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NARRATIVE AS SELF PERFORMANCE: THE RHETORICAL CONSTRUCTION OF IDENTITIES ON FACEBOOK PROFILES

BY

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DISSERTATION

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy
Communication**

The University of New Mexico
Albuquerque, New Mexico

December 2009

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ABSTRACT

New ways of creating and presenting the self in the "space" of the Internet are fascinating, but not yet fully understood. Framed in the theoretical literature of Goffman's presentation of the self, and Burke's conception of rhetoric, the study's primary concern is to explain and understand how Facebook users construct identities using narrative fragments on their profiles and the offline effects of these narrative performances. Specifically, this study argues that narratives are a type of rhetorical performance, and that both narratives and identities have symbolic meaning and rhetorical components.

While the effects of online identities occur at the macro-level, the actual process of construction and presentation occur at the micro-level. The method of narrative criticism informs the primary framework, called the Narrative Performance Model (NPM), that I created and used to analyze 100 Facebook profiles of undergraduate students at a large, southwestern university to understand the micro-level process of the performance of identities and to answer the following research questions: (1) What

features are used in the narrative performance of identities on Facebook? (2) What types of identities result from the narrative performances on Facebook profiles, and (3) What role does cultural capital play in the narrative performance of self? Focus groups discussions of undergraduate college students added a depth dimension to the narrative criticism, helped answer questions that could not be answered in the analysis of Facebook profiles, and answered the following research question: What are the offline consequences of communicating online identities on Facebook?

The micro-level analysis of 400 pages of text from Facebook profiles reveal that students use both linguistic and paralinguistic features in their narrative performance of identity. Students challenge and alter traditional conventions of grammar, writing, and narratives to present specific narratives of self. Students use these features to communicate five types of identities on their profiles: (1) the essential self; (2) the desired self; (3) the preferential self, (4) the dynamic self; and (5) the demanding self. Cultural capital makes possible the above mentioned narrative selves, and in effect, perpetuates the hierarchical arrangement of society by highlighting class differences.

A thematic analysis of focus group discussions reveal that offline consequences fall within four general themes: (1) keeping it real; (2) Facebook official; (3) friending; and (4) relationship boundaries—family as friends. In addition to an in-depth discussion of macro and micro-level findings, the practical, theoretical, and methodological contributions are discussed.

Table of Contents

"Advances in computer technology and the Internet have changed the way America works, learns, and communicates. The Internet has become an integral part of America's economic, political, and social life." ~Bill Clinton

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

What started out as an innocent online prank ended in a tragic suicide. In 2006, 13-year-old Megan Meier from Dardenne Prairie, MO, began an online relationship on MySpace with a young man, Josh. For six weeks, the couple engaged in countless online conversations and quickly established a very serious relationship. One day, Josh sent Megan his final message on MySpace "Everybody knows how you are. You're a bad person and everybody hates you. Have a shitty rest of your life. The world would be a better place without you." Minutes after receiving this message, Megan rushed up to her room and shut the door. Moments later, Megan's mother, Christina, went to check on her distraught daughter and found that Megan had hung herself. Tragically, on October 17, 2006, Megan Meier ended her life ("Mom: MySpace hoax led to daughter's suicide," 2007).

The prank that started this entire saga involved a friend of Megan's and her mother, Lori Drew. Wanting to know what Megan was saying about her daughter online, Lori assumed a fake identity of Josh, a 16-year-old boy, and created a MySpace page to become "friends" with Megan. Once Lori gained Megan's trust, she began an online romantic relationship with Megan. Already vulnerable, suffering from depression, ADD, and weight issues, Lori further destroyed Megan by posting bulletins calling her "fat" and a "slut." In 2008 the federal jury indicted Lori Drew on counts of accessing protected computers without authorization to obtain information to inflict emotional distress and one count of criminal conspiracy. The jury found Lori guilty of three lesser charges and remained deadlocked on the issue related to criminal conspiracy. On July 9, 2009, a

federal judge overturned the jury verdict and issued an acquittal on the three misdemeanor charges (Zetter, 2009).

This case serves as a reminder of the serious ramifications of online communication and points to the lack of adequate and consistent legislation regarding cyber crimes. Cyberbulling, false identities, and the stealing of private information are just a few of the dangers associated with life online. While social-networking sites may appear seemingly harmless, this case shows that user intent frames interactions and outcomes of online communication. Whether this case is the exclusive result of the new technologies or of other societal factors, one thing is certain; the Internet is changing our lives. The way we interact with others and understand ourselves has changed and we, as consumers of technology, need to understand what this means for our lives.

Many people today are living within the two distinct yet interconnected worlds of the real and virtual, myself included. The real world consists of a life lived offline, while the virtual world constitutes a life online. The line between these two worlds continues to blur on a daily basis, and this haziness and distortion increases the uncertainty people have of their place in the world(s) and their general understanding of life. To restore a modicum of certainty and understanding, it becomes important to understand the "self" in relation to these worlds, and this is what this dissertation seeks to accomplish. Specifically, the purpose of this study is to explain the popular phenomenon of Facebook communication as a rhetorical and narrative performance. In doing so, my dissertation expands upon existing theories of computer-mediated communication, public sphere, and identity, uses innovative methods; and breaks new ground in the study of computer-mediated communication.

Chapter 1 provides an introduction as well as framework from which to

understand, better explore, and achieve the above mentioned goals. A section on the

researcher's perspective provides insights into my affiliation with and interest in this

particular study. Additionally, I identify the theoretical perspectives that inform and

frame the study. Finally, I discuss my theoretical assumptions, the rationale for the study,

research questions, and key constructs.

<div align="center">*Researcher Perspective*</div>

The Internet offers a space in which users can create messages and make

meaning. Void of actual physical contact, the Internet challenges users to engage in the

message and meaning-making process, specifically personal, social, and communal

identity construction, through almost the exclusive use of text. While some argue that the

Internet erases difference, this study argues the contrary position and insists that available

rhetorical features enable individuals to construct not only a representation of their offline

selves but also to experiment with and create new identities. In other words, the Internet

permits individuals to create virtual selves that can interact with other virtual selves.

Years ago, before the proliferation of the Internet, Randal Walser (cited in

Rheingold, 1991) made the following prediction regarding the impact of new

communication technologies on the construction of the self:

> More than any mechanism yet invented, [cyberspace] will change what humans
>
> perceive themselves to be, at a very fundamental and personal level. In
>
> cyberspace, there is no need to move about in a body like the one you possess in
>
> physical reality. You may feel more comfortable, at first, with a body like your
>
> "own" but as you conduct more of your life and affairs in cyberspace your

conditioned notion of a unique and immutable body will give way to a far more

liberated notion of "body" as something quite disposable and, generally, limited.

(p. 191)

Based upon this argument, virtual identities, which result from the interface between the

virtual body and the computer screen, are unlike other types of encountered identities.

The Internet opens up a whole new world of possibilities in ways of relating and

interacting with others through the act of performing the self.

My interest in physical and virtual identities stems from both my curiosity of the

implications that arise from the ideas articulated by Walser (cited in Rheingold, 1991)

and from my position as part of the population I study in this project (college-age

students who use social-networking sites). As far back as six years ago, I created my first

profile on MySpace. I carefully crafted the image to portray a virtual self to my online

audience. I spent days considering my background color, images used, photos uploaded,

and text utilized so that I had what I thought to be an accurate representation of myself.

When Facebook emerged a few years later, I repeated the process of creating my virtual

persona, agonizing over word and image choices that I could use to create my new

Facebook profile. My ongoing process of identity creation reflected who I thought I was

at a point in time.

Using these social-networking sites became so routine that I never stopped to

consider the implications of social participation through these virtual networks. Upon

entering into my doctoral program, I began taking courses that addressed identity

construction and learned about the effects of new communication technologies. My new-

found knowledge of identity, communication, and computer-mediated communication

promotes new understanding about what it means to ask "Who am I?" in the real and virtual words. Research on identity reminds us that in order to answer this question people must consider who they think they are, what stories they tell others about who they are, what they think others think they are, as well as where they are physically or virtually located (Agger, 2004; Bolter, 2003; Bortree, 2005; boyd, 2007; Hillis, 1999; Huffaker & Calvert, 2005; Kennedy, 2006; Thurlow, Lengel, & Tomic, 2004; Wood & Smith, 2005; Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008).

While past research on identities acknowledges the importance of rhetoric, in narrative form, as creating and contributing to identities, traditional means of understanding these signs and meaning systems is ineffective in a virtual context. Self-identity is no longer one-dimensional and stable; rather the self exists in multiple planes of existence (Harter, 1998; Hillis, 1999). The self of today exists in a virtual state, to some degree, all hours of the day and must be understood as created and sustained through this medium. Furthermore, new media technologies have altered the rules of communication by challenging the traditional conceptions of distance, time, spatiality, and the boundaries between the private and public (Hillis, 1999; Nakamura, 2002). These changes bring with them a whole new set of possibilities and challenges, many which are not fully understood.

Interpretive Perspective

This section stresses how interpretive research about communication takes place in the virtual context and how principles from symbolic interaction and social constructivism provide grounding for the study of identity construction on the Internet. Bound within these issues related to "Who am I" is the idea that the self is rhetorically

constructed through social interactions. The self is a product of communicative interactions with others (Gergen, 1999; Mead & Miller, 1982). The following offers a discussion of the interpretive approach by looking at the different traditions that serve to inform this particular perspective.

My research in this dissertation aligns with the interpretive perspective. The interpretive tradition arose in response to the post-positivist tradition and has roots in Cartesian dualism, Kant's German idealism, hermeneutics, phenomenology, and social interaction. Hermeneutics provides the interpretive tradition with a focus on understanding and the importance of text; phenomenology assumes that knowledge is known through experience and expressed through language; and symbolic and social interaction focuses on how meaning is produced and interpreted through symbols in interaction (Mead & Miller, 1982).

These roots inform the philosophical assumptions of the interpretive tradition and differentiate the approach from those of the post-positivist and critical approaches. These differences begin at a basic level with differing research goals. Interpretive scholars seek a deep understanding at the local level by interpreting what is observed while post-positivists aim to explain, predict, and control and critical scholars work to uncover systems of oppressions and domination with the intent of empowering individuals (Miller, 2005). Furthermore, the interpretive perspective moves beyond the post-positivist perspective that reality exists independent of the individual and recognizes that reality is also constantly produced and re-produced at the local level as well as culturally constructed. Culture moves from a variable to a socially constructed system that informs and is informed at the macro-level by larger systems and structures and at the micro-level

by individuals. Knowledge about the self in relation to the world is subjective and created at the local level through the interaction of the knower and known. This approach differs drastically from the post-positivist tradition, which regards knowledge as objective and understood through questionnaires, variables and hypotheses-testing.

Interpretive scholars use methods that allow for a deeper understanding of events. Researchers use methods such as: ethnography, participant observation, interviews, focus groups, rhetorical criticism and naturalistic inquiry to help answer research questions related to issues of "how" and "why." Moreover, interpretive scholars adhere to the belief that qualitative research in communication involves performances and practices of human communication (Lindlof & Taylor, 1995). This dissertation both acknowledges and accepts these beliefs and seeks to further understand the issue of performance as related to social-networking sites on the Internet. Mixed methods, such as rhetorical criticism and focus groups, aids the appreciation and facilitates interpretation of these performances by allowing a depth analysis of two different sources: Facebook profiles, and the owners of these pages. Chapter 3 offers further discussion and justification of these methodological choices.

Assumptions

My assumptions about communication influence this study. As a communication scholar, I am interested in the process of communication as well as the forms and functions of communication features. The communication medium that guides my study is that of computer-mediated communication. This relatively new medium provides researchers a new context in which to understand not only communication, but also theoretical constructs related to communication, such as self-presentation, identity,

computer-mediated communication, and the rhetorical strategy of narratives. The Internet challenges traditional dichotomies of mind/body, text/context, real/virtual and these challenges serve to affect one's consciousness and therefore alter cognitive schemas and structures. Furthermore, the Internet calls for changes in conceptions of ways of being and interacting by altering and changing forms of written communication. Online communication demands as well as enables a new form of communication in which the spontaneity and playfulness of the spoken word combine with the traditional, permanency of written text to create a new symbolic structure of writing (Barnes, 2003; Warnick, 1998). The transformative power of the Internet is real and has serious implications for understanding theoretical questions, such as "how do we know what we know?" and "why do we act the way we act?"

Additionally, this study views virtual identities as a type of message construction consisting of shared cultural symbols (this includes images, text, paralinguistic devices, hypertext, etc.). Following the work of Mead (1934), communication, then, is central to the construction of identity in that it provides individuals with the symbols used to articulate the self. In relation to social-networking sites, individuals are able to construct their messages (the self) with limited editorial help/restrictions. While *Terms of Use* exist for sites, such as Facebook, there is little to no enforcement of restrictions in terms of message content. While this feeling of freedom affords users new ways of communicating identities with little fear of repercussion for such performances, the degree of freedom experienced by users is actually quite limited. The structure of Facebook, which consists of a uniform profile template, constrains certain types of

creativity thereby challenging users to develop new ways for communicating and performing identities.

Another guiding assumption is that individuals utilize cultural constructs of reality in their presentation of the self. This belief further supports the idea that culture and communication exist in a dynamic relationship in which each informs the other. Relating this to the self, one's identity(ies) is/are socially constructed through symbolic interactions (both online and offline). Symbolic interaction draws upon the work of Mead (1982, 1932) Blumer (1986), and Charon (1979). Their perspective generally considers how societies of interacting individuals use symbols to create personal and social realities. In any given interaction, social actors use symbols to infer and apply meaning and then react according to their interpretations. This perspective assumes that the interaction process is dynamic and that people are constantly undergoing changes in interaction and in turn, society, as a larger entity changes through interaction. Interaction implies human beings acting in relation to one another, taking each other into account, acting, perceiving, interpreting, and acting again. Hence, as a result of symbolic interaction, a dynamic and active human being emerges, rather than an actor merely responding to others.

In addition to recognizing the importance of social interaction in the identity construction process, this study advances ideas about social constructivism. In this view, humans actively create society and their interpretations of reality are woven together and expressed through communication encounters. Social life and the self that exists within the world are not taken for granted ideas; rather, they are socially constructed products (Gergen, 1999). The virtual self, then, is a construction based upon a set of social

relations made possible by the existence of technology (Agger, 2004). Bolter (2003) addresses the issue of the virtual self by affirming Gergen's (1999) idea that technology is dismantling the traditional notion of the self. While both Gergen (1991) and Bolter (2003) warn of the negative implications associated with this change, my study recognizes the potential for positive outcomes from the features employed to achieve ways of knowing the self at a different and deeper level.

The final and perhaps most important claim this study makes is that narratives are a type of rhetorical performance. While the effects of online identity presentation occur at a macro-level, the actual process of construction and presentation occurs at a micro-level. The micro-level acknowledges the language, in the form of rhetorical messages and narratives, that makes possible the social performance of identities and the construction of narrative arguments on social-networking sites. More specifically, both narratives and identities have symbolic meaning and rhetorical components.

The work of such scholars as Kenneth Burke (1951/1969; 1966) and Erving Goffman (1959; 1967; 1975) provide insights into the micro-level process of the rhetorical construction of the self. Burke's (1951/1969) conception of rhetoric begins at the micro-level, where language is symbolic action. Burke (1951/1969) asserts that the rhetorical impact should result from the act of working together, through language, rather than a means to convey knowledge. Viewing rhetoric in this way differs quite dramatically from traditional definitions; furthermore, rhetoric acknowledges that human actors use language to act in the social world, and Burke shows that language is the key defining characteristic of humans.

Burke's (1951/1969) concept of identification is understood within this context of language as symbolic action. Within this perspective, identification involves at least three types of processes or states:

> (1) the process of naming something (or someone) according to specific properties; (2) the process of associating with and dissassociating from others-- suggesting that persons (and ideas or things) share, or do not share, important qualities in common; and (3) the product or end result of identifying--the state of being consubstantial with others.

These identifications are embedded in the narrative discourses. Through association, Facebook users persuade themselves and/or others that they share common characteristics. Finding and building common ground makes the persuasive act much easier as it invites participation and a feeling of involvement. As related to this study on Facebook, the symbolic act of identification makes possible the creation and dissemination of narratives of self by users. Facebook users establish common ground with other users through group or popular culture affiliations. Because groups share a cognitive schema, they relate and understand better the messages presented through narrative form. Relating with others increases the believability of the narrative thereby increasing the coherence and fidelity of the narrative, and readers that believe the narrative performance will be less likely to call into question the narrative presentation of self performed on the Facebook profile.

Goffman's work (1959; 1967; 1975) provides a framework for understanding the performance of identity on profiles. The narrative performance is a dramatic act involving the message production, by the profiler, and interpretation of the narrative

message by Facebook readers. Interpretations of the narratives differ depending upon the relationship between the reader and the creator. Analysis of the Facebook profiles reveals the different levels of interpretation by taking into consideration the intentional and unintentional messages produced by the profile creators. Profile creators construct narratives of idealized selves, and the coherence of these narratives are ensured through a multitude of impression management features (the specifics are discussed later in the dissertation). Goffman's idea of social performance coupled with the Burke's focus on linguistic motives offer a framework from which to better understand one aspect of the phenomenon of Facebook, identity construction. Chapter 2 provides a more in-depth discussion of Goffman's and Burkes' work as related to this study.

Rationale

New ways of creating and presenting the self in the "space" of the Internet are fascinating, but not yet fully understood. Research does not fully explain or understand the implications for creating and re-creating the self using online rhetorical features, specifically linguistic and paralinguistic features. My study is unique in that it approaches identity as a fragmented, online narrative performance. Virtual identities, while socially constructed, are also performed for virtual audiences. On Facebook, profiles supply the venue through which users create and communicate these narratives. Moreover, in this study I argue that online narratives that create identities do not follow the traditional standards of narrative construction, but that these online narratives exist in fragments. These narrative fragments, which appear on Facebook profiles, each produces a different feature of identity. Piecing together the fragments provides an understanding of the performance of the virtual self. In addition to this unique contribution to research on

CMC, several other factors justify the need for this particular study: (1) the difference between CMC and other forms of mediated communication; (2) the extensive use of social-networking sites among college age people; and (3) the presence of personal, social, and ethical implications not always apparent to social-networking users.

Mediated Communication

A seemingly obvious statement to make regarding computer-mediated communication (CMC) is that it differs from other forms of mediated communication. The following section first explores these differences and then makes a connection between context and identity.

To begin, the Internet (used synonymously with the Web and cyberspace in this study) contains different types of genres, which include, but are not limited to: message boards, e-mail, discussion forums, e-mail, web pages, multi-user domains (MUDs). These genres, like real life speech genres, influence language use (Barnes, 2003). Because these genres serve different functions, people utilize different message-construction features when interacting within these sites. In addition to a distinctive genre, CMC differs from other mediums of communication by blurring the boundary between spoken word and written text. The structure of CMC combines the permanency and formal structure of the traditional use of writing, with the spontaneity, and fluidity of oral communication. The conversational style allows for the user to play with different symbolic structures in the absence of nonverbal cues. Combining written and spoken words serves to change the symbolic structure of writing. For example, Facebook users use emoticons to stand for verbal and emotional exclamations; these both replace nonverbal codes and enhance the interactional experience through visual imagery (Rezabek & Cochenour, 1998). The

13

forms and functions of interactions and messages and the meaning embedded in these interactions therefore have changed due to the new symbolic structures used for writing. Moreover, differences in the structure of CMC influence identity construction and performance in a number of different ways: (1) the use of anonymity; (2) synchronous vs. asynchronous communication; and, (3) the use of visual and textual data.

While these idea are quite apparent, the identity construction and communication processes online are quite different when compared to the same process as it occurs in offline contexts. First, individuals use the idea of anonymity vs. recognition of the online user to construct identities. The Internet offers a unique space where individuals can remain anonymous, construct new inventive identities, or choose immediate recognition by representing themselves as they would in non-mediated social life.

Discussions related to anonymity online are multiple and varied. For example, Hillis (1999) argues that depending on how anonymity is utilized in the CMC context positive or negative consequences may result. Positive consequences relate to the idea of "identity tourism" (Nakamura, 2002), which is the ability to try out different identities without fear of exposing one's true identity. Identity tourism has the potential to allow others to move beyond an outsider perspective and become part of the "in-group" and truly experience what it means to be part of a different social group. A later section of Chapter 2 discusses identity tourism in greater detail. Taking on an identity different from one's own, is in all actuality, a lie, as people pretend to be someone they are not in online interactions. Depending on how one uses these deceptive identities, there may be harmful, criminal outcomes, such as online stalking, cyber-rape, or online predators (Michaels, 1997).

Another example of the way current research addresses anonymity is found in Kennedy's study (2006) of the UK Project Her@. This study demonstrates that while anonymity is an important concept in CMC research, researchers need to move away from the preoccupation of online identities as anonymous and fragmented and realize that often online identities are continuous with offline selves. My dissertation supports Kennedy's argument by viewing online identities as a representation of offline selves, and it also takes into account offline factors in online identity performances.

Second, these spaces offer either synchronous or asynchronous communication. Users can either engage in real-time communicative acts or choose to delay the time between the actual sending and receiving of the online messages. Asynchronous communication allows for the formation and communication of strategic identities as well as for identity maintenance. The delayed communication allows for attention to what rhetorical features a person will utilize in presenting self to the online audience. The way a person constructs the self is persuasive, and the communication is delayed from creation to reception so that users can spend more time to construct an "ideal self," a variation of the actual self. Constructing an idealized self serves the dual purpose of relating to social others and allowing for a self-reflective process whereby the creator selects attitudes and preferences that emphasize one's own self identity.

Third, the Internet environment offers users the option of strategically selecting visual and/or textual data to represent who they are to others within an online interaction (Riva & Galimerti, 1998). With the absence of nonverbal features, Internet users rely on other paralinguistic features to communicate with others online.

Social-Networking Numbers

The battle between what is the largest social-networking site-Facebook or MySpace- ensued after Facebook opened to the general public in 2006. As of January 2009, there are conflicting statistics as to the number of members and active users on each site. Whether Facebook leads MySpace in the number of active users is somewhat irrelevant, as what is most important is that the number of users, which is just about 150 million, doubles about every six months, demonstrating that people are rapidly joining and often changing to Facebook from MySpace (Facebook, 2009).

The statistics page located on the actual Facebook (2009) site reveals important numbers regarding the actual use of the site. For example, Facebook reports that more than 3 billion minutes are spent on Facebook daily worldwide; more than 15 million users update their status daily, and on average, a user has 120 friends on the site. These numbers demonstrate that Facebook is now an integral part of the lives of people both nationally and internationally.

A well-known source of data related to new communication technologies, The Pew Research Center for People & the Press (Pew) (Project, 2008), conducted a survey in May 2008 on demographics of Internet users. According to the PEW survey, 90% of 18-29 year olds use the Internet, and 90% of those who have at least a college degree are online. These numbers demonstrate that college-age students (18-29) heavily use the Internet, and other research shows these age groups are also heavy users of Facebook (Cassidy, 2006).

Ethical Implications of Online Use

Previous sections of this chapter implicitly addressed issues related to personal, social, and cultural implications of online use. This section focuses on a third issue, online ethics. Ethics or the notion of what is right and wrong is extremely important as the number of online users continues to increase globally. Users of the Internet often take such privileges as privacy, safety, security, equality, and free speech for granted. When users ignore online ethics, these privileges no longer exist, and the Internet may become a dangerous place (Thurlow et al., 2004).

When the online ethical code of avoiding harm to others, being honest and trustworthy, respecting the privacy and dignity of others, being fair and taking action not to discriminate is violated, then inequality occurs (Machinery, 1992). Well known inequalities that exist online relate to issues of access and marginalization through communication technologies. The digital divide is a global problem, and one such issue that perpetuates the divide is related to access and connectivity. Wood and Smith (2005) cite that only 25% of the world is connected to the Internet. This demonstrates that the world is far from resolving issues resulting from globalization. Factors that contribute to the widening of the communication technology gap are economic power, poor technology choices, geography, race, and fear of homogenization. This list is by no means complete; rather, it shows a sampling of the reasons why the technology gap between the haves and have-nots continues to grow (Wood & Smith, 2005).

In addition to these issues, inequalities related to race, gender, and ethnicity plague the adaptation and use of new communication technologies. A PEW (2008) study reports that ethnic groups, such as Blacks/Non-Hispanics, are underrepresented online.

Even if certain groups gain access, they may face discrimination even in a virtual world. Furthermore, hate groups and hate speech infiltrate many different online sites, proving that the Internet does not always live-up to its utopian ideal of a technology of empowerment and true equality (Hillis, 1999).

The issue of ethics specifically relates to the construction and presentation of the self because users can utilize anonymity and pseudonymity to create false or deceptive identities. Even if a user has no intention of harming others by deception, this type of action can still be unethical. If the Internet is truly a public space, an idea modified from Jurgen Habermas's (1989) work on the public sphere, then an individual can say/be who he/she wants. These concerns, along with many others, have yet to be explored. This study attempts to bring to light certain communication actions online so that others can become aware of what it means to live online and if indeed online ethics are followed.

Research Questions

Despite the increase in CMC research and identity, little attention has been paid to the narrative performance of the virtual self and the real life implications of the presentation of the self online. The following research questions guide this study:

RQ1: What features are used in the narrative performance of identities on Facebook?

RQ2: What types of identities result from the narrative performances on Facebook profiles?

RQ3: What role does cultural capital play in the narrative performance of self?

RQ 4: What are the offline consequences of communicating online identities on Facebook?

The following section provides definitions of the following key constructs: (1) computer-mediated communication; (2) social-networking sites; (3) identity/virtual identity; (4) performance of the self; (5) narrative; and (6) rhetorical features. Defining these key terms establishes a specific set of parameters from which to conduct this rhetorical study.

Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC)

Barnes (2003) defines computer-mediated communication (CMC) as technologies that facilitate human communication and interactive information sharing through communication networks. The interconnectivity provided by the collection of networks allows for a unique connection of people from all over the world. While most of the youth today believe computer-mediated communication is a product of the twenty-first century, this technology has been around since before the *Internet* even was a word. The Internet and subsequently computer-mediated communication emerged in 1969 with the creation of ARPANET, an experimental project for the U.S. Department of Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA). During the initial stages of ARAPNET four computers were networked together. The number of networked computers grew over the years and eventually a system of open architecture networking came to life and was named the Internet (Leiner et al., 2003). In 1986 the National Science Foundation Network (NSFNET) developed a new network that connected five supercomputing centers built by the National Science Foundation. NSFNET helped make possible the use of networking beyond the military and allowed academic researchers to share information and resources across time and space. NSFET eventually replaced ARAPNET's function

as a research network and ARAPANET was then dismantled (Leiner et al., 2003). Communicating by computers today looks quite different than it did forty years ago. No longer are computers considered highly technical and specialist, but rather they are a part of everyday personal life and they help to shape and transform popular culture.

CMC is unique in that it allows users to have 24/7 connection and contact through either asynchronous or synchronous means. This technology has implications not only for the way people communicate, but also how they relate to and construct their social worlds and social and individual selves. For example, temporal issues, reduced cues, asynchrony, and the ability to edit allows for more strategic and selective written self-presentations. These selective self-presentations impact relationships with others as people act in relation to others (Charon, 1979). While the idea of written personae are not new, the Internet makes possible the sharing of personas to a wide audience, who is capable of responding to and participating in the construction of identities (Williams & Edge, 1996). The writing of the self also produces a sense of agency and control over individual rhetorical choices and features that result in personal publishing using web pages. This framework explains the specific context in which CMC and identity impact this study of social-networking sites.

Social-networking Sites

According to Webopedia (Kornblum, 2006), an online technical dictionary, a social network is "a social structure made of *nodes* that are generally individuals or organizations. A social *network* represents relationships and flows between people, groups, organizations, animals, *computers* or other information/knowledge processing entities." The important ideas within this definition pertain to relationships between

people/computers. The Internet provides a space to link computers so that people can create identities, pursue relationships, and disseminate information. Social-networking sites, then, are a type of website where people, through profiles, are able to create personal identities and maintain relationships with others using the same website. At the bare minimum, a profile includes a person's name, or other term of address, as well as information about that person (e.g. age, sex, occupation, interests, opinions, values.). By searching through profiles, individuals can choose with whom they would like to interact and can assume online identities that promote this interaction (Gross & Acquisti, 2005).

To date, there are numerous types of social-networking sites on the Internet. These include sites that cater to the following types of interactions and foci: dating, blogging, jobs, music, cars, school and colleges, cell phones, and general personal information dissemination (which can include any or all of the aforementioned types) just to name a few.

Identity/Virtual Identity

Identity. Considerations of identity typically rely upon philosophical questions related to the nature of being and existence. The noted rhetorician Kenneth Burke (1966) addresses social identity in terms of symbolic action. Social and cultural systems create and constrain symbolic expression, which in turn impact identifications. Furthermore, symbols provide the vehicle through which cultural values and beliefs are expressed, and these expressions, in essence, represent an identity.

The constitutive view provides yet another perspective on identity. Scholars of this approach view the interaction as the site of study where the engagement of self with other(s) results in a realization of identity (through discourse) (Mokros, 2003). More

specifically, the self is part of a social process. This approach relies upon the assumptions that one's concept of self is an ongoing product of social interactions, and "who I am is reflective of context, interactants, messages, and interpretations of messages" (Diggs & Clark, 2002, p. 371).

The Communication Theory of Identity, (CIT) which draws upon the constructivist and social interaction view of identity, provides yet another perspective on identity. Michael Hecht created CTI to explore African American and Mexican American ethnic cultures by understanding the direct relationship between communication and identity. Unsatisfied with existing theories of identity, CTI emerged as an extension of existing theories of identities by adding additional features pertaining to the understanding of this communicative act.

Relying on propositions from Symbolic Interaction Theory, CTI recognizes that communication is internalized as identity through symbolic meanings created within social interactions as well as through socially recognized categories, which are filled with expectations that influence a person's communication (Hecht, Collier, & Ribeau, 1993). The link between identity and communication is further articulated through the understanding that identity resides within four specific loci: personal, enacted, relational, and communal. Personal refers to the locus of identity as a self-concept, a self-being who defines the self in relation to particular situations. Enactment focuses on the "self as a performance that is expressed;" specifically, identity is enacted in social behaviors and symbols (Hecht, Warren, Jung, & Krieger, 2005, p. 263). The relational layer focuses on the importance of relationships and posits that identity is created in relationships through

communication. Finally, the communication theory of identity contains a communal layer showing that identity emerges out of groups and networks.

Found within the description of the four layers of identity are the basic assumptions of CTI. The theory posits 18 propositions, and the following provides a list of the most relevant seven propositions:

1. Identities have individual, social, and communal properties.

2. Identities are subjective, dynamic, and hierarchally ordered.

3. Identities are codes expressed in conversation that define membership within communities.

4. Identities have semantic properties expressed in core symbols, meanings, and labels.

5. Identities are emergent.

6. Identities emerge in relation to others and are enacted within relationships.

7. Identities are avowed and ascribed.

The communication slant offers a new perspective as it recognizes that people cannot not communicate and because of this, identities are always communicated.

These different approaches to identity inform this study's definition of this key concept; *identity* is a communicative process by which a person comes to construct, understand, and negotiate his/her specific role or self in relation to others within specific contexts. All aspects of social context, including people present in those situations, influence this knowing and communicating of the selves.

Representation. The next step in the communication of identities is the symbolic representation of self. The process of communicating identities involves the use of

representations. *Represent* typically refers to exhibiting the image of; or to use or serve, as a symbol for. *Representation* is defined as "act, state, or fact of representing or being represented: an image: picture: dramatic performance: a mental image: a presentation of a view of facts or argument" (Hall, 1997). These definitions, while not exhaustive, illustrate the complexity of representation and demonstrate the importance of the ideas of dramatic performance and presentation as actions, which constitute representations. Furthermore, representations rely upon cultural and historic contexts and as such, reflect cultural perceptions of reality. As related to this dissertation, people create identities and representation of identities on Facebook through symbolic action. Each strategic, symbolic, and rhetorical act functions to create a narrative argument of self (Harre, 1989, 1994).

　　　　Virtual Identity. Given the significant ways the Internet alters the identity construction process, it is imperative that identity be re-imagined so that individuals have a framework from which to understand their communicated selves online. The definition I offer of the re-imaged virtual self (also referred to as virtual identity and online identity in this study) is based upon five assumptions: (1) The presentation of the self to others is a production mediated by situations (context); (2) The self is discursively created and communicated in social interactions; (3) The self is multiple and dynamic; (4) The self is socially constructed; (5) The self involves individual, social, and communal properties. Based upon these assumptions, I conceive of virtual identity as the process of transforming and reconstructing the offline-persona into an online-persona. This virtual self is understood, negotiated, and articulated through virtual simulation and social interaction.

