicle to interpret Facebook as a powerful platform through which students engage in the process of filtering contextual influences and developing self-presentations that reflect the social identities they value or associate with themselves. For either of these existing models of holistic student development, Facebook would be an ideal platform for both collecting data and engaging in something like "profile elicitation" as a more comprehensive version of Birnbaum's (2008) photo elicitation.

A third area for future research lies in Facebook's uses for students studying abroad and for international students in the United States. The students with study abroad experiences in this project all talked about the importance of Facebook as a coordination and communication tool, and the stark changes they saw in their uses of Facebook. Using Facebook for diversion and entertainment went down, the number of photos and status updates went up (to share their experiences with people back home), and students focused their Facebook time on their classmates in their study abroad program. One student also talked about using Facebook as a translation platform for group projects where students spoke several different languages. In this

application, students used the chat function of Facebook during group work sessions as their platform for communication. Students typed messages in their native language and other students were able to use the chat's ability to translate to understand their workmate in more or less real time. This ability for students to conduct group chats across multiple languages has strong potential for other situations where students speak multiple languages and struggle to communicate, such as international students still working on their English skills and study abroad students still working on the language of their host country. Research on study abroad programs has found that students gain the most out of study abroad experiences that emphasize guided learning about the host country and the experience of being abroad. Facebook appears to be a productive platform for assessing students' experiences abroad and supporting those students through guided learning activities. An intentional application of Facebook for study abroad could make the most use of Facebook as a scrapbook or notebook to capture key experiences, as well as a photo and travel log with some intentional outcomes.

A fourth area for future research is the corporatization of Facebook. In May of 2012, Facebook held an initial public offering (IPO) of stock in the company. This stock offering shifted the ownership structure of Facebook from a private company to a publically traded company, with increased financial accountability to a larger ownership base. As an offshoot of this conversion, Facebook has introduced a number of approaches to increasing the revenue it generated through advertising, including the use of sponsored ads in users' News Feeds and broadcasting sponsored stories with users' names when users Like a company profile on Facebook. Users are unable to avoid or delete these ads in their News Feeds and the ads reflect an overall trend of Facebook becoming more and more corporate and revenue focused. Over time it is possible and likely that users will grow accustomed to having advertisements placed so

extensively in their profiles. As a future area of research, higher education scholars may wish to explore how these heavily advertised social environments influence the ways in which students adopt a taken-for-granted attitude with corporate culture infused in private or semi-private social spaces. Students in the present study expressed some frustration with the ads that were placed directly in their News Feeds; however, this frustration did not translate into students stopping their use of Facebook. Instead, students framed these corporate intrusions as something that they had to tolerate as part of their free use of Facebook.

Finally, colleges and universities seem poised to invest deeper and deeper into online education as a resource to increase access to higher education. The potential cost savings and ability to make higher education available to more and more citizens makes online education an appealing option; however, one of the challenges already noted in these learning environments is creating a rich and engaging social experience for students (Bonk, 2009). Research on Facebook and social media interactions might offer some tools for resolving these challenges of rich social interaction and they might offer some lessons for what approaches support the most useful learning environments for dispersed students. The layers of profile curation discussed in the present study have unclear implications for how students construct or curate self-presentations in the academic environment. Students continued to use Facebook because they saw it as a beneficial way to connect and stay connected with friends, family, classmates, co-workers, and acquaintances.

Critical Reservations

Along with the implications for practice and research, I wish to offer a set of critical reservations for faculty, researchers, practitioners, and policy makers as they continue to think about and explore Facebook as a vital social space linked to higher education.

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Potentially the largest area for concern with Facebook is the ways in which Facebook software collects and shares user information. Van Dijck (2013) outlined two key forms of Facebook information privacy and sharing. The first was individuals sharing personal information about themselves, and the second was Facebook sharing that same information as well as users' use patterns to third parties, such as advertisers. This second type of sharing should be one that raises concerns for the higher education community. Any encouraged use of Facebook implicitly contains support for students, faculty, and staff to make their own information available for Facebook to share with others. In effect, institution-encouraged use means that institutions are asking their students, faculty, and staff to engage in this same information sharing, which may violate privacy interests and concerns of those same students, faculty, and staff. Facebook also has an extensive set of copyright language written into their terms of use, which essentially gives Facebook fundamental copyright to any content posted on Facebook. This copyright issue may expose students, faculty, and staff to conflicts with institutional copyright notices, and at the very least raises an issue of giving Facebook potential copyright privileges to any academic or intellectual work that users post to Facebook. Much like students in this study adopted a "don't post it on Facebook if you want it private" attitude, students, faculty, and staff should adopt a "don't post it on Facebook if you want to retain copyright" attitude.

