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The New Face of Presentation:

Enacting Gender Roles on Facebook

by

Anitra Vrabel

Adviser Tracy L. Scott

Department of Sociology

Dr. Tracy L. Scott

Adviser

Dr. Regina Werum

Committee Member

Dr. Susan Tamasi

Committee Member

April 9, 2010

Date

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Abstract

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Erving Goffman's theory of the presentation of self posits that people are rational actors who perform in accordance to the roles associated with their social statuses. These performances may be altered depending on who makes up the audience. This study looks at these performances on Facebook, a popular social networking site (SNS). Recent research has shown that these sites may be influential in helping adolescents develop an identity because they can enact the roles associated with their social statuses and gauge how members of their audience approve them. This study looks at how undergraduate students at Emory University portray themselves on Facebook, where they can construct a specific audience, and how they interpret the presentations of others. Additionally, it seeks to uncover and understand gender differences associated with these two issues. In-depth interviews were conducted with twenty students in an effort to uncover the complex social processes involved in self-presentation on Facebook. During the interviews, several gendered differences in attitudes and behaviors emerged. However, most students in the study did not perform in a way that aligned with the expected roles associated with their gender status, even though they anticipated that their peers were performing in such a way. Thus, this study found that expectations of gender roles were more prevalent among these students than were actual enactments of these roles.

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Introduction

> **unfriend** *(n.) -* to remove someone as a "friend" on a
> social networking site such as Facebook (Gross 2009)

This entry would not be found in the majority of the dictionaries sitting on bookshelves in homes across the United States. "Unfriend" is a word that has only recently come into the public consciousness, and even then, it has primarily been used by adolescents and technologically-savvy individuals who use social networking sites (SNSs) as a means of staying connected with friends, family members, and sometimes even strangers. Despite its relatively recent inception into the lexicon of certain people, the *New Oxford American Dictionary* deemed the term "unfriend" Word of the Year in 2009 because, as a representative from the dictionary explained to the press, it's a term that "has both currency and potential longevity" (Gross 2009).

Indeed, social networking sites (SNSs) have been gaining popularity on the Internet for more than a decade. Between 2004 and 2005, MySpace, which was the most-used SNS at the time, saw a 752% increase in the number of users (Watkins 2009). Since then, the use of SNSs has continued to increase, and today's most popular SNS, Facebook, was created in 2004. The Web site was originally only open to students at Harvard University, but soon gained popularity and was later made available to all college students, and eventually became available to the general public. In January 2008, the site boasted 69 million active users; currently, the number is more than 400 million. Of these 400 million people, about half of them log onto their Facebook profiles daily,

and the average user is on the site for a little less than an hour each day (Facebook, Inc. 2010). Even when users are not logged onto Facebook, they can still stay up-to-date on what is happening on the site because Facebook sends e-mail notifications to alert users that a friend has posted a photo of them, written on their wall, sent them a message, or done something else on their Facebook profile. People who own smartphones that can connect to the Internet have even more of an opportunity to stay connected, as they can receive these updates and connect to the site in the palm of their hand. If they chose to, many people could easily be connected to the members of their online network twenty-four hours a day.

Facebook, like other SNSs, is meant to replicate or extend upon a real-life social network, or "a set of relationships that are somehow important to a person" (cited in Hinuja and Patchin 2008:127). As the slogan on Facebook's login homepage proclaims, the site "helps you connect and share with the people in your life." Although there are certainly some similarities between Facebook and an offline social network, in many ways, the environment created by a SNS differs greatly from real life.

Although the average Facebook user has 130 friends on the site (Facebook, Inc. 2010), I have noticed that the number of friends college students have tends to be much greater. After nearly four years as a Facebook user, I have personally accumulated a few hundred Facebook friends. Although this may seem unrealistic to people who do not use SNSs, I have observed that I am not an anomaly among college students who use Facebook. In fact, I have noticed that several of the people I am connected to on the site have more than 1,000 Facebook friends. In real life, it would be nearly impossible to

know details about the lives of 1,000 — or even a hundred — other people. On Facebook, however, it seems easier, as the site makes users privy to information about each other, including personal thoughts that might be shared via a status update or photos of weekend escapades or family vacations. Facebook provides its users with a unique opportunity to stay connected to more people than they might otherwise be able to keep in touch with and to seemingly be able to learn details about their lives that they might not otherwise able to know. But Facebook allows its users another unique opportunity — the ability to construct whatever image of themselves they would like to present to their Facebook friends. More than that, Facebook allows people to construct an audience for this self-presentation, as friends can be added or subtracted from a social network in just seconds, with no more effort than it takes to click a mouse.

Research shows that online activity often allows adolescents, particularly adolescent girls, a forum in which they can experiment with their identity and become comfortable with themselves and how others view them (Blais et al. 2008; Elm 2007; Grisso and Weiss 2005; Jones et al. 2008; Laudone 2007; Schau and Gilly 2003; Taraszow et al. 2001; Thiel 2005). Erving Goffman (1959) theorized that all people consciously alter how they present themselves, depending largely on the social situation. I was curious to see if and how this would be the case for college students who use Facebook. More specifically, I wanted to draw upon the classic reasoning of Goffman to understand if and how college students consciously choose to present themselves using the modern tool of Facebook and why they portrayed themselves as they did. I was curious to see if they were influenced by the fact that so many people could view their

profiles at any given time and without their knowledge. Furthermore, I was interested to see how students judged other people based on their Facebook profiles.

In addition to beginning to understand the general trends of college students, however, I wanted to see if there were differences in how college-aged men and women chose to present themselves on the site and in how they interpreted the profiles of others. Our society sanctions different behaviors and applauds different attributes for men and women. The phrase "boys will be boys," which is frequently used to excuse behavior that may be irresponsible or violent, demonstrates how society may make allowances for young men's behaviors and not hold them up to certain high standards of responsibility (Kimmel 2008b). Indeed, this expression emphasizes an essentialist point of view that presupposes that boys have no choice but to embody these negative attributes. Similarly, men receive negative social sanctions, such as being teased and called names, if they display behavior that is deemed too effeminate, and this can negatively affect a man's self-esteem (Kimmel 2008b:45-41; Kivel 1984). Young women, on the other hand, are allowed a little more freedom because there is more than one socially accepted set of behavioral traits for young women in college (Gonick 2006; Kimmel 2008b). Regardless of which persona a young woman embodies, she is frequently expected to uphold an image of "effortless perfection," which frequently indicates that women should appear to naturally be physically attractive as well as intelligent, ambitious, and friendly. Like young men who are not masculine enough, young women who do not exhibit behaviors that have been deemed appropriate for their sex are often treated negatively by peers, who form a sort of "gender police" (Kimmel 2008b:13-15, 193). I wanted to see how

these societal influences impacted the presentation of self by college students on Facebook, as well as they way they read the profiles of others.

Theoretical Framework and Empirical Background

Erving Goffman, the Presentation of Self, and Identity Management

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,* Erving Goffman (1959) theorizes that all individuals are actors that consciously perform to express themselves and impress those around them. According to Goffman (1979), this inclination to consciously perform is an inherent element of human nature, and it sets humans apart from other animals. Many factors are involved in the creation of the "front," or "expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance" (Goffman 1959:22). A personal front includes the setting, or background items that set a scene for a performance, as well as the appearance and manner of an actor. Elements of appearance "tell us of the performer's social statuses," and those of manner indicate what role someone can be expected to take in an interpersonal interaction (Goffman 1959:24-25). These various elements can be balanced and managed by an actor; the extent to which we knowingly construct our performance varies, and is at times painstakingly constructed with the intention of portraying a specific image or drawing a certain response from an audience (Goffman 1959).

Goffman (1959) writes that everyone has certain statuses that help define his or her place in society. These statuses may be ascribed, such as sex or race, or achieved, such

as a profession. These statuses help determine the role someone will play in society, which includes the way he or she behaves and interacts with others. As certain roles become associated with certain statuses, social norms are established. Additionally, people develop an understanding or an impression of the roles and statuses of the people around them and alter their performances accordingly. As such, the audience is a particularly important influence on a performance. People often choose to present themselves in certain ways in front of some people and in other ways in front of others; elements of someone's status can be highlighted or downplayed as that person sees fit for the situation. To make various performances possible, "audience segregation," wherein "the individual ensures that those before whom he plays one of his parts will not be the same individuals before whom he plays a different part in another setting" often occurs (Goffman 1959:49). Even the most banal, quotidian experiences dictate specific performances. People often blind themselves to this fact, which Goffman argues may be because less routine performances require more constant and deliberate attention. Audiences of some social positions prescribe desirable attributes more rigidly than others, but it is frequently the performance rather than the true embodiment of the desirable attributes that appeases audiences the most. Goffman writes that an "attempt to give the impression" of a specific attribute may suffice in appeasing an audience (1959:47). For example, a young woman may sense that she will not be properly playing her role as a woman if she is very knowledgeable about sports, a trait that is often associated with men (Kimmel 2008b). Even if she knows a great deal about sports, she may manage the situation she is in by not admitting her expertise in front of most audiences out of a fear of not being accepted. An understanding of audiences and their expectations of social

statuses and roles in particular social contexts, then, become important to an actor. Managing identity cannot truly be successful without also managing audiences.

An actor mentally constructs a mask that represents an idealized version of himself or herself.

> In a sense, and in so far as this mask represents the conception we have formed of ourselves — the role we are striving to live up to — this mask is our truer self, the self we would like to be. In the end, our conception of our role becomes second nature and an integral part of our personality. (cited in Goffman 1959:19-20)

In an effort to portray this idealized self to audiences, an actor may conceal "inappropriate" or "secret pleasures or economies" (Goffman 1959:43). The actor will likely only reveal a polished product; errors may take place before a performance is enacted, but are usually corrected before they are presented to an audience. Thus, the audience will see a version of the actor that as closely resembles his or her mask as is possible. "We are socialized to confirm our own hypotheses about our natures," Goffman writes (1979:7). The mask individuals create can be seen as this hypothesis, and people are therefore socialized to portray this version of themselves to an audience. The mask can be altered to become appropriate for the audience the actor faces; as such, individuals may take on "possible selves," or idealized selves, that may become real selves if they are well-received by audiences (Laudone 2007:4). As people assume the statuses, or social positions, associated with their idealized selves, they likewise adopt the corresponding role, or behavior.

Goffman also theorizes that photographs can provide an avenue through which individuals portray themselves and manage performances. Pictures may be public or private. "Private pictures are those designed for display within the intimate social circle of the persons featured in them," whereas photos for public display are intended to reach a wider audience, one that is made up of smaller, more specific audiences (1979:10). The people who see public photographs, which include such pictures as those of a politician used for a campaign, may have no connection to each other and instead form "an anonymous aggregate of individuals unconnected to one another by social relationship and social interaction, although falling within the same market or the same political jurisdiction, the same outreaches of appeal" (1979:10). Photos can be seen as an extension of a performance because audiences have learned to interpret them so that they are no longer one-dimensional "tracings," but instead are read as a representation of person or an event (Goffman 1979:12).

Presentations are integral to defining and understanding one's identity, "a complex social construction created and sustained by a subject's location within a culture and a society" (Thiel 2005). Identity is connected to ascribed and achieved social statuses. People develop a sense of identity as they act out the roles associated with these statuses and receive positive social sanctions from their audience (Laudone 2007). Establishing an identity and managing it for audiences is especially important for adolescents, a group of people that are frequently concerned with how they are impressing others and in fitting in with previously established social norms, as well as asserting themselves as individuals (Elm 2007; Laudone 2007; Schau and Gilly 2003; Subrahmanyam, et al. 2006; Williams and Merten 2008). Establishing a stable identity

for oneself, both as an individual and in relation to others, is a crucial element of young adulthood (Subrahrnanyam et al. 2006). Scholars suggest that this assertion of individuality may be especially critical — and difficult — for young women, who must assert themselves in a society where "human" has traditionally been equated with "man" (Elm 2007; Gilligan 1982:4; Grisso and Weiss 2005).

Gender Expectations for Presentation

An important element of someone's personal front is his or her sex or gender[1], and social norms related to these statuses are often strict (Goffman 1959; Goffman 1979). According to Bem's Androgyny Scale, the status of female is frequently defied by traits such as "affectionate," "childlike," "gentle," and "shy." On this same scale, traits of someone who is masculine include ambition, leadership abilities, and a willingness to take a stand (Bem 1974; Gale-Ross et al. 2009; Rickel and Anderson 1981). Social characteristics, such as "does not use harsh language," "sensitive to the needs of others" and "eager to soothe hurt feelings," are also included as indications of generally feminine behavior (Bem 1974).

Although these behavioral and personal traits are still widely accepted, social expectations for women, especially women in college, are changing (Kimmel 2008b). A young woman's male and female peers will accept her if she exhibits these traditionally feminine characteristics, but in college, female students who incorporate traditionally masculine traits are also accepted, as long as they adhere to certain limitations. For

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[1] In this study, the biologically male subjects identified with the male gender and the biologically female subjects identified with the female gender. As such, "man" and "male" will be used interchangeably, as will "woman" and "female."

example, as mentioned previously, a woman can talk about sports, but she isn't expected to be "too" knowledgeable about the subject; a young woman should have some sexual experience, but not so much that she could be given a negative label such as "slut" or "whore" (Kimmel 2008b; Stepp 2007). Young women can employ audience segregation and choose to perform in a manner that is either hyper-feminine or more masculine, depending on whom they are with. Regardless of which facade a young woman chooses, she is expected to carry it out with "effortless perfection" and not reveal the work she is putting into maintaining her performance (Kimmel 2008b:193; Stepp 2007).