Performance of the Self

This study extends Goffman's (1959) notion of performance (used synonymously with presentation in this study) into the area of new communication technology as a way of understanding how individuals perform/ present their multiple selves to an audience. Utilizing the metaphor of theatre, Goffman likens the self to a performer or character in a real life social drama. The self, then, engages in dramatic action that depends upon time, place, and audience. In other words, the presentation of the self to others is a self-production. The overall goal of the performance of the self is the acceptance of that self by others (audience). The performer utilizes certain rhetorical features to engage in impression management whereby he/she can control the actions and outcomes of the performance to meet his/her needs and goals. In other words, performers exert control over others and the situation so that their performed identities are received as intended. They do this by manipulating symbols in ways they think are appropriate to their definitions of situations. For example, users on Facebook manipulate and control the amount and type of information they disclose on their profiles, thereby structuring and limiting the interpretations of the audience.

Self-presentation online refers to a specific kind of textual performance. Within this performance, actors communicate specific messages through the textual and pictorial representations of themselves. Since identity construction is strategic, the actors systematically communicate identities by including or excluding information. This inclusion or exclusion of specific identity information leads to two specific types of identities, *sincere* and *deceptive.* The sincerity and deceptiveness of identities occur on a

scale, where certain inclusions or exclusions of information lead to overt and covert messages that affect the quality of a person's performance.

Narrative

This study focuses on narratives of self-presentation. It argues that the Internet produces a rhetorical situation (Bitzer, 1968) and the virtual self defines that situation and acts on it using rhetorical form, content, and style. Narratives on personal profiles show the result of these choices and constitute the performance. The following section provides a brief discussion of the connection between narrative and self to provide grounding for the analysis.

The definition of narrative draws upon the works of Walter Fisher (1989). First and foremost, all humans are homo-narrans, story-tellers. Fisher regards narratives as the most basic and universal human activity. The storytelling process of individuals serves to organize and make sense of the world for that particular individual; more specifically, storytelling is a way of organizing experiences and interpreting reality.

Narrative study is common in communication, but it has not been used to understand identities of individuals in computer-mediated communication or focus on narrative fragments within virtual communities. Additionally, past studies focus on narratives in their entirety. This study defies this approach to narratives and instead looks at narratives as story fragments that the rhetor (Facebook user) puts forth as fragments of their personal story rather than a complete story. In order to complete the story, other Facebook users must fill in the gaps created by the narrative fragments in order to create a theme for the fragments and make sense of the story.

Bruner (2001) and Fisher's (1989) work relies upon the idea of humans as homo-narrans and makes the connection between narratives and the self. Bruner (2001) sees self-presentation as a narrative art. Constructing the self through a story helps individuals to make sense of who they are. Further, self-telling is dependent upon individuals' beliefs regarding who they believe the self(ves) to be and what they believes the self should be. This idea links self-making with culture as culture provides the symbols, beliefs, and values that shape what a person is and can be (Murray, 1989).

Freeman (2001) furthers the connection between the self and narrative by proposing that the self is poetic, experiential, cultural, rhetorical, and dependent upon history. Self-making is also a result of verbalization and interaction (Lundby, 2008). The Internet provides a new space and way of verbalizing the self, and little is known about what this means for the self as a whole (online and offline). Looking at the events, symbols, images, and texts that make up the online narrative helps provide further insight into realities and notions of the self and how these narratives attempt to create identities with fragments.

The features of narrative that provide rhetorical form and content serve as indicators of the presentation of the self that result from the model of narrative elements (presented in detail in Chapter 3). The layers of the model contain the anatomical elements of the narrative fragments and are as follows: (1) Narrative fragments are rhetorical performances of self. Narrative construction involves the participation of both a profiler (creator) and reader (person accessing and evaluating the Facebook profile). (2) Message structure refers to the fragmentation and incompleteness of the narratives. (3) Performance is the communicative event that results from the act of narration. Profilers

use both linguistic and paralinguistic features to create narratives. (4) Medium structure

provides the communication source in which the narrative event occurs. The structure of

Facebook constrains and enables the communication of messages and as a result, content

is either included or excluded. (5) Medium effects evaluate the offline implications of

online self-presentation through narratives. (6) Social effects address issues of cultural

capital and social stratification that result from certain taste choices and preferences on

profiles.

Rhetorical Features

Rhetorical features refer to the linguistic and paralinguistic elements employed by

Facebook users in the narrative performance of identities on Facebook. Linguistic cues

focuses on the ways students challenge and reconstruct traditional forms of grammar and

language on their profiles. Careful attention is given to sentence structure, word choices,

normative definitions, the use of slang, and the use of one-sided arguments. Habermas's

(1989) notion of public space and public debate inform the idea of the one-sided public

argument. Narratives used in the performance of self on Facebook contain persuasive

features that narrow the choices of the audience (by strategically including and excluding

information) in how the self is "read" online. Within persuasive symbolic acts there exists

a central argument embedded in the message. Paralinguistic features relate to Facebook

users' use of humor, their use of language as action, and the role visual images,

specifically photos, play in the performance of identities.

Preview of Chapters

This dissertation is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 provides the research

questions and framework for this study. Chapter 2 highlights the relevant literature

related to the topics of: computer-mediated communication, social-networking sites, constructions of social realities, interactional identities, and rhetorical construction and interactions. Chapter 3 advocates mixed methods of rhetorical analysis, which follows the framework set forth by the Narrative Performance Model (NPM) and focus groups in the study of Facebook. Chapter 4 offers an analysis of the Facebook profiles and focus groups discussions. Chapter 5 brings the study to a close with a summary of findings, discussion of contributions and summaries of the theoretical and methodological implications of the dissertation.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This review of relevant literature lays the foundation for the investigation of the

rhetorical construction and presentation of the self on the social-networking site of

Facebook. This chapter provides a comprehensive look at the pertinent constructs of: (1)

computer-mediated communication (perspectives); (2) social-networking sites; (3)

constructions of social reality: public and private spheres; (4) interactional identities; and

(5) rhetorical and narrative constructions that are the basis for this study.

Computer-Mediated Communication

Definitions of computer-mediated communication vary by scholar and more

specifically by the type of research conducted. Definitions also vary because the research

crosses multiple disciplines and results in quite a diverse range of topics: electronic

commerce, law and ethics online, virtual organization, new media and politics, online

journalism, CMC and education, health and new media, online identities, virtual

community building, etc.

Defined also as Internet Studies, CMC looks to how humans both use computers

and how interactions occur and function. Within this frame, a distinction exists between

online and offline interactions as well as the discourses and speech patterns associated

with this type of environment (Shedletsky & Aitken, 2004; Warnick, 1998, 2001).

Specific types of computer communication include instant messaging, social-networking,

e-mails, list serves, blogs, and text chat to name a few.

When delving into the CMC research, one finds not only discussions of changing

communication features and styles, but also conversations about how best to approach

CMC research. As with any approach, my perspective informs my research questions and

the way I conduct research. Within CMC research two approaches dominate: technological determinism and social constructivism. These perspectives inform three additional theories, social shaping of technology (SST), social identity model of deindivuation, (SIDE) and uses and gratifications (UG). The following section outlines each of these perspectives as related to Internet research.

Technological Determinism

Technological determinism, a term coined by sociologist and economist Thorstein Veblen and made popular by Marshall Mcluhan "the Oracle of the Electronic Age," is a technology-led theory of social change (Wood & Smith, 2005). The perspective views technology as the primary cause of changes in culture and society. Furthermore, a society's technology determines its cultural values and social structures. This schema also argues that technological innovations drive social progress and that technology exists above cultural and political influence. The original conception of media effects theories supports this approach by assuming that people are passive receivers of media and that the media creates needs to be filled. My study refutes the claims of technological determinism and asserts that the relationship between technology and society is reciprocal, and that users have agency in the use, interpretation, and adoption process of new technology.

As with any theory, a number of assumptions drive the perspective. Chandler (1995) describes each assumption related to technological determinism in detail. This discussion addresses four from his list: reductionist, monistic, neutralizing, and the technological imperative. Reductionism is the idea that there exists a straightforward cause/effect relationship between technology and culture. In this view culture follows the

31

progression of technology, not visa versa. Reductionism also rejects the idea that social interaction plays a large role in shaping how individuals and societies understand and adopt new communication technologies. Monistic refers to the oversimplification of the otherwise complex relationship between technology and society. Neutralizing represents technology as value-free and therefore releases technology of any responsibility. Finally, the technological imperative assumes that technology is an unstoppable, inevitable, and an all-powerful source where technological progress is imminent and irreversible. This view is problematic because it eliminates user agency and ignores social factors such as culture, politics, and access, and it minimizes the impact of social systems and structures on technological implications. While not all researchers adhere to all of the assumptions and key tenets of such an extreme theory, many of the foundational ideas persist in CMC research.

Social Constructivism

Social constructivism (SC) is a sociological theory that attempts to explain how social phenomena develop in social contexts. SC differs from technological determinism in that it posits that knowledge of reality is produced and maintained through interaction (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Burke, 1969; Gergen, 1999; Goffman, 1959; Mead & Morris, 1934). Humans participate in the construction of reality and technological consequences result from human and larger social action. Interactions between individuals exist within a contextual frame, and social and symbolic constructs become institutionalized. The interaction and reaction to the symbols is dynamic and constitutes social identity and social reality.

Social constructivism recognizes the constant struggle between invention and appropriation, and it posits that users do not always use technologies the way developers intended (Pinch & Bijker, 1987). Furthermore, this theory moves its focus away from how technology brings social change and explores applications of technology. Media scholars typically adopt the SC perspective in their quest to understand how individuals use media to fulfill pre-existing needs and how technology influences the nature of communication (Thurlow et al., 2004).

As related to my study, a social constructivism approach acknowledges that intention does not always mirror interpretation. The analysis of symbolic meaning on Facebook profiles relies upon differing ways of constructing and decoding knowledge. In other words, cultural affiliations and preferences shape the choice of symbols, presentation (of the social actor), and interpretation (by the audience) of the online self.

Social Shaping of Technology (SST)

While these two theories have a long standing history in CMC research, a third, more progressive perspective, emerged in the last few decades called the social shaping. Social shaping consists of a set of approaches that explores the particular process involved in technological innovation. The social shaping of technology (SST) (MacKenzie, Rudig, & Spinardi, 1988) moves beyond approaches that address only the outcomes and impacts of new technologies and acknowledges the role of organizational, political, economic, and cultural factors play in the patterning and implementation of technologies.

Acknowledging that information and communication technologies both shape and are shaped by social practices allows researchers to question the character and influence

of larger societal systems and structures. The process of innovation involves sets of choices by both the producers and the consumers of technologies (Williams & Edge, 1996). Passivity and determinism cannot account for the multiple ways people adopt technology or the differing implications for particular social groups. Technology is not simply shaped by society and is not neutral in effect; rather, there exists politics associated with innovations. The access, use, and adaptation of technology become a form of cultural capital, a resource through which certain groups alter social relations and broader social systems (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). An increase in networks (friendships) and user savvy increases cultural capital of users on sites such as Facebook. The idea of cultural capital is explored further in the section on identity.

These approaches to CMC demonstrate the differing ideas about how people use and view media (including new media technologies) and illustrate how these views lead to different perceptions of message functions. The argument over whether the Internet is materialistic, anarchistic, and limiting or democratic and enabling will continue. This study approaches the Internet as existing somewhere between these two extremes, and aligns with the SST approach, and moves beyond the idea of technology as deterministic or shaped by society alone, viewing the relationship as reciprocal and dynamic, and shaped by a myriad of factors that need further exploration. These factors are part of social constructivism and dramaturgy (the presentation of the self), but not part of technological determinism. For this reason, the theoretical foundations of this study acknowledge these factors and extend the application of these theories into the new online context. The following section looks at the three other theories that inform the relationship between new communication technologies and identity.

Social Identity Model of Deindividuation (SIDE)

Identities include tensions between "our culture's desire to have us conform to particular roles and our own desire to resist pressure and establish a unique sense of self" (Wood & Smith, 2005, p. 85). Lacking traditional nonverbal markers, researchers assumed that the online self would exist in a state free of cultural constraints. Group markers of identity were believed to be no longer relevant in online interactions, and users had the chance to be the person whom they had always dreamt. These views resulted in early research that regarded anonymity as the antecedent of deindividuation and built upon psychological investigations of mob mentality. Zimbardo (1969) developed the ideas related to deindividuation (Festinger, Pepitone, & Newcomb, 1952) and created the formal theory known as deindividuation theory. The theory proposed that with increased anonymity, personal identity decreases in favor of social identity. Based upon cues within the given situation, individuals will derive and perform behaviors consistent with the group.

Based upon these tenets, the social identity model of deindividuation (SIDE) suggests that people online rely more heavily upon group-based discriminators precisely because there are so few nonverbal cues. Furthermore, the model asserts that people will likely comply with social roles, which are governed by pre-established social norms than uphold individual identity (Zang, 2007). By increasing adherence to social, and more specifically group rules, individuals appear more attractive to others than if they enacted deviant rules of identity. Similarity, and to some degree conformity, strengthen online attachments. As Wood and Smith (2005) conclude, the "SIDE model predicts that people

will set aside personal identity and adopt the appropriate social identity in order to find acceptance among others" (p. 86).

Research on online interpersonal attraction and relationships typically utilizes the SIDE model; however, limited research exists on the effect of deindividuation on social-networking profiles. If applied to profiles, the SIDE model provides a means for understanding the impact of affiliations on self-disclosure and presentation and answers questions such as: Will the desire to identify and attract others of a similar group influence the type of rhetorical features utilized to create an online persona? Do the narcissistic characteristics of profiles subvert the trend of conformity? Research has yet to answer these questions, but this study claims that virtual identity presentations relate to narratives constructed on the basis of personal needs.

Uses and Gratifications

Moving from the specific impact of the CMC context on identity construction, the uses and gratifications approach informs the way people use specific types of media and make rhetorical choices to achieve an overall goal. The uses and gratifications (UG) approach stems from the positivist paradigm and is generally recognized to be a sub-tradition of media effects research (Ruggiero, 2003). Media effects research focuses on the impact media messages have on receivers and assumes that audience members are passive and reactive. By ignoring the outside social and psychological environmental factors that work to influence audiences, these theories overlook the agency of the viewer or media user (Rubin, 2002; Ruggiero, 2003).

Turning away from the focus of passive audience members and media message effects assumed in the media effects research, UG looks at the media as fulfilling

preexisting needs, rather than generating preconceived needs (Richardson, 2003). More specifically three primary objectives dictate research conducted within the UG approach:

(1) to explain how individuals use mass communication to gratify their needs; (2) to discover underlying motives for individuals' media use; (3) to identify the positive and the negative consequences of individual media use. (Rubin, 2002)

Researchers developed typologies to understand the types of gratifications sought and obtained through media use. The general typologies used to categorize types of gratifications are: information, personal identity, integration and social interaction, and entertainment (Blumler & Katz, 1975). The following provides definitions of these four typologies: (1) Information refers to seeking out advice on matters, sorting out relevant events in society or the world, satisfying personal curiosity and interests, learning, and gaining sense of security through knowledge. (2) Personal identity, the typology used in this dissertation, includes a desire to find reinforcement for personal values, find models of behavior, identify with valued others (in the media), and gain insight into one's self. Related to online communication, if individuals wish to gratify their needs for personal identity, they may use social-networking sites to find reinforcement of personal values, seek models of behavior, identify with others, or gain insights into their self through the process of constructing a profile. (3) When people seek integration and social interaction they desire an increase in social empathy, identify with others and gain a sense of belonging, find a basis for conversation and social interaction, have a substitute for real-life companionship, help carry out social roles and enable connection with family, friends and society. (4) In the last typology, entertainment, people seek out media to help them escape from problems, relax, get intrinsic cultural or aesthetic enjoyment, fill time,

achieve emotional release or sexual arousal. Once researchers identify one of these four typologies, they then explore how people use media within the gratification process, typically with the help of a questionnaire.

Assumptions. Bound within this example are a number of assumptions. First, it is assumed that all individuals are active and use the media for a goal-oriented purpose, when more often than not, media use is unconscious. For example, individuals using social-networking sites online may believe they are simply expanding their social network, when often, unconsciously, they are constructing an identity or representing themselves in the best light through the networking process. Thus, they may consciously use the Internet to gratify their need for integration and social interaction while unconsciously gratifying a need for personal identity.

Furthermore, UG assumes a cause-and-effect relationship in its exclusion of the understanding of the process of interpreting messages (Blumler & Katz, 1975). Multiple factors influence the encoding and decoding process of messages, and it is dangerous to assume that all media use causes the same effect across individuals. Factors such as cultural attitudes, beliefs, values, and identities shape the way people both use media and understand the meanings embedded in the narrative messages.

Finally, while UG looks at Internet use for the gratification of certain purposes, research pays little attention to how the universal questions of "who am I?" may be answered through the World Wide Web. The Internet offers a space to do more than simply reaffirm personal identities; this public space offers people a place to create, re-create, and discover new personal identities through narrative constructions and user interactions.

Social-Networking Sites

Social-networking sites provide one specific example of a genre of CMC/Internet studies. According to boyd and Ellison (2007), this type of web-based service allows individuals to do the following:

(1) To construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of users with whom they share a connection, [and] (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system (p. 211).

Bound within this description are a number of key assumptions. First, this idea of public space does not fall within the conceptualized public sphere realized by Habermas (1989). Second, like offline systems, the online system both constrains and enables users in multiple ways. Third, the self, which users articulate through their profiles, is enhanced by the connections (friends) on these sites. Finally, users actively engage in the task of networking and connecting. While most users engage in these activities when participating on a social-networking site, the specific goals and patterns of usage vary among different providers (Gross & Acquisti, 2005). For example, age impacts reasons for use. College-age people tend to use the site for performing identities, connecting with school friends, and keeping in-the-know about social events, while the parents of these students use the site purely for connection and relationship maintenance reasons (Gross & Acquisti, 2005; Tom Tong, Van Der Heide, & Langwell, 2008)

While social-networking sites (SNS) differ in goals and usage, the basic purpose of these sites remains the same, online interaction and communication. The structure of these sites facilitates these goals by enabling users to engage in communication processes

by actively constructing and presenting the self through profiles to an audience. Furthermore, users also respond to others through synchronous instant messaging features or asynchronous e-mails, wall posts, or comments. More specifically, profilers and readers, actively construct narratives by interacting and communicating with one another via Facebook.

The study of self-presentation on social-networking sites (SNS) is not a new phenomenon. Examples of research on ethnicity and race include: (Byrne, 2009; Gajjala, 2007; Kennedy, 2006; Nakamura, 2002), religion (Nyland & Near, 2007), gender (Geinder, Flook & Bell, 2007), sexuality and (Huffaker & Calvert, 2005). The pervasiveness of Facebook coupled with the ever increasing amount of SNS users warrants more research conducted on the implications of living and interacting online. This dissertation builds upon existing literature, but provides a unique perspective on the topic by factoring in narratives as the vehicle for online self-presentation as well understanding what it means to narratively construct the self in a textual environment devoid of nonverbal features and cues.

History of SNS

Before delving into the specifics of the social-networking site, Facebook, utilized in this study, it is important to understand the roots of this particular web genre and recognize the genre as evolving and differing from many unmediated genres of discourse. The year, 1997, saw the launch of the first major social-networking site, Six Degrees.com. This site uses profiles and network connections to achieve the goal of connecting people and providing them with the ability to send messages to others. Six Degrees.com attracted millions of users over the span of three years, but in 2000 the site

was pulled from the Web. From 1999 to 2001, a number of competing sites, LiveJournal, BlackPlanet, MiGente, and CyWord, launched into cyberspace (boyd & Ellison, 2007)

Friendster, a social-networking site rivaling Match.com, launched in 2002. Users created profiles in the hopes of finding and connecting with friends-of-friends. While the site was quite successful the system was ill equipped to deal with pressing technical and social difficulties. The increasing social connections and decreasing social contexts caused users to come in contact with people they would have otherwise chosen not to communicate with in a dating context (boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Tom Anderson corrected the failures of Friendster and launched yet another SNS, MySpace in 2003. In its inception MySpace catered to musicians, providing them with a space to promote their bands. Within a short amount of time the site grew, and as a result, three distinct groups formed: musicians/artist, teenagers, and the post-college group. MySpace, and a number of other sites, Friendster, Orkut, and Bebo just to name a few gained popularity globally (boyd & Ellison, 2007). In 2004 a SNS by the name of Facebook emerged as a national leader. The following section provides an in-depth look at Facebook to set the context for this particular study.

Facebook

Facebook first launched in February 2004. The brainchild of Harvard college student Mark Zuckerberg, Facebook began as thefacebook, a way for Harvard students to stay connected. When joined by friends, Dustin Moskovitz and Chris Hughes, Mark and company purchased the domain of Facebook.com and thefacebook officially became Facebook. Interesting to note, Facebook was first available only to Ivy league universities before opening up to 30,000+ colleges and universities within the United States, Canada,

and few other English-speaking countries. Late in 2006, Facebook increased accessibility to non-students (Stone, 2007). This move helped to push Facebook to the second largest networking site, behind MySpace. Membership is free, and the site is supported through advertising.

A Facebook page consists of a profile that includes networks in which the user can choose from any of the following options: friendship, dating, networking, a relationship, politics, religion, interested in (men or women), a relationship status (single, in a relationship, engaged, married, it's complicated, or in an open relationship), hometown, and birthday. This information is typically aligned on the left side of the page with a profile picture fixed on the same side. A list of friends, photos, group affiliations, and a wall on which people can leave comments are also standard features. A final and relatively new feature to Facebook is applications. Applications increase user engagement by allowing them to showcase specific interests. Networked friends can interact with each other through these applications. For example, an application called "little green patch" allows users to send requests to other users to contribute to an environmental cause. Each time a user accepts a request of a "little green patch" outside vendors donate money to organizations to save the rainforest. Samples of Facebook profile appear in Appendix D. Not only do these applications promote social interactions, but also create narratives that serve as a symbolic reference of a specific identity, in this case environmental activism.

Context Influences Technology

Context informs and influences all aspects of the communication process, and the process of defining a space as public or private affects levels of self-disclosure. Public and private refer to locations or spaces as well as feelings. In terms of locality, public refers to places that are available to anyone. On the opposite end of the spectrum, private signals restricted spaces. The rules of restriction vary, and groups tend to define and limit access to the space. Public, in the emotional sense, connotes feelings of community, a collection of people that often share collective interests and worldviews. Related to the performance and presentation of the self, public becomes synonymous with audience. One can argue that the performance of the self online occurs in a public space (a place with unrestricted access, excluding access to physical machinery) to an often unknown public (audience). Private falls on the opposite end of the emotional spectrum and implies restricted feelings, and often occurs at the individual level in contrast to the communal level. Habermas's (1989) notion of the public sphere informs these definitions of public and private. Before delving into a discussion of the importance of distinguishing between private and public in an online context, I provide a discussion of Habermas's concept of the public sphere.

Habermas's Public Sphere

The notion of the public sphere arises from Habermas's interest in the fall of the bourgeois public sphere. According to Habermas (1989), the public sphere consists of private people coming together to form a public in which they form attitudes and

opinions regarding the current state of society as well as critique their current situation to ensure that the needs of the state do not dominate the needs of society.

Habermas (1989) traces the fall by addressing three specific stages and by looking at social, political, and cultural factors. The first stage of the public sphere is monarchical. During this time no distinction existed between the public and private sphere as the King occupied both of these positions; therefore, the King constituted the public. The second stage, the liberal bourgeois, focused on reasoned critical dialogue among participants. During this time the private and public sphere was separate; however, only those with an education, money, and property had access to the public sphere. The final stage contributing to the fall of the bourgeois public sphere is the modern mass welfare state. Again, there is limited distinction between public and private in terms of consumer culture (Habermas, 1989).

The final stage of the modern mass welfare state leads into our current situation in which once again, the private sphere enters the public sphere. The media makes possible this blurring of boundaries. The power held by the mass media allows for the creation of both false public spheres and false public opinions. Controlling the media outlets allows for the control, creation, and dissemination of information.

Application of Habermas's sphere-based logic in the twenty-first century shows that the current conditions of society blur the boundaries between the public and private. The Internet contributes to the crossing of the public and private spheres by allowing access to personal information. For example, one need only Google a person's name to find out where he/she lives, works, how many children he/she has, what car he/she drives, etc. Social-networking sites make finding personal information easier than in life offline.

Moreover, as this genre of Internet communication is narcissistic in nature, people often supply large amounts of personal and private information, including phone numbers, addresses, and very provocative pictures. Thus, the anonymity provided by the Internet increases spontaneous self-disclosure, further blurring the boundary between spheres (Barnes, 2003).

Both positive and negative consequences result from the blurring of private and public spheres. The following section outlines some of the outcomes specifically related to the online context. Positive consequences related to the distortion of the private and public spheres online include: (1) new forms of message production (new forms of communication); (2) self-exploration (including personal representations and social acceptance); and (3) increases in meaningful interactions.

Positive Outcomes: New Forms of Message Production

Due to the lack of traditional nonverbal cues Internet users rely on certain paralinguistic features to express positive messages. These features used in message production may help users create and interpret the narrative fragments constituting the message content. Barnes (2003) lists five paralinguistic cues utilized in online interactions, acronyms (including abbreviations and initalisms), graphics, humor, metaphor, and language as action. Acronyms, or shortened language and symbol/letter use, serve to shorten the duration of the communication interaction. For instance, Facebook users are now able to engage in an instant message type chat. Within these chats, users use Internet slang (which is a combination of acronyms, abbreviations, initalisms, and alphebtisms) such as lol (laughing out loud), brb (be right back), adl (all day long). Internet slang is such a part of youth culture that online sites, such as

45

, exist to help interpret and translate this specific type of net-speak. Furthermore, acronyms serve a positive function in that they bind virtual groups together through the creation of specific message forms. Learning these forms allows people to feel included as they know the lingo and jargon of their virtual community.

Graphics serve two specific functions: an artistic function and improving message fidelity. In terms of its artistic function, users can create unique and distinctive ways of being. This form of artistry is evidenced most clearly in the CMC genre of web pages, specifically personal profiles. A study I conducted on virtual ethnic groups on Facebook looked at both text and images on these profiles and discovered that groups use certain graphics as a way of distinguishing themselves from others and creating group solidarity (Leonardi, 2007). While some may view this function as exclusive, groups typically want to increase unity and commonality through their images (Zhao et al., 2008). Pictures on profiles also serve to promote uniqueness and individuality. Posting pictures is a strategic act, which also links people through alternative modes of communication. Furthermore, pictures also either help or hurt the narrative performance of identities. If the identity represented in pictures is not consistent with the other narrative fragments of identity on the profile, then the narrative lacks coherence (how the story hangs together and the consistency of narratives of identity) and fidelity (how the story fits with what the reader already knows about the profiler), which causes the reader to question the narrative performance and doubt the credibility of the profile creator.

Humor, another CMC message feature, connects individuals based on a shared cultural code, a similar knowledge of popular culture. Because humor is culture specific, groups need to share similar symbolic systems to decode the humor in the way it was

46

intended. Humor also contributes to positive feelings, which impact how individuals relate to one another. When looking at a wall posting on Facebook, a researcher often encounters "inside jokes" between the profiler and reader, which strengthen the bond between the two individuals. Giving certain gifts, through applications, also signify a type of humor that most often carries with it a symbolic expression known only to the sender and receiver.

Metaphors, like humor, bond people through common mental and linguistic schemas and contribute to one's online sensory experiences. Because the Internet is devoid of many sensory cues, metaphors help connect people through shared images and memories. Metaphors also showcase linguistic style, which serves to both bring people together and often exclude others. Looking back to the example provided about ethnic groups on Facebook, the flags used on profiles supplied an explicit comparison between a nation and its people. For example, an African group used an African flag as a way to represent the group and group members by connecting them to a particular geographic and cultural location.

Language as action is the final message feature addressed in relation to positive messages. This cue, within the CMC context turns messages into verbal behaviors. These behaviors are specific to virtual groups, and each member must learn the textual conventions to fit in and interact with the group. Knowledge of the social norms associated with wall posting on Facebook or status updates serve as an example of language as action in social-networking sites.

The five paralinguistic cues provide examples of features people use online to enhance social interactions and clarify the meanings of their online messages found in the

narrative fragments. Additionally, these markers share a common theme; they help create group solidarity. Shared codes, symbols, behaviors, and attitudes reaffirm cultures as well as define cultures. These positive outcomes relate to the theoretical concept of parasocial interaction. Defined by Horton and Wohl (1956), parasocial interaction is the creation and maintenance of mediated relationships which are similar in function to offline social relationships. Studies about television as well as the Internet demonstrate these parasocial relationships create positive message functions through gratifying the need for companionship and personal identification (Giles, 2002). Personal connections are important to a happy, fulfilled life, and this type of interaction allows individuals to establish this need through nontraditional relationships. In regards to identification, people can fulfill the need for self understanding through three types of identification: identification, which is shared perspectives, wishful identification (people strive to emulate others with whom they create a connection), and affinity, liking of an individual while not forming a parasocial relationship. Parasocial relationships coupled with the paralinguistic cues allow for positive psychological support and positive message function.

　　Self-Exploration. While some may argue that online identities are deceptive, the negative consequences of these false identities are minimal. The following provides examples of the space and medium impact on self-disclosure and self-exploration.

　　Related to self-exploration, Kennedy's (2006) article on the UK Project Her@ demonstrates how the Internet provides a space to enact and recreate multiple identities effectively. The women from Project Her@ explore and represent identities online that offline typically result in discrimination. Through images, text, narratives, and hypertext

48

these women take back what it means to inhabit these different identity positions and redefine what it means to occupy marginalized positions. These women move beyond the safety and anonymity provided by the Internet and instead chose to celebrate and educate others, through narratives, about who they are and what it means to be a woman.

Nakamura (2002) offers yet another example of positive implications of Internet use in his exploration of identity tourism. Identity tourism allows users to "try on" new identities and experience different perspectives, gaining greater insights into what it means to occupy a certain identity position. Identity tourism enables individuals to develop a deeper understanding of the "other," which can lead to a decrease in oppression and marginalization.

A study by Huffaker and Calvert (2005) explores similar implications of self-exploration by studying how youth enact gender, sexuality, and communication styles in teenage blogs. This study reveals that teens are more likely to communicate according to different gender stereotypes and talk about and enact their sexual preferences. In this study, the teens use the Internet as a space to challenge existing gender roles and rearticulate what it means to be male or female. Real life communication and contexts often do not support this type of experimentation so the Internet becomes a space to challenge dominant representations and expectations and delve deeper into the self to answer the question "Who am I?"

Sanderson (2008) offers another study on blogs and points to the usefulness of blogs for athletes and celebrities for combating negative media framing. Sanderson's study offers implications that apply beyond celebrities and demonstrates that information and communication technologies (ICT)s are valuable tools that enable "individuals to

strategically and selectively self-present to the public" (Sanderson, 2008, p. 912). In other words, blogs offer a space in which individuals can publicly address and cope with real life situations and obtain feedback and encouragement from an audience. Not only does an increase in the amount of time spent in self-exploration improve the depth of self-understanding, but it also increases meaningful interactions. The following section explores how the relationship between space and identity improves social interactions.

Increased Meaningful Interactions. In their article, Walther, Lohn and Granka (2005) address the question: Is social meaning of online interaction negatively affected by the lack of nonverbal cues? The findings reveal that contrary to the negative claims made by Caplan (2001; 2003) and Burgoon (1976), that an online medium does not negatively affect attraction or meaningful interactions.

Through exploring self-presentation in the online context, Ellison, Heino and Gibes (2006) conclude that while deception is a primary concern of online daters, users alter their social practices to overcome doubt. Online daters feel a sense of accountability to others and thus self-monitor to minimize inaccurate self-presentations.

The Internet also increases an individual's daily amount of social interaction and encourages a greater amount of information sharing. Online dating services offer what is known as "one-stop shopping" for an intimate partner. Users control information disclosure as well as conversations in these online forums. While people tend to present an idealized self, the amount of information disclosed increases, thus allowing online-dating users to learn more about others in a short period of time (Ellison et al., 2006) .

New technologies change the way people engage in social interaction. Outcomes and consequences clearly depend upon how individuals use the technologies. The following section addresses the negative implications linked to Internet use.

Negative Outcomes

The negative consequences relate to a number of issues that apply to all Internet genres. These outcomes typically result from the amount of information individuals self disclose and the accessibility of personal information. At a macro-level, the blurring of the two spaces disrupts a pre-established social dynamic. As dana boyd (2008) claims in her article on *Facebook's Privacy Trainwreck*, technology that "makes social information more easily accessible rupture people's sense of public and private by altering previously understood social norms" (p. 14). By blurring social contexts, the Internet effectively alters previously established cognitive and behavioral schemas related to defined boundaries. Physical demarcations no longer exist, and Internet users react by changing how they relate and respond to what was once known as the "public."