A second major area of concern is the potentially limited future of Facebook. Young people are already signing off from Facebook and seeking out alternatives to avoid extensive contact with parents and authority figures (Rainie et al., 2013). This trend is likely to continue and will have strong implications for who is on Facebook in the years to come. At the same time, these users may, and likely will, return to Facebook as a stable platform for social interaction.

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Many of the students interviewed for this present study talked about leaving or wanting to leave Facebook but coming back or opting not to leave because Facebook was so integral to their college experience. Facebook was literally a place in which they came to connect with other students for whom they may not have contact information, including the school directory; it was a place that students came to learn about campus events or coordinate class projects; and it was a place where they were able to gain more information about offices and services on campus. Many students used Facebook as a sort of information and Internet clearinghouse that provided them one location to aggregate all of the important information for their day-to-day lives. Should students be able to find a similarly useful alternative, then Facebook will likely struggle to keep its current numbers of college students. At the same time, those college students will also likely face the same issues they do now of having large numbers of parents and authorities on the new popular SNS, as parents and authorities have joined Facebook in part to be connected to and communicate with those college students.

Finally, the lessons students learn about social behavior on Facebook are likely to form the foundation of how students think of and enact social interactions in digital environments. Students have developed a rich set of social norms and expectations through their constant and consistent use of Facebook. The vignette outlined in the first page of this dissertation drew attention to Jeff's violation of the social norms of Facebook because he was not using Facebook to communicate and connect in the preferred ways of others. These same social norms will undoubtedly inform how today's students interpret and engage others in new and future iterations of digital life—for professional and personal uses of information and communication technology. Those of us connected to higher education should think of our students' approach to social interaction based on computer-medicated communication as a way to understand students'

behaviors and to offer thoughtful forms of resistance to encourage these students to question the meaning and implications of these new norms. For example, what are the implications of the normalization of reduced privacy and increased information sharing? How comfortable should students be with details about their lives that were previously seen as personal or private? I raise these questions not to be alarmist, but rather as a way to explore both students' understanding and interests in these areas as well as faculty and practitioners' interpretations of these areas. If the students in this study are any model for other students, then I suspect that students will err on the side of increased desire for privacy and a rejection of perceived norms around declining privacy and wide-spread sharing. That being said, there remains a need to have these conversations with students, if for no other reason than to help faculty and administrators help students navigate a social environment where they may feel strong pressure to share more and be less private than they want to be.

Despite these critical reservations, I find deeper reasons for hope about the skills and tools that students are developing as they curate digital self-presentations through Facebook. These curated selves challenge students to be thoughtful and creative and use some of the very best of their talents to reflect on themselves, connect with others, and interpret the world around them. These curated selves also provide a remarkable pathway for thinking about what type of digital future we all wish to create through our ever-increasingly digital lives. In many ways, the students in this study are at the vanguard of what can and should be a digital future.

Closing Thoughts

Social media engagement influences the social and intellectual lives of college students in profound ways, and these influences need to be more fully understood for their implications in the ongoing organization of higher education in conventional forms (e.g., physical campuses and

face-to-face instruction) and emerging forms (e.g., online education, MOOCs, competency-based instruction). The organization of social and intellectual engagement via cyber-environments is already having impact on conventional higher education via supplemental, participatory instructional technology such as class websites, blogs, and online library resources, and it promises to be the fundamental organizing principle of all cyber-only higher education. The social and intellectual tools that students learn and develop via Facebook and other social media are likely to form the de facto norms of social and intellectual life for higher education based on or integrative of online/cyber-technology.

The current study casts one view of the social and intellectual tools that students engage on Facebook. The two forms of selves that students enacted—the curated self and the commodified self—were each an expression of students working through the challenges of living and being in the unchartered territory of cyber-environments. Faculty, student affairs practitioners, and administrators have a unique opportunity in the growth of social media to use students' developing and developed skill sets to enrich higher education as a productive social learning environment in an increasingly online and computer-based society.