In the 1990s, two acceptable roles that corresponded with the status of female adolescent, Girl Power and Reviving Ophelia, emerged and became social norms (Gonick 2006). The Girl Power movement promoted strong, "assertive," and "unbound" girls who were not afraid to separate themselves from the restrictive image of traditional femininity, as outlined on Bem's Androgyny Scale (Gonick 2006:1). As the movement continued, and especially as it gained media attention, Girl Power also became associated with the idea that women could take part in stereotypically male behaviors, such as drinking alcohol and exercising sexual freedom (Gonick 2006). Conversely, the Ophelia movement reinforced the passive, delicate image of girls that the Girl Power movement attempted to overthrow (Gonick 2006). These two accepted roles for adolescent girls reflect the accepted roles for college-aged women that Kimmel (2008b) outlines. Women who are in college today grew up in the 1990s, when these contradictory images of the ideal adolescent female were most prominent; the concepts of Girl Power and Ophelia may have evolved into the roles of feminized masculinity and extreme femininity that we see today.

Social expectations for young men's behavior tend to be more rigid (Kimmel 2008b). There are numerous traits that are expected of men, and failure to abide by these expectations can result in not being accepted by peers, being a victim of verbal abuse such as name-calling, and suffering from low self-esteem (Kimmel 2008b; Kivel 1984). The rules of masculinity include being strong, having power and status, being reliable by being stoic, and being daring without appearing to worry about what others think (Kimmel 2008b). Any behavior that is deemed effeminate, such as dressing too nicely, communicating interest in art of music, expressing emotions, or even walking and talking in a certain way, can result in disapproval from an audience or social rejection. As an audience for the performances of their female peers, men are supposed to display interest in a woman's physical attributes rather than her personality (Kimmel 2008b). Men chastise each other for being in a romantic relationship with a woman because romance has been feminized. Entering a relationship often requires a man to establish an emotional connection with a woman, which indicates that he is abandoning the traditional male attributes of stoicism, detachment, and objectification of women (Kimmel 2008a; Kimmel 2008b).

For both young men and young women, adolescence is considered "the most gendered stage of a person's development," and peers form a "gender police," rejecting people who do not embody the gender traits that have been established for their sex (Kimmel 2008b:41; 47-48). This period of "gender intensification," then, requires militant identity management in order for adolescents to be accepted by audiences (Kimmel 2008b:41).

The Internet as a Unique Forum for Identity Management

Modern research has found that the Internet is a sort of gray area between public and private spheres (Elm 2007; Taraszow et al. 2010; West et al. 2009; Williams and Merten 2008). The Internet is inherently a very public space, as anything that is published on it is technically available to anyone in the world. However, many specific Web sites allow users to share information in a seemingly sheltered environment where they can limit their audience. Therefore, the Internet offers a unique forum for presentation of self and identity management.

A Facebook user begins by joining a network on the site — frequently people join a network for their university or employer, but up until recently, a network could be as large as a geographic region or even a country — and creating a profile. Users frequently upload a photo of themselves, called a profile photo, and fill in fields that ask for personal information, which often includes their hometown, birthday, educational background, relationship status, and interests. Facebook also allows its users the opportunity to share contact information, such as a cell phone number, home address, or e-mail address with people in their network. Another section, labeled "About Me," gives users the freedom to write anything else about themselves that they would like to share. In addition to this information, a user may update his or her status, which can inform others of what they are doing or how they are feeling; a status update is a response to the prompt "What's on your mind?" that is provided by Facebook.

Once this profile has been created, a user can request others to become his or her Facebook friends, and if someone accepts this request (friendship requests can either be

accepted or ignored), the two can begin to communicate through the site. However, as the 2009 Word of the Year choice shows, these friendships are not binding. Friends can be removed — "unfriended" — or even blocked so that there is no possibility for contact via Facebook. There are two forms of communication that are most common on Facebook: public posts on someone's Facebook wall and private messages, similar to e-mails.

Facebook users can also upload photos to the site and tag their Facebook friends in the photos as a means of sharing the photos with a wider audience. Once someone is tagged in a photo, it can be viewed by any of his or her Facebook friends unless the person who uploaded the photo has strict privacy settings and limits which Facebook users can view his or her photos. Users have the option to both remove their tag from a photo and to hide photos from some or all of their friends. Each user has a news feed, which is the personal homepage of his or her profile. It is updated minute-to-minute and allows users to see what their Facebook friends have done on the site recently, such as writing on another friend's wall, updating their status, or creating a photo album.

Facebook users also have the ability to create and manage what is called a limited profile. By using this feature, users have the power to hide any of the information on their profiles from certain friends. Users can control what information from their profile is available to each friend they are connected to on the SNS.

Especially for adolescents, identity management online is not a new concept, and the avenues through which adolescents manage their identity have progressed throughout the years, from the creation of personal Web sites and visits to anonymous chat rooms to the use of SNSs such as MySpace and Facebook. In many ways, Facebook is a digital

space in which people can enact Goffman's theory of performance. There is a visible personal front, as Facebook users show their sex, approximate or precise age, race, and other social categories. They can also control other elements of their appearance through the photos that are available on their profile. The social groups with which they most frequently socialize and converse become visible through the posts that are on their wall. Facebook can make it especially easy to present the idealized "mask" that one makes for himself or herself and to conceal "inappropriate pleasures," or characteristics that might be deemed undesirable, from other people on the site (Goffman 1959; Schau and Gilly 2003). People choose what information about themselves to write on their pages, which photos to show other Facebook users, and even what comments from their friends can be visible to others (boyd 2008). The information on a Facebook page can be edited easily, which allows users to "experiment with possible selves" and judge reactions from their audience (Laudone 2007:2).

Facebook users have more of an opportunity to engage in audience construction than audience segregation, as they have the power of selecting who will be allowed to view their page by sending, denying, and accepting friend requests. These behaviors could be seen as a type of audience segregation, but the option of creating a limited profile, which permits users to hide certain elements of their performance from some friends while making it visible to others, allows for audience segregation in a more traditional sense. However, managing audiences on SNSs in this way takes a lot of care and attention. The self-image that a Facebook user portrays to people who only have access to a limited profile is generally the same as the information that is on a full profile, but as the name would indicate, is partial. Thus, members of different real-world

audiences — for example, co-workers, friends, acquaintances, and family members — ostensibly see the same image of the profile owner, although the profile owner can censor some details from certain audiences. Goffman's theories on using photos as an element of performance is particularly salient in considering performances on SNSs. Photographs are an important element of the Web site, and many users use Facebook to share photos of private events with a public that they have created.

Although the image that someone chooses to portray in an online community is in some ways an extension of his or her real-world performance, Facebook also gives its users the chance to present themselves differently than they would in real life. Some sociologists believe that because profiles may stand alone as a representation of a person, someone can write himself or herself "into being" on his or her Facebook profile (boyd 2008; Grisso and Weiss 2005:32). That is, online arenas may not just reflect someone's identity, but they may be tools that help someone create an identity. Although the audience is an important element in a real-life performance, it arguably plays an even more active role in performances on SNSs, which are "as much about community as the individual" (Watkins 2009:xvii). There is an element of "co-construction," as this community is being created while an individual creates a presentation of himself and herself, while the influence of the community simultaneously impacts the performance of the individual (Clark 2005; Jones et al. 2008; Laudone 2007; Subrahmanyam et al. 2006; West et al. 2009; Williams and Merten 2008).

Even though online profiles and representations of oneself can be altered, there is a sense of permanence created by an online profile that isn't found in interpersonal

relationships. danah boyd (2008) concludes that unlike real-world interactions and performances, those that take place in an online sphere are persistent, searchable, replicable, and open to invisible audiences. Persistence indicates that anything that is online may be accessible for a long time; searchability means that online activities can easily be found by others; replicability means that anything that is written online can be copied and pasted into other environments without the author's knowledge or permission; invisible audiences indicate that people who share information online do not know who is receiving it, but often present information under the guise that they do (boyd 2008; Elm 2007; Williams and Merten 2008). Additionally, other people can interfere with an individual's online presentation. On Facebook, for example, people can post incriminating photographs or write updates or wall posts that may negatively impact the way someone else is presented and how others perceive them. Identity management online, therefore, can be managed with more care than it can be in offline forums, but it is more easily altered or sabotaged by audience members.

Summary

This study seeks to explore the intersection between Goffman's theories on identity management and presentation of self and society's expectations for gendered behavior in the online arena of Facebook. By talking to undergraduate students, I hope to begin to explain the relationship between gender roles, presentation of self, and understanding the expression of others, if such a correlation exists. Specific research questions for this project are as follows:

Research Question 1: How do students construct an audience for their Facebook profiles, and are there gendered differences in this construction?

Hypothesis 1: Based on previous research in which Facebook users have outlined a guideline for etiquette on Facebook that includes welcoming acquaintances as Facebook friends, I expect to find that male and female students will have similar audiences on Facebook (West et al. 2009). However, I anticipate that men and women will actively construct these audiences differently. Given gender role expectations for men to be assertive and commanding, I expect to find that men will be more likely to send friend requests than women. Similarly, given the gender expectations that women should be passive and polite, I expect to find that women will be less likely to remove someone from their online social network.

Research Question 2: How aware are undergraduate students at Emory of the image of themselves they are presenting to others on Facebook and how do they consciously manipulate this image?

Hypothesis 2: I expect to find that students are aware that they are presenting an image of themselves to others and will consciously choose to include or delete certain information about themselves during this presentation.

Research Question 3: Are there gender differences in how Emory students choose to present themselves with the various elements of their profiles — for example, with personal information, relationship statues, or status updates?

Hypothesis 3: I expect to find that undergraduate women will try to present a different image of themselves than undergraduate men. I believe that given the accepted social roles for women they will be less likely than men to portray themselves as people who attend parties, use inappropriate language, and reference sex and that they will be more likely than men to use Facebook to display strong interpersonal ties of friendship and romantic relationships. However, I also expect to find more variation in the profiles of women than in those of men. Based on research that shows some recent changes in gender role expectations for women (Kimmel 2008b), there may be different accepted behavioral for women in college. I expect that some women will include pictures of themselves drinking and will have crass language on their profiles, but not to the same extent as the young men. Other women will display a more stereotypically feminine persona that does not include these elements. Given the common social norm that "boys will be boys" and will thus be less proper and refined than girls, I expect to find that men will be more likely to not censor photos of themselves drinking and will be more likely to include offensive language or sexual comments on their profile (Kimmel 2008b; Subrahmanyam et al. 2006). I also expect to find that men will be more reserved with the amount of information they include about themselves in order to present a stoic, stereotypically "manly" view of themselves; this is particularly true in the case of relationship statuses, as society has feminized love and relationships and made them seem less desirable for men (Kimmel 2008a).

Research Question 4: How do students interpret the Facebook profiles created by others and how does their reading of others' profiles influence them as they manage their own?

Hypothesis 4: I expect to find that men and women will both form opinions about their Facebook friends based on the way they are portrayed on their Facebook profiles. I also expect to find that students will alter their profiles based on how they interpret the profiles of others.

Methodology

Research Design

I conducted twenty semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students from Emory University, a mid-sized private institution in Atlanta, Ga. Qualitative research is best for exploring complex social processes (Lofland et al. 2006), particularly perceptions and actions related to new social contexts and phenomena such as the technological innovation of SNSs. Thus, qualitative research is the best way to gain an understanding of students' perceptions of Facebook, the way they chose to present themselves on their SNS profile, and the way they read the profiles of others. Additionally, most published articles on the topic of online social networking are based on quantitative survey data, illuminating general trends and patterns in large populations, but lacking insight into the more subtle and complex processes by which people use SNSs and the meaning of these.

Thus, I hoped to tap into an element of "why" SNSs were used the way they are that had previously been left unexplained by many other studies.

Sample

I have limited my sample to college students for both practical and theoretical reasons. As noted above, gender roles are often salient in different ways during the life course. I chose one particular life course time to study: college. Furthermore, this age group has shown to be primary users of SNSs. For practical reasons, I use one college (a private Southeastern university), and I conducted purposive sampling in order to find equal numbers of men and women and some range of college experience.

Because the independent variable of this study is gender, I interviewed an equal number of men and women. I also interviewed an equal number of students in their first year at Emory and students in their fourth year at Emory. First-year college students may have a different experience with Facebook than seniors, as many freshmen had profiles while in high school, and the site was only open to college students when this year's senior class was in high school. Additionally, these two groups are at different junctures in their life — one is about to leave college to pursue a professional life and the other is still getting acquainted with the largely unsupervised freedom of college life — and I thought this would likely impact the self-image that students portrayed. In total, I interviewed five freshman women, five freshman men, five senior women, and five senior men from different backgrounds. They come from different regions in the United States, and three of the students attended high school outside of the United States. They

are a racially and ethnically diverse group that is representative of the diversity on Emory's campus.