Networked Publics. Networks, by their very definition, imply an interconnectedness and interrelatedness of groups. While networks, specifically social-networking sites, seemingly cultivate a sense of privacy, in reality there is a little room for actual privacy or separation. Most people realize that everything online is public; however, when it comes to these controlled sites the notion of an infinite public is forgotten.

Network publics differ from other conceptions of publics. boyd (2007) recognizes the changing definition of publics, calls for a redefinition of Internet publics, and suggests implementing the term "networked publics." A networked public recognizes

a public that is dramatically affected by the mediated nature of interaction. Networked publics are mediated publics that bind together space and audience through systems of linked channels.

Affiliating with a networked-public often leads to feelings of vulnerability and insecurity. Vulnerability and insecurity occur when individuals attempt to negotiate information and cyber-architecture. These feelings also result from the ease of accessibility of social information. An extreme example of the insecurities and fears stems from the increased ability of users to stalk other users. The Internet makes cyber-stalking possible by breaking down the physical boundaries of private and public. The stalking may begin as a general interest about a specific person, resulting from either an online or offline encounter. Search engines, such as Google or Yahoo, make finding personal information easy, and SNSs provide even more detailed personal information. One of the great fears of a cyber-stalking victim is that the stalker takes the online stalking offline and finds the person with whom they have been obsessed to potentially do him/her physical harm (Thurlow et al., 2004).

A less extreme version of information seeking relates to employee hunting. This trend is increasing quite dramatically, and stories of disgruntled would-be employees dominate the Web. When employers receive resumes, they often Google potential employees to find information not provided in applications. By conducting a Google search, employers can find links to profiles, which often house private, often damaging information. Employers take into consideration photos that portray potential employees in a negative light and often base final hiring decisions on impressions made by analyzing

profile content. Because the information is publicly accessible, prospective employees have little legal recourse.

   Psychological Effects. In addition to these outcomes, scholars argue whether there are negative psychological implications allied with Internet use. In his article, Caplan (2003) argues that the relationship between Internet use and psychological well-being is dangerous. Problematic Internet use (PIU), which is maladaptive cognitions and behaviors, has negative consequences. Due to the anonymity, temporal issues, and ability to edit online, people who typically have low social skills utilize this technology at higher rates than those with normal to high social skills. As a result, these people, who already have issues with social interactions, develop a dependency on the Internet and further damage their physiological well-being.

   This crossing of the public and private spheres should serve as a wake-up call to all people communicating online. Self-monitoring is important not only for safety, but also for one's work life. People must take care in representing themselves online as the interpretations by the public audience often differs from the sender's intended meaning. Differences in interpretations can lead to loss of a job, loss of friendships, as well an increase in physical harm (as witnessed in offline cyber-stalking encounters). Furthermore, cyber-representations bring up issues of deception. Those interpreting another's representation may do so with false information. This leads to issues of mistrust. Trusting a person online can be difficult if the information provided online does not match who they are offline. For people who only have an online relationship, there is often no way of knowing who is on the other side of the screen.

While within this dissertation I acknowledge that there are positive and negative implications and repercussions of online use, I also remain neutral in my assertions related to the presentation of the self. My goal is not to infer or predict specific outcomes, rather to understand the process and what it means to construct the self rhetorically through profiles.

Interactional Identities

The works of such scholars as Kenneth Burke and Erving Goffman provide insights into the micro-level process of the rhetorical construction of the self. The following discussion of these scholars' concepts aids understanding of the narrative performance of self on Facebook profiles.

Burke's (1966) terministic screen is a construct embedded in the performances and narratives on Facebook profiles. The act of naming is a purely human and symbolic act. The process of naming reveals (1) a person's view of reality and (2) how terms function as filters, shaping and altering what humans see. Terministic screens allow human's to make sense of what is seen, but also can limit perspectives and experiences. When applied to the Internet, specifically social-networking sites, terministic screens of the Facebook site make possible the reading of profiles on the site. Without certain predetermined symbolic acts and terminology, there would be no cohesion, making virtual communication virtually impossible. Furthermore, the Internet lacks certain nonverbal cues and sensory experiences, and calls upon readers to supply this missing information when constructing meaning of the profilers' message. Separation of the physical body and mind online alter the online symbolic meaning of human interaction, thereby creating different ways of interacting and being.

While Burke's (1951/1969; Burke, 1966) rhetorical constructs related to language help understand the narrative performance at a fundamental linguistic level, Goffman (1961) offers constructs related to the level of social interaction. Narratives are made possible through symbolic actions (Burke) and self performances. Understanding these performances and narratives involves the use of rhetorical concepts related to the performance of the self such as, (1) frame, (2) face, (3) front stage, (4) backstage, and (5) off-stage. Through dramas, actors give meaning to themselves, others, and situations. Interactions, also known as performances, deliver impressions (which are strategically managed by the actor), and through the interpretation of these impressions, audience members either conform or deny the actor's identity.

Goffman's *Frame analysis: An essay on the organization of experience* (1974) defines a frame and relates it to how communicators (actors) influence perceptions others have of them. A frame defines the packaging of an element of rhetoric in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others. Related to language, word choices shape people's schemata of interpretation, thus affecting how they locate, perceive, and label situations. The labeling process then renders meanings, guides actions, and organizes experiences in very specific ways. Frames are social constructions, which result from social interactions. The types of frames that people use depend upon the identity positions they occupy; more specifically, varieties of frames result from people's cultural affiliations. Related to the Internet, users of Facebook can use the rhetorical strategy of framing to help them create narratives that create a kind of impression management. Facebook profilers' word choices frame the one-sided

persuasive argument about a self by manipulating and limiting options that readers have for interpreting profiles.

Goffman (1967) discusses face in relation to how people present themselves in social interactions. Goffman believes people create reality through social interactions. This process results from a co-created system of practices, conventions, and rules which function to guide and organize the flow of messages. These conventions of interaction and message production led Goffman to his idea of face which is a social identity, a communicator's mask, which changes depending on the audience and the social interaction. Interactants constantly try to maintain face in interactions by looking for and acting upon cues given by the audience. Familiarity with communication features (facework) allows actors to maintain their fragile role within a specific social identity. When communicators lack skills they can lose face when the interactants refuse to support it or when they act in ways inconsistent with a proffered identity (Metts & Grohskopf, 2003).

Online identities also depend upon face and facework and online social interactions depend upon the alignment of social identities. The features embedded in a Facebook narrative help profilers to maintain face online, but little is known as to how these features differ from those used offline. Furthermore, analyzing face in CMC research allows me to move beyond the intention of actors and concentrate on the social construction of identities and their outcomes or effects that result from users either maintaining or losing face.

The final three rhetorical constructs, on-stage, off-stage, and back-stage, relate to different "regions" or areas of performance. Each region consists of different roles and

information. The front stage is where the performance takes place, and this area contains ways to explain the situation or role the actor plays. According to Goffman (1959), the front stage requires a distinction between setting and personal front. The setting is the scene or space that must be present for the actor to perform. For example, in order for a Facebook user to perform an identity, they must rely on the profile.

Personal front consists of the equipment necessary to perform in the given situation. The audience recognizes these items when a representation of the actor remains consistent. Using the idea of Facebook again, a user must have access to the site and the necessary technical skills to create and perform identities through the profiles. The personal front is divided into two different aspects, appearance and manners. Appearance refers to the items of the personal front that are a reflection of the actor's social status (number of friends, posts, cultural identifications online). As related to the narrative fragments on a profile, appearance refers to pieces of the performance that offer a reflection of the creator's social status by exposing levels of cultural capital. These tastes and preferences that illuminate social status are found in the "Interests" section on profiles. Manner refers to the way an actor conducts himself; specific attention is paid to behaviors. The actor's manner tells the audience what to expect from his performance (Goffman, 1959). Both the text and photos found on the Facebook profiles communicate behaviors enacted by the profile creator.

Back stage (Goffman, 1959) offers a space where actors can step out of a role without disrupting the performance. No members of the front stage audience can appear in the back stage. On Facebook, back stage performances become irrelevant because there is never a time when the audience is unable to view the public information on the

profile. When off-stage, actors are no longer part of the performance. While the formal performance is over, an actor may meet the audience independent of the performance. The idea of off-stage is especially relevant to online performances in that when actors, with virtual identities, meet audience members offline, inconsistencies between online and offline identities can lead to serious problems. Using Facebook as an example, if a user is in an offline romantic relationship but performs an online identity inconsistent with their offline persona, they may face serious consequences when their offline partner discovers this alternative identity.

Both Burke and Goffman's rhetorical concepts provide ways into a micro-analysis of performance and narrative expressions. As both scholars rely upon a social/symbolic interaction approach in framing their concepts, the following section provides an in-depth look at this theoretical approach.

Symbolic Interaction. Symbolic interactionism (SI) focuses on the nature of interactions and provides a framework for understanding how people create meaning in social interaction (Denzin, 1992). These interactions involve constantly acting in relation to each other, what Charon (1979) notes as "taking each other into account, acting, perceiving, interpreting, and acting again" (p. 23). Within this dynamic process, identity roles are not fixed, but rather fluid and contextually influenced.

When attempting to understand a symbolic exchange, symbolic interactionists take into consideration that actors enter into a situation with (1) a definition of the situation, (2) reference groups, and (3) symbols and perspectives. Defining the situation is extremely relevant in interactions because how people create and present their identities depends upon how they define their situation with the "other(s)." Specifically,

people act as they do because of how they define their situation. Charon (1979) makes the connection between definition of the situation, the other, and identity formation by referencing Erving Goffman's (1959) notion of self-presentation and states, "Goffman makes the point that each of us attempts to present that part of us to others that we choose to present in order to make public what we want, knowing full well that what we do will influence other people's definition of us" (p. 139). The presentation of the self is then both strategic and idealized. The idealized presentation of self is made possible by the strategic production of messages, which includes the inclusion and exclusion of certain information to ensure coherence across the narrative fragments. Furthermore, people co-construct identities through communication with a distinct other within a specific location. Language use, both linguistic and paralinguistic, informs and makes possible different perspectives, and are embedded in the narrative fragments. Each individual has multiple perspectives and these perspectives serve as a guide to understanding situations. Reference groups, or the social worlds to which one belongs, inform one's view of the world and in turn makes available certain norms, codes, and behaviors for interactions.

As mentioned previously, symbolic interactionists' (SI) understanding of identity presumes that there are multiple aspects of the self, and that the selves are fluid, yet contextually bound. Higgins (1987) asserts there are three domains of the self: the actual self, the ideal self, and the ought self. Each aspect of the self relies upon specific types of attributes. The actual self consists of attributes which an individual possesses; the ideal self relies upon attributes an individual would ideally possess; and the ought self relates to "should have" attributes. Internet research often focuses on the ideal self as related to issues of deception (Ellison et al., 2006). By omitting specific information to create an

ideal self, an individual commits a lie of omission. This perspective on communicating online identities seems a bit harsh as interlocutors engaging in face-to-face interactions typically utilize similar communication features. Relying on specific domains of identity has serious implications within communication encounters and can in the worst case scenario ruin a friendship. Descriptions used by profilers in the narrative performance of self influence the readers' perceptions of that person, and thus affect Facebook users' behaviors and rhetorical features used in their interactions and presentations of self.

Self-Presentation

In the *Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman (1959) likens the self to an actor performing on a stage to a particular audience. Through both verbal and nonverbal cues, actors strategically disclose the image of the self. Strategic activities allow for the presentation of a credible image, specifically an identity consistent with the expectations of the audience. The goal of the social actor and expectations of the social audience influence the self-presentation features as well as the outcome of the performance (Bortree, 2005).

The presentation and management of the self is a product of social interactions, which takes place within the confines of social establishments. Goffman (1959) explores the communicative process of self-making within four settings: technical, political, structural, and cultural. The relationship between the technical and impression management allows for an understanding of the self in terms of standards of work. Each participant in the interaction plays a role and works towards a specific goal. These goals frame the region of the drama related to the front stage. By assessing the implicit and explicit characteristics and qualities of the other participant, the actor can gauge how

he/she will contribute to either the efficiency or inefficiency of obtaining the overarching goal.

Relating the political to impression management illuminates how individuals control the activities of another. Within this relationship, power is exerted over others specifically through social control. The communication notion of *power over* finds application in this idea, where certain language choices enable or constrain the communication of interactants in various ways. The relationship between the structure and impression management speaks to the notion of social distance. The notion of the "other" finds purpose in this relationship because the image one has of his/her self and the interaction depends on the capacity to control the other. Finally, culture and impression speak to the implication of moral standards in the performance of the self. Normative attitudes, behaviors, and morals guide the interaction by either permitting or restricting certain types of performance.

In addition to societal influences, "impression management behaviors consist of expressions *given* (spoken communication) as well as expressions *given off* (unintentional cues)" (Ellison et al., 2006, p. 417). Most, if not all, current studies on self-presentation and the Internet focus on the given expressions; in other words, studies do not move beyond intention of the sender (Sanderson, 2008, p. 194). While the intentionality of messages is extremely important, moving beyond intention allows for a greater understanding of how an audience, perceives, and understands a performance. The current study makes the move beyond intentionality as a way of understanding the roles of both the sender and receiver in the self-making process.

As related to this study, online self-presentation results from the strategic, rhetorical choices of a creator of a Facebook profile. Within the mediated social interaction, interactants use symbols and specific language choices to construct messages. Interpretations of these messages result from strategic rhetoric features, on the part of the author, and the cultural locations of the audience. Availability of specific social and language systems color the perceptions of the audience and make the "readings" of online bodies (expressed through narratives) multiple and varied. As witnessed in the above discussion, the relationship between performance, culture, and cultural positions are extremely important in online presentations. To better understand this relationship, the following section discusses the connection between identities, culture, and stratification.

Identities, Culture, and Stratification

Early researchers, such as Edward T. Hall (1959), observed that culture is communication; in everyday and in everyway humans cannot help but communicate their cultural values through social behaviors and interactions with others. Identity is also an expression of social culture, which finds articulation through specific signs and symbols in language. For example, systems of stratification relate to culture and identity by creating a hierarchical system in which individuals reside and relate. Stratification also makes possible identity positions, and these are made known through the enactment of particular speech codes, behaviors, and norms. The following section delves deeper into the relationship between identity, culture, and stratification by relating these concepts to cultural capital, that is, assets that involve educational, social, and intellectual knowledge made possible by financial capital.

Culture influences and is influenced by social identity. The following discussion relies upon specific definitions of culture, provided by Bourdieu (2002) and Battani, Hall, and Neitz (2003). According to Bourdieu (1987), culture is habitus, which results from cultural capital. Habitus is specific to particular social groups and consists of schemas of perception, thought, as well as dispositions. These practical skills result from the internalization of culture and social structures and serve to guide people through everyday activities. Therefore, habitus is tied to and dependent upon one's position in the social system. Habitus changes when one's position in society changes, and this change, Bourdieu argues, is made possible through cultural capital. Facebook and other similar web genres are used to accumulate and increase cultural capital by providing a space where identities, roles, and positions can be challenged and changed. What is not known, and what this dissertation explores through the analysis of Facebook profiles, is what role cultural capital plays in the narrative performance of self.

According to Bourdieu (1987), cultural capital results from the combination of knowledge, tastes, sensibilities, material possessions, and overall advantages that enable groups to achieve higher social status. Accessible only through one's positionality in social space, cultural capital is often difficult to obtain for those in the margins. Groups with higher status possesses more cultural capital and are able to maintain and control the hierarchical arrangement of society through the imposition of their world views on others. While this fact remains true in real life, research on social-networking sites has yet to show if the structure of the virtual world disrupts this hierarchical arrangement and makes possible an increase in cultural capital for traditionally marginalized groups. Analysis of the narrative fragments found on Facebook profiles helps fill in this gap in

the research by showing how tastes and preferences found in the narrative fragments perpetuate the hierarchical arrangement of society.

A second theoretical conception of culture comes from the works of Battani, Hall, and Netiz (2003). Culture is a symbolic process of shared meaning socially constructed through group affiliation. These group categories, including race, class, and gender shape experiences and as a result contributes to different meaning-making systems that are raced, classed and gendered. My analysis of the Facebook profiles looks at how these stratified systems of meaning influence the narrative performances of self.

Bourdieu's (1987) ideas of culture as habitus, cultural capital, as well as the socially constructed system of meaning-making articulated by Battani, Hall, and Neitz (2003), demonstrate the strained relationship between social positions and culture, but do not extend these ideas into CMC. Research in CMC needs to be connected to culture and virtual self-presentation, but this work is limited. The "neutral culture" perspective (meaning culture lacks influence or power) appears to dominate the CMC literature and as such, in this dissertation I investigate further the significance of culture online as related to cultural affiliations on Facebook. The following section applies the concepts of stratification and cultural capital to Internet interactions.

Online Cultural Capital. Research conducted on identities on the Internet often argues that categories of race, class, gender, etc are not an issue online. The anonymity provided by the Internet allows people to shed their cultural affiliations and experience and try on new identities (Hillis, 1999; Turkle, 1995). People can take part in identity tourism where they enact different cultural identities through text and images. While this utopian ideal is great, it is simply that, a utopian ideal. Instead of transcending the

stratified cultures of the real world, virtual identities on Facebook actually reflect the cultural stratification of life offline.

Access to the technology and skills associated with the Internet demonstrate the reinforcement of inequalities related to social differences. According to the May 2008 PEW project poll (Project, 2008); approximately 75% of whites, 59% blacks use the Internet. Looking to age, approximately 90% of those 18-29 use the Internet compared to roughly 35% of those 65 plus. The inequality continues in the numbers associated with socio-economics and education, where only 53% of those making $30k or less are online compared to 95% of those making $75k or more and where only approximately 44% of those with high school or less are online compared to 91% of those with a college degree or higher. These statistics could not be more telling, they show cultural stratification begins at the point of Internet access and use.

Gender stratification contributes to online sexual violence (Michaels, 1997). In an online forum, men often turn sexual conversation into violent sexual discourse. This discourse can lead to what is known as cyber-rape, where men assault women's minds and bodies through words. This type of online violence has real life consequences as men often meet up in real life with the woman they met online and proceed to carry out acts of violence. This example demonstrates the Internet does indeed reflect gender inequality where men have "power over" women.

Moving to the actual representation of cultural identities online, Nakamura (2002) studies the intersection of race and ethnicity online. Nakamura argues that there is a hierarchical arrangement of racial and ethnic categories online as evidenced in drop down menus on social-networking sites. Creators of these Internet sites provide lists of

categories one may use to express their ethnic/ racial identity. Users find their choices of identification restricted and have little to no freedom in expressing mixed and multiple identities. Additionally, "white" remains the default category, and when individuals decide not to choose a specific classification they are automatically assigned the category of white.

Hierarchical arrangements of cultural identifiers also constrain racial representations online. Freedom of expression is an illusion and the virtual world simply reproduces the racist structure of the physical world. The dominant hegemonic culture structures Internet use and ways of knowing online (Nakamura, 2002). Furthermore, it should not be forgotten that online language and identities result from offline identifications and structural constraints. Through the use of text, images, language, narratives, and links, people can share what it means to be gendered, raced, and classed online. Experiences in these social positions find expression online and also impact the type of information shared with others.

Rhetorical Construction and Interactions

Conversations about the rhetorical self must take into account the persuasive nature of self-presentation. Previous sections of this chapter discussed the rhetorical features and selective nature of online identity presentation, and this section connects these ideas with one of the guiding goals of traditional rhetorical studies, the persuasive acts of symbolic influence.

The presentation of the self online is a strategic and selective process. Anonymity, temporal issues, including asynchrony, as well as the ability to edit allows Internet users to produce the idealized self; a presentation which highlights positive attributes. (Caplan,

2003; Ellison et al., 2006). A tension exists between the idealized self and what is known as the "authentic self." Moreover, Internet users decide what information they wish to reveal on their profiles (Hart & Daughton, 2004). This selective process begs further investigation and rhetorical analysis helps reveal what is not disclosed on Facebook profiles; these exclusions speak volumes about the construction and organization of reality as well as the self.

The rhetorical self is socially constructed through language. Users constantly monitor and update the content of their pages so that they control the messages as well as the impressions of the readers. The goal of the narrative message as well as language and paralinguistic choices on profiles control audience interpretation, but the question is, how does this happen? Rhetorically analyzing the Facebook profiles can provide an answer to this question.

Warnick (1998) states that electronic messages are designed, ordered, and organized to privilege certain ideas and to influence the thinking of users and readers. Since electronic messages on social-networking sites are indeed persuasive, rhetorical criticism can illuminate how messages function to persuade the receiver of the messages. The Internet creates a rhetorical situation which influences the structuring and presentation of the rhetorical virtual self.

Narrative Self Discovery

The strategic construction of self is often a narrative construct. Literary narratives include elements of characterization, employment, place of presentation, event, actor, and storyteller. These elements do not apply to online narratives because instead of existing as integrated and connected, the online narrative is fragmented and this fragmentation

forces readers to make sense out of the fragments by filling in missing content. The following discussion draws out these differences between online and offline narratives and provides a framework for understanding the modifications this study makes to narrative criticism.

"Advertisement of the self" or the public sharing of private lives is not a new phenomenon. Autobiographies provide individuals with the opportunity to express their most private moments and analyze these instances through the process of self-reflection. Writing the story of one's life from one's own perspective is potentially liberating. People who suffered/are suffering from exclusion, marginalization, and disenfranchisement can put down in ink the account of their lives. While one's audience is limited to those who purchase or stumble upon the book, the story is none-the-less important as it provides voice to an often voiceless person.

Researchers in CMC believe that the Internet offers users a new status as producers of meaning and creators of identity. The everyday citizen has access to his/her own writing space in which he/she can produce an account of his/her life. One of the most common spaces in which this production occurs is on profiles. In his study of genres of self-presentation on homepages, John Killoran (2003) likens the structure of the Web to print publishing as opposed to oral conversation. While he argues that homepages do not reveal a great deal about an individual and that the stories do not follow the traditional form of lengthy and well-integrated autobiography, individuals are quickly overcoming technological obstacles to re-image and reconfigure the online autobiographical genre in ways that fit this medium.

In this dissertation I disagree with Killoran's (2003) assertions regarding both the stylistic properties and the lack of stories existing on profiles. As mentioned in the previous chapter, CMC differs from other mediums of communication by distorting the distinction between spoken word and written text. Permanency, spontaneity, and fluidity inspire and shape online communication interactions. Attempting to apply existing theories and written and oral conventions to online communication is useless. When the medium changes so do the structures and standards of speaking and writing. As such, storytelling, specifically the narrative genre used in CMC should not focus on the mastery of storytelling, but rather, on the how humans use fragmented stories to make sense of their multiple selves and the worlds in which they live.

As a process, storytelling requires that storytellers piece together story fragments from their lives and use these pieces to create a narrative they believe will serve personal and social goals. Storytellers must also ensure that their front stage performance aligns with their off-stage performance (offline in this case) so that their truthfulness is not called into question. If audience members question the truthfulness of the identities created in the performance, then they challenge the coherence and fidelity of the narrative. Once an audience member no longer believes the storyteller, the dynamic and future interactions between the two change for the worse.

According to Stone (1981), identity carries with it a meaning of context, the "what and where" (p. 188). Presenting the self includes the consideration of identity in relation to specific situations, which are expressed through narratives. As Walker (2000) points out:

Narrative on profiles offers an effective means of describing the self because it

locates information and events in time and space. By placing vignettes on home

pages, authors' situate "social narratives in temporal and spatial configurations of

relationships and cultural practices [institutions and discourses]." (Somers &

Gibson, 1994, p. 69)

Somers's and Gibson's statement implies that culture, interactions, Facebook categories,

and applications frame the narratives that exist on profiles. How this exactly occurs is

still unknown.

Cultural affiliation also relates specifically to virtual identities. Virtual identities

are a type of message construction consisting of shared cultural symbols (this includes

images, text, paralinguistic devices, hypertext, etc.). Individuals draw upon cultural

constructs in their social reality in the presentation of the self. Furthermore, by linking the

self to narrative, the self is socially constructed through interactions (both online and

offline) and communicated through narratives.

Rhetorical Features: Symbols, Visual Rhetoric and Relational Linking

Symbols. Recognizing the rhetorical presentation of the self through narratives

online requires moving beyond the markers used in traditional analyses and applying new

signs. Symbols and visual rhetoric offer an alternative way to perform and present the

virtual self using narratives.

If the primary goal of self-presentation is to gain approval from others (Vazire &

Gosling, 2004), then how do users achieve this online? Schau and Gilly (2003) contend

that profile creators "construct identities by digitally associating themselves with signs,

symbols, material objects and places" (p. 385). Users in this particular study chose to

associate and display certain objects as a way of projecting the digital self. For example, José, a participant with a professed love of "hogs," used his page to pay tribute to this part of his identity by utilizing sounds of engines and moving motorcycle images. José used both sounds and symbols to construct a digital likeness.

As witnessed in the above example, associations become extremely important in the creation of an online self. With the absence of a physical body with cultural markers, and the inability to use tangible objects in self descriptions, online users draw upon both possessions and relational factors to create an identity. In a study conducted on Facebook (Leonardi, 2007), ethnic groups revealed similar communication features in creating a group identity. The majority of the profiles used flags to symbolize a cultural affiliation as well as to associate with a specific geographic place.

Related specifically to Facebook, symbol use also appears as a result of application choice. When users chose specific applications, such as "gifts," the friends of the particular user can send certain gifts, such as a box of chocolate or a roll of toilet paper, to symbolize a specific feeling or past event that these friends experienced. Another example stems from my personal experience. Graduate students use an application of "shite gifts for academics" to represent certain feelings of craziness, frustration, deliriousness, happiness, etc. or experiences (teaching issues, conducting research, experiences with faculty, etc.) related to life in academia. These symbols both create a connection and increase the bond between two people as well as to represent a certain identity, such as a graduate student. Application choices reveal a great deal about what is important and how people use interactions with others to perform identities. Along with verbal symbol use, visual rhetoric provides yet another self-presentation tool.

Visual Rhetoric. Visual rhetoric offers a form of communication that uses images to create meaning or construct an argument. With a decrease in verbal cues and tangible items online, visual rhetoric serves an important role in helping create and effectively communicate particular messages. As related specifically to profiles, visual rhetoric consists of images, such as photos, as well as the images used in symbolic representations.

On Facebook, visual images also include images posted on "walls" as well as "tagged photos." While this dissertation focuses on features of self-presentation, these images, posted by others, but accepted by the user, clarify additional and often conflicting messages in the presentation of self. Furthermore, these photos are of particular interest since they result from social interactions with others; however their appearance is not a result of their user. These images also have the potential to disrupt impression management and change the audience's interpretation of the profiler.

Relational Linking. Relational linking refers to the use of yet another digital tool, hypertexts. Hypertexts allow users to connect to outside references through the use of web-links. By clicking on a link, users find themselves transported outside of the profile and onto another website. Connecting the self to other websites is an extremely conscious decision. The content on the outside website provides audiences with external information that helps complete their interpretation of the performer (Schau & Gilly, 2003).

In addition to its use as a rhetorical strategy in the presentation of the self, hypertexts also function to dismantle the linear structure of narratives. By dismantling traditional hierarchies of writing hyperlinks allow "stories to be told with detailed

elaboration only when the reader clicks the hyperlink. In essence, hyperlinks allow

narratives that have no distinct beginning, middle, or end, but rather many modes of

elaboration" (Schau & Gilly, 2003, p. 398). The linear structure of narratives no longer

applies in this context; rather, the availability of technological tools and the mediated

environment reconfigure the story of the self.

Summary

This review of literature lays the foundation for the investigation of the rhetorical

construction and presentation of self on the social-networking site of Facebook. The

review of the constructs of computer-mediated communication, social-networking sites,

the social construction of reality, interactional identities, and rhetorical and narrative

constructions of identity inform the methodological choices of this study, which are

explained in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The primary goal of this study is to explain and understand how Facebook users construct identities using narrative fragments on their profiles. I chose qualitative methodologies, which align with the interpretive perspective, to answer the research questions presented in Chapter 1 that derive from my literature review:

RQ1: What features are used in the narrative performance of identities on Facebook?

RQ2: What types of identities result from the narrative performances on Facebook profiles?

RQ3: What role does cultural capital play in the narrative performance of self?

RQ 4: What are the offline consequences of communicating online identities on Facebook?

Choosing methods for this study was quite a challenge. I found that many of the current research tools are ill equipped to deal with research in CMC. While the impact of the new communication technology is quite dramatic, few of the current methods are useful in helping users and producers understand and respond to its complexities (Markham & Baym, 2009). Most of the methodological concerns center upon the issue of "defining both the online and offline worlds, and the relationships that exist among and between them" (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002, p. 260). Researchers tend to experience difficulties locating themselves within these spaces and deciding what to include as data. The existence of multiple Internet genres confuses the idea of space and locations, making the definition of boundaries and connections exceptionally exigent.

In response to the challenges associated with CMC research, I chose methods that offered enough flexibility to alter the procedures and to better accommodate my research needs. As a result, I decided to use a form of narrative analysis, which derives from the larger rhetorical methodology as well as focus groups. I modified the narrative approach provided by Sonia Foss (2004) and based on narrative paradigm theory (Cragan & Shields, 1998; Fisher, 1989) to accommodate my research needs.

The method of narrative criticism informs the primary framework used in this study, the Narrative Performance Model (NPM). Narrative criticism provides tools to analyze narrative structures, specifically the elements used in self-presentation. One unique aspect of rhetorical criticism is that it looks past the message intention of producers to uncover unintended symbols of meaning that result from differing perspectives and interpretations (Foss, 2004). Related specifically to the study, narrative criticism offered a way to analyze the narrative fragments, which included text and images, on Facebook profiles.

Focus groups added a depth dimension to the narrative rhetorical analysis, helped answer questions that could not be answered in the narrative analysis, and helped to achieve the following three goals: (1) understand the experience of online performance of Facebook users through discussion; (2) validate the findings of the rhetorical analysis of profiles; (3) and understand new media effects by exploring the outcomes and consequences that result from strategic message production. Furthermore, focus groups offered a way into the cultural modes of understanding, presenting, and modifying the self by allowing discussions related to "who we think we are, how we wish others to

perceive use, how we present ourselves, how others actually perceive use, and how others

perform those perceptions" (Wood & Smith, 2001, p. 47) .

The following sections offer explanations and rationales for both a narrative

rhetorical analysis and focus groups. Explanations of the specific procedures

implemented follow each rationale. Discussions of procedures include details regarding

participants, as well as descriptions of the analysis process. The chapter closes with a

review of the methodological choices.

Narrative Rhetorical Analysis

Rhetorical analysis moves beyond the descriptions and goals of online users and

explores unintended message production, which is part of the rhetorical act. By moving

beyond users' goals and intentions, my analysis reveals how the strategic use of symbols

embedded in the narrative fragments functions to persuade readers of the profiles to

accept the narrative performances of identity, limit the readers' interpretations of these

messages, and shows how these messages provide a form of virtual representation for the

profile creator.

The narrative analysis of the Facebook profiles, along with focus groups, allows

for the use of multiple methods. Combining rhetorical methods with other research

methods strengthened my analysis by providing both breadth and depth. Additionally,

this method enabled me to look at multiple concepts and constructs at the same time.

Concept comparison provided deeper understanding of the rhetorical discourse and a

stronger discussion of findings. Finally, as related to my study, rhetorical analysis

allowed me to analyze not just text and verbal discourse, but also the images on the

profiles. Looking at how text and images work together to create narrative fragments and

produce a rhetorical effect upon the profile reader is important since the virtual self is not simply a textual description. Narrative rhetorical analysis allowed me to analyze the narratives and the associated messages of the Facebook profiles and uncover messages and intentions that were not exposed in the focus group discussions. Based upon my goals as a researcher and my research questions, a rhetorical analysis provides a useful method for analyzing profiles, illuminating narrative performances of identity, and exploring how mediated contexts affect the creation and interpretation of the narrative fragments.

Rhetorical Features: Narratives in the Making of Identity

Narrative performances of identity on Facebook profiles made possible the use of rhetorical features. Analysis of the Facebook profiles focused on linguistic and paralinguistic features used by profilers in their narrative performances of self. Bruner (2001) sees self-presentation as a narrative art. Constructing the self through a story helps individuals to make sense of who they are. Further, self-telling is dependent upon an individual's beliefs regarding who he/she believes his/her self(ves) to be and what he/she believes the self should be.