Looking forward, one of the largest questions we have to ask is: for what jobs and society are we currently preparing students? The precise answer to that question is unknowable, but as members of the higher education community we can do our best to prepare students as engaged, critical thinkers with sensitivity and awareness to pursuing intentional outcomes through their social media use. Those outcomes may be a deeper sense of connectedness to friends, a stronger sense of belonging to a group or institution, information about activities or opportunities on campus, or access to new ideas suggested by Friends. Regardless of the outcomes that students pursue, faculty, practitioners, and administrators can challenge students to be more

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knowledgeable and thoughtful creators and curators and more intentional and critical consumers of the knowledge, culture, and society that they hope to create through their time in higher education.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: A Selected History of Facebook

2004

- February: Facebook launches at Harvard; *Messages* feature introduced
- March: access expands to other colleges and universities
- September: *Groups* launched
- December: Facebook reaches 1 million users

2005

- September: High School version launches
- October: *Photos and Video* feature added

2006

- August: *Notes* feature introduced
- September: *News Feed* launched; new privacy controls introduced; Facebook opened access to anyone 13 years old with a valid email address
- October: *Share* button introduced
- November: News Feed preferences introduced
- December: *Profile Picture* album introduced

2007

- April: My Messages and My Shares changed to *Inbox*; *Network Pages* launched
- July: Facebook reaches 30 million users
- November: *Pages* introduced
- December: *Friends Lists* launched

2008

- April: FB *Chat* feature introduced
- June: Suggest Friends to other Friends feature added
- July: Facebook *Wall* feature introduced
- August: Facebook reaches 100 million users

2009

- January: Facebook reaches 150 million users; *Birthday Reminders* introduced
- February: *Like* button introduced; Update to terms of use

- April: Facebook reaches 200 million users

- May: News Feed updates now in real-time; *Family Relationships* added; size of photo albums increased from 60 to 200; Facebook passes MySpace in user traffic

- June: introduction of Facebook Usernames in URL

- July: Facebook reaches 250 million users

- September: Facebook reaches 300 million users; ability to tag Friends in status updates introduced

- October: change in view options: News Feed or Live Feed

- November: new privacy policy adopted

- December: simplified privacy controls introduced

2010

- February: Facebook reaches 400 million users; New privacy controls for *Applications*

- March: update to privacy policy

- May: new security features added; simplified privacy control introduced

- June: ability to Like a Comment added; new Applications permissions authorization

- July: Facebook reaches 500 million users; *Facebook Stories* introduced

- August: *Facebook Places* introduced

- October: New version of Facebook Groups introduced; ability to download all personal Facebook content to personal computer; Skype integration added; *Friendship Pages* added

- December: new Facebook Profile format introduced; face recognition added to photo tagging

2011

- January: Facebook reaches 600 million users

- May Facebook reaches 700 million users

- August: improved controls for content sharing added

- September: *Timeline* introduced; *News Ticker* introduced; Facebook reaches 800 million users

2012

- May: Facebook initial public stock offering (IPO)

- September: *Gifts* feature introduced

- October: Facebook reaches 1 billion users

- December: new *Instagram* terms of service

2013

- February: *Graph Search* introduced

- April: *Home* Android software introduced

http://facebookstudy.org/

Welcome

Hello!

My name is David Kasch, and I am a PhD student at UCLA. I am conducting research on how college students create and express their identities through Facebook and how Facebook affects their lives as college students.

This research is part of my dissertation, and by participating you will be helping me complete my PhD in higher education.

If you are interesting in learning more about this study, please visit the Study FAQs page.

If you are interesting in participating in this study, please visit the Contact page.

[UCLA IRB# 12-000649]

Study FAQs

David Kasch, MS, MA [primary investigator] and Robert Rhoads, PhD [faculty sponsor], from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) are conducting a research study to learn more about how college students create and express their identities through Facebook.

Participant Eligibility

In order to participate in this study, a study participant must be over the age of 18 and currently enrolled part-time or full-time as an undergraduate college student. Participation in this research study is voluntary.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Accept a "Friend" request from the researcher. (Note: The researcher has restricted the visibility of "Friends" on his profile so others will not see your profile.)
- Allow the researcher to view and record parts of your Facebook page (including text, photographs, and videos) over a period of 4-6 months.
- Complete a demographic survey about your use of Facebook and social media, as well as information about various forms of identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political views, and gender).
- Possibly participate in a set of two 60 minute interviews via a private video chat (e.g., Skype, Google Talk, FaceTime) from a location of your choosing.

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation in the demographic survey will take approximately 30 minutes. Participation in the interviews will take approximately 2 hours, across two 60 minute interviews. Total participation in all parts of this project will take 2-3 hours.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts associated with this study.

Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study.