In addition to these twenty interviews, I conducted one follow-up interview with a senior female. She contacted me via e-mail a few weeks after her initial interview to tell me that she had recently broken up with boyfriend and had noticed the extent to which Facebook was involved in her life for the few weeks after the break-up. Because of this, she asked if I would like to interview her again, and I did. This interview is considered an extension of her first interview, and the data obtained from this student is part of one data set.

Data Collection

I sent out a public recruitment e-mail to several conferences on the Emory LearnLink system. I asked a few of my peers to forward the recruitment e-mail to conferences of groups with which they were involved, including those for school-sanctioned clubs, Greek organizations, and first-year residence halls, in order to reach a wider audience than I may have otherwise been able to reach. The only requirements for participation were that students were at least 18 years of age and have a Facebook profile. (See Appendix A for Recruitment E-mail.)

Students responded to me via e-mail if they were interested in participating in the study. Interviews took place in a location of the respondent's choosing, usually in a private room in the Sociology department building, which provided a quiet, conveniently located space for us to talk. The interviews were based on an interview guide I had

prepared previously. Topics on the guide included introductory questions about what had prompted students to create a Facebook profile and why they continued to use it; their thoughts on friendship outside of Facebook; their thoughts about Facebook friends; their impressions of sending, denying, and accepting Facebook friend requests and removing people from their pool of Facebook friends; how they use Facebook to communicate with others; how they use different elements of their Facebook profile and how they believed others used those same elements. (See Appendix B for full Interview Guide.)

Although every interview was guided by the same questions, interview length varied greatly, from just over twenty minutes to just under an hour. Every respondent answered every question, and the difference in length of interviews can mostly be attributed to the different styles in which students answered the questions, as some provided anecdotal examples and others were briefer and more general in their responses. I attempted to put the subject at ease during all of the interviews by engaging him or her in conversation prior to the official interview and answering questions or concerns about the interview process. This was especially important during interviews with students whom I had not met previously, especially first-year students. Some of these subjects were a bit more reserved than the older students, at least at the beginning of the interview. A few expressed worry that they might offend me during the interview because they had never met me or seen my Facebook profile and they were concerned that I would embody some of the traits about which they spoke negatively. I made an extra effort to be enthusiastic and encouraging with these subjects, and after a few minutes of the interview, they seemed to grow much more comfortable and open. Many of the fourth-year students who responded to my recruitment e-mail were people will whom I had

interacted before, and I was already Facebook friends with many of them. Conversations with these students tended to be a bit longer, as the subjects seemed at ease while talking with me and sometimes referenced people we both knew or experiences with which they felt I could relate.

I obtained consent from each participant prior to the interview. First, I asked for consent to interview the subject. Then, I asked if the subject would allow me to acquire and use information from his or her Facebook profile. (See Appendix C for Informed Consent Form.)

I recorded all of the interviews with a tape recorder that I borrowed from the Sociology department, and I also took field notes of the main points of their responses in case the recorder were to malfunction. Immediately following each interview, the digital audio recording was downloaded to my personal computer, which is password protected. The digital audio file was erased from the digital recorder as soon as it is downloaded to the student researcher's computer. Each audio file and transcription was labeled with a code name, and all identifying names, places, and events were similarly given pseudonyms. These measures were taken in order to protect the privacy of the participants and to keep their comments confidential.

Immediately following each interview, I visited the participants' Facebook pages and recorded how much information was on each page at the time for my field notes. I took note of which sections, i.e. "Interests," "Favorite Quotes," and "About Me," were filled out. For each section, I recorded a "no" if the field had been left blank, a "yes" if there was any information at all in the field, and a "not serious" if there was information

that had clearly been included as a joke. I also took notes about the profile photo that the interviewees used at the time of their interview. I recorded how much of the person was visible, the person's body language, what the person was doing in the photo, and if there were any other people in it.

Data Analysis

I digitally transcribed each interview verbatim and uploaded the data files into the qualitative software program MAXqda. I analyzed the data with a series of deductive and inductive codes, as outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). First, I developed deductive, descriptive codes that were based on topics from my Interview Guide (e.g. deciding what information to include on a profile; deciding who to accept, deny, request, or remove as a friend). I also developed inductive descriptive codes for themes that I noticed emerging as I collected and analyzed data. Then, I made a list of more interpretive codes (e.g., subjects' feelings toward their presentation and that of others) that linked subjects' perceptions and attitudes to the theoretical categories outlined by research questions. I uploaded this final code list (see Appendix D) into MAXqda and coded each transcript. With the software, I was able retrieve significant segments of the text and analyze the trends that emerged.

Results:

The twenty interviews provided insight into how students use Facebook, especially as a means of self-presentation, as well as how they read the profiles of others.

I looked at each participant as an individual, as well as a member of a gender category. Everyone with whom I spoke described Facebook as a tool that helped him or her stay connected to and communicate with a large number of people. Most people admitted that the network they created for themselves on Facebook did meet the aforementioned definition of a social network as "a set of relationships that are somehow important to a person," but rather that their Facebook network was composed of many people whom they hadn't met, hardly knew, or did not anticipate speaking to again. Almost all of the Facebook users I interviewed had a different explanation for how and why they utilized Facebook as well as how they interpreted the information other people presented about themselves on the SNS. Despite these highly individualized responses, many patterns emerged within the group, and several of them can be connected to gender socialization.

Understanding the Purpose of Facebook: Communication and Connections

I asked each interviewee what he or she felt was his or her primary reason for using Facebook. In response to this question, the majority of the subjects said that they used it primarily to keep in touch with people. Specifically, most said that it was a good way of communicating with people they did not see frequently, such as friends from high school who attended different colleges or older siblings. A few said that they also used it as a tool to communicate with people who also attended Emory, and some answered more vaguely that it was a sufficient way of keeping up with or keeping tabs on others. This question was one of the first in the interview, and as the conversations progressed, it became increasingly apparent that the majority of subjects were using Facebook to keep up with people with whom they were not communicating. Many used the term "Facebook

stalking" to refer to this habit, which included behaviors such as looking at photos of people with whom they no longer keep in touch or had only met on a few occasions, as well as reading information on the walls of close friends they did not live near or see frequently. Even though many of the students did not say that they primarily used Facebook to keep up with others without communicating or to acquire information about people they thought might be interesting, it became clear that many students spend a substantial amount of their time on Facebook participating in this behavior.

Most of the respondents, regardless of gender, said that Facebook was a good way to stay in touch with people they did not see very often. Although many said that they frequently used private messages and wall posts as a means of communicating with people they considered their close friends, some said that Facebook provided them with a "casual" or "passive" means of staying connected to others that they might not otherwise make an effort to keep in their social network. As an illustration of this, Tyler said:

> Well, I guess it allows me to communicate with people in a more casual way than actually calling them. I can stay up-to-date with people I don't see regularly. If it's somebody, especially people I don't go to school with — I'm from [out of state] … but most of my friends went to [state schools], so it allows me to keep in touch with them on a regular basis, see what's going on and ask them — you know, if they make a status update, I can just comment on it and ask them what's going on.

This explanation of using Facebook to stay in touch with friends was common for men and women, and most people said they felt as if they would have lost touch with people if they didn't have Facebook as a means of staying connected. Male and female students who had participated in activities such as study abroad programs or summer camps said that the close bonds they formed during these periods were often kept alive by keeping in

touch on Facebook. For example, Brooke, when reflecting on the role that Facebook played in her life, said:

> I think it's just interesting how it can be both limiting and expanding your social interactions in a way that we end up touching our keyboard more than actual people, but at the same time, there are so many actual people I've gotten back in touch with that I thought I'd never see again, like a girl from camp, from high school, a girl I met at one Flaming Lips show and we stayed in touch for four years now and we like have dinner once or twice a semester.

Although male and female subjects were about equally likely to reference the helpfulness of Facebook for keeping in touch with friends they were geographically separated from, females were a little more likely to say that they also used the site to communicate with friends who attended Emory. Only one male student, Derek, said that he used Facebook to talk to friends at school more than friends who lived elsewhere. The only other male student to discuss using Facebook to keep in touch with Emory students, Mitch, described the site as a way of improving relationships with acquaintances at school. He explained that he might send a friend request to someone he had met briefly but was interested in learning more about, and then would send that person a message because he considered it less personal than other forms of communicating, such as sending a text message. "If you don't really know someone and you want to get to be better friends with them, it's easy to break the ice that way," he said.

Gender differences were more pronounced in discussions of using Facebook as a means of keeping up with people without exchanging any written communication with them, something that nearly every participant referred to as "Facebook stalking."

Men were more likely to say they only "stalked" people who they considered friends, and only if they hadn't seen or spoken to them recently. As Jason, who once

deactivated his Facebook and sometimes considers deactivating it again, said, "The primary reason I still keep [Facebook] is I guess every once in a while, it's nice to see what some of my good friends and my family is doing." He also mentioned that he had recently realized that he hadn't spoken to his best friend from high school in several weeks, so he had gone to his Facebook page to look through some photos his friend had recently been tagged in as a means of updating himself about his friend's life. A few men discussed doing this and occasionally clicking on the profile of someone who seemed to be doing something "interesting" based on a notification that had appeared on a news feed.

In general, men were more likely to look down on people who frequently "stalked" others, and some speculated that people who had too much free time or were unsatisfied with their own lives engaged in this behavior. Sean said:

> I'd say probably more girls do it than guys. But why they do it? I don't know, maybe it's like a sense of security, like a connection. Like they feel the need to have lots of friends and that's a way they feel like they can keep in touch with this person. … Yeah, probably just out of a sense that they want to feel like they're still connected to these people, although I don't really understand that, because if you do want to be connected, you should not be stalking them, you should be actively talking to them.

A few discussed seeking out specific profiles when they were bored or curious about someone with whom they had a distant connection, but usually specified that they did this only rarely and didn't understand the appeal of doing it more frequently. Jason, for example, mentioned that he would very rarely look at pictures of his sisters' friends that he found attractive. Derek said that he used to "Facebook stalk" an ex-girlfriend as a way of feeling as if he was still connected with her, but that he had since ceased this activity:

I missed seeing her, I guess. It sounds much worse than it was and it is. I mean, I guess it's just like that lack of contact, you know? She ended things with me and it was really abrupt, I guess. And we just didn't talk anymore. So yeah. I was just like, "Man, I really miss her. I really want to see her." But I didn't want to contact her because she ended things. So I was like, "Well, I'll just see what she's doing." But not anymore.

Will articulated a similar element of curiosity about others' lives that drove him to look at certain profiles more than others:

Yeah, there's this kid I was friends with in high school. He's become communist now and hasn't cut his hair in three years. I check him out at least once a month. There's other people for sure. That's, by far, the most fun part of Facebook. … I think almost all people from high school, or from before — it's mostly to see how they've changed. I had this one friend who was — he didn't drink in high school, he was president of Teens Against Tobacco Use, was a very, very goody-goody, was very self-righteous about it. And is now a huge stoner who smokes pot every day at least once. That stuff's just kind of funny. But also just to see if people are happy. Because I feel like you can tell that from people's pictures, if they're having fun, what they're doing.

A greater number of women used this language of being curious about how classmates or other people had changed. Three specifically talked about using Facebook as a means of finding out if anyone from their graduating classes was pregnant or had had a baby, and others commented on being curious about details about former classmates such as who had gained weight. Several women echoed Derek and said that Facebook allowed them to keep up with people they used to date. This was particularly apparent when speaking with Brooke, the young woman who contacted me about doing a follow-up interviewing after her break-up with her boyfriend:

I think in a practical sense, [Facebook] just lets you see what [your ex is] doing. And that curiosity is just filled. Because we're both doing very different things within the next year. And we don't like each other, but we're both curious about each other. We both have an interest in each other. And you know what? I don't mind keeping up a digital connection that allows for some harmless stalking. I mean, I think it's harmless. … I allow myself once a day, I'm allowed to look at his profile and that's it. I don't care if it's like 11:50 [p.m.] on the same day, I won't look at it again.

Megan added:

> You don't want to contact [an ex-boyfriend], but you don't want to be the first to
> comment on their wall, and you don't want to let them know that you — not care,
> but that you want to know what they're doing with their lives or if they have a
> new girlfriend or something.

Along comparable lines, a couple women said that they occasionally liked to look at the

profiles of people who they no longer considered friends, people who they had fought

with and did not want to communicate with anymore. Brooke's continued discussion of

her ex-boyfriend illustrates this idea:

> Now I'm pretty much not wanting to ever talk to him again. But I had to make
> sure I didn't unfriend him because I felt like that would be uncivil. So I don't
> want to be his friend in real life. I told him that, actually. But I would never take
> him off Facebook.

The people who admitted to "Facebook stalking" frequently spoke of it

enthusiastically, and they shared details of information that they had learned by looking

at others' Facebook profiles with me — a former classmate had gotten braces, an

acquaintance was living abroad, a cousin was going to have a baby, people had broken up

with their significant others or had gotten engaged. Fiona spoke for several students when

she said drily:

> You can have real interpersonal relationships whenever you want, but only
> through Facebook are you able to see people that you hated or loved or idolized
> in high school that are now doing other things. I love it.

Many people spoke of the inclination to partake in this "Facebook stalking" as natural.