Freeman (2001) furthers the connection between the self and narrative by proposing that the self is poetic, experiential, cultural, rhetorical, and dependent upon history. Self-construction results from verbalization, visualization, and interaction. The Internet provides a new space and way of verbalizing and performing the self, and little is known about what this means for the self as a whole (online and offline). Analyzing the content that comprised the multiple narrative fragments provided further understanding about how students constructed and performed virtual identities, how cultural capital was

used in the narrative performance, how students perceived reality, and how they

negotiated multiple selves within an online context. A narrative analysis not only

produced a lens for analyzing and interpreting the organization of messages,

performances of self, cultural capital, and the persuasive nature of the performances of

self on profiles, but also contributed to an understanding of how this technology impacts

the lives of particular consumers.

The narrative approach involved a micro-analysis of the language and visual

imagery that consituted the narrative fragments found in the following sections of the

Facebook profiles: "Photo Albums," "Say Something," and "Personal Information." The

model below explains the different elements that compised the narrative fragments found

on Facebook profiles:

Model of Narrative Construction
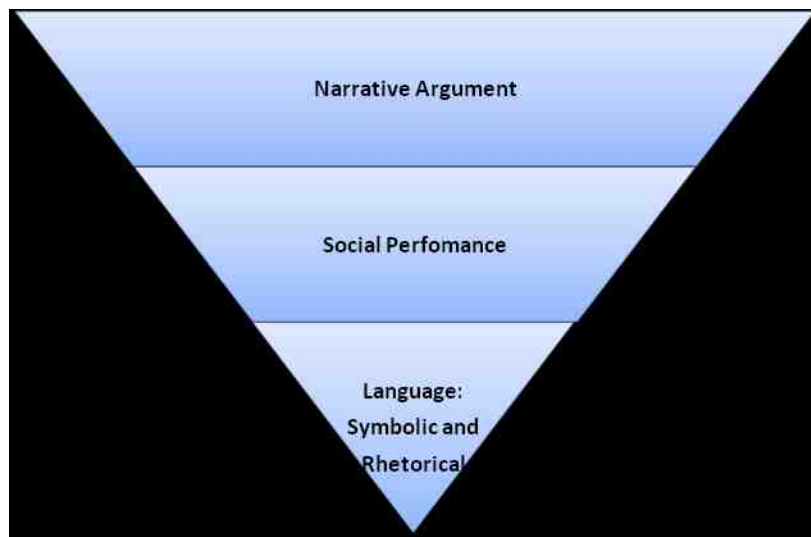
In order to understand narrative fragments, I first looked at the narrative argument

constructed by the profiler. This analysis involved an indepth look at the symbolic and

rhetorical components. As discussed earlier, both Burke (1969) and Goffman (1959)

provided concepts that helped understand language use in Facebook narratives (which are a type of social performance).

Burke's (1969) conception of rhetoric begins at the micro-level, where language is symbolic action produced in part by the use of identification and terministic screens. Identification is understood within this context of his understanding of language as symbolic action. Through association, people persuade themselves and/or others that they share common characteristics. The act of naming, defining a thing, is a purely human and symbolic act. The process of naming reveals: (1) a person's view of reality; and how (2) word choice function as a filter by shaping and altering what humans see. On Facebook, terministic screens allowed profilers not only to create strategic virtual identities, but also allowed them to construct multiple interpretations of their narratives of identity. Without certain predetermined symbolic acts and terminology, there would be no cohesion, making virtual communication almost impossible. The symbolic acts were embedded in the narrative fragments of identity of Facebook users. The structure of the Facebook site constrained what and how Facebook users created these narratives. For example, Facebook users had to complete pre-established forms such as, "Basic Information," which included the categories of networks, birthday, hometown, relationship status, looking for, and political and religious views. These pre-determined categories limited the creative expression of Facebook users by forcing them to adhere to the structure provided by the site.

By extending Goffman's (1959) ideas into the new communication technology context, I was able to use his constructs to understand the idea of the online social performance. Narrative self performances resulted from symbolic acts. Understanding

these performances and narratives involved the use of rhetorical concepts related to the performance of the self. (1) The frame defined the packaging of the narrative message in such a way as to encourage certain interpretations and to discourage others. Profilers controlled the frames of their Facebook profiles through impression management, which included the strategic inclusion and exclusion of information. (2) The face was the social identity performed in the narrative. The identity of profilers changed depending on the audience and the level of social interaction. (3) The front stage was the location of the narrative performance, in this case the Facebook profile. (4) The off-stage performances related to the offline performances of Facebook users and often included certain elements of the self that could not be captured through online content. When inconsistencies between online and offline identities arose, the coherence and fidelity of the online narratives were challenged.

Artifact

The narrative rhetorical analysis relied upon a close reading of 100 Facebook profiles of University of New Mexico undergraduate students ages 18-25. Each profile generated approximately four pages of text, multiply this by the 100 profiles and I analyzed 400 pages of text. The amount of profiles analyzed in past studies varies greatly (89 and 4540 pages) (Cragan & Shields, 1998). The large variation in numbers results from the differing research goals of each study. Based upon the research questions and the use of mixed methods, this study chose a smaller number of profiles to analyze. This number provided a manageable amount of rhetorically created narrative content to provide a dimension of breath to my study while the focus groups discussion added a

dimension of depth. The micro-analysis involved a close reading of each of the rhetorical performances, which included linguistic and visual features found on each of the profiles.

I analyzed Facebook profiles that were publicly displayed and accessible through the "Albuquerque Network." As a member of this network, I was able to access UNM student profiles, and I chose profiles based on order of appearance. Every fifth profile that appeared in the list became an artifact for the study. To ensure that the profiles matched the qualifications set forth earlier in this section, I set the search perimeters related to school affiliation, age, and academic status. I ensured confidentiality through the use of a numbering system. I numbered each profile with a number between 1 and 100, and when discussing profiles in the analysis I referenced them by their assigned number. I made a hard-copy of all pages so that I could easily make markings and notations. I stored all copies of the profiles in a locked drawer until the time of destruction.

Procedures

My new approach used rhetorical methods to understand how Facebook users constructed messages of identity. Concepts from narrative and performance theories provided a starting point for the analytical framework. Because online narratives did not follow basic narrative structures, existing rhetorical methods did not help understand this new fragmented structure. The lack of adequate methods prompted me to create and implement what I call the Narrative Performance Model (NPM). This model resulted from a pilot study but was revised after conducting the narrative analysis of Facebook profiles. I extended the ideas created by Fisher (1989), set forth by Cragan and Shields (1998), and applied by Foss (2004) in her discussion of narrative criticism. My new

81

theory explains how people rely upon narrative fragments and one-sided arguments to perform and communicate identities in an online context. Moreover, conducting an analysis based upon the framework provided by the NPM allowed me to answer the first three research questions: RQ1: What features are used in the narrative performance of identities on Facebook? RQ2: What types of identities result from the narrative performances on Facebook profiles? And RQ3: What role does cultural capital play in the narrative performance of self? The following section discuses the narrative performance model and provides details of each of the six dimensions of the model. I used the model to analyze the following sections of Facebook profiles: "Photo Albums," "Say Something," and "Personal Information."

Narrative Performance Model (NPM)
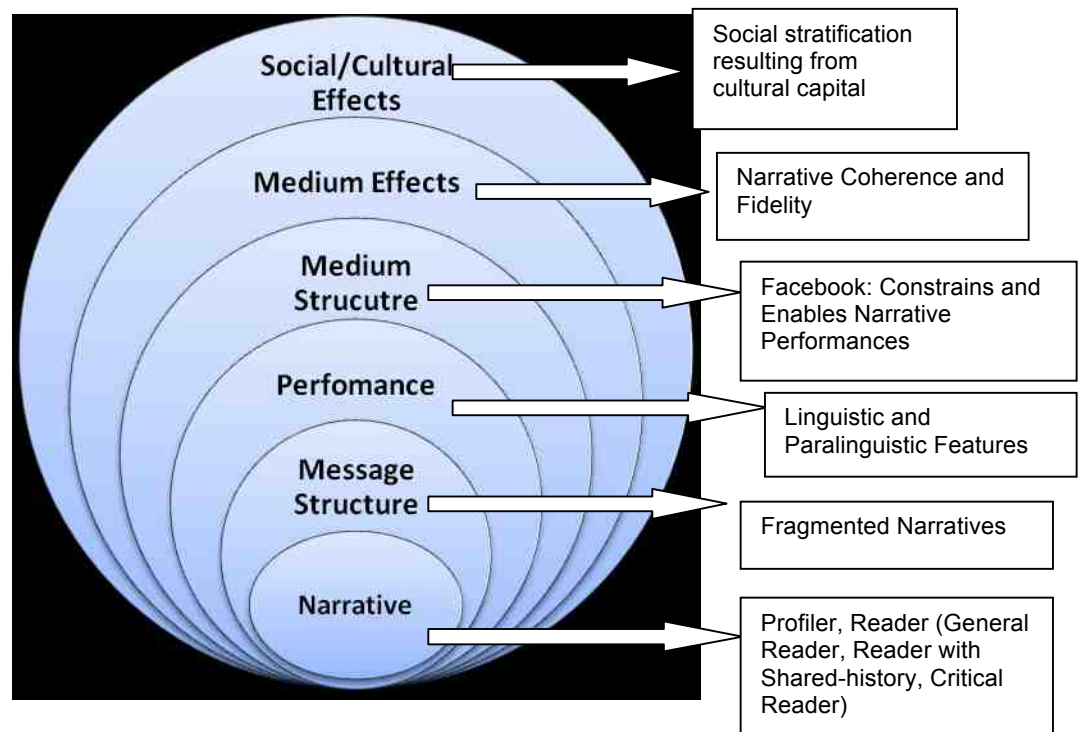
The Narrative Performance Model contains six levels: (1) Narrative is the rhetorical strategy used in the performance of the self. Narrative construction involves the participation of both a profiler (creator) and reader (person accessing and evaluating the

Facebook profile). (2) Message structure refers to the fragmentation and incompleteness of the narratives. The profiler relies upon the reader to make connections between the different narrative fragments to provide coherence for the narrative performance. (3) Performance is the communicative event that results from the act of narration. Profilers use both linguistic and paralinguistic features to create narratives. (4) Medium structure provides the communication source in which the narrative event occurs. The structure of Facebook constrains and enables the communication of messages and as a result, content is either included or excluded. (5) Medium effects evaluate the offline implications of online self-presentation through narratives. Fisher's (1989) concepts of narrative coherence and fidelity provide the framework from which to evaluate persuasive effects of online narratives. This specific layer is addressed through focus groups discussions. (6) Social effects address issues of cultural capital and social stratification that result from certain taste choices and preferences.

Narrative dimensions

The following section provides a more comprehensive description of the narrative dimensions associated with the six layers of the narrative performance model: narrative, message structure, performance, medium structure, medium effects, and social effects.

Narrative. The narrative performance results from the collaboration of both Facebook creators and readers. Facebook creators (profilers) create and perform the narratives of identity through the content posted on their profiles. Facebook readers also have their own Facebook profiles and have access to other creators' profiles. Readers consist of "the hearers or readers of stories, who evaluate a given story to conclude if it

hangs together and rings true to their experience" (Morgan, 1988, p. 12). Readers are extremely important in the narrative process because profilers craft stories with a specific reader in mind. Without readers, social interaction becomes impossible making the performance of the self unnecessary. In addition, readers provide feedback to narratives of others and thereby alter the narrative by the process of co-creation. The structure of Facebook limits the amount of feedback that readers can actually give to other profilers, and criticism and feedback are generally minimal.

This study divides readers into three categories based on affiliation: (a) the general readers, who are an acquaintance of the creator, but not a genuine friend, (b) the readers with shared history, and who are genuine friends, meaning both parities share some sort of connection as a result of shared past experiences, and because of the close connection, this reader can find meaning and make connections of the fragments in ways that I, as the analyst, cannot, and (c) the readers who are critical of the page, including myself, the researcher, parents, employers, etc. The type of reader classification dictates the way in which the reader reads and interprets the profile.

Message Structure. The general structure of online communication combined with the specific structure of Facebook challenge the traditional forms of narrative. Online narratives found on social-networking sites lack a time chronology of events. Furthermore, narrative fragments are incomplete in that they do not possess the traditional narrative elements of emplotment, a clear place of presentation, or a coherent event. Profilers rely upon readers to piece together narrative fragments in order to make sense of the narrative performance of self. Profile creators use features to engage in impression management to ensure that readers believe the performance of identity.

Narratives with fidelity ring true with the experiences of readers. Narrative coherence means the profiler's self identity, their words and pictures, are internally consistent with each other. Readers evaluate the credibility of the profile creator as well as the story itself through comparisons of the identities in the narrative fragments with what is known about the Facebook creator. If consistency exists between the two dimensions, then the reader is more likely to accept the narrative because the performance seems realistic and probable (Cragan & Shields, 1998).

Performance. This study argues that online narratives qualify as a social performance. While few prior studies support this claim, my study makes the connection between online narratives and self-performance through the careful analysis of paralinguistic and linguistic features used on Facebook profiles. Analysis of paralinguistic features pays special attention to students' use of humor, how they use language as action, and what role graphics play in the performance of identities. Analysis of linguistic cues focuses on the ways students challenge and reconstruct traditional forms of grammar and language on their profiles. Careful attention is given to sentence structure, word choices, normative definitions, and the use of slang, and the use of one-sided arguments.

Habermas's (1989) notion of the public sphere and public debate inform the idea of the one-sided public argument. Narratives related to self-presentation on Facebook use language, speech acts, and visuals to narrow the choices of readers (by strategically including and excluding information as part of narrative fragments) in how the self is *read* online. Within these persuasive symbolic acts exists a central argument embedded in the message. While readers may not agree with the argument (a specific self-presentation

of identity), they have limited means to respond and provide a counter-argument; thus, storytellers do not often find their narrative accounts challenged or refuted.

Medium Structure. The structure of Facebook constrains and enables certain identity performances. Facebook restricts users' creativity and originality by implementing a uniform design for all profiles and by forcing users to adhere to these design standards when creating their profiles. While the uniformity makes the reading process easier, as profilers know what to expect when reading profiles, it also stifles inventiveness. The structure prevents users from including certain information, which in effect, makes the narrative incomplete. Students respond to the systemic restrictions and limitations by altering linguistic conventions and by renaming and redefining certain ideas and concepts. My analysis of profiles pays careful attention to how students react and rebel against the medium structure by exploring features used in the narrative performance.

Medium Effects. Online performances produce offline effects. Analysis of focus group data reveals how students evaluate the coherence and fidelity of online narratives. Trust plays a large role in whether or not people believe the narrative performances. If a profiler has a reputation of being trustworthy, then people are less likely to believe the narrative. If the online performance of the self does not seem probable and if it does not match the offline performance, then serious consequences arise. Relationships become strained and friendships end because of the creator's inability to remain truthful when communicating online.

Social Effects. Narrative performances are made possible by certain amounts of cultural capital. Online performances depend on users' access and technological savvy.

Access refers to the availability and ease of use of new communication technologies. As related to Goffman's (1967) construct of *situation* in the *front stage*, availability of the profiler's self constructed scene is necessary in order to engage in a personal performance; the creation of a Facebook profiles is impossible without access to a computer, the Internet, or Facebook.

Technical savvy allows Facebook users to create profiles consistent with the requirements of the site, and online social norms, and permits them to engage in appropriate online social interactions. Without knowledge of online language/jargon or how Facebook functions, meaningful and socially acceptable interactions become impossible.

Cultural capital online also depends upon offline systems of social stratification. Both access and technical savvy depend on material capital. This means that social positions result from economic conditions. Furthermore, the social positions Facebook users occupy influence the type of self performed in narratives. Cultural capital influences tastes and preferences, and students articulate these preferences in their narratives, thus setting them apart from others who do not share the same preferences.

Focus Groups

Focus groups offered supplemental information related to users' understanding of media effects not found in the rhetorical analysis of Facebook profiles. Occurring in an offline setting, focus groups provided a tool for probing people's responses to and experiences with new communication technology. Additionally, focus group responses moved beyond the limited information found in quantitative surveys by eliciting firsthand accounts of feelings and experiences. Through exploitation of the group interactions, this

tool also made possible certain "data and insights that would be less accessible without the interaction found in a group" (Krueger & Casey, 2009). The nature of the group provided a more natural and egalitarian atmosphere, as compared with interviews, by creating an environment in which people influence and are influenced by others. Moreover, since the focus is on the respondents as opposed to the researcher, the power dynamic shifted and my influence over the group diminished.

Characteristics. According to Krueger and Casey (2009) focus group interactions typically contain five characteristics: "(1) people, who (2) possess certain characteristics, (3) provide qualitative data (4) in a focused discussion (5) to help understand the topic of interest" (p. 6). Each of my focus groups averaged anywhere from 4-7 participants. With this limit, my groups were small enough to allow each participant time to respond and large enough to capture diverse perspectives on a particular topic. Participants in the groups were typically strangers that shared common characteristics, and they established trust based upon this commonality. Commonality also promoted homogeneity, which invoked feeling of trust, based on shared qualities, which promoted an atmosphere of respect where participants felt free to express opinions without judgment. My focus groups consisted of volunteers who were undergraduate UNM students. Volunteers had to fit the following criteria to participate in the discussions: (1) fall between the ages of 18-26, (2) be currently enrolled at UNM as an undergraduate, and (3) have a Facebook profile. Please see Appendix C for the participant consent form.

Focus group data emerged from opinions across several groups. To produce this kind of qualitative data, I conducted at least three focus groups within a single study. Unlike other methods, my focus groups did not produce an outcome of consensus rather

they promoted a range of ideas that resulted in the most interesting and desirable data.

Finally, my focus groups followed a structured discussion. Achieving a focused

discussion requires the creation and implementation of a set of naturally and logically

sequenced questions. The questions I used were open-ended and easily understood, while

also appearing spontaneous. Spontaneity encouraged natural responses, which promoted

a more truthful dialogue and discussion. Please see Appendix A for a list of questions

used in the focus group discussions. To protect the data, I locked audio-recordings and

associated transcripts in a cabinet for which only I had a key.

Role of the Researcher. In focus group work, researchers must (1) moderate, (2)

listen, (3) observe, and (4) analyze. Characteristics of an effective moderator include

demonstrating respect for the participants, understanding the purpose and study of the

topic, communicating clearly, being open and not defensive, sharing affinity and

characteristics with the group (2002). Researchers also show respect through the act of

listening. Critical listening skills allow for a focused experience by taking in and

evaluating information in a mindful way. When listening, I recorded observations,

quotations, and captured rich descriptive information, and as such, I fulfilled my ethical

obligation to record observations and information as accurately as possible with minimal

bias. I did not change data to align with the study's purpose because this is unfair to

respondents since their experiences no longer ring true. I analyzed the focus group data

using a thematic approach, which I discuss in detail towards the close of this chapter.

Procedures

Focus groups functioned as a secondary method in this study and offered

supplemental data whose purpose was to answer questions related to new media effects

and provide deeper insights into RQ 4: What are the real life consequences of performing a virtual self on Facebook profiles? The following outlines the procedures and specific protocol used in the focus groups on self-presentation (consequences) in Facebook profiles.

Participants

With the permission of University of New Mexico (UNM) instructors (see Appendix B for Instructor Consent Form), I solicited focus group volunteers from UNM, Communication and Journalism undergraduate courses including, Small Group Communication, Public Speaking, Intercultural Communication, and Interpersonal Communication. These courses were chosen because they typically had a diverse make-up of majors from throughout the university. Participation was voluntary and involved no means of coercion. Each of the three focus groups consisted of at least four participants.

Protocol

Each focus group discussion followed the same questioning format to ensure consistency: (1) welcome, (2) overview of the topic, (3) ask permission to audio record discussion, (4) setting of ground rules, (5) introduction of participants, (6) opening question (1989). Ground rules consisted of a set of guidelines that established the group as a place where participants would feel free to express their opinions and views; however, they were reminded to expect differing points of view and respect these differences. Participants also turned off their cell phones to silent so as to not disrupt the discussion. The opening question involved all participants early on in the conversation. Once each participant answered the initial question, the discussion moved forward with the pre-established line of inquiry.

My focus group discussions were guided by a set of questions that I drew from the ideas as set forth by Walter Fisher (Baesler, 1995) concerning narrative coherence and fidelity. These concepts led into further understanding of the consequences related to the persuasive effects of Facebook storytelling (1997). Variables from Baesler's single item 1-9 point scale were altered to gain greater understanding of coherence and fidelity as related to narrative effects; these variables included: complexity (simple/complex), readability (easy/difficult to read), personalness (personal/impersonal). A list of the questions used to guide the focus group discussions is found in Appendix A.

Analysis of Focus Group Discussions

I analyzed the data according to Patton's (Krueger & Casey, 2009) advice that an analyst has an obligation to "Do your very best with your full intellect to fairly represent the data and communicate what the data reveals given the purpose of the study" (p. 434). Once researchers complete and transcribe all observations and recordings they then make sense of the data. Focus groups require that analyses are systematic, verifiable, sequential, and continuous (Krueger & Casey, 2009). Systematic analysis allows for the deliberate, planned, careful, and critical evaluation of data. My systemic analysis followed the conventions set forth by the thematic approach to qualitative data. This approach involved creating and applying categories to the focus group transcripts These categories emerged from counting presence, frequency, and intensity of ideas (Miles & Huberman, 1984). An initial reading of the transcripts allowed me to create themes related to the categories of relationships, online vs. and offline, and friends. By looking at relational words and similar themes, I was able to collapse a number of sub-categories to fit within the three broader categories. By merging the categories, I arrived at four new

themes: (1) keeping it real; (2) Facebook official; (3) friending; and (4) relationship boundaries—friends as families. These themes helped me to make sense of students' stories related to the offline consequences of online performances of identity.

I increased the rigor of the analysis process by making sure that my categories had the three elements Boyatzis (1998) suggests: (1) a label; (2) a description of when and how to exclude themes; and (3) both positive and negative examples of the theme to avoid confusion. Following this procedure ensured that other researchers would be able to extract the same themes if coding my focus group data.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an explanation of the methods used in this study of narrative performance of the self on Facebook. A Narrative rhetorical analysis of profiles provides a breadth dimension to my study and helps answer questions related to the performance of self through online narratives. Focusing on rhetorical content moves away from intentionality of producers and moves towards unintended interpretations. Focus groups provide a dimension of depth and help make connections between living online and offline by analyzing the effects of online messages.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF ARTIFACTS

The findings presented in this chapter emerged from two separate rhetorical

analyses involving undergraduate, University of New Mexico students, (1) of 100

Facebook profiles, and (2) of the transcriptions from three focus groups. The Narrative

Performance Model (NPM) as well as the Model of Narrative Construction guided the

analysis of the Facebook profiles and helped uncover the rhetorical features and symbols

used in the construction of online identities through deciphering narrative fragments. A

thematic analysis facilitated the analysis of the focus groups and allowed me to answer

the research question related to media effects: What are the offline consequences of

performing a virtual self through a Facebook profile?

Rhetorical Analysis of Narrative Fragments of Identity on Facebook

An examination of the rhetorical artifacts of the Facebook profiles revealed five

categories of narrative fragments, each of which contribute to the creation and

interpretation of an online identity. Different elements of Facebook profiles constitute the

narrative fragments. I refer to these elements as fragments as opposed to completed

narratives because the Facebook structure does not fit with those of conventional

narrative; however, each element still contains strategically crafted messages which

illuminate specific performances of the self. By putting these narrative fragments

together, readers (also referred to as students) fill in missing content from the narrative

and create coherence in the overarching narratives of identity.

The five types of narrative fragments discussed in this analysis result primarily

from the rhetorical choices of form, style, and content found in the "Personal

Information" "Say Something" and "Photo Album" sections of the profiles. Each of these

rhetorical constructions contributes to a type of story and constitutes the performance of the virtual self on Facebook profiles. The five categories of narrative fragments of identity are: (1) The Essential Self, which is a primary category by which the profile's creator articulates an idealized self through personal descriptors; (2) The Desired Self is a secondary category which in which the profile's creator expresses desires for the future; (3) The Preferential Self is the tertiary category in which the profile's creator offers personal valuations through one-sided arguments; (4) The Dynamic Self is the quaternary category in which the profiler narrates a self through affiliations with certain activities; and (5) The Demanding Self is the final category in which the profile's creator invites readers to participate in the narrative through certain language choices.

Defining the two categories of participants in this study is important. The first category is a Facebook creator (also known as "student" in some sections of the analysis). A creator both produces a Facebook profile and performs the narratives of identity through the content posted on their page. The second is the category of "readers," and they also have their own Facebook profiles and have access to the other creators' profiles. This study divides readers into three categories based on affiliation: (1) the general readers, who are an acquaintance of the creator, but not a genuine friend; (2) the readers with shared history, and who are genuine friends, meaning both parities share some sort of connection as a result of shared past experiences and because of the close connection, this reader can find meaning and make connections of the fragments in ways that I, as the analyst, cannot; and (3) the reader who is critical of the page, including myself, the researcher, parents, employers, etc. The type of reader classification dictates the way in which the reader reads and interprets the profile. Each reader interacts with the narrative

fragments to make meaning by synthesizing information and relating it to their story of identity and that of other college students. Each reader infers messages differently allowing for multiple ways of understand the narrative performances of identity.

In order to make sense of the narrative fragments, I use three levels of analysis. The multiple levels enable me to "read" the narrative at multiple levels by considering different readers. The analytical structure contains the following levels. (1) The primary level takes into consideration the general reader, who has limited knowledge of the creator, and explores the explicit and literal messages of the narrative. Language and paralinguistic cues reveal the content of messages. Relevant concepts in this level of analysis include idealized and deviant identities and front stage. (2) The secondary level focuses on readers with shared schemas, cognitive structures in which knowledge is organized as a framework for future understanding. With a shared history, readers have more schemas to fill in the gaps in the narrative that lead to a coherent story of someone's identity. Relevant concepts include impression management, one-sided arguments, and popular culture references. (3) The tertiary level explores the critical readings and evaluations of the unintended reader. This level moves away from the explicit and intended messages, and also hints at (suggests) unintended, implicit messages created as a result of rhetorical choices. Relevant concepts include tone, which makes implicit reference to tastes and cultural capital.

This system of analysis supports my argument that online narratives differ from literary narratives in that they are fragmented and must be read and interpreted differently depending on how the readers makes meaning from the narrative. The rhetorical choices of creators not only construct the narrative but also signify a social performance. The

following section offers an analysis of each of the five fragments of identity essential self, desired self, preferential self, dynamic self, and the demanding self.

Narrative Fragment 1: Essential Self

Description

Narrative fragments of the essential self result from ascribed identities and the construction of an idealized self. Features of selective inclusion and exclusion facilitate the management of an idealized self, which makes possible the primary goal of self performance, acceptance of one's performed identity by one's perceived reader. The construction of narrative fragments emphasizing the essential self are a primary category at the core, or center, of the creator's social identity. The essential self is typically what people, both online and offline, experience first within a social encounter and afterward, people most often make value judgments concerning the creator based upon the performance of this particular identity.

Primary Analysis

Analysis of both the language and relevant paralinguistic cues of the narratives of the essential self reveal two categories of self (1) idealized and (2) communally structured. For this level, I do not confine the analysis to the "About Me" and "Say Something" sections of Facebook profiles, but rather include other explicit rhetorical expressions including relationship status, number of friends, pictures, and group affiliations.

Idealized. In their profiles, Facebook creators represent the self as an idealized image. While most literature on an idealized self speaks to a positive image, my analysis of the language used on profiles exposes both positive and negative idealizations. An

idealized self primarily exists as a glorification of what one should or ought to be in terms of social acceptability. Students performing a positive self use language related to personality types and characteristics that elicit an image of the model young adult. Profiler 3 offers the first example of this language use, noting "I am intelligent, worthwhile and interesting. The greatest joy in life is making a positive influence on the world around me. I have great moral fortitude also." Not only does Profiler 3 list his personality traits, but he also supplies his view on the role of an individual in the world. The Profilers 95 and 16 are more indirect in their descriptions of their essential selves. Profiler 95 writes,

> Well [,] I'm basically your typical girl that likes to have fun but knows when to be serious. I've been told that I'm strong willed, and I would like to say that when I want something I'll get it. I'm very happy go lucky and really am only interested in positive people. Dance is my life! Although it's only my minor [,] if I had to drop everything else to keep it [,] I would. I'm going to study and hopefully become an environmental lawyer.

Any reader evaluating Profiler 95's profile likely would conclude that she has a strong balance in her life. She clearly cares what others think of her as she includes a trait that an acquaintance uses to describe her, *strong-willed*. While some may attach a negative connotation with strong-willed, her lack of context and the overall tone of her fragmented narrative exude positivity. Her future aspirations are admirable, and she exhibits passion in her description of dance.

Profiler16 is more focused in his self-description. Attention to wording reveals that he is a hard-working, school oriented, driven individual. He states,

I am currently working on my BSCS at UNM. I enjoy relaxing and having care-free fun. I am a pretty mellow guy. I do what makes me happy. Most of my time is spent being productive. I can be called a work-aholic.

Another example of a creator who constructs a socially acceptable image is Profiler 85. Through the use of language of passion and postivity she creates this narrative,

I love dancing!!! I've been dancing for about 6 years and I hope to continue it in the future….I have the most amazing friends and sisters and I love them all dearly. I just love life and I love taking chances because you only live once. I'm a pretty outgoing girl and I am pretty easy to talk too [*sic*].

While the narratives do not foster much critical thinking nor do they offer profound content, they create an image of a person who is well-liked and accepted among social peers. Unless contradictory messages exist elsewhere on the profiles, readers would not question this idealized conception of self.

Upon further analysis I found the antithesis of the idealized self, the negative, deviant and often inadequate self. This narrative performance of identity is an essential self that is rebellious and contests the ideal conception of the college student. Language that characterizes this identity includes: alcoholic, freak, indecisive, manipulative, picky, obsessive-compulsive, weird, bad-ass, loud, smart-ass, and obsessed. Profiler 64 mirrors this kind of negative idealized self in his narrative fragment "I have a job, it's pretty alright, I'm in school, it's pretty lame…aside from that I'm not the most interesting person…if you've ever met a college dude in their early 20s with a social complex and that's an alcoholic, chances are you've met me."

While he projects an image of a productive member of society, he works and goes to school, he presents the descriptions of these social tasks as negative. As for the performance of self in this narrative, the student indicates that any sort of failure should be attributed to his general inadequacies and imperfections as a person.

Profiler's 52 and 24 offer descriptions of unattractive traits as well. Profiler 52 notes "I'm picky when it comes to everything; I have OCD," Profiler 24 writes "I'm loud, I talk a lot, and some people say I'm a smart ass." Defiant and negative descriptions are the opposite side of the idealized self. By showcasing these characteristics, the Facebook creators challenge societal expectations about acceptable identity and highlight personal behaviors that defy the reader's expectations of an acceptable performance. Rather than performing the customary idealized identity, these students perform deviant public identities that seem to seek readers who empathize with this kind of performance of self.

Profiler 55 offers an extreme example of a deviant identity. Her narrative focuses on defiant actions that can also be read as rebellious, "I'm manipulative, I smoke, I'm sarcastic. I am whatever you think I'm not." Narratives such as this challenge conventions of acceptable public behavior and offer backstage rather than front stage behaviors. In so doing, they create a shock value that tries to destabilize norms of conformity and politeness. Furthermore, deviant characteristics function as an "attention grabber" by offering a type of narrative that most readers (based upon the socially constructed conventions of Facebook) do not expect to see. These idealized performances, both positive and deviant, focus on the self as individual. The next section,

the communal self, looks to the construction of narratives that focus on a socially constructed or community based self.

Communally Structured. Narrative fragments qualifying as communally structured emerge primarily from an obvious paralinguistic cue, such as graphics, as well as from statements showing the profiler's group membership and number of friends. In addition to networking, one of the primary functions of Facebook (according to students in the focus groups) is sharing. Sharing primarily occurs in the form of pictures and tagging. The majority of the profiles analyzed contain at least 200 or more photos. The photos typically involve groups of people engaged in activities, such as camping, partying, drinking, dancing, eating etc. The picture albums are not always posted by the profile creator; rather, friends "tag" the creator causing the photos to show-up in the album. Tagging, which is naming and linking a person in a photo, connects two or more people together by asserting social affiliation. The tagged person does not exist alone in the Facebook reality, but rather he/she delineates connections with other creators, creating what is known as a network of friends.

Creators emphasize group membership through their network of friends and offer visual confirmation of the connection in the amount of friends they have on Facebook. For example, of the 100 profiles analyzed, only 23 people had less than 100 friends. I discovered the largest number of friends on any page was over 700, and the majority of creators had between 200 and 400 friends. The large number of "friends" that appear on profiles has serious implications for the definition of *friend*, an idea I discuss further in the final chapter.

