



# CS 6474/CS 4803

## Social Computing:

### Social Computing Theories: Public Displays and Performance

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- Assignment I due soon (Sep 12)
- Project Proposals and Teams (Sep 26)

**“Life itself is a dramatically enacted thing”**



**Irving Goffman**

**‘‘The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life’  
(1990).**

# The participant's dramaturgical problems of presenting one's self



- “a potentially infinite cycle of concealment, discovery, false revelation, and rediscovery”

# The legitimate performances of everyday life...



- ...are not “acted” or “put on” in the sense that the performer knows in advance just what he is going to do”



# Expressions we give vs. give off



- "The expressiveness of the individual appears to involve two radically different kinds of sign activity: the expression that he gives, and the expression that he gives off"

# What he meant was that:

- Life is a dramatic performance for us!
- We 'perform' for others.
- We present a kind of 'act' to them.
- We perform differently in different situations - and the world is our 'stage'.

## We present 'ourselves' in six different ways:

(1) Persona – the different personality 'masks' we wear in different situations, for different people.

For instance, the way we behave with our family on a picnic is different to how we would behave with prisoners if we worked as a Prison Warden.



## (2) Performance:

- This refers to **how** we wear our persona or personality mask. For instance:
- We might be '**sincere**' in how we behave. We are honest in what we say and do.
- Or
- We might be '**cynical**' – and not really believe in our performance.

## (3) Staging:

- What do we need for our 'performance'?
- A certain location.
- Props/objects.
- Costume/dress.
- These form the context for our performance.
- For instance, if you were to go for a job interview, you would wear formal/business attire.

## (4) Teams:

- Who do we 'perform' with? Who forms part of our 'team'?
- Who is there when we stage our performance?
- For instance, when we go to the club to 'pull', do we go with friends for confidence?
- For example, when we may adopt a 'work persona', when we work and communicate with others.

## (5) Role:

- This refers to the individual 'jobs' or responsibilities we have in a 'team'.
- We wake up as a son or daughter, within a family.
- We go downstairs and clear up last night's mess (role as cleaner?) to help other family members.
- We act as a comforter to an upset friend on the bus. You then chat to other friends.
- We arrive at college and work hard as one of GT students!

## (6) Personal Style:

- This is the **unique, individual** aspects of yourself you bring to teams, roles, persona and how you stage things!
- This is what makes you **different** to others.

# Class Exercise o



# Front



The Joe Schmo Show

- “A given social front tends to become institutionalized in terms of the abstract stereotyped expectations”

# Dramatic Realization



- “In mobilizing his behavior to make a showing, he will be concerned not so much with the full round of the different routine he performs but only with the one from which his occupational reputation derives.”
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# Idealization



- “incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society”

# Concealment



Real Housewives

- “we tend to conceal from our audience all evidence of ‘dirty work’

# Maintenance of Expressive Control



- “the audience may misunderstand the meaning that a cue was designed to convey, or may read an embarrassing meaning into gestures or events that were accidental, inadvertent, or incidental and not meant by the performer to carry any meaning whatsoever”

After reading Goffman, does it make you disbelieve everything your friends share/do on social media?



# Class Exercise 1

Sort the social computing platforms below based on how much performance and/or exhibition you expect to see:

Twitter

Facebook

Tumblr

Reddit

Twitch

LinkedIn

Pinterest

Google+

# The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online

- Self-presentation can be split into performances, which take place in synchronous “situations,” and artifacts, which take place in asynchronous “exhibitions.”
- Introduces a theory of “lowest common denominator” culture employing the exhibitional approach

Why is Goffman's theory valid and applicable to social computing platforms?

# Class Exercise 2

1) What are some examples of performance (Goffman) and exhibition (Hogan) in existing social computing platforms?

2) What are some design features in these platforms that enable (or hinder) “performance” or “exhibition”?

# Class Exercise 3a

Examine the functional regions of performance (Goffman) and exhibition (Hogan) in the context of *anonymous* social computing platforms.

Is the “lowest common denominator” approach still valid?

# Class Exercise 3b

Examine the functional regions of performance (Goffman) and exhibition (Hogan) in the context of *ephemeral* social computing platforms.

Is the “lowest common denominator” approach still valid?



Hogan says: “A key difference in exhibitions is the virtual “curator” that manages and redistributes this digital content”. What would be examples of a virtual curator on Facebook?