Students of both genders said that the news feed feature brought information about other

people to their attention and that it was a natural instinct to be interested in it. Emma

illustrates this idea:

> Human nature inclines to be very curious and want to look at that. To me, that's human instinct. … I think what happens with that when you click on something of theirs, another name pops up of someone that you are friends with you and you click on their name, and it starts this cycle of knowledge updating, almost, in your head of going from one person to the next via these updates. … I mean, you could look it as creepy, you could look at it as flattering, or you could look at it as you're just one little person in the whole big network, and I wouldn't take it personally. It's just out of human curiosity that [others] would be [looking at your profile].

Even though every person I interviewed said that they engaged in "Facebook stalking" at least occasionally and believed that most people did it frequently ─ too frequently, some even said ─ most seemed taken aback when I asked them if they ever considered that people might be looking through their information on the site without leaving some kind of message. Several people said that they had not thought about the possibility prior to my question. Often after thinking about the question for several seconds, all of the subjects admitted that it was possible that members of their online audience were looking at their profiles. However, nearly all of the men said that they doubted people would be inclined to look at their profile, either because they didn't have much interesting information on it or because they didn't update it very often and thus weren't likely to appear on a news feed. The women I interviewed were more conscious that their Facebook friends might be looking at their profile, and they were more likely to let this possibility influence their decision regarding what information or photographs to include on it.

Audience: Creating and Understanding an Online Social Network

As I mentioned previously, Facebook users have the opportunity to decide who is allowed to be a part of the audience for the image that they present on their profile. They

may deny friend requests or block users from seeing their profile page. Once a Facebook user has accepted someone into his or her network, he or she has the option of later removing them. Likewise, users can send friend requests to ask certain people to become a part of their network. Facebook users can also manage their audiences by creating lists of friends that can each see a different amount of information on a profile. This allows Facebook users to personalize an audience, excluding people as they feel is appropriate. However, many students did not seem aware of their freedom in this matter, perhaps because the option of limited profiles was introduced after most interviewees first created their Facebook profiles, and it was not advertised well. Rather, many people, both male and female, spoke of feeling compelled to accept friend requests from most people and extend friend requests to people they did not know very well. The interviews revealed that each person defines his or her audience and approaches audience construction differently, although some gender patterns did become clear.

Defining an Audience

Subjects were asked to give their impressions of Facebook friends, and without fail, interviewees said they were Facebook friends with people they had never met, or had only met briefly. Many admitted to occasionally seeing an update on their news feed and not recognizing the name of the person that the update was about. Subjects used words such as "silly," "ridiculous" and "cheesy" to describe the average Facebook friendship, and two male students said they believed that the term "Facebook friend" sometimes undermined real friendships. Jason made a connection between the way "friend" is used

on Facebook and "hook up," an ambiguous and popular phrase used among college students:

> I think the word "friend" is used very loosely now because of Facebook. It's like "hook up." It's very, very broad. The term is friend is like the term hook up — what does that even mean any more? When you say "hook up," they either kissed or they fucked. "Friend" is like their great friend or people they happened to meet once. Or people who don't even know each other.

All of the interviewees said they had at least 200 friends on Facebook, and many had several hundred more. Two students estimated that they had at least 1,000 friends on the site. Many people said that they weren't sure how many they had, and provided me with their best estimate — although one student admitted he couldn't even do that — that included a range of fifty or one hundred friends. When I asked subjects how many people they considered close friends, however, sixteen of the twenty students provided a number less than twelve and many said they had fewer than six. As interviewees talked about the differences between close friends, friends, and acquaintances, almost all of them said that a close friend was someone with whom they felt comfortable talking about personal matters and sharing information in confidence, whereas acquaintances were not people with whom they would share much information, especially not personal problems or feelings. Facebook, however, is a platform for people to share information about their lives, a space where private conversations may be published on public walls. These statements all point to the fact that there is often a disconnect between someone's performance in front of certain audiences, depending on whether it takes place online or offline.

Building an Audience: Requesting Friends

Nearly every subject had a different standard by which they judged whether it was appropriate to request someone as a friend on Facebook. Most people said that they didn't request people very often, but that there were certain circumstances that compelled them to send a request. Men were more likely to say that they would send a friend request to someone they had only met briefly. Eric said:

> Sometimes I'm at people's apartments and I meet someone and we have a conversation so I friend request them. … Sometimes I'll wait several times to friend request them or see if I'm actually ever going to talk to them again. And I'll wait to friend request them. I've probably done it after meeting them once.

Conversely, several of the male respondents said that they would only send a friend request to someone that they already felt a close connection to in real life. Tyler, Will, and Jason all said that they had discovered they weren't Facebook friends with people they considered good friends or at least close acquaintances in real life. They had each sent a friend request after this discovery as a formality. Many students discussed the expectation of being Facebook friends with someone you had even a casual relationship with in real life; Mitch even said that this had become "a social norm."

Women were more likely to speak of needing to form a relationship or have "common experiences with" someone before sending a friend request. They talked about sending requests to dorm mates, classmates, and other people with whom they spent considerable time and had a basic sense of familiarity, even if they did not have a particularly intimate relationship with the person. "Generally, if I've talked to you a few times, I'll go friend request you on Facebook if I can find you and know how to spell your name," Kendall said, laughing.

The exception to this general attitude came when women spoke of sending friend requests to men and women they didn't know well because they found them interesting and wanted to learn more about them. Most men did not say that interest in learning more about someone ever compelled them to send a friend request. Two women specifically said that they were apt to send a friend request to a boy that they were interested in romantically as a way of flirting, trying to establishing a connection, and learning more about them, but no men said the same about women.

Building an Audience: Accepting and Denying Requests

Although most of the students said they had certain standards by which they decided if they should send a friend request, they all said that they were more lenient about whose requests they would accept and that they denied requests very rarely. Students said that if they recognized a person's name or face, they would almost always accept the request. Brooke summed up a thought process that many students described when she said, "I tend to be a little picky. I need to know who you are. But at the same time, I usually say 'sure, why not?'" This statement reflects the general ambivalence that nearly all students — even the "picky" ones — articulated when describing habits of accepting friend requests. The students who were more strict about who they accepted often felt conflicted because they felt as if their personal views on who should be included in their online social networks were not the same as the views of the majority of Facebook users. Megan said that she sometimes waited two to three weeks to accept a request from someone she didn't know well because this allowed her more time to "get comfortable with the fact that that person will be seeing my [personal information]."

Jason was the only student to say he would frequently deny requests from people he had met, but admitted to feeling "angst" when rejecting a request because he knew it was looked down upon to reject friend requests and because he had experienced confrontations with people who felt personally slighted that he did not want to be their friend on Facebook.

With the exception of Jason, everyone said that they usually only denied people they did not know at all — for example, people who did not have any mutual Facebook friends with them or who came from another country. A couple people said that only in extreme circumstances, such as having only had negative interactions with a person and feeling severely uncomfortable sharing any personal information with them, had they denied someone's request.

Some students said that they denied requests from certain types of people, such as Emory administrators, parents, and family friends. Other subjects were inclined to accept requests from such people, and no clear patterns, gendered or otherwise, were clear.

Building an Audience: Removing Friends From a Network

Many people said that they had "unfriended" or "defriended" someone in their online social network, providing reasons such as realizing they did not know who someone was, not anticipating any future communication with someone, being irked by someone's behavior on Facebook (e.g., updating statuses too frequently), and having a falling out with someone in real life. The only gender pattern to emerge was that women

were more likely than men to unfriend or block someone based on a personal grievance.

Fiona said:

> But if I really start hating someone to the point that I'm wishing them ill, I'll unfriend them. In my memory, the people who I've unfriended, I've done it in such a state of anger and outrage and tears, usually in the library, being like, "I can't even concentrate 'til I unfriend them!" There's *so* much passion behind it; it's important to me.

Megan made a similar point:

> Umm, I've only blocked two people from Facebook, ever, and those are people I've had a major fall-out with through college. And those two are people I never want to see again in my life, and I really couldn't care less what happens to them in the future. Other than that, I've never had a malicious defriending.

Aside from this one pattern that seems to be instigated by a strong, negative reaction to another person, the majority of instances of unfriending seemed based primarily on an individual's preferences, with some people admitting to removing friends frequently and others saying they thought it was rarely appropriate.

Anticipating Audience Approval

During the interviews, there were several points wherein female participants mentioned that they were acutely aware of their audience, or that they were more aware of some audience members than others. This occurred most frequently when women discussed family, teachers, or anyone else from outside of their peer group requesting them as a friend. Upon receiving such requests, many of the young women said they reconsidered what information was on their Facebook or changed their behavior — such as changing their statuses, untagging photos of themselves, and deleting wall posts from

friends they thought might be considered inappropriate — on Facebook in anticipation of how these members of their audience would interpret it.

Similarly, Brooke said that she became hyper-aware of her audience after she and her boyfriend broke up. Even though her audience technically had not changed, Brooke assumed that members of her network would be looking at and judging her profile — and, by extension, her. She discussed the fact that her ex-boyfriend was probably looking at the profile, but she was more concerned with how she it would appear to others, as she said: "A lot of it was probably third-party. I actually didn't totally think about how he would think of it."

Such examples illustrate a type of "audience segregation" where the literal audience remains unchanged, but the performer mentally creates a hierarchy and alters her performance accordingly. This differs considerably from the discussion the majority of the men had about their audience. In some ways, they talked as if they did not have an audience, as they speculated that no one would be looking at their profile or using it as a way to judge their character or behavior.

A "Front" on Facebook: Presenting Oneself on a Profile

As I mentioned previously, Facebook allows its users to carefully manage an image that they want to portray to the audience they build for themselves. The interviews with students revealed several different thought processes that people used when deciding what personal information, relationship status, and photographs to include on their profile.

Presentation of Self: The Information Section

Each Facebook profile has an "Info" page, where users can fill out sections pertaining to their favorite movies and music, as well as information such as their religious views and educational background. This is also where the open-ended "About Me" section can be found. All of the interviewees said that they did not consider Facebook an appropriate platform for very personal information, so they tried to use the site to give a general overview of what they considered to be the most important information about themselves. Megan said: "But for Facebook, I'll never put anything personal. If I'm ever truly depressed or upset about something, you'll never see it on Facebook; you'll see it on my face, probably, but not on my Facebook." Megan also said that people were probably attempting to form a judgment about her based on her profile, so she carefully considered what information to include so that she wouldn't inadvertently label herself:

> I don't put my favorite music or movies or TV shows because I'm not comfortable with people seeing the limited list of my favorite movies and books and TV shows and music and be able to judge me or categorize me in any way. I have such a wide taste in everything that I could never list it in any limited amount of space. And it's so easy to go to your site and have somebody say, "Oh, this girl likes 'Legally Blonde' and 'Love Actually' — total chick." Or "'Boondock Saints' and 'Lethal Weapon' — total, like, action chick or whatever." In reality, all four of those are some of my favorite movies. Even when somebody asks me in person, "What's your favorite band?" I'll never answer because I can't answer. Or when someone asks me, "What's your favorite movie?" I can't answer. I get into a long conversation about why I like so many different movies or books or whatever. So I don't list those. I don't think I ever have.

Mark echoed this sentiment: "I don't have any personal, personal information on Facebook that's going to like give anyone any kind of advantage over me in any way."

Although all the students said that they believed their profile only had very basic personal information, women were more likely to say that they had changed their profile

so that it provided more general and less personal information, whereas men usually said

that this was how they had originally created their profile. Zoe said:

> Um, I guess in the very beginning, I had more information. I had the little About Me section. I had a lot more information in that then, when I first got it. I kind of gauged it based on what other people had. I had a couple of my movies, I had some music that I liked, things like that. I think I even had a little About Me, which I find so funny now. … Gosh, I don't ever put emotional things on there. I think I used to. In the beginning, I think I used to do it more. But now, nothing personal, nothing like really emotional or anything like that. The most emotional I'll ever get nowadays is like, "[Zoe] is happy" and there'll be the little emoticon. That's pretty much the extent of it.

Some women made changes to their profiles because they became more aware of the

implications of having personal information available to several hundred people. Others

anticipated a change in their audience, and changed their profile accordingly. Two of the

women who attended high school abroad, for example, mentioned reassessing their

profiles in context of how people with different cultural backgrounds might read them.

Erin, who attended high school overseas, said:

> I originally had everything down and I deleted — what did I delete? — religious and political status or whatever. Yeah. Just in case — I don't want people — suddenly, I come to America, I'm atheist and really liberal or whatever, and I don't want people in America to judge me before I come over. So I deleted all that kind of stuff.

Rachel illustrated this point further:

> You know the info like your religion and political views? That, I hide from people because they don't need to know. They make their own judgments then. Especially coming from [another country]. Sometimes people look at that first and they're like, oh, well, she's Christian. Then she must be this, this, and this. And it's like, no! Don't make that judgment, you know? The limited profile people are people I don't talk to much so I don't want them to know these things, I don't want them to judge me.

Even though conversations with students did not seem to reveal gendered

differences in the types of information that they presented on their profiles, an analysis of

their Facebook profiles did. (See Tables 1a and 1b for more on profile information.) I looked to see how many fields each interviewee had filled in with information, as well as if this information could be classified as serious or non-serious. I looked for non-serious information because it is a technique that people can use to give an impression of themselves and of their personality without divulging too much personal information. Additionally, I looked for sexual references on profiles.