In addition to establishing a communal, socially constructed self through the "friends" application, creators also utilize the "group" application, which provides a social identity in the form of group membership. Group memberships range from interests in books with the *Harry Potter and the people who love him at UNM*, political affiliations, *Barack Obama (One million strong for Barack), Democrats are sexier!,* UNM affiliations, *UNM howl raisers*, religion, *6 degrees of fellowship*, and causes, *Death of an innocent animal-Sign the petition!, Feed a child with just one click!.* Any person reading the lists of group affiliations on these profiles would not likely question the creators' interests or their membership in society (virtual in this case). Creators that do not claim membership to these groups are not privy to the goings-ons of the group, thus serving to legitimize the creators' affiliation and participation in the group.

Each of these examples of communal membership--photos, tagging, number of friends, and group affiliations--add narrative fragments that piece together the idealized narrative performance with the communal narratives. Readers also piece together the entire narrative that constitutes the Facebook profile in ways that connect their own schemas about college student identities with the profiler.

The idealized and communally structured essential self are primary narratives of identity that use explicit and literal rhetorical symbols to call attention to social identities for the profiles I analyzed. A different reading of the narrative surfaces when rhetorical elements are less literal and when the reading relies upon shared schemas for the college demographic of Facebook readers.

Secondary Analysis

Moving beyond the explicit and literal, the secondary level of analysis focuses on the narrative of the essential self as related to readers with shared schemas. Some rhetorical features help to create narrative fragments that provide further coherence to the narrative performance of the Facebook creator. The essential self on these profiles relies upon a reading by someone who has a shared history, a shared cultural reference, and or a shared language.

Shared History. The narrative of the essential self that pertains to a shared history can differ quite drastically from the explicit essential self narrated in the first level of analysis. Any reader who shares some sort of past or history with the Facebook creator (the level of history varies due to degree of friendship) has a frame-of-reference from which to make sense of the narrative fragments and piece them together in ways that align with the profile's narrative thereby increasing coherence and attributing meaning in line with the creator.

In addition the reader and creator often co-create a narrative through conversations. For example, when looking at wall posts on the profile page, stories are shared and elaborated. The creator starts the narrative by posting something in "What's on my mind." When a reader understands the reference or event, he/she responds to the post, thereby co-creating the remainder of the narrative.

Profiler1 offers an example of such a co-created narrative, developed through a shared-schema of creator and reader. Profiler1 posts a comment on her wall and one of her friend responds in the following narrative:

Profiler: It's not official, but I may have a job in CZ looking at biological crusties

from Nuevo Mexico and Spain! Yay, and weird all at the same time.

Reader: Holy awesomeness batman! Have to ask though, crusties?

Profiler: Not like boogers! Like the thingies in the soil that make the world go

round from a bottom up perspective. Sheesh, didn't you take plant biology classes

or has it been too long since you graduated??? Haha.

With a pre-established relationship, Profiler1 and her reader feel free to joke and offer

references which they share in common, such as the batman quote and reference to

graduating college.

Profiler 3 offers another example of a co-creation within a wall post in which the

meaning depends upon a shared reference:

Profiler 3 says she: "is rosebud [*sic*]"

Reader responds to Profiler 3 saying: "you [*sic*] sleigh me every time."

Profiler 3 answers: "YES! So happy someone got that. But no worries, it's not my

dying words or anything."

As a researcher, with numerous resources at my disposal, I cannot participate in meaning

construction using these references because I lack a shared schema based on the symbols

shared in this particular relationship. Therefore, this reader understood this narrative of

the essential self and expanded upon it in ways that I could not.

Not only does a shared history help readers understand the status updates, but it

also assists in the interpretation of preexisting narrative fragments. Readers at this level

may better understand why the profile's creator made the choices to include the

information discussed in the primary level of analysis of the essential self. For example,

if a reader knew that Profiler 10 studied abroad, he/she would interpret the pictures and comments made on the profile differently, and with more context, than someone who is nearly a stranger with no shared history.

Shared history results from a past connection and from the participation in mutual experience. A shared history plays a role in understanding the narratives created through the listing of favorite quotes. Creators often quote friends within this section. Without context, these quotations often make no obvious sense. Profiler 27's list offers an example of quotations that make little to no sense without a shared schema. Profiler 27 says "just let me flick it….otherwise I'ma [*sic*] sock it real hard," I'm not a poon hunter," "murr [*sic*]." Profilers 29 and 34 use a similar rhetorical feature that includes these quotations from friends, Profiler 29 states "I shit on your boots," "You guys have never seen me this drunk right now [*sic*]." Profiler 34 uses examples that seem to mimic Profiler 29 "I don't like how she throws it in my face…but Vivian…she's just happy... and STUPID!," Profiler 27 says "It [*sic*] feels like we're in the titanic, at the end of the movie, where all the people and food are all old." Profilers 27 and 29 use the paralinguistic cue of humor in their narratives through these quotations thereby providing a connection between friends. Profiler 34's quotations seem to rely upon a shared context that supplies a back-story, that is a story constructed between the two parties at an earlier date.

Just as important as what is included on a profile is the information that is purposefully excluded. Exclusion of information is apparent when a shared history exists. A friend may call into question why the creator excluded seemingly important information about him or herself, or he/she may notice when one of the narratives of the

essential self does not align with the offline performance of this same self. When the

avowed identities performed on the front stage do not mesh with either the avowed

identities performed on the backstage, or the identities ascribed by the readers to the

creator, the message disrupts the narrative coherence and fidelity and potentially spoils

the credibility of the creator acting as the narrator. The deception that results from the

altered narrative can have serious consequences for that creator's specific relationship

and life offline (an issue that is discussed in the focus group analysis.) To avoid the

previously mentioned scenario related to coherence, users (both creators and readers)

engage in impression management. The narrative of the essential self, created through the

rhetoric used in the creator's performance, must match with the offline performance. If

continuity exists, then a kind of fidelity exists, thereby eliminating the threat of a failed

presentation of the self and an idealized identity.

Cultural Reference. In addition to sharing a history, readers can also piece

together the narrative fragments of the essential self through linked cultural schemas, in

this case, a shared reference to popular culture. Almost all of the references can be found

in the list of favorite music, TV shows, books, and quotes drawn from popular culture.

For example, Profiler 20's list of favorite TV shows include *Scrubs, South Park, Family*

Guy, and movie favorites include I am Legend, Dude Where's My Car, Harold and

Kumar. While each of these favorites provides a glimpse into his associations, they also

relate to a certain generation since the TV shows and movies (excluding *South Park*)

came into existence within the past nine years. These fragments of the essential self, then,

rely upon shared schemas related to generational interests about popular culture.

The use of "favorite quotes" as well as lyrical choices on the profiles offer an even stronger example of how shared cultural schemas help make sense of the narrative. To understand these references, the reader must possess knowledge of pop-culture. Quotations from movies, books, and songs suggest a type of identity that relies upon external cultural references to make sense and perform the self rather than on familial references or relationships. Profiler 39 quotes a character from the popular fantasy book and movie series, *Lord of the Rings,* "It's a dangerous business going out your front door." Profiler 40 quotes from the popular comic, Margaret Cho, as well as from the movie *Dark Night*, and by doing so offers a glimpse into who she is "Life is a tragedy for those who feel and comedy for those who think," Y'see, madness, as you know is like gravity. All it takes is a little push."

Music lyrics also require a schema for interactive meaning construction. All of the examples appear in the "Say Something" box, a space which is always present no matter which tab creators click on a profile. For example, Profiler 50 writes, "I find it kind of funny I find it kind of sad the dreams in which I'm dying are the best I've ever had. I find it hard to tell you cos [*sic*] I find it hard to take when people run in circles, it's a very very mad world," *Mad World*, by Tears for Fears. Clearly something about these lyrics spoke to her, but what they exactly refer to in her life is unknown as she offers no further discussion of the song in her profile.

Profiler 87 refers to the song *Talking Shit About a Pretty Sunset* by Modest Mouse in this way: "Talking shit about a pretty sunset, blanketing opinions that ill probably regret soon I've changed my mind so much I can't even trust it, my mind changed me so much I can't even trust myself." Similar to the lyrics posted by Profiler

50, these lyrics have meaning for the creator, but the meaning again is ambiguous. Profiler 87 references Johnny Cash's song *Won't Back Down*, "Well I know what's right, I got just one life, in a world that keeps pushing me around. But I'll stand my ground and won't back down," and Profiler 70 uses Jason Molina's song *Being in Love* as a representation of something he feels, "I am proof that the heart is a risky fuel to burn, yeah, we are proof that the heart is a risky fuel to burn."

These songs evoke a type of affiliation or social group reference that requires knowledge about music and college life in general. Without this schema, readers are unable to interpret this narrative fragment in the way the creator intended, thereby changing readers' impressions of the creator's identity and how the music lyrics enforce the performance of the essential self. Moreover, the purposeful ambiguity and artistic expression supplied by the lyrics allows for multiple interpretations of the true meaning behind the song. Listeners who extract similar meanings from the lyrics and have similar feelings as evoked by the song form a bond with one another based upon a common interpretation of the song.

Shared Language. Facebook creators and readers share a final schema in a common system of language. In addition to writing in English, students also use slang. Slang is the use of informal words and expressions that are not considered standard in language and are often considered a misuse of language conventions. The prevalence of slang in society is so great, that someone created two very specific online dictionaries, the Urban Dictionary and The Slang Dictionary, to help decipher this form of speech. The Urban Dictionary lists 4,199,599 definitions, ranging from *anywhoo,* "A more funky, radical way of saying anyways," to *shress*, "an article of clothing that is a mix between a

shirt and a dress. Best described as those frilly tops that girls wear over jeans or tights and often wear boots along with them"(Dictionary, 2009). These words reflect a very specific type of culture and function to help young people articulate and make sense of their world on and offline.

Examples of slang on profiles range from *hang out*, *chillin*, *holla at yo boi*, to *pretty sweet* and *babe*. Whether talking about *hanging out* (the first two expressions) or referring to women (*babes*) creators alter existing meanings and create new words and phrases to describe the world in which they live. Readers not privy to this particular system of language may find themselves confused, and this confusion may impact their ability to decode the narrative fragments or understand another's performance of the self.

In addition to creating new words and meaning systems, creators also alter the conventions of writing by challenging the traditional sentence structures and grammatical rules. By altering the standard conventions, students create a new form of writing that mimics conversational speech. Many of the narratives do not contain complete sentences, meaning that the sentence lacks a subject or a predicate, and creators rarely use clauses, modifiers, or phrases to enhance the narrative. Much of the information provided under the"Personal Information" tab exists in list-form as opposed to complete sentences. Creators use capitalization and punctuation very rarely and often inappropriately. An example of this language structure can be found in the "About Me" section of Profile 14: "San Diego Chargers fan, attending UNM just ask if you don't know." In this sentence he omits reference to a subject, does not use a comma consistently and does not use a period at the close of the sentence. While the sentence, if one can call it that, does not follow

grammatical conventions, most readers of this fragment can and will understand the overarching message.

Readers who do not share the same grammatical and language tendencies may judge the narrative negatively and assume that the creator is of low social status. Knowledge of the language system indicates a specific level of knowledge and education, and those whose narratives do not mirror these standards may well be considered ignorant, thus contributing to a type of social stratification based on knowledge (cultural capital). The final level of analysis further explores the issue of cultural capital by taking a critical look at the construction of the essential self on Facebook.

Tertiary Analysis

The final level of analysis involves a critical reading of narrative fragments. While the structure of Facebook, with the different and often non-related sections, does not foster critical thinking or promote a critical reading, as a researcher I see beyond these constraints and offer a new way of reading. The rhetorical elements that comprise the narrative fragment of the essential self uncover implicit and suggestive messages supplied by tone and cultural capital.

Tone refers to the creator's attitudes, either stated or implied, and reveals the self in subtle language choices that compose the narrative performance. Moreover, word choices associated with the idealized self contribute to specific dispositions including these descriptors--funny, independent, active, confident, loving, easy-going, enthusiastic, blessed, out-going, communicate optimism, joyfulness, affection, happiness, and vibrancy. On the opposite end of the spectrum, descriptors, such as distracted, freak, alcoholic, typical, manipulative, sarcastic, righteous, bad-ass, and smart-ass,

communicate a cynical self that is patronizing, contemptuous, lackadaisical, arrogant, and elegiac. Communicating these opposing attitudes affects a reader's interpretation of the self narrative. While the typical reader might not readily notice or take into account the tone, the language use impacts how a given profile is read and interpreted in relation to other narrative fragments.

Cultural Capital. Profiles function within a public space and contain private information expressed through the narrative performance, revealing aspects of the essential self. A front stage performance reveals only certain parts of the self and omits other pieces of information that would contradict or challenge a unified identity.

Performances that take place on the front stage are strategic and involve what Goffman (1959) calls appearance and manners. Functioning at the primary level, some readers may be aware of some blatant aspects of appearance and manners, such as personal wealth and conformity to Facebook rules and norms. While recognizing aspects of appearance and manner in the performance helps with the surface level reading, understanding how these features create identity produces a more complex understanding of how and for whom the narrative actually functions.

Appearance refers to pieces of the performance that offer a reflection of the creator's social status. These pieces of information, which relate to certain social standings, serve as a form of cultural capital that provides social designations. When creators quote well known scholars, politicians, world leaders, etc, they appear to have a certain amount of intelligence and associations with the taste cultures. Examples of some intellectuals referenced in profiles include Winston Churchill, William Blake, Buddha, Karl Marx, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Gahndi, Abraham Lincoln, and the Bible.

While these references clearly connote a version of self that is easily interpreted by most readers and in line with the creator's goals, it is not until a comparison is made with other profiles that the differences in levels of cultural capital become evident. Creators often quote from less prestigious sources who represent popular culture, such as Vince Vaughn, *The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill*, Dave Shapelle, *That 70's Show*, Ferris Buller. While I do not dispute that these popular icons create shared schemas for creators and readers, they indicate the creator is less cultured, mature or intelligent as compared to those creators who quote Gandhi.

Narrating an essential self with differing levels of cultural capital influence how readers, such as parents, potential employers, or scholars, might interpret the performances of students' profiles. These choices represent a self that may or may not match with what the creator intended and in so doing can have offline consequences. For example, if a potential employer reads the profile and interprets these associations and representations negatively, he/she may not hire the potential employee because the person represented through the narratives does not match with the image or values of the organization. In effect, there are offline consequences for online performances.

Manner refers to the way a creator conducts him/herself. Recognizing certain behaviors on a profile is much more difficult than doing so offline because the structure of Facebook dictates certain actions. The layout forces creators to divulge only certain types of information, as evidenced through the profile categories of personal information, basic information, friends, photos, applications, status. While the wall fosters some degree of action among creators, the system set in place by Facebook dictates not necessarily what is said, but how (format) the information appears. When manners,

appearance, and the different narrative fragments conflict, the coherence and fidelity of the narrative can be fractured, and the reader is likely to make interpretations that differ from the goals of the profile's creator. For example, if a profiler narrates a solitary self in the "About Me" and then posts pictures in his/her "album" in which he/she is always surrounded by people, creating a socially engaged self, the narrative of identity becomes contradictory, and this disrupts the narrative coherence.

Clearly any analysis conducted at the tertiary level becomes biased since a critical reading and interpretation depend upon perspectives. Narratives of the essential self reveal an enormous amount of information related to identity, and the reader's presence, whether assumed or real, influences whether or not the creator includes or excludes certain information; more specifically, the idea of an intended reader influences the narrative performance. The performance is clearly socially constructed and the narrative of self evolves over time as preferences and interests change. While this category of identity focuses on the issue of "Who am I at the present moment?" and provides a kind of core identity, the category of the desired self focuses on future goals and aspirations providing another piece of the narrative performance puzzle.

Narrative 2: Desired Self

Description

Narrative fragments of desire convey a longing for something in the creator's life. Rhetorical choices of phrases such as "I want" and "I hope" express wishes and future aspirations. Instead of expressing fact, much like the narratives of the essential self, these narratives of desire express uncertainty as well as communicate how the creator envisions their future self, a truly desired, "hoped for" self. This vision of self is grounded in shared

desires of their reference group, undergraduate, college students. The following sections

analyze the different layers of desire in an attempt to further understand the fragmented

narrative of identity.

Primary Analysis

This first level of analysis focuses on language use and draws from the "About

Me" section of the profile. This section of the Facebook profile offers the most blatant

and literal expressions of desire. Phrases such as, "I want," and "I hope," point to explicit

narratives of desire. Two types of narratives emerge from the analysis: (1) narratives of

fulfillment; and (2) narratives of personal growth.

Fulfillment. Expressions of fulfillment allude to things the creator believes will

bring about happiness. A number of these narratives focus on happiness as obtained

through a career. Profiler 27 "want [s] to be a mechanical engineer; Profiler 61 is "a

freshman at UNM, studying to be a computer engineer with the hope of being an Audio

Producer someday." He also "love[s] music and want[s] it to be a big part of [his] life,

but if its not, [I] still want a good degree to make some money with. Profiler 96 says she

is "going to study and hopefully become a[n] environmental lawyer."

These narratives of desire are not surprising given that the participants of this

study are college-age. One of the most pressing concerns of college students, other than

graduating, is finding a job, more specifically the ideal job (based upon the student's

passions and interests.) What is also interesting is that the desire for a career/job relies

specifically upon the self rooted in the present and influenced by socially significant

others. College majors and passions dictate these narratives, and students fail to mention

any real life concerns, such as the economy, actual skills or training as part of their narrative.

Yet another type of fulfillment relies upon completing certain activities. The creators of the profiles seem to assume that once they complete these activities they will somehow become happier and more fulfilled. Profiler10 speaks to some daredevil activities completed in the past and mentions others she wishes to complete in the future," I love crazy fun things (like flying, oh ya I've done it, and one day soon am going to skydive and bungii jump!)." Profiler 39 dreams of traveling and contributing to society through the arts, "I want to see the world, even it's all at once from the moon or something. If I ever name movies, I'd like to make at least one of every genre (Drama, Horror, Comedy, Sci-Fi, etc.)" Profilers 83 and 99 express a hope to "continue dancing" and Profiler 84 wants "to be a pin-up. Bettie Paige style ☺."

Again, these profilers base their desires on their current interests. While this study is not longitudinal, it would be quite useful to see how these desires change over time and if they match with their most current Facebook narrative of self. As life changes, what constitutes happiness also changes. Finally, while there are a few common actions that might contribute to happiness, most visions of happiness are just that, visions and not reality.

Personal Growth. Narratives related to desire for personal growth focus on doing "things" that will result in some-sort of positive improvement of self. Profile creators performing these narratives often speak of traveling the world. Creators seem to believe that by traveling the world they will return changed. Seeing the world offers new perspectives and challenges what once was believed to be definite and true. By traveling

the world, creators can tell new stories and discover new ways of performing their narratives.

Personal growth is also articulated through narratives of learning and understanding. Profiler 99 provides a list of the things she hopes to learn one day:

I learn from those around me and I will never quit learning. I want to learn as much as I can about this world before I leave it. I want to learn how to sustain myself outside of society. I want to learn how to build a house. I want to learn to dance. I want to be fluent in French, Spanish, German, Italian, Portuguese, Swahili, Arabic, Hindu, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Greek, and Latin. I want to know how to make this world a better place for my generation and the next. I want to learn how to fix my own car. I want to learn how I am. I want to learn how to accept myself. I want to learn how the world works. I want to learn how people work. I want to learn.

This desire to learn alludes to an essential self that has a thirst for knowledge and seeks out life experiences that foster personal growth through both erudition and personal experiences.

Profiler 3 provides an example of personal growth that is a bit more modest and limited than Profiler 99, through his expressed desire to understand people. Profiler 3 "wants to make everyone I meet smile and laugh," and in order to do that, he must understand what makes people happy. Through another person's happiness, he experiences happiness himself. Laughter and smiles then serve a dual purpose for this student.

At this level, the reader recognizes the desired self through the specific rhetorical choices and through expressions of these visions using verbs indicating future goals, "I want" and "I hope." The following section provides a different perspective on the desired self by focusing on understanding that results because of shared schemas.

Secondary Analysis

This section focuses on the issue of impression management as related to the desired self, and considers what is included and excluded on the profiles, and how readers with shared schemas might interpret the constructed narrative.

Inclusion. Readers with shared schemas possess a clearer understanding of how the creator decides to perform the desired self. Specifically, both the creator and reader share similar experiences thereby allowing them to relate and interpret the profiles in a specialized manner.

A reader with a shared schema will understand why students feel the need to construct narratives about fulfillment and personal growth. College students often derive a sense of self from their status as student. Most things in life revolve around and depend upon academic success and it often becomes difficult to penetrate the "bubble" that constitutes college life. One way to break this bubble is to look beyond one's current life situation and envision a future. Students use their Facebook profiles to perform this envisioned future thorough a narrative of the desired self.

Narratives of fulfillment and personal growth represent a self that desires to move beyond current avowed and ascribed identities, and create and re-envision the self through new and yet to be experienced social interactions and situations. Readers who share in this desire are able to understand what it feels like to not fully understand who

the self is and to not fully understand one's true potential. The reader recognizes the need for situations that facilitate personal growth and likely understands why the narratives, at this point and time, are so limited and similar in theme. One specific example of a narrative of the desired self comes from an expressed desire to travel.

A desire to travel emanates from the need to move beyond the confines of structured education (in which the student has been confined for at least the last 18 years) and experience and apply what the student learned. Navigating the world requires a maturity and openness that comes with both knowledge and age. Traveling affords a type of escape, which students often need after graduation, and it appeals to an adventurous self.

Frequently, traveling brings about challenges, and to deal with these trials, students must have the appropriate skill-set. With the right skill-set, it becomes possible to overcome any obstacles and critically evaluate each situation and act in an appropriate way. Students must also internalize experiences they encounter while traveling and understand how to incorporate these lessons into their lives. Internalization requires the ability to think critically and to embrace change. While students may not understand what traveling entails, they can appreciate that the desire to travel stems from a longing for adventure and their current status as an academic drone.

The elements that profile creators choose to include in the narratives of the desired self not only provide social affiliation, but also contribute to an idealized essential self. By creating narratives related to fulfillment and personal growth, students demonstrate that they long to be a well-rounded person who contributes effectively to society. The desires to learn, travel, and excel in a career are not selfish, but rather, are

noble as students wish to give back to the world as well as become better informed about the world around them. Just as important as what students include to create a respectable self is the information students decide to exclude.

Exclusion. Students are usually strategic in their performances of a desired self. Certain word choices coupled with the exclusion of some less than altruistic desires enhance the coherence of the idealized self narrative. In the explicit narratives, students focused on desires that would lead to a positive, constructive self. Students did not focus on desires that would seem selfish, such as the desire for fame, large amounts of money, material goods, unwarranted success, or harm to others because these word choices would disrupt the believability of the narrative of self because the narrative would lack what Fisher calls fidelity, that is, the narrative told lacks soundness and fails to resonate with reader's experiences.

While word choices are strategic and certain ideas are excluded, certain readers might infer specific messages from what was not included in the listing of past jobs. The majority of students include past work experience on their profiles, and a good number include descriptions of those jobs. With a close reading, certain readers (close friends and those who worked in a similar line of work) would detect sarcasm, bitterness and perhaps some self-effacement. Profiler 99 describes her current job at Dion's Pizza as "Not the worst place to work," and her past job as a buser, "It kinda sucks and the pay is crappy but the people I work with are cool and we're kinda like family ☺." Profiler 100 describes his job as a model as consisting of "being bored and looking pretty." Profiler 70 offers two thorough descriptions of previous and current jobs, "I cook chicken...," "Practically did everything. Held keys to the store, but never promoted to management.

$6.00 an hour. Worked for four years and never got promoted. Over the course of the time I worked there I made a dollar raise." Profiler 40 also lists three jobs and provides descriptions for all. Her description as a personal trainer is as follows:

> This is how I support my urge to collect action figures and comic books, and it's two fold: A) It gives me money, B) Being unemployed and spending money pm Transformers merchandise more often than not fills you with the urge to kill yourself for the betterment of mankind.

Her thoughts on being a stable hand include "This is the most you'll risk your life shoveling poo," and finally, she tells about her bout as a lawnmower, "I mowed lawns with my BFF. And [*sic*] got stared at/hit on by creepy old golfers." Her humorous descriptions imply that she, along with the students from the other examples, do not enjoy performing these tasks and wish for something better. By poking fun at themselves, the students tell the readers their jobs do not define who they are, but rather they are capable of better things and deserve more from life. This rhetorical feature helps with impression management by performing a narrative that the reader finds acceptable and fitting with the other narrative fragments offered through the profile and that match the educational context.

In addition to these messages, the reader may also pick up on a sense of entitlement. This may or may not hold true for the individual who created the profile, but the reader may interpret the performance as such. Through the job descriptions, students suggest that the jobs are demeaning and that they simply hold these positions for the monetary payoff. Some students may think they should do more life-changing,

worthwhile jobs, while others attempt to further the narrative of a deviant self using negative images and word choices that connote an apathetic and ungrateful attitude.

This level of analysis illustrates that the interpretation (as intended by the creator) of the narrative performances depends upon a shared schema. If there is no shared context or history, the reader will attribute different meaning to the messages than initially intended, and in so doing, may challenge the coherence and fidelity of the narrative of identity. The final analysis of the desired self concentrates on the issues of cultural capital and taste and explores how rhetorical features contribute to stratification.

Tertiary Analysis

The final analysis in this section investigates the suggestive nature of the desired self. I pay particular attention to how certain desires imply levels of cultural capital and contribute to particular tastes, which allow students to imply judgments about people, practices and things.

Cultural Capital. The primary analysis of the desired self narratives revealed two themes, fulfillment and personal growth. These themes are explicit in nature and depend upon certain language choices. Moving beyond the actual desire and the language used, I find that these desired selves depend upon certain amounts of cultural capital. For example, Profilers 27, 61, and 95 articulate desires related to careers in mechanical engineering, computer engineering, and environmental lawyer. As a result of the previously established coherence, the desire itself is quite straightforward and probable to anyone reading the profile; however, to achieve this desire and more importantly this particular socially desirable self, one must possess certain types of cultural capital to make possible the obtainability of the career.

Having a career, specifically those expressed by these three students, depends upon a number of factors, specifically access to education. An interest in education, specifically higher education, like college, develops as a result of access and support. First, a student must have access to primary and secondary education. Schools that support college as the ultimate academic achievement are critical in the obtainment of the career goal. Instilled with this type of mentality, children usually prepare themselves, both consciously and unconsciously for the challenge of school. Support from parents, teachers, mentors, and significant others is extremely influential in a student's life because these people contribute to the profiler's desire to succeed academically. Help with homework, tutoring programs, and proper training also help contribute to this academic success.

Second, systemic issues also either help or hinder academic success. For example, schools that offer college-prep courses set up students for success by providing them with the necessarily skills to succeed beyond secondary schools. Also, schools with access to technology typically have higher academic performance than those who do not possess the funds to acquire the technology. Class size as well as teacher training also impacts the quality of learning and overall success of students.

The third and final factor contributing to the desire for a successful career is access to capital. Without money, students cannot afford to attend college. The issue of cost is extremely timely and pressing as the price of college attendance continues to increase dramatically each year. Community colleges, which serve as a great stepping-stone and in some cases alternative to four year colleges, are known for more affordable prices, in present times, however, that is no longer the case. While more affordable than

the four-year college plan, prices and fees make attending community college often impossible thereby reducing the number of options for academic success beyond high school. Scholarships, grants, and loans often offset some of the college expenses; however, with the current budget crises the likelihood of a student receiving one of these forms of funding assistance seems unlikely.

In summary, obtaining a successful career is dependent upon both economic and cultural capital and serves to stratify society by allowing educated students access to high-paying jobs and to keep those with limited education in blue-collar positions. While all of the profilers in this study clearly have some degree of economic and cultural capital, since they are all college students, it is unclear what opportunities these profilers had earlier in life and whether they truly appreciate this new level of cultural capital and use it for self-improvement, or instead, squander the opportunity.

The issue of travel also serves as a type of cultural capital. Traveling exposes people to a variety of cultural differences as well as different perspectives. As a result of these experiences, people gain knowledge that sets them apart from those who do not possess the means to engage in the luxury of travel. Students who seem to truly appreciate this type of cultural capital document their experiences in multiple ways on their profiles. Profilers 5 and 10 discuss their love for travel, specifically related to studying abroad, in a number of different sections of their profiles such as interests, groups, profile pictures, and picture albums. Both students share their experience with friends and reflect upon them in their notes and wall posts. The plethora of information and the self-reflection show that Profilers 5 and 10 do not take for granted the

opportunity to study abroad, but rather, they benefit from the experience and appreciate the chance to travel.

Exposing oneself to these different experiences also contributes to the creation of taste/taste cultures. According to Ollivier (2004), taste is part of the process by which social creators construct meaning about their social world, classifying people, practices, and things into categories of unequal value. Consequently, when a student makes certain rhetorical choices in the narration of the desired self, he/she demonstrates his/her taste preferences and exposes his/her world views.

When analyzed from a basic level, narrative fragments of the desired self appear to simply provide a preview of a "hoped for" self. Analyzing this self from a more critical standpoint reveals profilers' hopes for the "hoped for" self that rely upon and contribute to certain types of cultural capital. Furthermore, both cultural capital and taste serve as an identity and status marker thereby perpetuating social stratifications of class.

Narrative #3: Preferential Self

Description

A third piece of the narrative performance of identity centers upon a preferential self. Narratives of preferential self rely upon rhetoric, such as "I like, I don't like, I hate, and I love." These expressions convey certain tastes and offer compelling insights into the larger narrative of self. Furthermore, the preferential self depends upon the assumed choice between alternatives, which is based upon the happiness, utility, satisfaction they provide.

Experiences shape preferences, and these preferences guide certain behaviors. At this level of analysis, I do not look to the experiences that inform the preferences and the behaviors that result from them, but rather, I look at examples of these explicit messages, found in the "About Me" section and the self that results from the performance.

Personal Valuations. Profile creators perform their preferential selves through an articulation of likes and dislikes. These personal valuations exist on a scale in which like and dislike represent the weakest valuation and hate and love represent the strongest valuation. I begin the analysis by looking at the weakest expressions of preference, like and dislike, and then move to the strongest indicators of taste, love and hate

Expressions of "like" feature preferences for certain things. Profiler 19 likes pizza; Profiler 39 likes cats and Facebook; Profiler 62 likes good tunes; Profiler 54 likes good friends; Profilers 61 and 73 like hanging out with friends; and Profiler 84 likes it "when people know how to spell, drive a standard, and bake cakes." Expressions of negative judgment (dislike) appear the least often and again, focus on "things," including objects and music. Profiler 27 doesn't like rap, and Profiler 84 doesn't like clowns, snakes, or sharks. While these examples provide certain predilections, they are rather mundane and ordinary and offer limited insights into the actual identities; however, what they do is create what Burke (1951/1969) calls categories of negative. These negatives constrain human action and sets up a hierarchy of actions and knowledge.

Expressions of love and hate are more specific and center upon people and activities and provide positive associations. Most people who communicate some type of love also divulge what they also hate. Many students communicate love for family and

friends. For example, Profiler 85 says she "loves my family and friends more than anything." Profiler 84 reports something quite similar to Profiler 85, "I love my friends and family so much. They are my life." Profiler 61 is not quite as explicit in his love for family, but the actual sentiment is quite clear, "Family and friends are a big part of my life; I would go to the ends of the world for them because usually they would do the same for me. You have a problem with them; you most definitely have a problem with me."

The types of activities that students love have a dramatic range. Profiler 15 loves "to know random facts that will have no useful purpose in life besides amusing me and starting awesomely random conversations;" Profiler 10 says, "Well there isn't much to know about me. It's simple. I love sports (anything to do with them!), I love the outdoors (especially backpacking), I love crazy fun things; and Profiler 17 "just likes to have fun, there is nothing wrong in that right? (and) I love keeping up with everything political that is going on."

As mentioned previously, some students offer both what they love and hate simultaneously. Profiler 12 is "loving school even though last semester I slacked. Football, I love it like it was my first love....I love me some ladies lately I been lookin [*sic*] for one girl to call mine and me hers…I love being happy and hate being sad so that's why I'm always happy!!!" Profiler 84 says she loves "my friends and family so much. They are my life. I hate school. I hate fake, rude, arrogant, ignorant people. I hate New Mexico. But it'll have to do for now; and Profiler 27 loves "being cold by don't get cold easily??? I hate people who TyPe like This. I love girls but I hate them, but mostly love them a lot….I love baby ruth candy bars with a passion…. I love going to shows.. I love my plaid shorts."