The results of the research may offer new insight into how college students use Facebook as part of their identity development and social lives while in college.

Will I be paid for participating?

Participants who accept the "Friend" request from the researcher and complete the demographic survey will have the option of receiving a $10 gift card or entering into a raffle for one of four $50 gift cards.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of removing your name from all Facebook profile content collected and replace with a code number. A code key will be created to link participants' data with code numbers. All data will be kept on an encrypted hard drive, accessible only to the primary researcher, David Kasch. Code keys and identifying information will be kept on a separate encrypted hard drive, also accessible by only the primary researcher. Published results of this study will make use of a pseudonym for all identifiable names (students, universities, and Facebook Friends).

What are my rights if I take part in this study?
- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.
- You have the right to withdraw your data from this study at any time.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

The research team:

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact:

David Kasch [primary investigator] at dkasch (at) ucla (dot) edu
Robert Rhoads [faculty sponsor] at rhoads (at) gseis (dot) ucla (dot) edu

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):
If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

Download a copy of the Study Information Sheet.

[UCLA IRB# 12-000649]

Appendix D: Recruitment Website – Contact Page

http://facebookstudy.org/contact/

Contact

If you are interesting in being part of this study or learning more about it, please fill out the form below.

Name (required)

[textbox]

Email (required)

[textbox]

Facebook URL

[textbox]

I want to… (required)

- Participate! [radio button]

- Learn more! [radio button]

Comment

[textbox]

[UCLA IRB# 12-000649]

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES
STUDY INFORMATION SHEET

A Study of College Student Identity on Facebook

David Kasch, MS, MA and Robert Rhoads, PhD, from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) are conducting a research study.

You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you are over the age of 18 and currently enrolled part-time or full-time as undergraduate college student. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

Why is this study being done?

This study is being conducted to learn more about how college students create and express their identities through Facebook.

What will happen if I take part in this research study?

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- Accept a "Friend" request from the researcher. (Note: The researcher has restricted the visibility of "Friends" on his profile so other will not see your profile.)
- Allow the researcher to view and record parts of your Facebook page (including text photographs, and videos) over a period of 4-6 months.
- Complete a demographic survey about your use of Facebook and social media, as well as information about various forms of identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, political views, and gender).
- Possibly participate in a set of two 60 minute interviews via a private video chat (e.g., Skype, Google Talk, FaceTime) from a location of your choosing.

How long will I be in the research study?

Participation in the demographic survey will take approximately 30 minutes. Participation in the interviews will take approximately 2 hours, broken into two sessions. Total participation in all parts of this project will take about 2-3 hours.

Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?

There are no anticipated risks or discomforts associated with this study.
Are there any potential benefits if I participate?

You will not directly benefit from your participation in this study.

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The results of the research may offer new insight into how college students use Facebook as part of their identity development and social lives while in college.

Will I be paid for participating?

Participants who accept the "Friend" request from the researcher and complete the demographic survey will have the option to receive a $10 gift card or enter into a raffle for one of four $50 gift cards.

Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of removing your name from all Facebook profile content collected and replace with a code number. A code key will be created to link participants' data with code numbers. All data will be kept on an encrypted hard drive, accessible only to the primary researcher, David Kasch. Code keys and identifying information will be kept on a separate encrypted hard drive, also accessible by only the primary researcher. Published results of this study will make use of a pseudonym for all identifiable names (students, universities, and Facebook Friends).

What are my rights if I take part in this study?

- You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study, and you may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time.
- Whatever decision you make, there will be no penalty to you, and no loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.
- You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.
- You have the right to withdraw your data from this study at any time.

Who can I contact if I have questions about this study?

- **The research team:**
  If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the research, you can talk to one of the researchers. Please contact:

    David Kasch [primary investigator] at 310-425-3530 or dkasch@ucla.edu

    Robert Rhoads [faculty sponsor] at 310-794-4243 or rhoads@gseis.ucla.edu
- **UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program (OHRPP):**
  If you have questions about your rights while taking part in this study, or you have concerns or suggestions and you want to talk to someone other than the researchers about the study, please call the OHRPP at (310) 825-7122 or write to:

UCLA Office of the Human Research Protection Program
11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 211, Box 951694
Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694

Appendix F: Use and Demographics Survey

Survey Introduction
The following survey is part of a doctoral dissertation studying how college students express their identities through Facebook.

The survey will take approximately 20-30 minutes to complete and covers areas related to general patterns of Facebook use and specific forms of personal identity (e.g., religious beliefs, race/ethnicity, political views, sexual orientation, nationality, and gender).