Women were slightly more likely than men to have non-serious information on their profiles. Only two men had non-serious information, but five women did. The most noticeable difference, however, came in the inclusion of sexual references on profiles. Three of the five freshman women I talked to had sexual content on their profiles.

Lisa had the most sexual references. Each of the four quotes included in the "Favorite Quotes" section of her profile were blatantly sexual in nature: ""If you don't have sex for a while you're a virgin again," "If you have sex in a different state, it doesn't count," "Condoms are reusable, just flip 'em inside out!" and "You can't get pregnant standing up- it's gravity!" The other two young women to reference sex on their profiles each only had one reference. Erin quotes a friend as saying, "hooka is like giving head.. you just blow!" and Rachel quotes a friend as saying, "i'm not horny, im just sexually deprived."

None of the men, regardless of class year, or senior women had such comments or innuendos on their profiles. Conversely, many specifically said that they were very conscious of not including such information on their profiles. Throughout his interview,

Jason spoke passionately and frequently about the need for people to keep their Facebook

profiles "clean." He talked about the quotes he had selected to include on his page:

> Jason: I have a couple George Carlin quotes and "Pulp Fiction" quote that's a little racy, but it's nothing, like, offensive. At least, I don't think it's offensive. It's nothing that bad. There's one Carlin quote, come to think of it, that could be bad, but I don't think it's terrible.
>
> Me: What is it?
>
> Jason: "Be white, be proud, and get the fuck off the dance floor." There's no "fuck" — it just says star, star, star, star. It's funny because I like to dance a lot and I'm white. And Carlin makes that joke that you should be proud, be white and get the fuck off the dance floor.

Compared to the quotes posted by Erin, Rachel, and especially Lisa, this would

seem relatively benign. However, Jason worried that this quote might be seen as "bad,"

even though it was not sexual and he had censored the obscenity. This conversation with

him, when compared to the quotes found on the freshman girls' pages, illustrates how

diverse students' conceptions of what was considered appropriate really were.

Presentation of Self: The Relationship Status

When updating his or her profile, a Facebook user can choose to include a

relationship status. A user may leave the space blank or choose from the following

choices: "Single," "In a relationship," "Engaged," "Married," "It's complicated," "In an

open relationship," and "Widowed." If two Facebook users are in a relationship with each

other, they can choose to include that information on their profiles as well. For names to

be listed, one person must send a relationship request, similar to a friend request, to the

other. The two will not be listed as being in any type of relationship until each person

clicks a button to confirm it.

A common theme of not wanting to announce a relationship until it was serious ran through the interviews, regardless of the gender of the subject. Hardly anyone expressed very positive opinions about relationship statuses. (See Tables 1a and 1b for information on what each subject had listed for his or her relationship status.) In fact, many students mentioned the pressure associated with deciding whether to change their relationship status from "Single" to "In a relationship." Mitch talked about how deciding to change his status on Facebook actually ended a relationship:

> [I] broke up with my girlfriend. We had plans to break up coming into college, and we did. It was awful. But I came to college and I still kept in really close touch with her. And then I kind of started a relationship here and in one moment of absent-mindedness, I did the relationship status on Facebook with her and was totally denied. And then it all became awkward and fell apart because of this. It was bizarre.

Many students talked about keeping their status set to "single" when they were dating someone casually. For some, this decision came as a result of not wanting to have an "awkward" conversation with the person they were dating about the status of their relationship. They worried about ruining a potential relationship like Mitch had by moving too quickly. Eric said:

> I have been dating people and it still said single. I don't think it was an issue. It never came up. I didn't think it was too important to change it, like to take off the single part. Because technically we weren't in a relationship. It was just a little bit of dating.

Others felt that using Facebook to announce that they were in a relationship with someone was inappropriate because it made the relationship too public. Many referred to relationships as private information that didn't need to be broadcast to hundreds of people on the Internet.

In a few cases, students said that they had hesitated to change their relationship status on Facebook for fear of ruining their chances with other people. Zoe discussed an internal debate she had when she started dating her last boyfriend:

> And like this summer — because I started dating my boyfriend this summer, and I was kind of still interested in someone else at the time. Or I had been before we'd gotten together. And then he requested it to me, and he thought it was the greatest thing in the world. You know, let's be Facebook official! And so he just thought it was fantastic, but I actually freaked out, kind of, and I made it so that the only people that could see my relationship status were the people that I worked with this summer because they would all know [anyway]. It was like 20 people who could see my relationship status. I hid it from everyone else just because, I don't know, I didn't feel comfortable at the time with everyone being able to see my relationship status. … I eventually did change it at the very end of the summer, like right before I came back [to school in August]. Maybe a couple weeks before I came back, I changed it. At that point, we were really serious and that point, we'd committed to doing the long-distance thing. I guess it was almost like a back-up for what if we decide not to stay together at the end of the summer? Then it's more awkward. And I didn't want it to be like, I'm in a relationship, oh I'm not in a relationship. To be completely honest, I didn't want it to kill my prospects in other areas if I were to put it on. The other person I was possibly interested in, if they saw, maybe they'd go out and date someone else and things would be different. And what if we didn't stay together? It just affected things. Don't tell my boyfriend that. [laughs] Yeah. That's actually the honest truth of why I did it. But it is up now.

Although only one person I interviewed, Meredith, was adamant that publicizing a relationship on Facebook was an important step to making a relationship "official," other people said that they believed women cared about it more than men. Sean and Mark, two of the three men from my sample to have their relationship status set to "In a relationship," both said that they only had this listed because their girlfriends had insisted upon it. Mark said: "Unfortunately, my girlfriend is a girl. She wants everyone to know. I'm fine with everyone knowing, but Facebook is important to her, so that's what we do." Sean gave a similar response:

> I have a girlfriend and I started dating her here, and she really, really wanted to do that and I don't. But I went along with it. After a couple days, I was like,

"Fine." I wish I could just say in a relationship and not with who, but you don't have that option [if your girlfriend wants to show your name on her profile]. … I don't feel any need for everyone to know I'm in a relationship. Not a big deal for me. Not that it's not a big deal, but not that it's any of their business.

When I interviewed Sean's girlfriend, Kendall, however, she did not express that publicizing her relationship status was important to her. She simply told me that she was "honest" about her status. Later in the interview, however, she did discuss how she looked at others' relationship statuses to judge how serious they considered their relationship to be.

Some females, such as Emma, said that they felt as if members of her gender were more likely than men to want to put a public label on a relationship. "Especially, stereotypically with women who need more defined relationships with men, in heterosexual relationships, that they are the ones to sort of pressure or send the relationship request to men because they want to put a label to it," she said.

In my sample, the women were not more likely than the men to consider a relationship status important. Conversely, both men and women frequently said that they had noticed their peers using Facebook to validate their romantic relationships, which they found, among other things, "weird." Like the expression "Facebook stalking," "Facebook official," which means using the "In a relationship" option on Facebook to officiate a romantic relationship, was a phrase that most students mentioned. This saying could be used in a "tongue-in-cheek" manner as Kendall said, but she and several others said that they had heard it used to define whether or not a relationship was serious. She explained:

But now, there's such — I don't know, for a lot of couples, there's such like a weird line between when you're actually calling yourself boyfriend and girlfriend versus when you're just going on dates or hanging out or whatever. So now, a lot of people use it kind of tongue-in-cheek, like "Is it Facebook official?" And even though it's kind of a joke, it's also become sort of a thing. I always think it's kind of interesting — if I see somebody and I'm like, "Oh, you guys are probably dating," and I check their Facebook a day later or something and it's not updated, I kind of wonder. My friends and I, we talk about that, kind of gossip: "It's not on Facebook, so is anything *actually* going on?"

In general, the decision as to whether to include a relationship status as part of one's profile seemed to be a source of confusion and even stress for both men and women. As they discussed how they had decided on their current status, most of them talked about wanting to portray a certain image, but being unsure of how others would read it. After breaking up with her boyfriend, for example, Brooke didn't know whether she should list herself as single or if she should completely remove her relationship status from her profile. She was wary of labeling herself as single for fear of inviting questions and of being considered "desperate" by others, but she was equally wary of not pronouncing a status in case "a potential boy" was to look at her profile and decide not to approach her because he didn't know if she was available. She finally decided to remove the status, laughing as she told me: "I think I'm cool for not having a relationship status. Or mysterious or something. It's like an image choice, I feel like."

The issue of which relationship status — if any — to include on a profile seemed to be the most difficult choice most students made when considering how to present themselves on Facebook. People were much more likely to verbalize concerns about how people would perceive them or judge them based off their relationship status than they were about any of the other written information on their profiles. They were also more

likely to say that they perceived gendered differences in the use of the relationship status option. However, the gender patterns that emerged over the course of the interviews did not reflect these expectations of difference that many students articulated.

Presentation of Self: Photographs

There are three ways in which Facebook users can present photographs of themselves on the site. Each user has a profile photo, which is the only photo of that person to appear on the main page of his or her profile. Whenever a Facebook user writes on someone else's wall or is referenced on someone's news feed, this image is visible. There is a link to the photos in which the user has been tagged under the profile photo. Users have the option of untagging any photo that they have been tagged in, or of hiding this link so that some or all of their Facebook friends aren't able to see the pictures. Finally, users can upload their own photographs into public or semi-public photo albums.

Most subjects talked at length about pictures on Facebook, and many people, both men and women, said that the ability to share photos on Facebook was an important reason why they found the site appealing. During the interviews, it became apparent that most of the interviewees saw Facebook photographs as crucial to the self-image they displayed on the site. It was also the element of their presentation that required the most energy because they had to keep up-to-date with what photos their friends had posted of them in order to stay in control of the image they wanted to present. Most interviewees said that they felt as if other people would judge their photos on Facebook more than any other aspect of their profile and that they were therefore very vigilant about the image they conveyed. They spoke of an urgency associated with receiving a notification via e-

mail or phone that alerted them that they had been tagged in photos. Even Jason, who said he only logged into Facebook a few times a week, said:

> The only thing that immediately sends me to Facebook is tagged photos. That, I'll immediately go to. If it's a wall post, I may or may not disregard it; if it's an event, I'll definitely disregard it; but if it's a photo, I'll immediately go that second and see if I like it. If not, I'll delete it.

He continued by saying that pictures allowed people to form judgments about others very quickly, and this affected his decision to delete certain photos of him:

> I do believe that people are looking through — I can't tell if they are or aren't — but I do think you can be judged, or people will judge you, based off of that. Now, whether that'll greatly affect their opinions of you, I don't think so. I don't think they'll say, "Ah, he's a loser" or "Oh, he's a cool kid." But I think that for that split second, I don't want to be thought of in a certain way, so I just take it off.

In discussing what would lead someone to untag a photograph of himself or herself on Facebook, many trends emerged: people spoke of untagging photos if they didn't think they looked attractive, if there was alcohol consumption or other potentially questionable activities taking place, or if they were pictured with people with whom they did not want to be associated.

Appearing unattractive was a concern addressed by women a little more than by men. Some women said they were hesitant to untag photos because they wanted to portray an honest, accurate image of themselves to people, but they also admitted to untagging pictures that they felt were particularly "unflattering" portrayals. Appearing to untag a lot of photos could be judged by others because it could be seen as vain, some said.

Men and women both discussed a desire to not be pictured with alcohol. This was especially true for those who were underage, but even students over the legal drinking age practiced caution. Will, who is of legal drinking age, said: "I untag anything where I'm really, really clearly drunk. Usually I untag things if I'm holding a drink in my hand unless it's a more classy kind of affair. Those are really the only two times." Two of the seniors, Eric and Megan, said that they had asked people who had uploaded pictures of them to delete any that they felt could be too incriminating, especially if taken out of context.

Being worried about having certain photos appear online made some students alter their behavior when they were somewhere where photos were being taken. Megan said that she tried not be in pictures while smoking cigarettes and mentioned cropping cigarettes out of photos because her family and many of her friends didn't know she smoked. She said that some people considered the habit "trashy" and she didn't want to be judged so quickly. Similarly, Rachel crops alcohol out of the photos that she posts on her Facebook, and even said that she tried to not have alcohol in the background of photos she took at events. Tyler also said that he physically avoided being in photos with alcohol. At parties, he said that he would consciously move out of a photo that was being taken if people seemed drunk or had alcohol with them:

> I tend to just avoid being in pictures that I don't want to be in, so I haven't had to [untag them]. … I'll be in pictures, but if there's going to be like liquor bottles all over the place, I'll scoot out. … I feel like when I'm 21, yeah, I can have pictures with like a beer in my hand or a drink in my hand and that'll be fine. I mean, I wouldn't put up pictures, I guess, where everyone's like, ahhhh, smashed out of their minds. … It wouldn't be a big deal once it's legal, I guess. I still wouldn't put up some of the pictures that I avoid being in here, when everyone's smashed and it's crazy.