Each of the students narrates their preferences in a certain order, love, and then hate. The ordering of these narratives show the importance of life's pleasures over the frustrations encountered on a daily basis. In addition, the juxtaposition of positive and negative preferences supports an idealized representation. Focusing on positive preferences promotes the likeability of the profiler by showcasing their passion for the good things in life, and by deemphasizing negative affiliations students reduce the probability of negative interpretations of the narrative of self by readers of the profile. Moreover, students distort the words of love and hate by applying the same term to important people and events as they do to trivial items such as candy bars and plaid shorts. By doing this, students reduce the power and passion associated with these descriptors, which in effect makes them weak and benign. The following section moves beyond the preferential choices and looks to how the performance of this self is made possible by the use of a one-sided argument.

Secondary Analysis

The performance of the preferential self relies upon the strategy of a one-sided argument. Narrative fragments of preference function as a one-sided argument in that the statement made is not refutable. The structure of the narrative does not allow feedback, thus allowing the creator to communicate claims without fear of criticism or a counter-argument. The use of statements, such as "I like, I don't like," function as claims and make clear the central argument. Most students do not appear to use arguments to persuade their reader, but rather to make clear their preferences and tastes.

One-sided arguments also help attract readers with shared schemas to strengthen their existing connections. When a reader agrees with and relates to the argument created

in the creator's profile, the connection between the two is in effect strengthened because a common ground exists. A reader might then want to learn more about the creator and will read and interact further with the profile.

On the contrary, if a reader does not agree with the central claims of the creator's argument a dispute may arise. The construction and actual structure of the narrative by Facebook users is dictated by the site's structural constraints, which offer little to no room for criticism. If the reader happens to disagree with the one-sided argument presented by the profiler, then this disagreement typically manifests itself through a conscious decision to limit contact. The reader can decide to simply not interact with the creator online or take the extreme action of deleting the friend from their friend list and ultimately end the relationship offline.

One-sided arguments force readers to accept the narrative performance of self without question. The structure of Facebook combined with the narrative form prevents feedback and allows arguments to remain unchallenged. While the lack of counter arguments helps keep the creator's position uncontested, this does not necessarily mean the reader will be persuaded by the profiler's narrative. Because readers have limited abilities and chances to refute the profiler's argument, the profiler actually retains a sense of power and control over the message content. This control produces a type of gratification that intersects with the ideas set forth in the Uses and Gratifications Theory, where the uses and gratifications are not for the readers as much as for the profiler.

The final level of the analysis of the preferential self moves from exploring readings by readers with shared schemas to interpretations from a critical reader. The

narrative performance elucidates the tastes and cultural affiliations and niches of the creator.

Tertiary Analysis

The performance of the preferential self looks to the issues of taste as articulated through statements of valuation. In addition to addressing issues of taste, this analysis also explores the idea of cultural preferences as related to the perpetuation of social stratifications online.

Tastes. Taste signifies a type of discrimination, a preference for certain objects, human or otherwise. Taste, in this analysis, results from exposure and life experiences, and appears in aesthetic judgments the profiler makes; however, this analysis of judgments moves beyond the appreciation of beauty and looks more to the general quality and aptness. Discernment of quality and appropriateness develop from culture as well as exposure. Culture influences judgments and behaviors and sets forth certain schemas for understanding the world, which in turn help individuals develop personal preferences or likings.

Students narrate their tastes of both high as well as low culture. High culture suggests a set of cultural products, often artistic in nature, held in highest esteem by society. Low culture, typically used as a derogatory term for popular culture, refers to products that hold mass appeal. Students that reference high culture in their preferences typically express a desire for self-improvement through the use of arts, such as dance, drawing, writing, and playing music. Whether personally engaging or observing these activities, students who narrate these high cultural interests show a level of sophistication.

While taste seems like a less obvious feature of identity, it actually helps uncover issues related to class and cultural capital.

Some critics attack high culture as advancing elitism. Often, a small segment of the population has access to or is educated in these activities; moreover, these cultural interests contribute further to social stratification. Access to enjoyment of these cultural activities creates a divide and a "have/have-not" situation. When the hierarchical arrangement of society and an individual's cultural status depend upon money and money enables access and education, it follows then that those without money remain confined to their lower position in society.

While popular culture in its own right is not necessarily negative, the stigma attached to some cultural products is quite negative. Students who communicate a preference for reality T.V., escapist fiction, fantasy, popular music, sports etc. show their affiliation with and appreciation of popular tastes and mass culture. The perspectives and ideas expressed through popular culture permeate the everyday lives of people and some critics consider the ideas informal and mainstream. Those who appreciate high culture often find popular culture trivial and vulgar and use these cultural interests as a standard by which to define high cultural tastes and practices.

While this subgroup of culture continues to define the social strata, the line between high and low cultures has also begun to blur. Those in positions of power, and who consider themselves the ruling social groups, have expressed interests and predilections for some popular culture preferences. Recently in an interview on CBS President Barack Obama divulged his list of favorite movies and at the top of that list was *The GodFather* 1 and 2. A man as influential and as powerful as President Obama enjoys

a movie that a large percentage of the population enjoys. The blurring of cultural

boundaries creates commonalities among groups, which can foster understanding; while

this is a positive outcome of the blurring process, similar interests cannot erase decades

of discrimination and stratification. The narrative performance of the preferential self

provides many insights into individual tastes, and these tastes serve to link people to

particular cultural subgroups. Profiler 2 offers an example of this linking process. In her

profile she lists three favorite TV shows related to vampires and/or zombies, and in her

"Say Something" box she says "It's not about the zombies, It's about the brains." Profiler

2's preference for gothic and the undead link her to a popular culture subgroup that

appreciates fantasy and things related to the underworld. People who affiliate with high

culture tastes would not appreciate the preference of the fantasy world and would most

likely scoff at this child-like interest. The following section moves beyond valuations and

explores the idea of the self in motion.

<div align="center">*Narrative #4: Dynamic Self*</div>

Description

The performance of the dynamic self provides a look at the self in motion. Within

this narrative the creators perform by *doing* things, more specifically they perform certain

activities. This narrative reveals what students choose to do with their time, and how

these activities actually structure their lives. The activities rely upon social interaction

and can, upon deeper analysis, help understand the narrative performance of identity.

Primary Analysis

This level of analysis focuses on the rhetoric found within the following sections

of the Facebook profile "Activities," "Interests," and "About Me." These sections offer

<div align="center">130</div>

explicit listings of activities, which are made known through the use of intransitive action verbs. Language use is critical at this level of analysis and provides the categories of different types of dynamic selves, such as those related to: (1) physical well-being; (2) self-improvement; (3) connection; and (4) debauchery.

Physical well-being. Students perform narratives of physical well-being through the use of verb forms that relate to activities that produce a healthy physical body. While some students provide a vague list of physical interests, such as sports, others supply a detailed list of activities. Profiler 1 enjoys swimming, biking, hiking, bouldering; Profiler 4 expresses interest in "climbing and repelling in the foot hills, sparing with my brothers, playing golf with buddies;" Profiler 14 enjoys working out; Profiler 21 does wakeboarding, water skiing, and snowboarding; and Profiler 24 enjoys working out, running, playing sports, wake boarding, and rock climbing. These profilers provide just a few examples of the types of activities represented by students as part of the dynamic and engaged self.

Students express their interests through the listing of these specific activities to provide readers with evidence to support their argument that they pursue an active, healthy lifestyle. Readers might interpret these healthy activities in one of two ways: (1) the reader might assume the creator is concerned about his/her physical health; or (2) the reader assumes they engage in activities to promote positive mental and spiritual health. Furthermore, this strategic listing might very well support the idealized self and function as strategic impression management. I discuss the details of this strategy in the second level of analysis.

Self-improvement. Students that narrate a dynamic self concerned with self-improvement list activities that are often creative and artistic in nature. Society often categorizes people who engage in these types of creative endeavors as imaginative and inventive. These skill-sets give depth to individuals and help set them apart from others who do not possess the same set of skills. Profiler 5 "enjoys learning how to cook;" Profiler 47 paints, reads, and likes artsy thing; Profiler 16 works on cars and programs and fixes computers; Profiler 19 considers himself a Renaissance man and enjoys painting and drawing; Profiler 20 reads philosophy; Profiler 40 enjoys acting, singing, cooking, dancing poorly; and Profiler 42 likes playing the piano, drawing, working out and making gangster movies. While many of these skills do not require an education, they do require actual talent, commitment, or passion. Students need not be competent at any of these skills to be considered creative, but their very interests demonstrate to readers that they have depth and wish to enhance personal development.

Interesting to note, many of these activities involve either limited or no involvement with others. This issue of acting alone may expose the creators' personality and help explain other facets of their identity. Because these are generally positive activities, the reader may recognize that the creator is performing an idealized identity. On the other hand, some readers may view these activities (they enforce solitude) as traits of a flawed or deviant identity, which defies the need for certain types of social interaction. Perhaps, a reader that shares a history or a schema with the creator can truly understand the original intention of this narrative.

Another common type of self-improvement not surprisingly performed by students is the act of going to school. Most profiles simply list "student" as an interest,

and assume readers will understand the implied activity of going to school. Some profiles offer more creative expressions of this activity. For example, one of the profiles lists only a single activity, and that is "studying my ass off." Based on the population I studied, being a student and engaging in activities related to student life is important to all of these creators. However, it is not as important as other activities listed on profiles. Perhaps, some students take their lives as a learner for granted and do not feel they need to list this part of their identity as it is quite obvious and taken for granted. Why then do other students choose to make this activity explicit when others do not? Maybe some perceive education as a gift and take it more seriously since they struggled to be able to attend college, while others may simply recognize education is a privilege and a task that should not be taken lightly. While the reason for including this information is not important to my analysis, the fact that certain students choose to include the activity as part of their narrative is important because it provides another piece of the narrative of identity. The designation of a "student" may be a core marker of the Facebook narrative in that it provides coherence to the other features of the narrative performance by connecting other narrative fragments.

 Connection. Many students perform narratives that involve activities that help keep them connected to others, specifically with friends. Students fulfill their need for connection by engaging in such activities as "hanging out with friends" and "chillin with friends." Some examples of the use of these colloquialisms can be found in the following profiles: Profiler 1 enjoys "chillin with the hommies;" Profilers 14, 16, 42, 61, 40, 76, 77, 83, 92, 97 and 56 say they like "hanging out with friends;" and Profiler 75 loves "hanging out with her boyfriend." Profiler 72 deviates from these lines of expression and lists that

she "just loves to get to know people." Profiler 5 also lists that he likes meeting people, and Profiler 13 says she likes "being with the ones she loves."

The need for affiliation and connection is universal and many students fulfill this need through their relationships with friends. Friendship during college years is extremely vital and can help make the often challenging process more bearable. Facebook makes fulfilling this need for friendship and affiliation easier by increasing accessibility to other students who share similar interests and similar life-styles. Students no longer have to rely on social events or dorm-mixers to find new friends because Facebook facilitates this friend-finding process. Furthermore, associating with friends provides a level of status. While some students may be genuinely concerned with relationship maintenance, others may simply want to flaunt their affiliations. Either of these goals contributes to the performance and the readers' perception of the creator, which will inevitably influence future interactions.

Debauchery. Debauchery serves as the final type of dynamic self. Debauchery in this context refers to activities of self-indulgence, not necessarily sexual in nature. Most performances of debauchery include activities related to alcohol. Profiler 11 explains that he enjoys doing drunk karaoke; Profiler 22 and 36 play beer pong; Profiler 25 engages in University of New Mexico athletics (beer pong) and likes drinking beverages; Profiler 59 enjoys anything that involves drinking good beer; and Profiler 81 says "There's only two things to do in a power outage, Get drunk….One Thing."

All of the alcoholic references appear on men's profiles. By listing this activity, men obviously believe this activity is important and want others to know they engage in drinking because it is part of the male student identity. Perhaps, the need to share this

ritual comes from the stereotype that drinking, specifically beer, and getting drunk is a masculine activity. By narrating events related to alcohol the men are actually defining a trait of masculinity. "Manly men" can drink large amounts of alcohol, and engage in idiotic activities all night and drink a beer upon waking in the morning to cure the hangover. A real man, in this scenario, has the ability to consume large amounts of alcohol.

Students do not confine their performance of debaucherous activities to the written text; they also use their photo albums as a means to represent this debaucherous self. While the performance of alcoholic activities in text is exclusively done by males, the use of pictures as a performance piece is used quite equally by men and women. Both genders document their drinking activities and their multiple states of drunkenness. While some students likely engage in some type of impression management through picture selection, the reality is that most pictures offer unflattering and embarrassing accounts of this part of students' lives.

The final explicitly stated debaucherous activity involves women, or at least a reference to women by men. Out of the 100 profiles, eleven men make reference to interests in girls, babes, or women. The men do not use the term *woman* in their description; rather, most of the references of the opposite sex are achieved through the use of the labels of *babe* and *girl*. Not only do these terms demonstrate masculine superiority and the subjugation of women, but they also allude to the fact that these men are interested in sex. Not once is the term *girl* or *babe* followed by the word *relationship,* so the impression the text gives is that these men want women for sexual gratification.

The dynamic self exists in many different states. These four examples--physical well-being, self-improvement, connection, and debauchery--represent the activities students most often take part in at UNM. The next layer of analysis looks at some implications of these different dynamic selves on Facebook.

Secondary Analysis

A reader who is not a student and/or does not fit within the age range of the participants of this study will relate to these student-created narratives quite differently than a reader who associates with the student classification and 18-25 age range. Unaffiliated readers may find the narrative naïve and transparent because they lack a true understanding of life beyond academia. On the other hand, a reader with similar affiliations to the creators most likely will relate to the narrative and find multiple similarities between the creators' dynamic selves and their own dynamic selves. The following analysis focuses on the readers and seeks to understand how they might interpret the narrative of the dynamic self.

The Dynamic Self: Living Life Within a Bubble

Narratives help make sense of life experiences by allowing the creator to organize thoughts and events into a coherent story that can be shared with others. As the participants of this study are students, most of their life experiences, at the present time, relate to college life. Life within the college world is structured quite differently than life outside the confines of academia. The college structure privileges some identities and activities over others. For instance, affiliation with college majors, sports teams, clubs, and the partying scene help define college students. Once a student leaves college, these

affiliations often no longer matter and other activities, such as a job, relationship status, and an income, become defining factors of identity.

Attending college is a privilege that fosters a sort of ignorance related to the public and social life outside of college. Students most often live in a bubble where factors beyond the confines of the university, such as the economy, politics, global relations, are regarded as unimportant and inconsequential. Life in the college bubble allows students to focus on themselves. Granted, students attending UNM are unique in that more than 50% of those attending classes are also working full time; nevertheless, they are self-absorbed to some degree and this type of absorption is required for success in college.

The different categories of the dynamic self: (1) physical well-being; (2) self-improvement; (3) connection; and (4) debauchery demonstrate the self-absorbed nature of college students in the activities listed that relate to their concerns and experiences of college life. Students that express preoccupations with physical well-being may do so for two reasons: they see these activities as an escape from academic life, and their description of interests in physical activities speaks to their physical fitness, also known as attractiveness. Most of the activities listed by students take place outdoors and perhaps away from the college campus. Furthermore, using Facebook allows them to leave campus, if only for a moment, and provides them with a sense of escape from the responsibilities of college life. When using Facebook, students do not have to worry about papers, grades, financial aid issues and can instead focus on activities that bring forth enjoyment. This escape also provides time for connection and commiserating with friends about their current experiences and everyday joys and frustrations.

While narratives of physical well-being express a desire to escape, they also provide a means to express physical attractiveness. One of the standards of beauty relates to physical attractiveness. Facebook users who represent themselves as physically fit are most often considered more attractive than those who do not make this same effort. Because much of college life revolves around dating and finding a partner, students feel the need to articulate their attractiveness on their profiles because a potential mate may look them up on Facebook and do a bit of research on who this potential mate is and what they look like. Narrating a fit self, then, is extremely important for success in different aspects of social life.

Narrating a self concerned with self-improvement helps differentiate students by focusing on unique talents they may possess. Students showcase certain talents through their list of activities and interests and in so doing create a narrative with depth. Students with these more sophisticated narratives challenge the negative stereotypical image of a college student that is obsessed with beer drinking, fraternity/sorority parities, and stumbles to class only to pass out in the back before class even begins. Activities related to self-improvement also communicate a self that is well-rounded, qualities employers and potential mates often appreciate. Taking part in activities that extend beyond the classroom also demonstrate that the student can organize their time and engage in multiple activities successfully.

In addition to academic success, students also narrate about connections with others in life. Because students often venture out for the first time on their own in college, they may find college life overwhelming; making connections and establishing friendships alleviates some of the feelings of anxiety and loneliness. A strong network of

friends makes the challenges of college life bearable, and it also offers a support system for any other issues that may arise during a student's tenure in college.

Not only do connections help students navigate through the challenges of college, but they also play a role in debaucherous activities. Planning and actually undertaking debaucherous activities involves the encouragement of friends. With the support of a group of like-minded friends, any sort of caper is possible. While the activities themselves might not be the most mature or even legal, they do serve to bring friends together by creating similar experiences and allowing for shared narratives.

These different narratives of dynamic selves reveal the interests and needs of college students, at both the personal and social levels. Those who identify as a student will understand these needs better than those who never experienced or have moved beyond this lifestyle. In that sense, a reader who is/was a student may have an easier time piecing together the narrative fragments and making sense of the creator of the profile.

Tertiary Analysis

While the previous sections focused more on the categories of activities, this analysis explores the order of the word choices. More specifically, this analysis relies upon the assumption that words not only reveal how people see the world and what is important in life, but also that the ordering of these words, whether conscious or unconscious, reveals what is most important in a student's life, in this case, portraying a social self. Furthermore, these activities illustrate that instead of using inventive categories of self, most students are known through their cultural preferences (affiliations).

The Social-Self. While students record quite a variety of interests on their profiles the four that appear first in their lists of interests are: sports, music, school, and friends. Each of these interests functions to create a narrative of "self as a social actor." The first three interests listed, sports, music and school, all posses a team component; students participate in team sports, they play in bands, or are part of a choir, and their success in school often depends upon the ability to work and function within a team (such as on group paper and projects). Furthermore, because the self exists as a result of social interactions, knowing how to relate and work with groups of people is a skill required for success in life beyond the classroom. More specifically, understanding social nuances and engaging in socially acceptable behaviors is critical for a student's social well-being.

While the "team" component of these primary interests seems to be explicit, the idea of self as social creator who thrives on social ties tends to be more implicit. These performances rely upon specific identity claims and seek to convey a desired impression by the reader, especially in terms of social connections. In addition to the textual cues provided through these interests, students also use visual cues, such as the large number of albums showcasing activities with friends and profile pictures with more than one person in the shot, to confirm the image of the social self.

Cultural Affiliations. Not only do the primary interests of sports, music, school, and friends contribute to the performance of a social self, they also illuminate a cultural self. The cultural self subsists on cultural affiliations, which are made known through the interests and preferences of the students. Instead of narrating an original, unique self, students use these affiliations to categorize themselves as part of a larger social group.

For example, those interested in sports communicate a self that exists within a sports culture.

Just like any other culture, the sports culture relies upon certain roles and rules. The position within this culture depends upon the classification system created by those affiliated with the group. Using the sports example, students who classify themselves as sports fans assume the role of "fan" and occupy a different position within the hierarchical arrangement of the sports cultural system. Athletes assume a different position within the hierarchical arrangement of a sports society, and often with this role establish a degree of power based upon one's talent as well as income. The other three interests, music, school, and friends, function in the same way as the sports culture. Students either assume or are ascribed certain roles and these roles dictate how they function and interact within the given culture. In conclusion, the role of social actor and the ascribed cultural self help to further define students' identities while at the same time contributing to their position in society. The following section analyzes the final narrative fragments related to a demanding self and seeks to explain the identity claims surrounding this often private self.

<center>*Narrative #5: Demanding Self*</center>

Description

Students perform the demanding self through the use of requests. Requests occur at the end of the description provided in the "About Me" section of the profile. Of the 100 profiles, fourteen students took advantage of this type rhetoric within their narrative. Students perform the request through the use of the phrase "ask me." At one level, this request simply invites others to inquire further about the creator and engage in their

performance. On a deeper level, the demand functions as a strategy to hide certain information regarding the self. Only when the reader probes deeper does the creator provide more personal information than what is found on the profile. The first two levels analyze the action of *inviting* while the tertiary analysis focuses on the rhetorical strategy, impression management, as a means to conceal elements of self.

Primary Analysis

The creators' use of the phrase "ask me" serves as an invitation to the reader to participate in the narrative performance. The narrative fragment of demanding self provides the first and only time creators acknowledge and make reference to the reader. Clearly the request is not intended for the self, but rather for the *other,* the reader of the profiles. The creator does not use a term of address or any sort of pronoun to indicate the sex, age, marital status of the reader, but rather makes the invitation vague, allowing participation from anyone who happens to read deep enough into the narrative. If the reader chooses not to participate, it is of no consequence to the creator; rather, it is the reader that stands to gain the most when responding to the demand.

By inviting the reader to participate, students welcome the possibility of creating a stronger connection with this *other*. By providing information about the self, the creator becomes more vulnerable because the level of sharing and knowledge of each other increases. When only one person shares information in a relationship, they skew the power-dynamic because knowledge is power. The reader can use the extra information in multiple ways and this practice can have serious consequences. In a negative scenario, extra personal information can help in cyber-stalking or harassment. Cyber-stalking and harassment can come from two different sources: Facebook friends and those who are not

friends but have access to profiles through shared networks. If the creator releases information such as address, phone number, etc., the stalking can move from online to offline. The disclosure of private information is extremely serious and people should consider the ramifications of sharing such knowledge. Having focused on the meaning attached to the expression "ask me," I now explore the different ways of interpreting the demanding self.

Secondary Analysis

Depending upon the level of shared-history and/or a shared schema, a reader may interpret the demanding self in one of three ways: (1) the demanding self represents a type of person who is private, perhaps a bit reserved who offers an invitation for participation and waits for others to respond before providing additional information; (2) the demanding self represents a person who has something to hide and who, rather than inviting a person to participate in the performance, demands they seek out more information; and (3) the performance of a demanding self simply indicates that a person is following the conventions set forth by creators of Facebook of presenting the self on a profile. Each of these examples demonstrates differing personality types and offers further understanding of the virtual self.

Reserved. Students whose narratives present a reserved personality typically are cognizant of the amount and type of information used in the representation of self. This student does not wish to inundate the reader with information and only provides additional information upon request. Profilers 14, 44 and 41 offer good examples of this type of character because the amount of information on the profiles is extremely limited as compared to Profiler 11. The invitation of "ask me" is the first articulation of this type

of self. When the reader reads the rest of the profile, they will find that, overall, the profile lacks large quantities of information. This is not to say that what the student decides to include is not insightful or informative, but rather the overall amount disclosed is small compared to someone who has something to hide.

Concealed. Students that conceal information typically enact a deviant identity in some parts of their profile and offer an excess of information in other parts of their narrative performance. No matter the medium, an omission of information, specifically a lie, takes the same form. People often exaggerate different parts of their stories to account for the lack of information in other areas of the story. Online narratives in which students omit certain information are recognizable in the same way, a surplus of information is found in other sections of the profile. Profilers 5, 54, 83, 85 provide examples of the use of excess information in specific areas of their profiles. While some students are simply verbose and narcissistic and like to share vast quantities of information with their reader, a strong connection exists between the rhetorical category of "ask me" and the specific narratives fragment of self that users place on their profiles.

Conventions. Public spaces are influenced by certain conventions, and Facebook is no exception. The number of students making use of the phrase "ask me" illustrates the existence of one such rule. While some students proffer the phrase to help support a narrative performance, others simply use "ask me" in their "About Me" section because they are following a Facebook trend. Profiler 61 speaks directly to this convention in the last paragraph of his "About Me" section:

> If you want to know anything more about me, feel free to message me and
>
> ask…Not like anyone does anymore cause [*sic*] everyone puts it on their profile.

144

But hey, I figured mi[ght] as well include it, as if I didn't say that you wouldn't

have messaged me anyways haha.

He argues that by abiding by the convention, people no longer take the request/demand

seriously. Users have become so used to the request they simply gloss over its importance

and do not take the invitation seriously. Perhaps, students have begun to rebel against

such conventions and the way people interact through the network is changing.

Readers who use similar features or have similar personality traits as described

earlier understand the narrative fragment of the demanding self more clearly than those

who do not share the schema. Moreover, close acquaintances of the creator have an easier

time determining which of the features a creator used, and which personality type is most

relevant. The relative strength and depth of a relationship clearly impacts the reading and

interpretation of a narrative performance.

Tertiary Analysis

At this level of analysis, the word choice of "ask me" not only creates the

narrative of demanding self, but also illuminates the profiler's rhetorical strategy of

impression management. Previous analyses of narratives selves explored impression

management within the secondary level of analysis; however, the discussion of the

strategy within this section of the dissertation utilizes a critical and scholarly perspective.

Students communicate their identities in strategic ways through their profiles. As

the creator of the identities, students decide which information to include and exclude.

This decision of inclusion or exclusion depends upon the goal of the profile as well as

whom students believe actually reads their profile. By using the phrase "ask me" students

rather subtly exclude information and the placement of this demand, at the end of the

narrative, ensures that most readers will fail to notice they have not actually been cheated by what might be extremely vital information.

Students use this strategy to ensure that the narratives created in other sections of their profile do not conflict thus guaranteeing that the image created through their narrative performance remains consistent; more specifically, students influence the perception of their self image by others. Because profiles are essentially self-advertisements, it is important that the creators remain in control of the narrative. By limiting the amount of information there is less of chance of any sort of issue arising from the reading of the profile's content. If an employer were to look at a page that offers limited and very strategically selected information, which contributes to an idealized self, there is less of a chance the employer will make a negative valuation of the student.

Taking the example of an employee/employer one step further, the disclosure of certain information and the invitation to find out more about an individual on Facebook is like a job interview. The job interview is like a performance, where the interviewee offers a very specific performance of self to their reader, the interviewers. Having read the job description and qualifications for the job, the interviewee assumes the role of the ideal candidate for the position. The interviewee eliminates superfluous information from the performance and concentrates on only providing information that will show him/her in a positive light. Typically at the end of the interview, a good interviewee invites the interviewer to ask further questions about one's qualifications and also provides additional information about the interviewer to demonstrate his/her knowledge of the company. Much like the interview situation, the performance that takes place through the narratives on Facebook involves this same type of information exchange, and the way

each person responds to the other in that situation dictates the outcome of the overall performance.

Summary

My analysis of the Facebook profiles provided categories and themes for understanding the forms and functions of the narrative performance of self. I deconstructed the narrative performance on multiple levels to understand how the narrative fragments contribute to an online identity. Concepts, such as impression management, cultural capital, front stage, tone, taste, cultural affiliations, and stratification aided in the analysis and gave clues about how Facebook profilers create coherence in their narratives from the multiple fragments on their page. The consistent use of textual and visual representations of identities on profiles ensures that narrative fragments are rational and believable thereby making the performance probable.

While the analysis of the Facebook profiles helped to answer the first three research questions, one question still remains unanswered, the question which deals with media effects. Information provided by the focus groups helps answer the research question concerned with the media effects of the Internet medium. The following section analyzes the text that resulted from the transcriptions of the three focus groups of UNM students and establishes some of the offline consequences of online narratives.

Analysis: Focus Groups

Focus groups serve as the secondary method used in this study and function to answer the research question related to media effects. Because life online is simply an extension of life offline, there are certain consequences and repercussions that result from the narrative performances that constitute the profiles. To understand these consequences,

a set of five questions (Appendix A) related to issues of information sharing and the implications of sharing often private information in a public space were asked.

By conducting a thematic analysis of the focus group transcripts, I uncovered four dominating themes: (1) Keeping it real; (2) Facebook official; (3) Friending; and (4) Relational Boundaries: Family as Friends. Each of these themes results from the distorted boundary that exists between life online and offline. I organize the analysis of the data by giving a brief description of the theme followed by the analysis of the focus groups' discourse.

Keeping it Real

Description. Keeping it real centers upon the dichotomy between life online and offline and focuses on issues of truth in representations. Students emphasize the importance of communicating "real" information through profiles and judge acquaintances based upon the realness of their narratives. Students serve as monitors for others and help ensure that their friends keep it real as well. Students also report either they or their friends suffer consequences for posting misleading information on their profiles. The following analysis focuses on the issues of truth as related to the disclosure of information and the process of monitoring as means to protect self-image.

Truth. Keeping it real relies upon the dissemination of truthful information. Students define *true information* by what it is not; it is not misleading, and it does not pertain only to life online. Truth, then, results from an accurate performance of the self, meaning the representation online corresponds with the offline performance of self. P1 introduces the idea of keeping it real during a discussion of fake identities, "Personally, Facebook to me, I try to like keep it real. I'm sure there are lots of weirdoes out there that

are doing that [performing fake online identities]." She believes that including fake information not only ruins credibility but is not truthful because the information does not accurately reflect life offline. In addition to introducing the concept, P1 also supplies a good example of how to engage in this type of truthful performance: "I would say it's reflective of your life offline. Like if you put you know like on your info section your hobbies, that's keeping it real. You're putting like the truth out I guess you could say." P4 responds to P1's comment and offers an example of how she maintained truthfulness on her profile:

> Yeah, just things that you…[say], regardless of being online or offline they're true to your life. For instance, when I first started college, I was in a sorority and it wasn't for me, I got out of it, so I took it off [my profile] because I think that having that still on my profile was like misleading information about me because it had nothing to do with me anymore….I mean having something or putting a school on there [your profile] that you've never been to, you're not keeping it real. So stuff like that just pertains to your life in general and not just online [is a way of keeping it real].

Both of these female participants believe that re-articulating the offline self in the online venue helps them keep things *real* online. P5 addresses the issue of truthful performances through the use of the synonym, *honest*. She believes, "I say everything on my Facebook. I'm pretty honest. I mean that's because I don't feel like I have a lot to hide. I'm not very closed, I'm an open person. So I feel like my Facebook reflects who I am." By saying this, she links an individual's personality to their ability to be honest and truthful.

Furthermore, it seems that the way a Facebook creator intends to use the site also influences his/her level of honesty.

Students also express issues concerning accentuating parts of the self. During this discussion students could not seem to agree whether they would classify someone who is exaggerating parts of their identities and who puts forth a type of idealized identity as truthful or not. Students spoke of how many people put their "best face forward" or the "best things about yourself" on their profiles. P2 speaks directly to this issue and says, "And the thing is, on the account, like you said, you put the best about you in it. It's you, but you tend to put the good things." P4 offers an example of how one of her Facebook friends exaggerates a bit too much on her profile, and as a result, does not keep it real:

> An example in my experience is this girl, oh my God, updates her status like eight times a day, I don't know, it's ridiculous. And then like [she says], oh, 'I'm out cleaning.' And then the next [day] 'I'm out mountain biking' and [then] 'I'm sitting in bed reading a novel.' And my other friend, she and I just joke about it because we're like if she's working out so much she would be like so built and… [she's] just trying to make herself look better than she is….That, I think, is not keeping it real when you're always trying to [do too many things and you exaggerate too often].

By providing an excess of details in her narrative performance, this student ruined her credibility. Engaging in a truthful and accurate online performance allows students to establish and maintain trust with their Facebook friends. P4's Facebook friend did not put forth a truthful performance and perhaps, damaged the trust that existed in the friendship.

According to P8 the issue of trust and disclosure on Facebook is similar to the issue that exists with online dating "[It's] sort of the same thing as like online dating I guess. People don't really disclose all that information. So like it's just they appear better than what they are I guess." Whether students believe the omission or exaggeration of information is good or bad, they can agree that the narrative performance of the creator impacts their interpretation and response to this person.

While the examples support the theme of *keeping it real*, they also illuminate ways students engage in impression management. Students that include, exaggerate, and/or exclude information perform a strategic narrative of self. By excluding or highlighting certain information, students can ensure the fidelity of a narrative related to an idealized self. While some readers may believe the performance, others may decide the performance is inaccurate and that their friend is not trustworthy.

Monitoring. According to P3, readers' participation in the performance can either help or hurt the believability of a performance. She speaks to the issue of friends and family monitoring the performance:

> Part of it too is that if you're friends with people you're close to in real life, they're going to know if I say that I'm like an expert soccer player, they're like no you're not you're horrible. Even if I wanted to put really misleading stuff, someone would catch it and call me out on it.

Friends and family help keep the creator honest and help him/her to keep the performance real.