Participants who accept the "Friend" request from the researcher and complete the demographic survey will have the option to receive a $10 gift card or enter into a raffle for one of four $50 gift cards.

Thank you in advance for your time and energy in completing this survey and being a part of this research project. Please contact David Kasch at dkasch@ucla.edu if you have any questions about this survey or this project.

Patterns of Facebook Use
- When did you open your Facebook account? *[text box]*
- How much time do you spend on Facebook on a typical day *[text box]*
- How many times do you visit Facebook on a typical day? *[text box]*
- How do you usually access Facebook? *[smartphone, tablet, laptop computer, desktop computer]*
- What are the main reasons you use Facebook? [*textbox]*
- How often do you update your profile status? *[Several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, once a month, once every few months, once or twice a year, never]*
- How often do you add/update photos on your profile? *[Several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, once a month, once every few months, once or twice a year, never]*
- How often do you delete photos on your profile? *[Several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, once a month, once every few months, once or twice a year, never]*
- How often do you add new Friends to your profile? *[Several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, once a month, once every few months, once or twice a year, never]*
- How often do you delete Friends from your profile? *[Several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, once a month, once every few months, once or twice a year, never]*
- How often do you use apps and games on Facebook? *[Several times a day, once a day, several times a week, once a week, several times a month, once a month, once every few months, once or twice a year, never]*
- What other accounts do you have linked to Facebook? (e.g., Google, MySpace, Yahoo!, OpenID? *[text box]*

General about Student
- When is your birthday? *[text box]*
- What college or university do you go to? *[text box]*
- What year are you in school? *[text box]*
- What is your major? *[text box]*
- Where are you from originally? (City, State) *[text box]*
- How many siblings do you have? *[text box]*

Religious Identity
- How would you describe your religious beliefs? *[text box]*
- Do you belong to a specific faith tradition? *[Please list it]*
- How important are your religious beliefs to who you are? *[Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important]*
- How important are your religious beliefs to your relationships with others on Facebook? *[Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important]*
- Are you involved with any religious groups on Facebook? On another website? In person? *[If yes, please list them]*

Racial/Ethnic Identity
- How would you describe your racial/ethnic identity? [American Indian or Alaska Native, Arab or Arab American, Asian or Asian American, Black or African American, Latina/o or Hispanic, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, White, Other ___] (check all that apply)
- If you selected more than one racial/ethnic group, how do you identify yourself most often? [Mostly one race, Biracial, Multiracial, Depends on the situation]?
- How important is your race/ethnicity to who you are? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- How important is your race/ethnicity to your relationships with others on Facebook? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- Are you involved with any racial/ethnic groups on Facebook? On another website? In person? [If yes, please list them]

Political Views
- How would you describe your political views? [Liberal, Conservative, Middle of the Road, Democrat, Republican, Independent, Libertarian, Not interested in politics, Other _____] (check all that apply)
- How important are your political views to who you are? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- How important are your political views to your relationships with others on Facebook? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- Are you involved with any political groups on Facebook? On another website? In person? [If yes, please list them]

Sexual Orientation

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- How would you describe your sexual orientation? [Bisexual, Gay, Heterosexual, Lesbian, Queer, Uncertain, Other _____] (choose one)
- How important is your sexual orientation to who you are? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- How important is your sexual orientation to your relationships with others on Facebook? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- Are you involved with any sexual orientation groups on Facebook? On another website? In person? [If yes, please list them]

Nationality
- How would you describe your nationality? [text box]
- How important is your nationality to who you are? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- How important is your nationality to your relationships with others on Facebook? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- Are you involved with any nationality groups on Facebook? On another website? In person? [If yes, please list them]

Gender
- How would you describe your gender? [Female, Male, Transgendered, Uncertain, Other _____]
- How important is your gender to who you are? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- How important is your gender to your relationships with others on Facebook? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- Are you involved with any gender groups on Facebook? On another website? In person? [If yes, please list them]

Relationship Status
- What is your relationship status? [text box]
- How important is your relationship status to who you are? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]
- How important is your relationship status to your relationships with others on Facebook? [*Scale: 1 Very unimportant to 5 Very important*]

Conclusion
- What do you like the most about Facebook? [text box]
- What do you like the least about Facebook? [text box]
- What do you think is missing from Facebook? [text box]

Gift Card
Please provide your name and email address and choose to receive a $10 gift card or be entered into a raffle for one of four $50 gift cards.
- Name [text box]
- Email address [text box]

- Gift card selection [radio buttons]
  - $10 gift card
  - Raffle for one of four $50 gift card

Appendix G: Observation Protocol

Timeline
- How do individual participants use the Timeline function of Facebook?
- What types of information do they post?
- What types of information do they not post?
- What do others post to participants' profiles?
- What kind of status updates to participants post to their profiles?
- What types and forms of interaction do participants have with other Facebook users through their Timeline and/or News Feed?
- What were popular posts to the participants News Feed?
- What were unpopular posts to the participants News Feed?