For each of these students, the reason they altered their behavior or their photographs was because they knew pictures would be on Facebook and they weren't sure how their audiences would interpret certain images of them. Tyler expanded on why he tried to avoid being in photos where he or his friends are drinking and what happened when he was in such photos:

> The people who I party with know how I party and stuff like that, so I don't need to put up — I mean, it's nice to see those pictures, the crazy pictures that won't go on Facebook, but when those happen, we'll transmit it in other ways other than putting it up on Facebook and being like, "Hey everyone, look at this." I don't know. I've never really been like, "Yeah, everyone needs to know this stuff" or "I want everyone to see that I did this."

With this quote, Tyler communicates an awareness of and worries about his audience. This sentiment was echoed by many men who otherwise said that they did not expect people to be interested in looking at their profiles. Mitch, who repeatedly said that he thought people used Facebook too much and put too much stock in it, said he didn't think people were looking at his pictures, but he secretly hoped that they were because he considers them to be "a pretty good representation of who I am and stuff."

Concerns about alcohol were the most prevalent, but interviewees talked about a variety of misinterpretations that they feared. Derek, for example, said that he always untagged photos of him kissing girls because he felt that wasn't "classy." Devon talked about having untagged a photo that he felt could portray him as homosexual:

> I'll give you an example. It was during semiformal, I guess. There was a hot tub, so there were four guys, four of us, and I guess our shirts were off because we were just in the hot tub, and we started wrestling. And all four of us somehow ended up on the couches, trying to pull each other off or whatever, and somebody took a picture. It looks like — it did not look like we were wrestling. It looked like something else, so I had to untag that.

A few students also mentioned that it was important for them to consider the other people who were in the photos, and some said they had untagged pictures in which they were with people who they did not like or with whom they otherwise did not want to be associated. Most notably, Brooke untagged herself from many of the photos of her and her ex-boyfriend after they had broken up, both for personal reasons and to send a message to a potential audience:

> Yeah, because usually you think of the cliché of cutting his face out of a photograph or tearing them or burning them of something dramatic like that. But untagging a photo is somewhat less cathartic. But I did feel like I had some power in untagging myself from some — I didn't untag from many things, just some things that I wouldn't want to see later. Because once I untag myself from a photo, you know, I usually don't see it as much. And I definitely removed a photo of the two of us from my profile pictures because if somebody was looking through my pictures, like a prospective boy, I don't want him to be like, "Oh, there's a boy involved" or something.

If something with "a prospective boy" ever worked out, she also said that she would be sure to include pictures with him on her profile to send the message that she was no longer completely single:

> Oh, I would throw that out there so fast. … He'd have to be cute, though. He'd have to be really cute. [laughs] Wow, I sound so deep. But basically, my criteria for the next boy is he needs to be visually awesome. Possibly for the Facebook.

Most students discussed making similar decisions to these when choosing their profile photo. Looking attractive, capturing an aspect of their personality, and being pictured with close friends or romantic partners were all things that subjects discussed. The selection of a profile photo was difficult for many people because they realized that this photo represented them on different parts of the Web site and served as a first impression for people who did not know them well. Will said that he strongly dislikes

selecting a profile photo for his Facebook. He discussed all the considerations he made

when making his decision, and explained how his last picture, which he thought fit all of

his self-imposed criteria, had actually misrepresented him:

> Yeah, it's hard. And I'm never good about it. I had one that I was really happy with. It had me with a picture of Teach for America in the background, but I took that off. [laughs]
> Me: Why?
> Will: Because I'm not doing it anymore. And also, evidently — so the sign I was with, it said Teach for America and then it said "only one out of 10 kids from low-income communities graduate from college" and someone pointed out to me that the part that said Teach for America on the sign was kind of shaded and you couldn't really see it that well, so the part that really stood out was one in 10 kids and I was like [makes thumbs up], thumbs up, smiling. [laughs] So yeah, it's hard. I want to have something where I look not retarded, but also fun and presentable. It should be fun but not too outlandish, not too much personality.
> Me: What do you mean by not too much personality?
> Will: It shouldn't be overbearing. It shouldn't be offensive to anyone.

Women mentioned that they changed their profile picture much more frequently

than men; most women talked about changing their photo every few weeks, but many

men said that their current picture had been up for six months or more. Women were also

more likely to worry about misrepresenting themselves by looking too attractive in their

profile photo because they did not want people to be disappointed by their physical

appearance when they met them in real life.

An analysis of profile photographs revealed that women were more likely than

men to select photos that focused on their faces and photos in which they were wearing

formal clothing. Only two women did not have their faces clearly visible in the photo and

half of the women used photos in which they were wearing what I classified as "formal"

attire, such as a cocktail dress and visible make-up. Several men had their faces obscured

or were turned away from the camera, and all but one were in casual attire such as T-

shirts. (See Table 2a and Table 2b for more information on profile photos.)

Acting as an Audience: Interpreting Others' Performances on Facebook

Many interviewees, regardless of gender, admitted to forming opinions about others after looking at their Facebook profiles. Hardly any two people mentioned looking for the same elements or reading profiles in the same way. Although everyone said that they believed photographs were the best tool to get a glimpse of someone's personality from their profile, others thought that mutual friends, musical interests, political views, wall posts from friends, and other such elements could indicate the type of person someone was.

Most men said they believed that with few exceptions, a Facebook profile provided other people with a very basic, shallow representation of someone. Several of these men, however, said that they felt as if it was more illuminating to look at how someone appeared to use Facebook. Devon illustrated this by saying:

> I think I can get a lot [of information]. Maybe not from what they put down. Maybe from how they use Facebook, I want to say. Like if a person updates their status every minute, you can kind of tell they're a little high maintenance, I guess. I guess they're social. But yeah, I think you can tell from how they use Facebook. A lot of people, as far as the material itself, I think a lot of people — I don't want to say lie, but I guess kind of exaggerate or change certain things to make themselves look better or cooler.

This theme of expecting people to alter information about themselves, or at least being aware that they could, was brought up in several interviews. Women were more likely to anticipate that people were purposely including or excluding certain information on their profiles in order to present an idealized version of themselves. Rachel said:

> And sometimes people, I feel like, try to make their profiles a certain way. Like if they want to seem like the emo type or something, they have all these deep sayings or sad, depressing things on their profile. That's kind of weird, but then

they aren't in real life. So I think it's kind of interesting to see how people portray themselves.

Me: So you think often people are constructing a way that they want to come off?

Rachel: Yeah. I don't feel Facebook is a natural thing. I think people pick and choose the information that's on there and how they present it.

Despite the fact that women were more likely to say they felt as if people constructed a desirable self-image for their audience, they were also more likely to say that elements of someone's personality could be determined from a Facebook page, even if it did mean, as some young women said, "psychoanalyzing" the information that was there. Emma was one woman who spoke of learning to reconcile her assumption that people were presenting a certain image and her belief that certain portions of a profile shed light on someone's personality:

But again, you have to remember that it is the image they're projecting of themselves onto the world, so it might not be an accurate representation of themselves because it's how they see themselves. So I really don't think that any profile that you yourself make of yourself would really accurately reflect how you are. It's how you want others to see you, but it might not necessarily be that. I think that the only place where people's true personalities maybe come out is when people fill in that About Me [section] on Facebook. If you read psychologically into some of the statements, I think part of them really does show, just from the way they do describe themselves, you can get an idea of them. Otherwise, I think it's just an image they projected of how they want people to see them.

Some women discussed instances when they had formed an opinion about someone before getting to know him or her well in real life. Zoe and Rachel both relayed stories about having judged a future roommate before move-in day, only to discover that their impression was false. Rachel said that her roommate had recently told her that she had attempted to figure out what kind of person Rachel was by looking at her Facebook profile before meeting her, and that she had also been very wrong in her assessment.

Zoe told her story:

I totally, totally judged my sophomore year roommate via Facebook before we ever met because she was a random roommate and I had no idea about her, but she Facebook friended me before we met, before we even talked. I thought she was like this huge bitch, just because she looked — she had kind of a bitchy face in some of her pictures, like her old pictures. She only had a few because I think she'd just gotten a Facebook kind of thing. She only had a few pictures, and she just kind of looked bitchy. And my mom thought she looked like a really nice girl, but I was like, no, she looks like a super-bitch. And all her pictures were of her family and I was like, ugh, she's like totally lame. She's mean and lame and she only has pictures of her family and she's so weird. Things like that. I was like, she has a boyfriend and she has all these pictures with her boyfriend and he's going to be at our room all the time. But in reality, she's probably the sweetest human being that I know. I love her. I'm going to her wedding next summer because her boyfriend's really nice. She is obsessed with her family, though. It's outrageous, straight up. She just loves them. But yeah, I totally judged her before I met her and she ended up being the exact opposite of what I thought.

At several points in the interview, Zoe said that she felt as if Facebook created "a false sense of intimacy" with other people and that people should be aware that they were only getting "slivers" of information about others and that the information they thought they were getting as "just a mirage." Despite this standpoint and past experience, Zoe said she couldn't help but assume some information about people based on what they presented on Facebook. "You can definitely tell who's some crazy partier and who's kind of slutty. Or who's a man-whore. I don't know if you can definitely gauge things about certain people, but you can form certain opinions," she said. Her particular example certainly shows this. After seeing the exact same information on the profile of Zoe's future roommate, Zoe and her mother formed very different opinions of the girl. They both attempted to "gauge certain things" about her and seemed to be confident in their appraisals, but in the end, it was revealed that they each misjudged her in some ways.

Impressions formed from Facebook stuck with people as they continued to get to know that person in real life. Eric told me:

> Um, I've probably judged people's personalities and characters through their Facebooks. A little bit. Not like, "Oh, I hate this person now" because of something. But I think it's kind of natural to make a judgment on something. …
> I'll have some images in my mind, but I won't make that the definitive picture of who they are. Or I'll really try not to.

A few students discussed ways in which they read the profiles of men differently from those of women, or held the two genders to different standards. Updating a status frequently was seen as something that "girls did," some men told me. They felt as if many girls tried to draw attention by writing vague statuses that would invite questions. Similarly, some people have noticed About Me sections that simply stated that the person was open to answer any questions. Meredith said, "I think that's like prostituting yourself. [laughs.] Like my best friend's is like that. Hers is like, 'Curious, question mark,' and stuff like that, but I just have mine generic."

Although many students said that they looked down on people who had too many pictures of them drinking, some considered it even less desirable for women to have such photos. Meredith explained that she judged women more harshly for them:

> I *hate* it when people have pictures of smoking or drinking on their Facebook. I think it's tacky. I don't know if they're trying to be cool, but I just think it's tacky, especially when girls do it. "Oh, I'm so drunk" or "What happened last night?" — you know, stuff like that, I think it's tacky.
> Me: Why do you think it's tackier when girls do it than guys?
> Meredith: I think that guys are always just stupider than girls. They can get away with whatever they want. I feel like girls always need to be a little classy and a little held back. I took a women's studies class and I learned about equality and all that, but I still think girls should definitely be more careful about that kind of stuff.

Even basic information about interests, such as favorite books, could be read differently, depending on whether the Facebook profile belonged to a man or a woman. Like Meredith, Fiona seemed to operate under the assumption that men were less intelligent

than women, and she discussed how they may compensate for this via their Facebook

profile when she said:

> I'm actually a lot more likely to judge a girl with a lot more music and books on
> her Facebook than a guy.
>
> Me: Why do you think that is?
>
> Fiona: Because I think every girl is just going to list a zillion things. [Long
> pause.] Alright, I retract that. When girls list a lot of music, I'm suspicious. And
> when guys list a lot of book, I get suspicious. Because when guys list a lot of
> books, there's no way they're going home every night and reading *A Tale of Two
> Cities*. There's just no way. And they're always bullshit like that: "*A Tale of Two
> Cities* and, uh, *Catcher in the Rye*" and what else? Just horrible books and you're
> like, "No, no, there's no way." I understand that they liked them at one point, but
> a favorite book is something that you return to and love and make your own. It's
> not like, "Sydney Carton is kind of baller; it's my favorite book." I like *A Tale of
> Two Cities*, but I only read it once; it's not my favorite book. I don't know what
> it is about girls and music. I feel like it's a highly judgmental thing to say, but it's
> true.

Most discussions about judging others people based on what they put on their

Facebook profiles indicated that women were generally judged more harshly than men.

Details of a profile, such as what clothing women were wearing in tagged photos, were

mentioned as important elements of forming an opinion about someone. Conversations

about making judgments based on such details were more likely to be instigated by

female interviewees.

People were more likely to talk about having a double standard about others'

relationship statuses than any other element of the Facebook profile. Brooke said that one

of the main reasons she did not list herself as single on Facebook following her break-up

with her boyfriend was that she was concerned about appearing desperate; she said that

she normally thought that women who listed themselves as single were usually desperate.

She said:

> I don't always read it as that, but I couldn't put it as that without thinking that. I
> don't know. I guess sometimes I do judge people on that. But sometimes I have a

> double standard for boys though. Because sometimes a lot of boys don't take Facebook very seriously and it's just like whatever. They just did it once and that's it. They don't like delete photos or like change this or that. Sometimes I give boys more slack for some reason, about that, even though I have a fair share of girlfriends who don't really keep up with it at all. I don't know. Some kind of double standard even though I have no proof for it.