While family and friends help to monitor the performance, students also engage in a process of self-monitoring. Self-monitoring involves a form of self-censorship because

students control how and what they communicate through their profiles and most importantly to whom. P4 and P7 offer examples of how a reader impacts the level of disclosure of information on a profile:

P4:   I definitely just I don't want to put anything up [on my profile] that I would be embarrassed, or my boss would see it or…that somebody could use against me. That's always in the back of my mind…I hear tales of these horrible photos if it gets out, oh my God, but I try to keep like the alcohol consumption to a minimum.

P7:   My mom is on it [Facebook] and she's a children's pastor so all of her little like elementary school kids are on there and so I have to be really careful because my friends are a little crazy and so all these little kids can see what's posted and so constantly when I'm on, I'm usually going through my posts making sure there's no profanity or anything like that because I don't need these little kids to…[see all these negative things on my profile].

P5 and P9 also express concern about the content their mothers might see on their profile, P5 "Yeah, I think that if I know certain people write things that they don't mean…but it sounds inappropriate…I take that stuff down [off my profile]. I know…[it's not true], but if my mom read it she would…[think it was true]." P9 adds:

    I remember this one girl that would always send me funny bumper stickers about like being drunk or whatever and like have more fun with Captain and all this stuff and my mom got all worried about me being all drunk and crazy so I don't put that stuff up [on my profile].

152

Worried about how the content might influence their mothers' perceptions, these women removed the potentially offending content and became extra vigilant about what they themselves and others posted on their profiles.

While reader perception is an extremely important factor in the self-monitoring process, as witnessed in the aforementioned examples, stories about other people, friends and strangers, also influence the self-monitoring patterns of students:

P6:   There's a couple of girls that…talked about their weekend and their drinking and you know, they went out and did that, and you know the head of the school actually came upon it through his daughter's page. [He] printed it all out, there was proof, and they got expelled. I was like nice job guys, put your life story on Facebook where everybody can read it and risk your education. Everyone was like oh my God I feel so sorry for them; I was like, I'm sorry, they brought that upon themselves. I'll admit, I made a couple of mistakes during senior year but I was not about to put that on Facebook.

P11: I guess a teacher he had a Facebook page and was pretty popular and on his [profile] some of his pictures weren't very Facebook…friendly, and he…also [had] some pictures of alcohol bottles on his Facebook page…and one of his students sent it around and told people, and it pretty soon got to the administration and he almost got fired.

P8:   People get fired a lot because of their statuses. Like I know at the Eagles they just released Dawkins, the safety, and he's playing for the Broncos now and one of the workers was pissed so he wrote something about it on his status thing. Like 'this

is so stupid and the manager is like an f'in idiot' and like he [the manager] got

aware of it so they fired him of course.

Through these stories students express their desire to maintain a socially acceptable self-image in front of their intended readers. Controlling and monitoring the type of image and text available helps ensure readers believe the others self performance. By controlling Facebook identities through monitoring, students show that they believe Facebook identities are real in a sense they have real consequences for their lives.

Facebook Official

    Description. Facebook official relates to the idea that until students make a declaration on Facebook, the issue, idea, etc. in question is not legitimate. When students discuss Facebook official they most often bring up issues about relationship status. Whether or not two people are in a committed, romantic relationship depends upon the discourse used to describe their relationship status online. The analysis of Facebook official explores ideas related to the boundaries between private and public information, life online and offline, and the consequences that result from defining and acting within these boundaries.

    It's Not Real Until It's On Facebook. Relationships are a large part of college life. Students constantly get together, break up, and hook-up, so that keeping track of the relationship status of a friend is often difficult, but Facebook provides a venue in which to announce one's relationship status and report these changes to a larger audience. Facebook limits the options profilers can use to define relationships and forces them to use pre-selected categories, which include: relationship, single, engaged, married, it's complicated.

Disclosing this type of personal information offline is challenging for many people, as defining a relationship takes time and often results in awkward conversations. Facebook offers students a way to circumvent the unpleasantness of these "defining the relationship" talks by allowing them to simply classify their relationship status online. While this may seem like an easy solution, problems arise when a couple defines their relationship status differently. P3 and P2 have a discussion about this issue:

> P3: Relationship status is a big deal. We have a friend who kind of has something going on with a girl, and we asked him about it, and he's like 'no we're not dating, we're just friends,' but then she changed her status to 'in a relationship' but his isn't [changed]. He says they're not dating, and [now it's become] what does she think what does he think [about their relationship status]?
>
> P2: It's not official until it's on Facebook.
>
> P3: It's true.

In addition to helping to circumvent awkward discussions regarding "what are we," Facebook also serves as a venue in which people can make a public declaration about their status. By making this public announcement, students do not have to tell their individual friends about the change in their romantic life. P5 offers a story in which her friends decided to publicly announce their relationship in the virtual venue before telling people offline:

> I have two friends who go to my church and like one lives in Texas and one lives here and they were completely…underground with their relationship. [N]ow they made it Facebook official, and I was like 'this is just huge because they're not

even open in like circles of really close friends and family but they're Facebook

together.'

P7 shares her story about when she began dating her boyfriend, "When my boyfriend and

I started dating we both had Facebook and that's actually how we met was on Facebook,

well not like met, but we found each other on Facebook, and when we made it official or

whatever I like put 'in a relationship' [on my profile]." P7 speaks as if the process of

posting one's relationship status online is not only normal, but expected; more

specifically, this demonstrates how normalized Facebook rituals have become in

everyday life.

Overall, students seem to embrace the ritual of announcing their relationship

status online; however, when asked to think more about this process, students began to

question the normalized practice. P7 admits in an earlier story that she does indeed

engage in the practice of posting her status online; however, she later realizes that

Facebook is simply a venue to express an identity change (from single to partnered) and

the communication act itself does not make the claim official. P7 makes the point "Like it

does not need to be Facebook official for people to know. Like everybody knew senior

year [that I was dating] and we weren't allowed to have Facebook at school. So

everybody's going to know, it does not need to be Facebook official." During this same

discussion P6 reiterates P7's sentiments by saying, "You don't need to write it to make it

real."

Rebelling. Some students move beyond questioning the online practice of making

things Facebook official and rebel because as P10 so eloquently states "I think most

issues on Facebook are relationship issues. I think if anyone has an issue on Facebook I

156

think… [it's because of relationships]." Rebelling serves two purposes: (1) not posting ensures that individual privacy is protected; and (2) by not posting students avoid any of the consequences that result from announcing private information in public.

Students that rebel against the normalized practice elect not to post a relationship status on their profile. During the discussion surrounding information sharing P10 announces her reasons for rebelling "It's ridiculous. Like people know about your relationships. Like I refuse to put my relationship status at all because even if something happens everyone knows about it." By not making public her status P10 protects her privacy, thus eliminating the need to explain anything about that part of her life.

Many students decide to rebel because of the experiences of their friends. P8 decided not to post his status because of what happened to one of his friends "Facebook ruins a lot of relationships I find. Well yeah, I used to have friends that were dating and this guy wrote on his girlfriend's wall like I had a good time with you .… And [her boyfriend] got super jealous and like [broke up with her]." Because Facebook is public, it becomes difficult to control the actions of others, which is what happened in this scenario. Furthermore, this example illustrates the point that online actions produce offline consequences as these actions upset the trust in relationships.

Instead of using a friend's experience to justify her decision to no longer update her status, P6 uses one of her own past experiences:

When I broke up with my high school sweetheart/boyfriend, we were together for three years, and so in that time I got Facebook, [and my status] said 'in a relationship.' Spring break of senior year we broke up, and I waited a couple of days and I was like okay it's time, you need to say you're single. [Once U

157

changed my relationship status], people were like 'oh my God, I've lost all hope;

if you can't stay in a relationship, then neither can I.'

Tired of her friend's questions about the change in her status, P6 decided not to categorize herself in regards to a relationship. P6 serves as a cautionary reminder to those who choose to update their status; be prepared to explain and justify your personal decisions. Every action bears a consequence, thus, in a public space, such as Facebook, students must weigh each decision to include or exclude information carefully.

Friending: Facebook Friends vs. Genuine Friends

Description. Urban Dictionary.com ("Friending," 2007) defines Friending as "the action of adding somebody as a friend for social-networking sites or social community sites etc." Friending is a way of increasing one's social network by either sending a friend request to another Facebook member or receiving a request. Once the friending process occurs, students then classify the friendship by one of two categories: (1) A genuine friend is someone with a deep sense of shared history and whom the student often interacts with in an offline setting. The relationship is sincere and students make an effort to maintain and strengthen the relationship through Facebook interactions. (2) A Facebook friend is considered an acquaintance, someone the student seldom or never interacts with offline. The relationship is superficial and shallow and exists primarily so that each person can monitor the other. The labeling process not only influences how students interact with these friends on Facebook, but also influences the type and amount of information a student decides to disclose on his/her profile. The following offers an analysis of both levels of friendships and looks to the role Facebook plays in fostering these relationships.

158

Genuine Friends. Facebook functions as a relationship maintenance tool. Students use Facebook to strengthen existing relationships and/or reconnect and rebuild relationships from the past. Both P3 and P6 share stories about how Facebook helps them to maintain friendships with those who no longer live in the same geographic location, "I use it the most to communicate with people that don't live here. I have a lot of friends that live in other countries and so I use [Facebook] a lot just to keep in touch with them."

P6:   I guess I initially got it [Facebook] because I wanted to keep in touch with all my friends from boarding school because everybody was in Boston while I was over here and it was just like that way [to] stay communicated [*sic*] with everybody without needing to set a block of time for getting on the phone or email.

According to these students, Facebook helps them stay connected with friends. The technology makes sharing information easier and less time consuming than traditional methods of communication.

When speaking to friendships and friendship maintenance, students cite certain Facebook applications that make the process possible: status updates, the wall, the chat function, and photos. Status updates are real-time updates that students can include on their profile. The content of these updates are entirely up to the student and range from what they ate for breakfast to the announcement of a death in the family. The updates provide a glimpse into the student's life and often prompt further discussion through the comment application. Genuine friends typically respond to updates and if the message seems serious, they will check up on their friend via an offline medium. The wall also offers a place to comment and offers insights into a student's life. P1 comments on the role of the wall in friendship maintenance:

I think if you do know the person it gives you even more insight to them. Who

they are, what they like, and what they do on the weekend, and who's written on

their wall....Like say your friends or you want to hang out [you'll post something

on their wall] inviting them to hang out then.

Wall posts serve a dual function in that they allow students to keep in contact with friends

and also monitor friends' activities.

Both commenting on status updates and positing comments on the wall are

asynchronous forms of communication. The chat function offers the only synchronous

communication option on Facebook. The chat tool functions much like AOL Instant

Messenger (AIM) or Google Chat (Gchat) and allows student to engage in real-time talk

with their friends. Instead of picking up a phone, texting, or talking to their friend face-to-

face, students chat online most often while undertaking a multitude of other computer

related activities, such as typing a paper, checking e-mails, updating their Facebook

profile, etc. This tool enables multitasking while at the same time keeping friends

connected.

The final application students discuss as helping maintain friendships is the photo

album. When speaking to photos students mention two specific ideas, sharing photos

through tagging and commenting on photos. Tagging people in photos is a way of

showing others that the friendship exists not only online, but offline as well.

While students believe communicating this connection with others is a positive

outcome of the tagging process, they also mention some of the negative implications of

either tagging others or being tagged in a photo. P11 offers a story about what happened

when friends tagged her in photos where people were imbibing:

My sisters are older than me and I sometimes I get tagged in photos, and I believe if you get tagged it's automatically goes to your profile. I got in trouble because I went to a few parties where there was actually alcohol there and people drinking and I'm… there somewhere in the background [of the picture] and someone tags me. I don't drink, personally, and when my sisters see that they assume [I do].

Based on what her P11's sister saw in the pictures, they assumed P11 was drinking, that is, engaging in activities of which they did not approve. As a result of these images, the identity P11 enacted when with her sisters was challenged, causing her to have a conversation with them explaining the situation. In other words, the tagged pictures caused undue stress on P11's relationship with her sisters and challenged the idealized image she created on her profile.

Not all students are as careless with the tagging process as P11's friends. During a conversation on tagging, three students speak about why they do not tag friends:

P5:   Photos, I'm huge. I have like fourteen or fifteen albums; I might have more than that. But every time I take a photos I'm usually putting it up as soon as I get home.

P2:   I do that, too.

P5:   Okay, I'm not a tagger. My thinking about tagging is that it's up to the individual who sees the photo if they want to be tagged. I don't like being tagged in other people's photos.

P7:   Yeah, it's awful.

P5:   So I prefer not to be, and like I said that I blocked [photos] so people can't see the tagged photos of me…I don't tag other people because it…shows respect.

These students respect the privacy of their friends and recognize that some people do not want their images made public. Based on this discussion, tagging has serious implications for the issue of public vs. private information. While students have the option of untagging themselves in photos, doing so requires constant vigilance of their friends' tagging activities.

Photos not only offer the public a glimpse into the social life of people on Facebook, but they also help stimulate conversations through the photo comment tool. Once students post a photo, they can receive comments from those who visit the album. Student P5 notes that this tool encourages the involvement from friends who might not have attended the event documented in the photo:

> Pretty much first thing I do when I wake up, and it's kind of sad, I turn on my computer and I go to Facebook to see what I've missed, because being from Australia when I'm sleeping my whole family, friends from back home are up and writing on people's walls and commenting on my photos.

P5 offers another example of how the act of commenting on pictures keeps people connected:

> I have this photo of this ring that I love it's like a yellow diamond with diamonds around the outside, vintage style, and it's like I say it's my future engagement ring. My mom comments on it um, not just yet, wait till you finish school. So now, I didn't take that down because I think it's kind of funny if people read that they'll be like 'oh.'

These examples show how pictures and comments help keep people involved in one another's lives. Moreover, people from afar can still offer advice and impact lives through the virtual medium.

While pictures offer a sense of social connection, they can also negatively impact relationships. P2 tells a story about how Facebook allowed her to catch a friend in a lie:

We…went on a trip to Wolf Creek and we…[had a friend who] was supposed to come with us. The night before she cancelled on us, so we're like, that's fine, whatever…so we…looked at her Facebook [pictures the next week] and she'd obviously stayed just to go to this party. And we're like really, you ditched [us] for this party?

Because people do not often consider who looks at their page, they do not edit the content they post. P6 tells a similar story about what she found out about a friend through her photos:

When she and I talked she asked me like how did I know what she was doing. Like how did I know she was at all these parties and everything. I was like 'do you see that you're tagged in those pictures? Do you really think I'm that stupid to not see your new pictures? I mean it says it in the News Feed. You are tagged in these pictures; of course I'm going to look.' That opened a whole new thing for us [and started a fight].

These stories serve as cautionary tales to warn people that the content they decide to post is accessible to a wide audience and that if telling a lie, they need to ensure that the lie told online matches the lie told offline. Moreover, these stories show that friendships can end as a result of what happens on Facebook.

In addition to helping friends stay connected, Facebook also helps old friends find one another (through the search tool) and reconnect. P4 tells a story about friending an old babysitter and how by finding her, she reestablished a friendship:

> I looked up a neighbor from like a long time ago when I lived in Colorado and she used to like baby-sit me when I was real little. I found her and I added her and it's weird, because she's like married now….And it's just weird to be able to talk to her now that we're all grown up. Just weird though, I never thought I'd talk to her again, but it's cool.

Not only does Facebook connect friends, but it also alters the level of the friendship. The power dynamic that defined the past relationship between P4 and her baby-sitter was of boss and subordinate. Now, years later, thanks to Facebook and the leveling power of the friending process, the power dynamic decreased and the relationship resembles a more equal partnership. The implications of the friending process are serious and should not be ignored. The following section addresses a different classification of friends, Facebook friends.

Facebook Friends. Students tend to define Facebook friends as an acquaintance, a person whom one knows but who is not a close friend. A Facebook friendship may emerge from a one-time meeting offline, or two people might never have met offline and simply have found each other through the networking capabilities of Facebook. P3 provides a clear description of what she terms a "Facebook relationship," "It's a Facebook relationship, it's pretty minimal, pretty shallow; you're only putting forth what you want them to see you're not going to show your bad side at all and its pretty I guess surfacy."

As opposed to a genuine friendship, the Facebook friendship is superficial. The reasons for creating this type of relationship are: to monitor a person's life, and/or to increase one's network of friends and consequently increasing one's popularity and social standing. People do not want to necessarily communicate with someone they met at a party or knew in fifth grade so Facebook offers a solution; become a causal observer and learn a lot about a relative stranger: P10 says, "One...[way] I think that [Facebook] has changed my life [is] that you know so much about people that you don't know very well."

During a discussion of the issue of popularity, P8 tells this story "I have, like, my little brother's friends that are like four years younger like add me just because like they know who I am." This story provides a great example of the difference between genuine and Facebook friends. P8's brother's friends had no intention of keeping in contact with him; rather, they saw him as a means to an end, showing their social connectedness

Encountering Facebook friends offline proves to be an awkward experience. P8 shares a story about when Facebook friends meet offline, "I've had girls come up to [me] and like [say] 'hey we don't even know each other but like we know each other from Facebook. We're Facebook friends, like wow." These offline meetings are uncomfortable because these "friends" know each other only on a superficial level. Online friendships do not always translate into offline friendships especially in the case of Facebook friends.

Concerning the type of information available to Facebook friends, Facebook allows creators to control their information and who sees it. The default setting is that all the creator's friends and those in associated groups and networks can see their profile. By

165

changing the privacy setting, creators can block people from the account or hide sections of the profile.

Most students choose to limit or hide pieces of their profile from Facebook friends. By doing this, students control the level of closeness of the relationship. Excluding people from information on the profile is in a sense excluding these same people from the creator's life. In the following comment, the student creates a protective barrier between herself and the Facebook friend while at the same time ensuring privacy:

P4:   So say [there are] people you don't really know very well, well then you can make special albums. Like I have friends and family and stuff. I don't really want them to see every posted picture of me, I just want them to see photos that I've approved and like certain albums.

Friending and classifying *friends* as either a "Facebook friend" or a "genuine friend" has implications for life both online and offline. Students can alter their self performance by controlling the amount of information disclosed, thus perpetuating the chosen relationship level. In addition to providing a more thorough understanding of friending, these issues of self-image and information disclosure also frame the following analysis on relationship boundaries: family as friends.

Relational Boundaries: Family as Friends

Description. Much of the focus group discussion surrounding the idea of information sharing through Facebook profiles centers upon relationships. The word relationship appears 20 times in focus group one, 23 times in focus group two, and 7 times in focus group three. Much of the rhetoric surrounding the issue of relationships relates to family and friends. In terms of frequency, the word friend appears 81 times and

the word family 25 times in focus group one, 87 and 7 times in focus group two and 83 and 14 times in focus group three. Over the course of 75 minutes, this is quite a large number of references of each of these three words, relationship, family, and friends. Students cite two consequences related to defining friends as family: (1) they limit the amount and type of information disclosed to family members, thus increasing privacy; and (2) they can strengthen family bonds through the online connection.

Self Disclosure and Privacy. Students, as strategic creators on Facebook, craft their narratives with particular readers in mind (friends); however, the structure of Facebook makes differentiating between family and friends extremely difficult as the system categorizes any acquaintance, whether related or not, as a "friend." Even though the actual categorization process is made difficult by the structure of Facebook, students can easily control the amount of information available to family members. Privacy settings allow students to limit the amount of information seen by families. By managing the information, students ensure the coherence and fidelity of the narrative of an idealized self.

P4 gives an example of how she controls information to maintain a specific image:

> Like I have friends and family and stuff. I don't really want them to see every posted picture of me, I just want them to see photos that I've approved and like certain albums because [the photos show]….a different side of me.

P4 recognizes that the activities documented in the photos may portray her in a negative light thus destroying the image she has so carefully crafted for her family. P10 also brings

up the issue of pictures and the consequences related to sharing these images with her family:

> I'm just a normal college student but I put a lot of my family members that I don't see very often on my limited profile because I mean even cousins, I have like 14 year old cousins that I don't ever see anymore, and I guarantee that the first thing they will think of when they look at my pictures is wow, she parties all the time [but I don't. That's just a small part of my life]. I don't want to pretend I'm someone else but at the same time like I don't want them [my family] to judge me off of my Facebook and judge me off of my pictures.

Maintaining a certain image is extremely important to students. By using the tools available to them on Facebook they strategically perform their identities. Moreover, students' discussions of strategic performances indirectly speak to the importance of context in narrative performances. Both the location of the performance and the readers influence the identity students perform.

During her discussion of the issue of family on Facebook, P9 shares a story about the consequences of friending her sister "my sister, she's a recovering alcoholic but she drinks now, but none of the family knows except for me, so it's horrible….She won't add my mom on Facebook or anyone because she's like I don't want [anyone to know I'm drinking again]." P9's sister puts her in an awkward position as she chooses to divulge only certain information on Facebook (P9 explains later that her sister performs this alcoholic identity though status updates and photos on Facebook). By excluding her family, the sister can maintain the positive identity she enacts when around family while her sister maintains the burden of keeping her sister's secret. When a profiler feels

168

responsible for a friend, whether it be a blood relative or not, they go to great lengths to monitor their image and ensure secrets are kept safe.

Strengthening of Family Bonds. Instead of writing letters, making phone calls, or even e-mailing, students can use Facebook as a forum to communicate with family. P4 shares a story about how Facebook allows her to reach out to family members she might not normally keep in touch with offline; "My cousin in France has Facebook. So cousins that I rarely ever spoke to, maybe except at like weddings, I now can keep in touch with all the time." Thanks to Facebook P4 and her cousin can communicate and continue their relationship.

Not only can Facebook make accessing family members easier, but it can also strengthen existing relationships between immediate family members. P10 offers a story about how Facebook positively enhanced her relationship with her brothers:

I think Facebook has helped me. I have like two older brothers because they're protective of family, and I think Facebook kind of really helped us like trust each other more in a weird way. Like when my brothers first added me on Facebook and my dad, like I had them all on my limited profile for so long because I didn't want them to know about anything I was doing. I would like have pictures of me going out or pictures of me with guys and I would always be scared about what they're going to say….And then they would end up seeing it on other people's pages and it was more of an issue as to why I was hiding it, so I finally got to the point where I was just open and honest with them. It really kind of brought us closer because they know everything [about me] now.

P4 shares a similar story about how Facebook positively impacted her relationship with her sisters:

> One thing that I do like about it [Facebook], since like older people have been adding it, like my older sister, I feel like I get to like at least know more about her and just I feel close to her just because she's on Facebook. Another sister who lives in Ohio, she just had a baby, my nephew, and like she posts pictures of like stuff that they do so I feel so much closer, closely connected to her and him through Facebook. So that's something like a positive, it just brings like families who live far apart closer and I don't feel as far away from them.

P11 offers a similar story about communicating with her sister through Facebook:

> My sister, she's in the military and she just this past eight months was overseas. She wasn't in combat or anything; she just like traveled around the world I think. And she didn't call very much, but I still kept in contact with her because it was through Facebook and she was on whenever she had the chance and I guess we're a little closer.

Both P4 and P11 show not only that Facebook improves familial relationships, but also that Facebook functions to decrease issues associated with geography. Facebook allows people to share information, including images and videos almost instantaneously, with the click of the mouse. People need no longer rely on snail mail to share stories and pictures with family members in different states; rather, they simply can upload this information onto a Facebook profile.

Conclusion

The findings from the analysis of Facebook profiles contribute to an understanding of how Facebook users construct identities using narrative fragments on their profiles. The analysis of the 100 Facebook profiles reveals five specific types of narrative fragments of identity: (1) the essential self, (2) the desired self, (3), the preferential self, (4) the dynamic self, and (5) the demanding self. The multiple levels of analysis illuminate the numerous linguistic and paralinguistic features used in the representation and articulation of virtual identities. In addition, the analysis shows how cultural capital makes possible certain narrative selves and perpetuates existing social hierarchies by differentiating students based upon certain high and low cultural tastes and preferences.

Analysis of the focus group discourse provides insight into the effects of Facebook and provides an understanding of the processes and practices of Facebook users. Students' stories related to the offline consequences of online performances of identity fall into four general themes: (1) keeping it real, (2) Facebook official, (3) friending, and (4) relationship boundaries: family as friends.

In summary, the study's findings offer further insight into the phenomenon of Facebook. Analyses confirm that identity construction is students' primary motive for using Facebook. Students now believe that connecting and networking with friends comes in second as a motivation for using Facebook. This shift in focus has serious implications for future research on Facebook and these implications, along with a few others, are discussed in the final chapter.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Not only is this study timely, but the findings from both the rhetorical and focus group analyses are significant. This study offers a unique framework for understanding online communication by approaching Facebook messages in a unique and interesting way. Not only does this study provide a new framework for understanding online communication, but it also challenges, integrates, and modifies existing theories and methods to help better explain the effects of online communication, such as identity construction.

The primary goal of this study is to explain and understand how Facebook users construct identities using narrative fragments on their profiles. To achieve this goal, I propose a framework called the Narrative Performance Model (NPM). Multiple levels of analysis provide a complex explanation of how users construct identity on Facebook. The narratives that exist on profiles appear in fragments, and each fragment produces a different feature of identity. Piecing together the fragments provides an understanding of the performance of a virtual self. The focus group discussion adds a depth dimension to the rhetorical analysis and examines some of the media effects associated with identity construction on Facebook.

In addition to the primary and secondary goals, this study achieves the following overarching goals: (1) understand the phenomenon of Facebook, (2) contribute to rhetorical theory by expanding upon existing theories of computer-mediated communication, public sphere and identity, (3) integrate methods so as to arrive at a new model of narrative criticism that has application in an online context. This chapter

summarizes the study by revisiting the research questions, contributions to the field of rhetoric and communication research, and final thoughts.

Findings: Micro and Macro Analyses

The summary of findings related to the narrative performance of identities derives from the analysis of the Facebook profiles. Focus groups supplement the micro-analysis of identity and provide further insights into the media effects of Facebook. Answers to the first three research questions result from the three levels of narrative analysis of the Facebook profiles. The answer to the fourth question develops from the thematic analysis of the focus group data.

RQ1: What features are used in the narrative performance of identities on Facebook?

In this study, the rhetorical situation, as explained by Bitzer (1968) consists of UNM student profilers, and readers. Students' discourse occurs in response to the context, which in this case is the Facebook profile. The rhetorical act is unique in that students react to the constraints caused by the structure of Facebook, and in effect, shape the technology to fit their needs. More specifically, UNM Facebook users create a specific context for shaping this new communication technology. This finding supports the claims made in the social shaping of technology theory (MacKenzie et al., 1988) by demonstrating the reciprocal relationship between users of technology and the actual technology. The following section discusses how exactly this social shaping of technology occurs by addressing the features used in the narrative performance of identities.

Students utilize a number of features, both linguistic and paralinguistic, in the creation and communication of selves through narrative performances. In terms of linguistics, students challenge and reconstruct traditional forms of grammar and language. Students contest traditional rules related to sentence structure and thus alter the way they present information on their profiles. Students commonly communicate personal information by manipulating conventions of sentence structure (missing pronouns, punctuation, and capitalization), by providing lists, and by choosing from pull-down menu options.

Students also respond to this new medium by challenging traditional conventions of writing and by integrating them with conventions of conversation. The narrative fragments are disjunctive accounts of events that defy the traditional chronological ordering of narratives and students instead use Facebook page options to create messages that present specific narratives of self. Profilers rely on readers to supply connections among the fragments in order to make sense of the narrative performance.

Regarding features related to language, students commonly use slang in their narratives to communicate directly (via the wall, the chat function, or comments) with other readers through their profiles. By changing the normative meaning of existing words and using a private and popular words and phrases, students create a common language, which is understood by people who share this language, and cognitive schemas for processing the language and by doing so, they exclude readers who are lacking those schemas. In addition to the use of slang, students invent their own terminology to describe and make sense of their virtual experiences. Examples of new words that students coin include: friending, tagging, Facebook official, and Facebook friend.

Not only do students alter the meaning of existing words, but they also contest the literal definition of words. The structure of Facebook challenges the meaning of friends by placing all people, regardless of the level of relationship into the category of friends. Because students experience difficulties distinguishing between types of friends, they redefine what is meant by the word *friend* by inserting qualifiers such as "genuine" and "Facebook."

Students use paralinguistic features (acronyms, humor, metaphors, language as action, and graphics) in their constructions of self to augment their linguistic features. Acronyms are primarily used in the naming of groups. While group names are preset, students must have some preexisting knowledge of the group in order to understand the meanings behind the acronyms. The acronyms provide group solidarity through shared information and exclude people who do not possess this insider information. One frequently used acronym in the pages I analyzed is the Awkwardness Awareness Campaign, (AAC). This global group seeks to spread knowledge about how to recognize and react to awkward situations.

Students use humor as a way of grabbing readers' attention and showing a social self. Because most of the humor on profiles depends on inside-jokes, students consciously exclude certain readers who are not part of the joke. Furthermore, humor not only enhances the profilers' attractiveness but also supports narratives of their idealized selves. One student offers this humorous quotation by a friend on his profile, "It tastes like unicorn giggles!" Clearly, these two friends experienced something together and that experience spurred the creation of this particular phrase.

Most students are not poetic and do not show a creative side to their writing so the metaphors they use are limited to song lyrics and quotations. Lyrics from a Jason Molina song show the poetic nature of one student, "I am proof that the heart is a risky fuel to burn." One of the most obvious examples of language as action appears within the narration of the demanding self. Within this particular representation of self, students either invite or order readers to inquire further into their lives, and as a result turn ordinary language into physical action. Most students who demand a response by readers use the phrase "ask me." This phrase serves as a command and prompts readers to engage in some type of action with the profile and the profile's creator.

The final and most widely used paralinguistic features are graphics, which supplement the written body by adding further information and depth to the creator. In this study, students typically add the graphic element of pictures to showcase their social selves, both through profile pictures as well as picture albums. Tagging of the self and others in pictures also confirms the narrative performances of the self as social actor since this act connects creators to other readers. Likewise, pictures offer a glimpse into the offline lives of students by documenting their involvement in activities beyond their online lives. Many students post pictures from past trips with friends and family, and in effect, showcase their participation in offline activities and events.

To enhance the believability of the narrative performances of idealized identities and to establish narrative coherence, students engage in the technique of impression management. The features implemented to help control impressions other people form as a result of reading the profilers' narratives include the inclusion and exclusion of information (textual and visual) and the use of one-sided arguments. Students include

information that connotes socially acceptable traits, such as hard-working, loving, and devoted. The use of these positive traits coupled with the exclusion of questionable photographs that reveal negative traits contribute to the general representation of an idealized self. It also deserves mentioning that while most students restrict access to pictures that reflect negatively on their idealized self to their close friends, some students fail to keep private photos involving partying, drinking, smoking, and some seductive poses, and these photos actually jeopardize the idealized narrative of self by conflicting with other strategically created narrative fragments on their profile. Both the linguistic and paralinguistic features contribute to students' narrative performances and create their virtual identities.

RQ2: What types of identities result from the narrative performances on Facebook profiles?

The analysis of the 100 Facebook profiles reveals five specific types of narrative fragments of identity: (1) the essential self, (2) the desired self, (3), the preferential self, (4) the dynamic self; and (5) the demanding self. The primary identity, the essential self, results from ascribed identity characteristics and constructs an idealized or deviant self as well as a communally structured self. The essential self is the primary category of identity because it forms the core of the creator's social identity and frames the remaining four selves. This particular narrative of self relies upon the creator and reader sharing a history, a language and cognitive schema, and culture preferences.

The idealized self evolves from the inclusion of socially acceptable, positive personality traits, and the exclusion of information that contradicts this image. Students that choose not to narrate an idealized self often construct a devious and/or negative

identity that challenge conventions of acceptable public behavior and offer an off-stage rather than front stage performance. Furthermore, narrating deviant identities creates a shock value that attempts to destabilize norms of social acceptability.

The essential self is a product of social interactions and connections. Students narrate a self that is structured communally through the interactions that take place on Facebook. Moreover, the communally structured self exists as a result of group affiliations, thus making the self a product of social interactions. Through the communication of dispositions students also give voice to specific attitudes and preferences, which display varying levels of cultural capital.

The second type of self is a dynamic self, a "hoped for" type of future self. Students narrate this self through expressions of "I want" and "I hope" that relate to their desire to engage in particular activities as well as to envision their future selves. Narratives of desire surface within two categories: (1) narratives of desired fulfillment, and (2) narratives of personal growth. Narratives of fulfillment relate to personal happiness whereas narratives of personal growth deal with the desire for the profiler's self-improvement. Constructing a desired self depends upon the users' successful implementation of features of impression management, and the obtainability of the desires depends upon a certain degree of cultural capital. For example, students wishing to perform work in fields such as engineering, law, and medicine depend upon financial capital so that they can obtain knowledge (cultural capital), through higher education, related to their career choices.