About Me
- What education and work information do participants post?
- What have they writing for the "About You" section?
- What information is included/not included in the "Basic Info" section
- What contact information do they provide? How much access do they provide to others through this section of the profile?
- What family do they have listed?
- What information have they included for Favorite Quotes,

Friends
- How many "Friends" do participants have listed on their profile?

Photos
- How many photos do participants have?
- How many profile pictures?
- How many photos and videos?
- What is the timeline distribution of photos added to their profile?
- What are the major foci of photos included in individual profiles?
- What are the minor foci of photos included in individual profiles?
- How extensive is the "tagging" of other people in Facebook photos for individual participants?
- Which photos have the comments? Which photos have the most comments?
- What types of comments do photos have?

Favorites/Likes
- What information have they listed under the Favorites categories?
- What Likes have they posted? How many? Over what timeframe? At what time?
- How many of their friends share those same Likes?

Map
- What are the places listed on the Map for the individual participants?

- How much information do they convey to others through their individual Map?
- How connected is the Map to other functional areas of individual profiles, such as Photos or Timeline?

Notes
- What notes have participants written for "My Notes"?
- What information is listed in "Notes About Me" for individual participants?

Appendix H: Interview Protocol

<u>Welcome</u>
- Thank you for taking time to talk with me.
- Informal and conversation interview
- I have some prepared questions, but I also want to let the conversation go where it takes us.
- The focus on this interview is how you use Facebook to express yourself and sense of identity.
- Is it okay if I record the audio of our conversation?
- Do you have any questions before we get started?

<u>General</u>
- Walk me through your typical day of using Facebook.
  - What do you tend to look at when you log in?
- When did you first start using Facebook? And why?
- How has the way you use Facebook changed over time?
- What do you think are the most important elements of someone's Facebook profile?

<u>Identity/Self</u>
- How do you approach sharing information about yourself on Facebook?
  - How did you develop this approach to Facebook?
- What are some of the important aspects of who you are?
- How do you think Facebook has changed the way you see yourself? Or others?
- What role does Facebook play in your sense of who you are?
- How do you use Facebook to communicate what is going on with your life?

<u>Profile</u>
- How do you decide what photos/status updates/comments to post and not to post on Facebook?
- How you decide what to include/exclude from your profile?
- What kind of response do you hope to get from your posts?
- How is your profile similar or different from other people you know?

<u>Image</u>
- What do you hope others see about you when they see your profile?
- How do you hope that other people see you/think of you based on your profile?
- How similar is your profile to how you are in person?
  - What is missing?

<u>Other People</u>
- Who do you interact with the most through Facebook?
- What do you look at first when you look at other people's profiles?
  - What do you use to learn about who that person is?

- What makes a good Facebook user/"Facebook Citizen"?
- What sorts of judgments do you make about other Facebook users?
- How do you decide who to friend? De-friend?

Audience
- Who do you post for?
- Who do you imagine is looking at your Facebook page?
  - How does that influence what you do and do not post?

Relationships
- How do you think Facebook influences how you interact with others?
- What impact do you see Facebook having on how people interact on campus?
  - What is the role of Facebook in your campus's social life?

Privacy
- How do you approach privacy on your Facebook account?
- How do you decide who can see what?

Creeping/Stalking
- Where are the boundaries for looking at other people's profiles?
  - How much is okay? How much is too much?

Other SNSs
- What other social network sites do you use?
- What apps/websites do you need your Facebook login to access?

Wrap-up
- What do you see as the real benefits of Facebook?
- What are some of the negative consequences of Facebook?
- Is there anything I didn't ask you about that you think I should have?

Mixed Bag
- What posts do you have the strongest reactions to? Example?
- Have you ever deactivated your FB account?
- Have you ever deleted a post? Why?

Conclusion
- Thank you for taking time to discuss your experiences with Facebook.
- Please feel free to email me if any additional thoughts come up in the coming weeks.

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