The theme that men were not supposed to admit on Facebook that they had a girlfriend came up on several occasions. Although most of the people I interviewed said that they didn't see anything wrong with men having a relationship status up on Facebook — many of the men publicized their relationships on Facebook or said that they had previously — they believed that men were more likely than women to receive negative social sanctions from their peers if they did so. Devon illustrated this when he said that some of his male friends were concerned about being teased for publishing their relationship status on Facebook:

> Most guys I know hate it. I mean, if they have girlfriends. I know a lot of my friends, a couple of my friends, actually, over the summer, they deleted their Facebook and then, I guess in between that time and now, they both got girlfriends. They literally just reactivated their accounts last week. Their main — their only problem with it was they know their girlfriends are going to want to request a relationship status. I guess girls, they need that or whatever. Yeah, that was like their only worry about it.

The use of the word "need" here reflects greater trends in impressions about women's Facebook profiles, especially relationship statuses. Such language of insecurity was used to describe women's performances on Facebook more than men's performances. For example, women were thought to be more likely to "need" a relationship to be "Facebook official," to post statuses or other information that drew attention, and to "Facebook stalk," perhaps to make them feel as if they were connected with others or as a means of comparing themselves to their peers. Similarly, women were

more aware of the possibility of seeming insecure because of their activity on Facebook, such as untagging photos of themselves.

Conclusion

Discussion

With this study, I have aimed to apply Goffman's classic theory of presentation of self to help understand how people use Facebook to portray themselves to a large audience that they create. Previous research on online forms of communication and SNSs has revealed them to be important forums for young adults to create and manage an identity. Although a great deal of this research has not directly addressed Goffman's theories, it has shown that the Internet can be both a public and private space, sometimes simultaneously, and that this uncertainty and gray area may complicate Goffman's theory of conscious realization of a social status and desire to enact the roles with which it is associated. Additionally, I have attempted to understand how traditional expectations for gender roles set forth by society influence college students' presentations and their interpretations of others' activity on Facebook.

Audience Construction

Discussions about requesting, denying, and removing friends on Facebook reflected slight gender differences, as well as some differences within gender groups. More men than women discussed extending friend requests to people they had only met a few times. However, men were also more likely to say that they almost never requested people to be connected to them on Facebook and had realized they weren't Facebook

friends with people they considered friends in real life. Women were a little more likely to say that curiosity about a person, especially about a person to whom they were sexually attracted, led them to send friend requests. Similar to how women were more likely to say they would request someone to be their friend on Facebook after having had a positive experience with them in real life, they were also more likely to say that they would remove someone on Facebook with whom they had had a negative experience.

The men who said they requested people to be their friends after only a few encounters with them aligned with my hypothesis that men's friending habits would reflect the social expectations that men be aggressive and assertive (Kimmel 2008b; Kivel 1984). The tendency for men to not send friend requests reflects different, but still widely accepted, gender roles. Men are expected to be stoic and not invest much emotion in interpersonal relationships; not seeking people to add to an online network could be seen as a way of following this social norm (Kimmel 2008a; Kimmel 2008b; Kivel 1984). Due to a social expectation that women be passive, I had anticipated that women would not remove people from their networks. In contrast, women were more likely than men to delete a Facebook friend (Bem 1974; Gonick 2006; Stepp 2007). Although this is opposite behavior from what I expected, it could potentially be linked to the same gender expectations because removing a friend from an online network is a non-confrontational way in which people can express negative feelings toward someone.

However, no trends in audience construction were articulated by the majority of men or the majority of women. Rather, when it came to building and defining an online social network, there were very few differences in the general thought process followed

by men and women. Everyone said that Facebook friendship and real friendship were very different, and talked about primarily denying friend requests from people that they knew they had never met or to whom they had no direct connection.

The people I interviewed described Facebook as a public entity, but also as something that could be very personal. This was most evident when people discussed who they felt it was appropriate to accept into their network, or audience. Despite admissions from most interviewees that they hardly knew members of their audience on Facebook, everyone still expressed a desire to not make their performance on Facebook completely public. Each person spoke of purposely barring certain people from being included in their audience — often, interviewees rejected people with whom they were quite close, such as parents, from their audience — and some said they managed what information was available to certain members of their network. Audience segregation, as outlined by Goffman, does exist on Facebook, but usually in a slightly different form. Audiences that may be literally separated from each other in real life come together on Facebook and form a single audience. Completely altering one's performance to appeal to any specific sub-section of this larger audience is impossible, so students using Facebook discussed altering their presentation in order to appeal to the audience they thought might be the most judgmental, such as parents or other people outside of their peer group. The concept that I refer to as mental audience segregation was also articulated by several people, and was brought up more frequently by women than men. Mental audience segregation implies that the literal audience has not changed, but that a Facebook user has altered his or her self-presentation on the site in order to be more appealing to a specific person or group of people. This mental segregation can be trigged

by different events, such as the addition of authoritative figures to an audience or changes in the status of a romantic relationship or flirtation.

<u>Differences in and Awareness of Presentation</u>

The most pronounced gender differences in this study come from an analysis of the participants' profiles, primarily in the occurrence of sexual references and the type of profile photos selected by Facebook users. In contradiction to my hypothesis, I found that freshman girls were the least likely to hide "inappropriate pleasures" on their Facebook profiles. Three of the five had sexual references on their profiles, compared to no men or senior women. It is possible that these young women, who are relatively new to college, consider the status of college student to be their master status, or a status that is more important than that of gender. They may be attempting to play the role of a college student that they believe will lead to peer acceptance, especially from males (Kimmel 2008b). This could also explain why women were more likely to include non-serious information on their profiles, as this could be seen as reflecting the casual, unemotional way in which young men stereotypically interact with each other (Bem 1974; Kimmel 2008b). Conversely, the inclusion of non-serious information could be seen as a way of being mysterious or coy, and therefore, ascribing to the expectations of the female gender role (Bem 1974; Gonick 2006; Kimmel 2008a).

Goffman's writings on photographs (1979) as possible extensions of real-life performances become particularly important in the analysis of self-presentations on Facebook. Goffman believes that people have a way of reading pictures that makes them representations of people or events rather than simple still images or "tracings." Indeed,

during the interviews, photographs were widely described as an element that attracted people to Facebook, and some people even said they were the best part of the site. Most people referred to pictures when describing if and how they felt someone's personality was visible on a Facebook page. On one level, the pictures that people usually post on Facebook can be classified as what Goffman would call "private photographs" (1979) because they are taken at closed events and are taken for an audience that primarily includes only those who are in the photo. However, when these private photographs are posted in the quasi-public sphere of Facebook, they become available to many more people and are more like what Goffman calls public photographs (1979). The audience for these once-private photos expands exponentially, and members of this audience may have no connection to each other or the event that is pictured, but may still be using them as a means of reading a person.

Photographs were a particularly important element in the discussion of hiding "secret pleasures" and therefore presenting a mask or idealized self on Facebook (Goffman 1959:43; Laudone 2007). Every person I interviewed mentioned untagging photographs of himself or herself at least occasionally, and some people mentioned altering their behavior by avoiding being in photographs that they did not feel comfortable presenting to a larger audience. For members of both genders, alcohol was the "secret pleasure" that was hidden the most. This propensity to untag photographs indicates that most people are conscious that their Facebook profile is a means by which they may present themselves to many different people.

There were few differences in how men and women discussed what photographs they presented to others. Although attractiveness was a consideration for men and women, women were more likely to talk about wanting to appear to embody certain attributes, such as beauty or thinness, whereas men tended to say that they simply did not want to look unattractive. Similarly, women were more likely to untag a photo if they felt it did not accurately depict their physical attractiveness. When I looked at profiles, I saw that women were more likely than men to use a photograph of themselves in formal clothing as their profile picture, therefore presenting an image that is more polished than the one they would give on an average day. Women were also more likely to have their faces be the focus of this picture, thus drawing attention to their physical attributes and attractiveness. Physical beauty is often seen as an important trait for women to have, especially stereotypically in the eyes of men, as Kimmel writes (2008b). The decision to choose an attractive photo is possibly linked to the fact that most women said they were conscious of performing for an audience.

Recent studies on female adolescents and online communication (Elm 2007; Grisso and Weiss 2005; Thiel 2005) have revealed that Web-based forums can be especially important for young women as they gain an understanding of their status and roles and consequently gain of sense of self. Online and offline, audience approval has been shown to be an important element of women feeling comfortable with their identity (Clark 2005; Gonick 2006; Laudone 2007; Subrahmanyam et al. 2006; Williams and Merten 2008). This theme was apparent during my interviews. As subjects discussed the way they used Facebook and their impressions of the site, women were more conscious of their audience on Facebook and were more likely to believe that people they did not

know very well were using the site to form an opinion about them. Likewise, women seemed more aware that people were apt to use Facebook to construct images of themselves. They also admitted to engaging in "Facebook stalking" more frequently than men and were more likely to say that they felt as if more than shallow, factual information about someone could be gleaned from his or her profile.

Even though women admitted to "Facebook stalking" and using this information to judge others to a greater extent than men did, nearly everyone discussed forming opinions about other people based on what was presented on their Facebook pages, as I had anticipated. Almost all of my participants articulated a different strategy that they used to learn more about a person or to try to get a sense of who they were from their Facebook. Although very few differences in behavior on Facebook could be attributed to gender, many students said that they believe gender differences in attitudes and behaviors exist, and they used stereotypical expectations for gender roles to judge others. This became most evident in discussions about relationship statuses on Facebook. Although there were not pervasive gender differences in how the men and women in my study used relationship statuses — in fact, most people, regardless of gender, talked about the pressure and confusion associated with publishing and reading statuses — people anticipated that their peers would attempt to ascribe to specific gender roles with this element of the profile. Men and women both expected that women would be more likely to want to publicize a relationship on Facebook. They also said that they thought men who displayed this status were teased or otherwise looked down upon by their peers, even though they did not personally associate any negativity with men who showed that they were in a relationship on their Facebook page. The perception of gender differences in

regards to relationship statuses can likely be explained by what Kimmel (2008b) describes as the feminized way in which love and relationships are portrayed today, particularly in the media. Because of this representation, it is generally believed that women value romance more than men, and even that a man should disassociate himself from the concept in order to maintain and assert his masculinity.

In this way, Kimmel's (2008b) description of the "gender policing" that takes place among adolescents became evident, but at the same time, many of the subjects did not seem to feel as if they needed to uphold some of the traits that they expected from or looked for in their peers. As I mentioned previously, conversations with men and women about expectations for relationship statues and other several elements hinted at the fact that many participants anticipated that women would play a role similar to the one Gonick (2006) and her contemporaries refer to as Reviving Ophelia. The Opheliac description of young women operates under an assumption that women are reserved, fragile, and constantly in need of acceptance from others. More women spoke about attempting to avoid these traits than they did about ascribing to them, but the belief that women would adopt these characteristics was widely held in my sample.

Limitations and Implications for Further Study

There are some limitations to this study. Some are connected to the nature of the study, as qualitative research is known to be exploratory and usually not able to be generalized to represent the population at large (Lofland et al. 2006; Miles and Huberman 1994). Limitations associated with this study specifically may be related to its location and participants. The students I interviewed all attend the same private university with a

foundation in the liberal arts. A sample of students from another region of the country or different type of institution may yield more pronounced gender differences. Similarly, in addition to his or her respective ascribed sex status, each person I interviewed had the achieved status of a college student. For some of my participants, the status of college student may have been their master status, or the one that they considered most important, and they may have constructed a Facebook profile that would reflect the role of student more than the role associated with their gender. Although previous research has named adolescence "the most gendered stage of a person's development," this label does not necessarily extend to the time people spend in college. Rather, college usually occurs between two highly gendered stages in someone's life — adolescence and family life. In American society, the status of parent, unlike the status of college student, is strongly linked with gender expectations. Thus, when someone adopts the role of parent as his or her mater status, his or her behavior may be more likely to reflect stereotypical gender roles similar to the ones described by many of my interviewees. The liberal atmosphere found on many college campuses, including the one on which this study was performed, may decrease the amount of stringent "gender policing" that takes place. However, after approximately twenty years of gender socialization, many students likely internalize their expectations for how people around them will enact gender roles.

A follow-up study that focused more specifically on students' impressions of gender roles and stereotypes would complement this one well. This study supports previous findings that online communication and identity management, especially on SNSs, are important to young adults. Using Facebook, especially as a means of fostering or maintaining relationships, however casually, has become habitual for the students I

interviewed. The results of this study indicate that holding their peers to gendered expectations they themselves do not embody has become commonplace for many of them as well. If this is indeed a greater trend that permeates younger generations in America, the implications for society could be significant. Will gender expectations change if men and women begin to behave more similarly? Goffman's work shows that social norms are established based on the roles people play; these roles are in turn determined by a person's status. Will we have new expectations for gender status if gender behavior converges? Continued study on this topic would be beneficial for understanding how adolescents relate to each other and view themselves, particularly around gender statuses and roles, and in both in online and offline forums. If it is true that there is a disjuncture between how individuals define their own roles in relation to gender expectations and how they perceive others' gender behavior, then what are the implications? And are there any hints of new emerging gender expectations and roles?