The third construction of self is the preferential self. Students articulate this self through a listing of preferences and through a value system that includes like, dislike,

love, and hate. Likes and dislikes express the value of ordinary things in life, such as

pizza and television shows. Expressions of love and hate center upon family,

personalities, locations and friends; valuations of love always preceded those of hate.

Students perform the preferential self through a series of one-sided arguments, which

preclude feedback or criticism from readers. The articulation of preferences also

illuminates certain tastes, which function to perpetuate social stratification based upon

culture and class. Preference for travel, the arts, and music show a student's access to

high culture, and participation in this particular culture perpetuates a social hierarchy

based on access to goods and services.

The fourth performed self is the dynamic self. This performance relies upon

activities of "doing" and appears in narrative fragments about self that concern: (1)

physical well-being, which focuses on desires of escape and a means to express physical

attractiveness; (2) self-improvement, which shows the profilers' desire to stand out; (3)

connection, which implies the need for association and social acceptance; (4) debauchery,

which indicates the profilers' need to engage in illicit and deviant activities. Furthermore,

the narration of the dynamic self creates a social-self that is familiar to others with similar

cultural affiliations.

The final self presented on Facebook profiles is the demanding self. Students

either invite or demand participation of others in the construction of their narrative. The

decision to either invite or demand creates three types of demanding selves: (1) the

private, reserved self who only makes available additional information upon request, (2)

the deviant self with something to hide, and (3) the conformist self who is concerned with

rules and following the conventions set forth by other Facebook users. Each of these

selves strategically includes and excludes information so as to control their narrative performances and restrict the responses and interpretations readers are likely to make.

RQ3: What role does cultural capital play in the narrative performance of self?

Cultural capital makes possible certain narrative selves, which in effect perpetuates the hierarchical arrangement of society. Examples of narratives that include references to cultural capital are part of the performances of the essential, desired, and preferential selves. In their profiles, students express certain cultural sensibilities, interests and preferences that demonstrate different types of cultural capital. For example, the interests found in the narratives of the essential and desired selves reveal a certain amount of privilege. Attending college is a privilege and access to this privilege depends upon a certain type of knowledge and social connections. Moreover, the knowledge and experience one gains in college contributes to a greater level of success in life when compared to someone with less experience and privilege. Students also express an interest in traveling, a kind of privilege that relies upon access to financial capital. The experiences and knowledge gained as a result of traveling also help increase students' cultural capital.

The valuations articulated in the narratives of the preferential self also uncover a certain degree of cultural capital. The tastes and preference profilers list on their pages come from their exposure to certain life events. Exposure to high culture increases students' culture capital, and they communicate their resulting preferences in their narrative performances. A preference for the arts, more specifically dance, illustrates a taste for activities typically enjoyed by those from a high culture.

The levels of cultural capital that students possess set them apart from other students. Those with access to money and high culture identify different interests and different types of habitus in the narratives as witnessed in preferences for classical music, art, and travel. Also, students with linguistic and technical capital are able to navigate Facebook easier as evidenced in the amount of information and level of involvement on their profiles. In summation, Facebook does not serve as a great equalizer nor does it erase social and class difference; rather, these sites maintain and perpetuate social status.

RQ 4: What are the offline consequences of communicating online identities on Facebook?

The findings from the analysis of focus groups help answer the final research question. Students' ideas related to the offline consequences of online performances of identity fall into four general themes: (1) keeping it real, (2) Facebook official, (3) friending, and (4) relationship boundaries: family as friends. *Keeping it real* deals with communicating a real or online self. Students claim they represent a "real" online self and in turn expect friends to do the same. Most students agree that exaggeration of information and the inclusion of misleading or false information about one's identity qualify as not keeping it real. Keeping it real requires that students represent themselves truthfully and honestly on their profiles. In other words, the online representation of the self should to be an extension of the offline self. Consequences arise when students do not represent themselves truthfully and honestly on their profiles. By posting false or misleading information students damage the credibility of their narrative self. Distrust not only erodes the probability and fidelity of the narrative self, but also negatively impacts the friendship, and in the most extreme cases, ruins the relationship completely.

To avoid such relationship issues, students monitor the representations of their friends and they self-monitor the information included and excluded on their personal profiles. The goal of self-monitoring is the maintenance of a socially accepted and desirable self. Controlling and monitoring the type of Facebook image presented to the public ensures the believability of the social performance of self and limits challenges to this identity by readers.

Facebook official acknowledges the idea that certain facets of life are not real or legitimate until posted on Facebook. During focus group discussions student's ideas about Facebook official primarily center upon issues surrounding relationship status updates on profiles. The participants mention that changing the relationship status has positive and negative consequences. If both parties agree to making public their relationship, they then post the information on their Facebook, thus eliminating the need to tell friends individually. Furthermore, posting this information on profiles helps facilitate and make "official" the offline relationship while also circumventing awkward "what are we?" conversations.

Since the practice of Facebook official has become normalized, and most Facebook users no longer question the practice, they blindly continue with the practice. A small majority of students acknowledge what they believe to be an idiotic practice and rebel against posting certain information on their profiles, thus limiting what readers can see on their profiles.

Focus group discussion related to the process and action of friending focused on categorizing friends as either a genuine friend or a Facebook friend. Defining the relationship through one of the two categories impacts how students use Facebook as

well as the type of information they disclose on their profiles. When interacting with a genuine friend, students use Facebook as a relationship maintenance tool that permits them to either strengthen existing relationships or reconnect and rebuild past relationships. Through applications, such as wall posts, instant messaging, photo comments and status updates, friends keep in contact with one another and communicate and respond to events in each other's lives while at the same time they construct a social self.

Facebook friends are superficial, and students, who classified friends as such, use Facebook to observe these relative strangers. Students often limit their profiles so that the stranger does not have access to all areas of their profiles. Focus group participants say that encountering Facebook friends offline is awkward and uncomfortable because they do not expect to interact with these friends offline.

The final way Facebook influences life offline is through the blurring of the relational boundary of friends and family. Focus group participants mention that the structure of Facebook forces them to classify family as friends, thus altering the definition and boundaries created through the classification process. This blurring of boundaries causes students to limit the amount of information available to family members by enacting profile privacy settings. Excluding families from certain aspects of the profiles allows students to maintain the image and identities performed offline for their families. While some students restrict information, others say they allow family members full access to their pages, which in turn helps strengthen family bonds. Facebook enables families to stay connected and also strengthens family bonds by allowing for the rapid sharing of information via this new communication medium.

This study's findings provide further insights into the phenomenon of Facebook, a number of current theories, and methods pertaining to online narrative criticism. Before discussing these implications, I discuss the contributions of this study to theories of rhetoric and identity.

Contributions of the Study

This study generates exciting new knowledge and insights into the rhetorical construction of online identities and the offline effects of these strategic representations. The contributions are substantive because they contribute new knowledge on computer-mediated communication, rhetoric and the social construction of identities.

This study attempts to do what no other study on social-networking sites has done, that is, to implement micro and macro-levels of analysis. Each Facebook profile generates approximately four pages of text, multiply this by the 100 profiles used in this study and I have analyzed 400 pages of text. The textual analysis of each of these rhetorical pieces involves a close reading of the rhetoric performances, which includes linguistic and visual features. In the analysis I look at grammatical and linguistic structures and how challenges to the conventional means of communicating result in new ways of communicating and writing the self into being.

My rationale for choosing UNM, undergraduate students as the sample population comes from watching the intensive and obsessive use of Facebook by students between classes. Each generation consumes and integrates new technologies in unique ways and I had a strong desire to understand why this specific set of consumers chooses to engage in Facebook use. Focusing solely on the profiles of UNM students is not exclusionary, but rather, is necessary so that I can generate knowledge related to this specific population.

Furthermore, the micro-analysis of the Facebook profiles is an example of qualitative data analysis that provides depth rather than breadth and generalizability. The goal of the micro-analysis is not to objectively evaluate the content of the profiles or generalize the findings to all Facebook users; rather, my goal is to provide specific knowledge for specific groups of users to help make users more critical and conscious consumers of this technology. Moreover, implementing an analysis of three levels allows for a close reading of the text, and the connections made between each level are helpful in understanding the different lenses that influence the readings and interpretations of profile content.

Focus groups offer supplemental information related to media effects not found in the narrative rhetorical analysis of Facebook profiles. Focus groups provide a forum in which students can verbalize their understanding of their own use as well as their friends' use of Facebook. Similar to the micro-analysis, this macro-analysis does not attempt to generalize findings, but rather reinforces what is found in the rhetorical analysis of UNM students' profiles.

Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative studies allow for investigation of a phenomenon subjectively rather than objectively. As a Facebook creator myself, I use my own page as a frame of reference for reading the profiles. Based on how I use the site and the process by which I create and communicate my performance of self and evaluate my friends' profiles, I form assumptions about how these students also perform their virtual identities. As both a consumer and critical researcher of Facebook, I provide a unique set of interpretations of the discourse found both on Facebook profiles and from focus group

participants. My interpretations of the discourse offer a useful perspective for understanding the experiences of college-age Facebook users.

Profilers constantly update the content on their pages thereby altering the narrative performance of self. Because this study is not interested in how identity changes overtime, these changes are irrelevant. In addition to updating and controlling content, profilers also control the privacy settings for their accounts. Because I am not friends with any of the students whose profiles I analyzed, my view of their profile may be restricted. While access to further content can provide more depth to the narrative fragments, the amount of information I found on the pages was more than sufficient in helping me make conclusions about the construction of online identities.

Finally, while creators are capable of changing profile content, Facebook, the entity, is capable of changing the entire Facebook environment. To meet the needs of its creators and to keep up or enhance performances, Facebook must make some subtle and not so subtle changes to its structure, policies, and applications. The Facebook of today is noticeably different compared to the Facebook used by Harvard students in 2004, therefore, narratives of identity do change as the structure changes. When these future changes occur, the theory generated in my study will serve as a point of comparison for understanding how Facebook users adapt to structural changes and how these changes alter narrative performances overtime.

Contributions

This study makes several significant contributions. (1) This study contributes to an understanding of the phenomenon of Facebook. (2) The study contributes to theory by expanding upon existing theories of computer-mediated communication, public sphere,

and performance of identity. (3) The study integrates methods so as to arrive at a new

model of narrative criticism that has application in an online context.

Understanding the Phenomenon of Facebook

This was not the first study that attempted to understand the phenomenon of

Facebook and the impact these sites have on the identity construction process; however,

this study develops a new perspective on identity construction by challenging the

traditional forms of narratives and by refuting claims by scholars, such as Zhao and

Martin (2008), who assert that Facebook users use few if any personal narratives on their

profiles. This study demonstrates how Facebook users actively construct narratives of

identity through different Facebook applications.

Furthermore, this study emphasizes the importance of readership in the

interpretation of narrative fragments of identity. The relationship between the readers and

the profile's creator directly affect not only the amount and type of information available

for viewing, but also the way in which readers interpret and understand the narratives

created and performed by others. The reader must fill in the missing pieces of the

narratives and combine fragments for the narrative to have meaning. These findings

regarding the influence of readers not only impact the performance of self, but also the

meaning-making process that takes place when interpreting performances.

Most studies about Facebook look to how users respond to the freedom afforded

by Facebook; however, this study focuses on how users respond and adapt to the

constraints created by the structure of Facebook that limit the content of the messages and

at the same time enable users to strategically adapt messages to friends. This finding has

implications for understanding the changing nature of communication as witnessed in the

creation of new language systems that are used to help make sense of experiences in this new virtual world.

Furthermore, this study's focus on the response and adaptation process of Facebook users in the identity construction process extends the understanding of the Uses and Gratifications theory (Blumler & Katz, 1975). My study extends the theory into the online context by showing how people use the technology as yet another way of fulfilling their need for personal identity and integration. While users consciously and actively use the Internet to gratify their need for integration and social interaction, the gratification for personal identity most often occurs at an unconscious level. By prompting discussion related to identity construction online, I made students aware of this unconsciousness need for fulfillment thus making them more conscious and knowledgeable consumers of this technology.

Finally, this study offers new insights into the motivations for using Facebook. My study refutes assertions made by past studies on Facebook and by Facebook's mission statement, which "is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected," (Facebook, 2009) by establishing that students' primary motive for using the site is not to connect with friends, but to communicate and advertise identities. Before connecting and networking with friends, Facebook users must first create a virtual representation of self. Creating a profile requires generating a textual and visual representation of self. This process is extremely involved and strategic and often becomes more important than findings friends and maintaining relationships because the process itself is continuous as identities constantly change and evolve. This finding has

implications for future research on the motivations for using Facebook and should prompt
researchers to approach Facebook research in an entirely different way.

Contributions to Computer-Mediated Communication

The knowledge produced in this study extends, challenges, and provides
additional insights into existing theories of computer-mediated, public sphere, and
identity. The discussion identifies specific contributions to each area of theory.

Regarding theories of computer-mediated communication, my research refutes the
claims made by the technological determinism perspective and extends the theory about
the social shaping of technology (SST). The features developed and implemented by the
users of Facebook contest the central claim of technological determinism that people are
passive users and receivers of technology. By creating new words and discursive systems,
students demonstrate their level of agency through their involvement and interaction with
the technology thereby showing the relationship between people and technology is
reciprocal.

Current computer-mediated research dichotomizes the ideas of the anonymous
and the known. This polarization of levels of visibility is problematic when studying
social-networking sites because the sites offer both forms of visibility. Because of
privacy settings, the ability to control the information included on profiles (specifically
pictures), and the ability to falsify information allow users some anonymity. While a
level of anonymity is ensured, most profiles still contain some identifiers, including the e-
mail address used for login and the name attached to the profile account, thus making
them semi-visible. As this study shows, perceived levels of visibility affect the type and
amount of information disclosed on profiles. Current studies on computer-mediated

communication would benefit from further exploration of the varying levels of visibility and by naming and defining this new boundary system.

Contributions to Rhetorical Theory

This study extends the ideas set forth by Habermas (1989) regarding the blurring of the public and private spheres and shows that his theory has great application in understanding virtual identity construction. Cyberspace offers an alternative way of strategically participating in the public sphere. On Facebook, users present private information about themselves and invite public responses about private matters like identity and relationships. The ability to access private information coupled with the naïveté of many Internet users regarding online privacy options challenges Habermas's (1989) assumption that the dichotomous positions of public and private can neatly exist. Clashes between these two areas of life are expected and inevitable. Whether by choice or not, many aspects of an individual's life are documented online for the whole world to see. The repercussions of having a private life documented publicly are serious and still not well understood, but this study provides further insights into the effects of this media by showing that life online should be an extension of life offline rather than just a projection of an idealized self.

Furthermore, Habermas (1989) fails to enter into the discussion of how the public sphere impacts the creation and communication of identities within a public space. As posited by Habermas (1989), the public sphere appears to be a patriarchal space devoid of specific identities and interests; clearly this is not the case for Facebook users. The goal of this public, social sphere is not to participate in public policy decisions and promote democracy, but to indicate and sustain relationships—that is, to broaden social spheres

and construct identities in those social spaces. Not only are identities constructed in these social spheres, but these representations are strategic and filled with meaning for Internet users.

Identity Theories

The findings of this study provide further insights for theories of identity and the performance of self. Existing studies on identity apply the idea of the disembodied to virtual identities, so that identities are understood as a specific kind of textual performance. The structure of the Internet forces the separation of the self from the physical body, and the self becomes something understood through text and the response of others to that set of symbols.

Virtual Identities. This study challenges the idea of disembodied virtual identities and shows that people actually perform specific messages related to the self through both textual and pictorial features. Since identity construction is strategic, creators systematically communicate identities by including or excluding information. This inclusion or exclusion of specific identity information leads to two specific types of identities, idealized and deviant. This study also refutes the claim made by Goffman (1959) that the primary goal of all performances of self is the acceptance of the ideal self because my study shows that many students choose to perform a deviant or inadequate self over an ideal self. The reasons for this type of performance are varied; however, many of these identities demonstrate a rebellion against conformity and acceptable social identities.

Performance. This study extends Goffman's (1959; 1961; 1962; 1974) idea of the presentation of self into the virtual context of Facebook and looks to narrative as a means

of executing the performance of identity. The analysis of the Facebook profiles reveals new features for impression management that involve both the manipulation and control of text and images. Furthermore, the study makes a theoretical leap by linking the identities that result from the impression management to concepts of cultural capital and social status. Contrary to existing claims made about the utopian nature of the Internet, my study proves that the Internet does not erase social differences, but rather perpetuates social hierarchies. The identity claims and the social spaces people occupy offline influence the representations created and communicated in an online venue, and set up a similar hierarchy based on class and culture affiliations.

Moreover, this study challenges and re-imagines Goffman's (1959) idea of front stage, back stage, and off-stage performances. Front stage performances relate to all elements of the profile that remain constant. These narrative performances remain relatively the same, as creators do not update these sections of their profile on a regular basis. Back stage performances become irrelevant because there is never a time when the audience cannot view the public information of the profile. Off-stage relates to the offline performance of Facebook creators. While creators represent pieces of their offstage self on their profiles through identity claims and visual cues, there are still certain elements of their offline self that cannot be captured through online content (messages), and users are forced to exclude this identity information.

Finally, for the purpose of this study the concept of audience is reconstructed and renamed "reader." The readers of Facebook profiles work together with Facebook profilers to construct and make meaning from the narrative performances of identity, an idea which parallels that of symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1986; Mead & Morris, 1934).

Creators continue to control frames so that the readers interpret the performance as the creator intended. The level of relationship between creator and reader also impacts the narrative construction and the identity or "face" enacted by the creator on his/her profile.

The final area of identity research impacted by this study deals with core identity and the importance of ethnic, racial, and spiritual identifications associated with this core. While students did perform multiple identities on their profiles, I found very limited message content about ethnic, racial or spiritual identities. While I believe these identifications are still significant and that they inform the claims and narratives made by students on their profiles, I think that Facebook's focus on the-here-and-now makes these identities less salient in this context. Further research is needed to understand whether the exclusion of such information resulted because of the context itself or because of a larger social reevaluation of which identifications actually constitute the essential self of the twenty-first century. Finally, future studies on online identities would benefit from further exploration into the hierarchical arrangement of the virtual social sphere. This study's findings show that online social stratification does not result from racial or ethnic affiliations (as is the case offline), but rather from other cultural identifications. The consequences of this change are not well understood and should be studied further because as everyone knows, life online affects life offline.

Methods

This study provides a new approach to online communication research. The approach uses rhetorical methods supplemented by focus groups to understand the Facebook messages and how they construct identity. Concepts from narrative and

performance provide a starting point for an analytical framework. The framework was modified, integrated, and refined through the analysis process.

Traditional methods of narrative criticism have limited application in the online context due to the fact the most often online narratives do not follow the basic narrative structure. As such, this study reinterpreted the idea of a narrative, and instead of looking at the entire narrative, focused on individual narrative fragments and how users and readers jointly construct meaning. Approaching narratives in this way prompted me to create and implement what I call the Narrative Performance Model (NPM). This model extends the ideas created by Fisher (1989) set forth by Cragan and Shields (1998) through the narrative paradigm theory, and applied by Foss (2004) in her discussion of narrative criticism into the virtual context where the people that use social-networking sites rely upon narrative fragments to make one-sided arguments to communicate stories about the self.

The six levels of the NPM, narrative, message structure (fragmentation), performance, medium structure, medium effects, and social/cultural effects, consider language as social action at both the micro (language and visual cues that create narrative performances) and macro-levels (the offline effects of said performances). Furthermore, this model acknowledges the importance of both textual cues and visual cues (graphics) in the narrative performance of identities because both types of information contribute to the effect of online messages. Internet research is challenging because it requires that researchers combine, collapse, and collide contexts, technologies and social worlds (Markham & Baym, 2009). It is my hope that this new framework for studying online communication expands research methods and extends existing communication theories.

Final Thoughts

I began this dissertation with a heart-wrenching story about the offline implications of online communication, and it is only fitting that I parallel this structure and end in the same way so that for the final time I might show the extreme power of this communication tool. On March 12, 2009, five-year-old Kian Lewis woke up to find his mother, twenty-six year old Hayley Jones stabbed and strangled to death. Kian's father, Brian Lewis, murdered Hayley after finding out she changed her Facebook relationship status from married to single only ten days earlier. The change in relationship status resulted from arguments concerning financial issues and Hayley's excessive use of Facebook disrupting the couple's everyday life. In September of 2009, a jury found Brian Lewis guilty of murder and sentenced him to life in prison (Llewellyn, 2009). This tragic story serves as a reminder that what happens online does not always stay online. What happened on Facebook motivated an extremely horrific act that ended in the death of a young woman.

What began as a simple exploratory investigation into a communication technology I use and take for granted on a daily basis turned into this complex study on the online performance of narrative identities. My hope is that this study not only informs future research on Facebook and identity performances, but also serves as a reminder to all Facebook users not to take any communication practice for granted as the impacts of these technologies are great. This new communication technology of Facebook has changed the very definition and process of communication and identities and will continue to do so as the number of users continues to increase exponentially everyday.

Appendices

Appendix A: Focus Group Discussion Guide

Appendix B: Instructor Consent Form

Appendix C: Focus Group Participant Form

Appendix D: Facebook Profile

Appendix A

Focus Group Guidelines

1. Describe how Facebook has become part of your everyday life. Can you give examples of how Facebook has changed your life?

2. What type of information do you think is important to share with others through your homepage?

3. Talk about how you decide what information to include/exclude on your homepages

4. Give some examples of when what experienced some sort of reaction from family/friends from posting specific content on your homepage

5. What are your thoughts about experimenting with identities online or posting false information?

Appendix B

June 1, 2009

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written in support of Marianne Leonardi's dissertation project. Ms. Leonardi contacted me regarding utilizing classroom time to recruit students for her dissertation project entitled: *Narrative as Self Performance: The Rhetorical Construction of Identities on Facebook Homepages.* I am fully in support of Ms. Leonardi's project and I am more than happy to provide her with the requested class time to assist in her recruiting process.

Sincerely,

Courtney Fletcher

Mediation

Rachel Stohr

public speaking

Jessica Nodulman

Small Group Communication Instructor

Iliana Rucker

Intercultural Communication

The University of New Mexico Main Campus IRB
Consent to Participate in Research

Narrative as Self Performance: The Rhetorical Construction of Identities on Facebook Homepages

Introduction

You are being asked to participate in a research study that is being done by Marianne Leonardi, who is the Principal Investigator and Insert one co-investigator or state "his/her associates" and her responsible faculty member Janice Schuetz from the Department of Department Name. This research is studying how people use text and images to create their Facebook profiles and the offline consequences related to choices made on Facebook.

Previous studies have looked at how people create their identities on homepages by looking at their network of friends, and links to material items and making generalization across groups. In my study I do not focus on these identifiers, but rather, I study how people use image and text to tell stories about who they are as an individual.

You are being asked to participate in this study because you are an undergraduate UNM student with a Facebook homepage. Approximately 20-30 UNM students will take part in this study. Insert Sponsor Name is funding this study.

This form will explain the research study, and will also explain the possible risks as well as the possible benefits to you. We encourage you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. If you have any questions, please ask one of the study investigators.

What will happen if I decide to participate?

If you agree to participate, the following things will happen:

You will be asked to participate in a focus group discussion with the researcher, and approximately 6 of your UNM peers. In this focus group the researcher will ask you about your experiences as a Facebook user. You will be asked what you think about how Facebook has affected your life. You will be asked to share how you decide what content to include/exclude on your homepage and any stories you might have about people reacting to the information on your page. You may refuse to answer any questions at any time during the interview. The focus group will take about 90 minutes to complete.

How long will I be in this study?
Participation in this study will take a total of approximately 90 minutes over the period of one day.

What are the risks of being in this study?

While the risks to you in this study are minimal, you may experience a small degree of stress, emotional distress, inconvenience and possible loss of privacy and confidentiality associated with participating in a research study. If you want to leave the focus group please feel free to do so at any time.

For more information about risks, please ask one of the study investigators.

What are the benefits to being in this study?
There will be no direct benefit to participant in this study. The results of this study will contribute to the understanding and research on how people use the Internet and establish identities online.

What other choices do I have if I do not want to be in this study?
You do not have to participate in this study. If you do not feel comfortable or do not wish to participate, you may decline participation at any time. Whether you choose to participate or not in this study, your grade will not be affected.

How will my information be kept confidential?
I will take measures to protect your privacy and the security of all your personal information. I will keep your information in a locked filing cabinet in a locked office.

Information contained in your study records is used by Marianne Leonardi, in some cases it will be shared with the sponsor of the study. The University of New Mexico IRB that oversees human subject research, and the Food and Drug Administration and/or other entities that may have access will be permitted to access your records. There may be times when we are required by law to share your information. However, your name will not be used in any published reports about this study.

What are the costs of taking part in this study?
There is no cost to you as being a part of this study. You will not be billed for any participation.

Will I be paid for taking part in this study?
You will not be paid for taking part in this study.

How will I know if you learn something new that may change my mind about participating?
You will be informed of any significant new findings that become available during the course of the study, such as changes in the risks or benefits resulting from participating in the research or new alternatives to participation that might change your mind about participating.

Can I stop being in the study once I begin?
Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You have the right to choose not to participate or to withdraw your participation at any point in this study without affecting any services to which you are entitled.

If you wish to withdraw from the study early, please notify the investigator and she will immediately stop the study, with no repercussions.

Whom can I call with questions or complaints about this study?
If you have any questions, concerns or complaints at any time about the research study, please contact the lead researcher, Marianne E. Leonardi, M.A. email at mleonar1@unm.edu, or her responsible faculty member, Dr. Jan Schuetz will be glad to answer them by email at jschuetz@unm.edu. If you need to contact someone after business hours or on weekends, please call (510) 410-2816 and ask for Marianne Leonardi. If you would like to speak with someone other than the research team in regards to any complaints you have about the study, you may call the UNM IRB at (505) 277-0067.

Whom can I call with questions about my rights as a research subject?
If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, you may call the UNM IRB at (505) 277-0067. The IRB is a group of people from UNM and the community who provide independent oversight of safety and ethical issues related to research involving human subjects. For more information, you may also access the IRB website at http://hsc.unm.edu/som/research/HRRC/maincampusirbhome.shtml.

Appendix D

Jordan Sayre   [Add as Friend]

Wall   **Info**   Photos   Boxes   Notes   C&H

View Photos of Jordan (135)
View Videos of Jordan (1)
Send Jordan a Message
Poke Jordan

Meow

Information

Networks:
New Mexico '10
Birthday:
March 24, 1984
Current City:
Albuquerque, NM

Friends

466 friends   See All

Kristina   Lee M   Sarah
Austell   Trujillo   Maddox

Laura   Adrienne   Derek
Eberhardt   Gonzales   Warren

Gifts

2 gifts   Give a Gift

From: Nicole   Private

Photos

2 of 4 albums   See All

Things I
found
Updated about
4 months ago

Donkey
Punchin' fun!!!
Created on July
6, 2008 at
5:40pm

Links

3 of 6 links   See All

B4-4 – Get Down

The 12 most annoying types
of Facebookers – CNN.com

Basic Information

Networks:	New Mexico '10
Sex:	Male
Birthday:	March 24, 1984
Hometown:	Aztec, NM
Siblings:	Joshua Sayre
	Erin Sayre
	Kayla Rain Sayre
	Laura Joe
	Naomi Sayre
Parents:	Joe Sayre
Interested In:	Women
Political Views:	Liberal Moderate
Religious Views:	personal

Personal Information

Activities: Biking, playing tuba, eating, sleeping, driving late at night, looking at Albuquerque from the Crest, smiling, making people laugh, teaching,

Interests: Teaching band and playing tuba

Favorite Music: Tenacious D, Sublime, Earth Wind Fire, Jon Sass, Outkast, Johnny Cash, The Darkness, Prince, Michael Jackson, Barry White, Al Green, Extreme, Scorpions, Poison, Iron Maiden, Aaron Copland, ODB, Green Day, Blink 182, Black Eyed Peas, Long Beach Dub Allstars, J.S. Bach, Mozart, Handel, Beethoven, Mahler, Shostechovich, Rick James, Maynard, Tower Of Power, Rufus Wainwright, Jay Z, 50 Cent, Snoop Dogg, Electric Six, Spirit Marching Band, Richard Strauss, Chicago Symphony, 311, Incubus, Journey, Meatloaf, Weird Al Yankovich, Paul Hindemith, Brahms,

Favorite TV Shows: The Nightly News and any documentary, Southpark, The Office, Cops, Vice Cops, Dirty Jobs, Survivorman, Man vs Wild, Star Trek The Next Generation, Family Guy, Hells Kitchen, Kitchen Nightmares, Anderson Cooper 360, Diners Drive-Ins and Dives, Iron Chef

most anything on National Geographic, Discovery Channel, TruTv, Food Network, or CNN

Favorite Movies: Super Troopers, Jay and Silent Bob, Back to the future, Starship Troopers, LOTR, Hook, 28 Days Later, Happy Gilmore, Wedding Singer, The Long Kiss Goodnight, Quentin Tarantino Movies, Starsky and Hutch, Old School, Anchorman, Zoolander, Superbad, Aqua Teen Hunger Force Colon Movie Film For Theaters, 3:10 to Yuma, X-Men, Saving Private Ryan, Austin Powers, Hellboy, Saving Silverman, Love Actually, Big Fish, School of Rock, Batman, Superman, Blankman, ET, Hook, The Patriot, Orange County, Every Star Trek Movie Ever Made, 28 Days Later, The Way of The Gun, Pulp Fiction, Ironman, Forest Gump,

Favorite Quotations: Every job is a self portrait of the person who does it, autograph your work with excellence.

Celebrate your A'ness! –Glenn Kostur

It tastes like unicorn giggles!–Joe Wilson

You have to treat her like shit... and pretend that you have another girl... then she'll work really hard to impress you and then she'll do stuff like sit on your face... –Pat Alonzo

Jordan: what's the worst that could happen...
Gerry: i could get aids and live for 5 years of agony
then die...

Q: What exactly is a douchebag?
A: A douchebag is not defined as simply a series of hand gestures, facial expressions, overly gelled hair or a giant Jesus bling around the neck. A douchebag is a state of mind. It is a place where men go to become scrote. Where machismo mixes with testosterone to form a foul cocktail of rank sewage that smells vaguely of cheap cologne.

You cannot be happy with someone else unless you are first happy with yourself.

About Me: I work and go to school all day. I play tuba. I am addicted to watching COPS. I eat food. I am somethin right? The greatest joy in life is making a positive influence on the world around me. I don't think people necessarily need faith in anything other than themselves to be good people. I want to make

---

202

CNN Political Ticker: All
politics, all the time Blog
Archive – CNN Truth Squad:
Will college studen
1:07pm Aug 13

eport/Block this Person

hare

everyone I meet smile or laugh. I am still learning everyday. I
like meeting new people.

Contact Information

Email:	jmsayre@unm.edu
Current City:	Albuquerque, NM
Windows Live:	jordanmsayre

Education and Work

College:	New Mexico '14 Music Education
High School:	Aztec High '02
Employer:	University of New Mexico Bands
Position:	Band office assistant
Time Period:	January 2008 – Present
Location:	Albuquerque, NM
Description:	I recruit for marching band, organize events, help run Zia, clean, manage databases and keep confidential information.

Groups   See All (50)

Member of: UNM Spirit Marching Band Drumline and Front Ensemble,
University of New Mexico Color Guard, Daniel T. Cornish for
Progress, 2009 UNM SMB Sousaphone section, Boycott Dennis
Dodd and CBS Sports, Video Pizza, New Mexico Music
Educators Association, Diane Denish for NM Governor, Brigette
and Cedric's Wedding!!!, UNM Soundpack Alumni, International
Clarinet Association New Mexico, Jimmie's Awesome Collection
of Funny Pictures, Lobos Unidos, Tuba and Euphonium
Doughnut Sales!, Golf Course Runners Group, UNM CMENC,
Lets make the CFA basement at UNM better by removing the
lounge rats!, Fenway Quintet , UNM Alumni Band, UNM College
Democrats, Albuquerque for Obama, Hit Me With Your Digits,
In honor of John Smeltzer, In Rememberence of John "Wolfie"
Smeltzer, I Like to Bake, New Mexico Students for Tom Udall,
UNM Spirit Marching Band Mellophones (& friends), Friends of
UNM tuba players, Santa Fe Presbytery (PCUSA), Open &
Affirming U.C.C. Church in NW New Mexico

Pages   See All (35)

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
Education

Senator Tom Udall
Government Official

Spirit Marching Band
Sports / Athletics

Reading Rainbow
TV Show

Democratic Party
Politician

About Advertising Developers Careers Terms ▪ Find Friends Privacy Mobile Help

Applications   📧 🎵 🏈   Chat 2

//www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=11601171&ref=search&sid=20203543.265478235..1

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