Tables

TABLE 1a: Information on profiles of female respondents

Subject	Relationship Status	Religious Views	Political Views	Interests	Music	TV Shows
Fiona (senior)	None	N*	N	N	N	N
Megan (senior)	Married to [female friend]	N	N	Y	N	N
Zoe (senior)	In a relationship with [bf]	NS	N	N	N	N
Brooke (senior)	In a relationship with [boyfriend]; none^	NS	N	Y	Y	Y
Emma (senior)	None	N	N	N	N	N
Lisa (freshman)	Single	Y	N	N	N	N
Kendall (freshman)	In a relationship with [boyfriend]	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Erin (freshman)	None	N	N	Y	Y	Y
Meredith (freshman)	Single	N	N	NS	N	N
Rachel (freshman)	None	Y	N	Y	Y	Y

^ Brooke's relationship status was recorded directly following her first interview and her second interview, following her break-up with her boyfriend.

TABLE 1a: Information on profiles of female respondents, continued

Subject	Movies	Books	About Me	Sexual Content**
Fiona (senior)	N	N	N	N
Megan (senior)	N	N	N	N
Zoe (senior)	N	N	N	N
Brooke (senior)	Y	Y	NS	N
Emma (senior)	N	Y	NS	N
Lisa (freshman)	N	NS	NS	Y
Kendall (freshman)	Y	Y	Y	N
Erin (freshman)	Y	Y	N	Y
Meredith (freshman)	N	N	NS	N
Rachel (freshman)	Y	Y	Y	Y

TABLE 1b: Information on profiles of male respondents^^

Subject	Relationship Status	Religious Views	Political Views	Interests	Music	TV Shows
Jason (senior)	None	N	N	NS	NS	Y
Derek (senior)	None	Y	NS	Y	Y	Y
Eric (senior)	Single	N	N	N	Y	Y
Will (senior)	Single	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Devon (senior)	Single	Y	Y	N	N	N
Sean (freshman)	In a relationship with [girlfriend]	Y	N	Y	Y	Y
Kyle (freshman)	None	N	N	N	N	N
Tyler (freshman)	In a relationship with [girlfriend]	N	N	N	N	N
Mitch (freshman)	None	Y	Y	N	N	N

^^ Only nine of the ten men I interviewed allowed me to look at their profiles.

TABLE 1b: Information on profiles of male respondents, continued

Subject	Movies	Books	About Me	Sexual Content
Jason (senior)	Y	Y	N	N
Derek (senior)	Y	Y	NS	N
Eric (senior)	N	Y	Y	N
Will (senior)	Y	Y	N	N
Devon (senior)	N	N	N	N
Sean (freshman)	Y	Y	N	N
Kyle (freshman)	N	N	N	N
Tyler (freshman)	N	N	N	N
Mitch (freshman)	N	N	Y	N

* N indicates the field is blank; Y indicates there is information in the field; NS indicates there is primarily non-serious information in the field

** "Sexual content" indicates if there are any references to sex (i.e. as part of a favorite quote or in the "About Me" section) on the interviewee's profile

TABLE 2a: Information profile pictures of female respondents

Subject	Number of other people	Amount of body showing	Body language & facial expression	Clothing & appearance*	Caption
Fiona (senior)	None	Torso	Hands on hips, smiling	Ordinary	None
Megan (senior)	Two females	Torso	Holding birthday cake; smiling	Formal	None
Zoe (senior)	None	Torso	Hands on hip; smiling	Formal	None
Brooke (senior)	None	Upper torso	Making peace sign with fingers, holding jar; smiling	Ordinary	"evil eyes and mason jar"
Emma (senior)	None	Torso	Smiling	Formal	None
Lisa (freshman)	None	Upper torso	Leaning against wall, one arm behind head, looking down at camera; not smiling	Ordinary	None
Kendall (freshman)	One (boyfriend)	Torso	Hugging boy; difficult to determine expression, as photos is blurry	Formal	None

Erin (freshman)	None	Can't distinguish which figure is her	Can't distinguish which figure is her	Can't distinguish which figure is her	None
Meredith (freshman)	None	All	Sitting cross-legged, making "rock" sign with fingers; sticking tongue out	Ordinary	None
Rachel (freshman)	One (face indistinguishable)	Torso	Dancing with partner; smiling	Formal	None

TABLE 2b: Information profile pictures of male respondents

Subject	Number of other people	Amount of body showing	Body language & facial expression	Clothing & appearance	Caption
Jason (senior)	Two males	Shoulders, head	Smiling	Ordinary	None
Derek (senior)	None	All	Sitting in chair; photo is blurry; laughing	Formal	None
Eric (senior)	One female	Upper torso	Smiling	Ordinary	None
Will (senior)	None	Shoulders, head	Mouth open, laughing	Ordinary	
Devon (senior)	Two males	Torso	Arms around other males; laughing	Ordinary	None
Sean (freshman)	One male (can't distinguish which is Sean)	All	Doing a handstand	Ordinary	None
Kyle (freshman)	Two children	All	Playing with child, not looking at camera; smiling	Ordinary	None
Tyler (freshman)	One (girlfriend)	Upper torso	Arm around girl; smiling	Ordinary	None
Mitch (freshman)	None	All; photo is taken from a distance	Holding snowboard over head; face not visible	Ordinary	None

* "Clothing & appearance" refers to what the subject is wearing in the photos and an estimation of what type of event he or she was attending when the photo was taken. The category "formal" indicates that the subject appeared to be at an event and was wearing formal clothing (or, in the case of the female subjects, noticeable makeup). The category of "ordinary" indicates that the subject is wearing something he or she would presumably wear on a daily basis, such as a T-shirt.

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Appendix A: Recruitment E-mail

RECRUITMENT E-MAIL

Honors Thesis: Facebook and Gender

Hi! My name is Ani Vrabel and I am an undergraduate sociology major. I am conducting a senior honors thesis about gender and Facebook usage. I am looking for volunteers who are willing to participate in one interview with me, which will last about 45 minutes to an hour. Additionally, I would like to be able to see the Facebook profiles of the students I interview. However, reviewing your profile is not a requirement for participation. All information would be kept anonymous. I am hoping to find volunteers who are either in their freshman or senior year. You must be at least 18 years old to participate in this project.

The interview will be conducted at a place of your choosing, and if you have no preference, a private room in the Sociology department will be secured. I cannot offer you any compensation, but your participation is essential to my study and I would really appreciate it!

If you are interested, please contact me. Your participation is completely voluntary and you can choose not to participate at any time.

Again, your contribution to my project would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your consideration!

Ani Vrabel

Dept of Sociology

Emory University

Tarbutton 225

Atlanta, GA 30322

avrabel@emory.edu

Appendix B: Interview Guide

GENERAL INFORMATION ON FACEBOOK

1. How long have you had Facebook?

2. What made you decide to make a Facebook profile?

2a. What was your first impression of it?

3. Had you used other social networking sites before you made a Facebook profile?

4. How frequently do you log into Facebook?

5. What would you say is the primary reason you use Facebook?

FRIENDSHIP & FACEBOOK

1. Do you draw a distinction between acquaintances, friends and close friends?

1a. How would you define each of these?

2. When you refer to these different types of people in conversation, do you use these different titles in your speech? For example, would you say "Oh, I have this acquaintance so-and-so…."

3. How many people would you consider "close" friends?

3a. Do you draw a further distinction between close friends and a best friends? What is the difference?

4. What do you think about Facebook friends?

5. How many Facebook friends do you have?

6. How do you decide who to request as a friend?

7. Do you ever deny friend requests? Who would you deny a request from?

8. What about unfriending or defriending people — do you ever do that? What goes into that decision?

9. About how many of your Facebook friends do you keep in touch with regularly through the site?

10. How many of them do you keep in touch with in some other way, like by seeing them in person or talking on the phone regularly?

11. Are there people you keep up with via Facebook without communicating with them, as in you look at their profile, but they might not be aware of it?

11a. How often do you do this, or with how many people?

11b. Why do you do this?

12. Do you think there are a lot of people who may be doing the same thing with your profile?

13. Are there any people who you feel like you would no longer be friends with or be in touch with if you did not hav Facebook?

14. What about relationship statuses? What do you think about them?

14a. Are you honest about your relationship status on Facebook?

14b. What goes into the decision to change your relationship status on Facebook?

PRESENTATION OF SELF WITH FACEBOOK

1. How did you decide how much information about yourself to include on your profile?
2. Do you update your status?

   2a. How do you decide when to change or status or what it should say? About how frequently do you update your status?

   2b. How do you see most people using this feature?

3. Do you consider the fact that people may be looking at your profile without you knowing it when you decide what information about yourself to include on your profile?

4. How honest about yourself are you on your profile? Do you purposely leave some information out?

5. How do you decide which photo to use as your profile photo?

6. How often do you "untag" photos of yourself? What makes you decide to untag them?

7. Do you feel as if you can get a lot of information about someone from their Facebook page? Do you think a Facebook profile is an accurate depiction of someone's character and personality?

8. Are you Facebook friends with older people now, like family or family friends?

   8a. Did you alter any information on your profile after becoming "friends" with these people?

9. How concerned are you with a future employer seeing your Facebook page? Does this affect how you present yourself on Facebook?

9a. Do you think it's OK for employers to look at the Facebook profile of someone they are considering hiring? Do you think it's a breach of privacy in any way?

10. How often do you notice Facebook coming up in real-world conversations? In what contexts? How do you feel about this?

11. Do you think that Emory students might use Facebook differently from students at other schools who don't have a convenient communication tool like LearnLink?

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Emory University, Emory College, Department of Sociology

Consent to be a Research Subject

<u>Title</u>: Facebook and Gender: Community and the Self

<u>**Principal Investigator:**</u> Tracy L. Scott, Ph.D.

<u>**Co-Investigator:**</u> Anitra Vrabel

<u>**Funding Source(s):**</u> **Not applicable.**

<u>**Introduction**</u>
You are being asked to be in a research study. This form is designed to tell you everything you need to think about before you decide to consent (agree) to be in the study or not to be in the study. It is entirely your choice. If you decide to take part, you can change your mind later on and withdraw from the research study. The decision to join or not join the research study will not cause you to lose any benefits.

You were chosen for this project because you fit in the criteria of being either a freshman or senior at Emory University who uses Facebook. There will be 20 students total participating in this study. You are only expected to participate in this study for as long as the interview lasts (approximately between 45 and 90 minutes).

<u>**Purpose**</u>
The scientific purpose of this study is to look at the role that Facebook plays in the lives of college-aged men and women, and how the site is involved in opinions on community and decisions on how to present oneself.

<u>**Procedures**</u>
We are conducting 1-hour interviews with male and female students who use Facebook. Interviewees are expected to answer the questions to the extent that they feel comfortable.

<u>**Risks and Discomforts**</u>

There are no foreseeable risk or discomforts associated with this study.

<u>**Benefits**</u>
This study is not designed to benefit you directly. This study is designed to learn more about the current most popular social networking site, Facebook, and how people use it, as well as how it impacts peoples' lives. The study results may be used to help other people in the future. There may be no direct benefit to you as a participant from this study.

Compensation

You will not be offered payment for being in this study.

Confidentiality

Certain offices and people other than the researchers may look at your study records. Government agencies, Emory employees overseeing proper study conduct may look at your study records. These offices include the Emory Institutional Review Board and the Emory Office of Research Compliance. Emory will keep any research records we produce private to the extent we are required to do so by law.

A study number rather than your name will be used on study records wherever possible. Your name and other facts that might point to you will not appear when we present this study or publish its results.

Questions

Contact Anitra Vrabel at:

- if you have any questions about this study or your part in it,
- if you feel you have had a research-related injury [if applicable], or
- if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research

If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or if you have questions, concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the Emory Institutional Review Board at 404-712-0720 or 877-503-9797 or irb@emory.edu.

Consent

We will give you a copy of this consent form to keep. Do not sign this consent form unless you have had a chance to ask questions and get answers that make sense to you.

Nothing in this form can make you give up any legal rights. By signing this form you will not give up any legal rights. You are free to take home an unsigned copy of this form and talk it over with family or friends.

Please sign below if you agree to participate in the interview portion of this study.

_____

Name of Subject

_____   _____

Signature of Subject   Date
Time

_____   _____

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion   Date
Time

Please sign below if you agree to let the researchers view your Facebook profile page.
This is not a requirement for participation in the interview. All confidentiality measures
apply to this information also.

_____

Name of Subject

_____   _____

Signature of Subject   Date
Time

_____   _____

Signature of Person Conducting Informed Consent Discussion   Date
Time

Appendix D: Code List

Presentation of Self

Audiences

Elements of Presentation

    Profile (other than rel. status)

        Content

        Reasons (for posting own content)

    Relationship Status

        Content

        Reasons

    Status Updates

        Content

        Reasons

    Photos

        Content

        Reasons

Assessing Others' Presentation

    Profile (other than rel. status)

        Content

        Interpretations (others' presentation)

    Relationship Status

        Content

        Interpretations

    Status Updates

        Content

        Interpretations

    Photos

        Content

        Interpretations

Friends

Facebook Friends

        Definitions/Impressions

        Friend Requests

                Sending - reasons

                Denying - reasons

                Accepting - reasons

        Defriending - reasons

                Don't know person

                Falling out

Facebook Purpose re: Friends

        Stay in touch with distant friends

        Stay in touch with near friends

        Number of friends keep in touch with