

# CS 6474/CS 4803

## Social Computing:

### Social Computing Theories: Public Displays and Performance

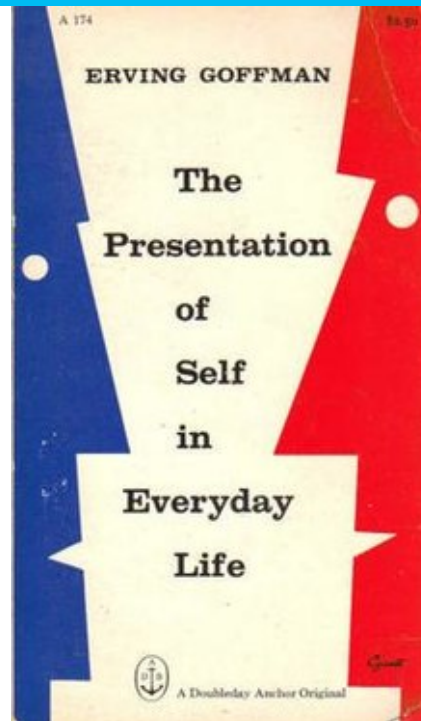
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- Project Proposals and Teams (Sep 25)

**“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”

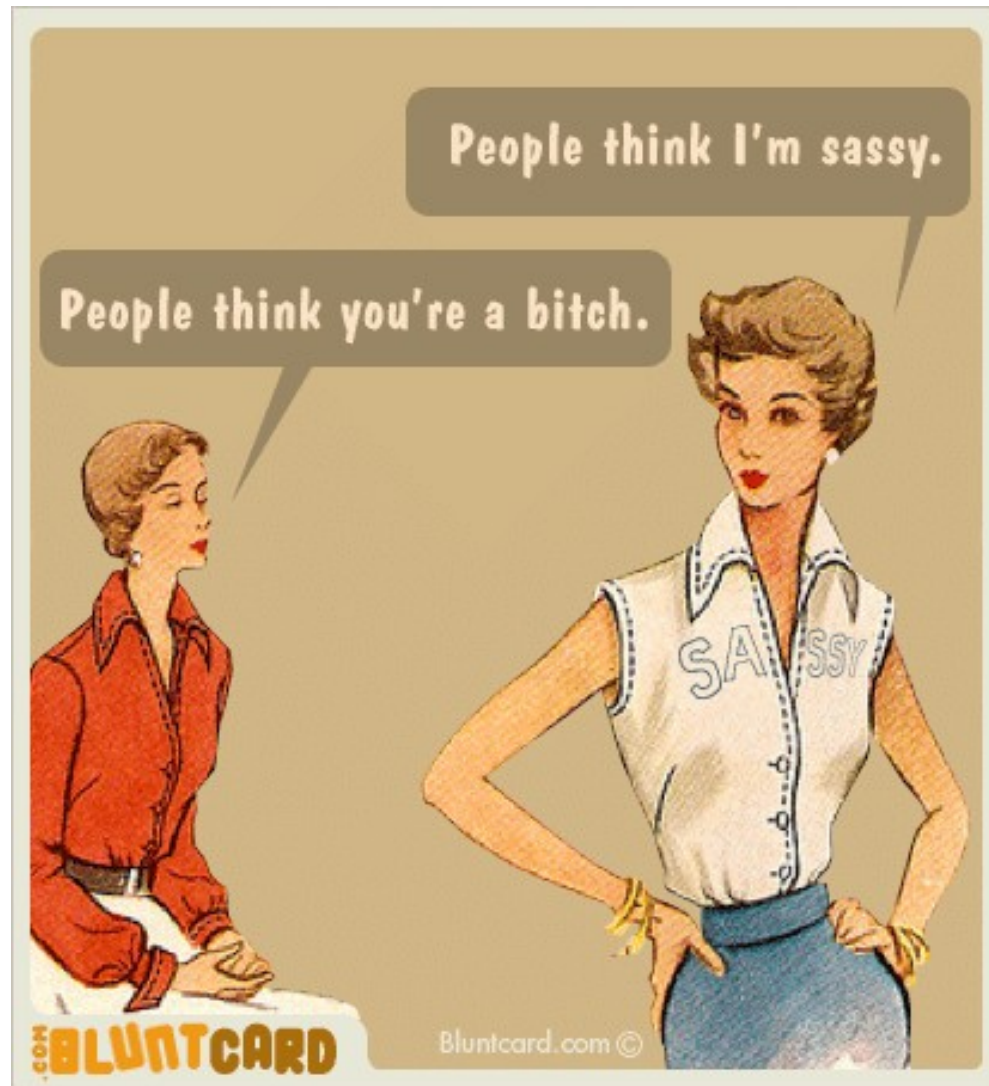
# The legitimate performances of everyday life...



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

Connection between performance and life/front stage and back stage

# 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 because there is an audience.
- 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.

But there are implications...

# Front



The Joe Schmo Show

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

# Idealization



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



# 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.”
-

# 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”

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

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

# 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”?



# The Many Faces of Facebook: Experiencing Social Media as Performance, Exhibition, and Personal Archive

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## ABSTRACT

The growing use of social media means that an increasing amount of people's lives are visible online. We draw from Goffman's theatrical metaphor and Hogan's exhibition approach to explore how people manage their personal collection of social media data over time. We conducted a qualitative study of 13 participants to reveal their day-to-day decision-making about producing and curating digital traces on Facebook. Their goals and strategies showed that people experience the Facebook platform as consisting of three different functional regions: a *performance region* for managing recent data and impression management, an *exhibition region* for longer term presentation of self-image, and a *personal region* for archiving meaningful facets of life. Further, users' need for presenting and archiving data in these three regions is mediated by temporality. These findings trigger a discussion of how to design social media that support these dynamic and sometimes conflicting needs.

## Author Keywords

Reminiscing; personal archives; curation; identity; exhibition

media the feeling of an art exhibition in a museum [11]. In this metaphor, performances leave behind digital traces that act as digital artifacts of the performance, and the accumulation and collection of these artifacts causes these spaces to take on the character of a long-term identity "exhibition," rather than that of an ephemeral performance.

The value of these exhibitions is not limited to others. Much of the content that people create in social media has personal meaning [4], and the emerging personal value of content in these media has been explored in recent studies [15, 25, 29]. Thus, despite these systems' focus on social purposes, it is fair to say that "today there is an increasing desire to use online social media as a way for archiving life experiences and reflecting on identities" [9, p15].

These shifts and emerging goals triggered us to rethink the nature of social platforms, the curation of data that they afford, and the ways that individual users conceptualize and experience social media and the data they create in them.

Both the archive and the exhibition metaphors point to the



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## Strategic self-presentation online: A cross-cultural study

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### ABSTRACT

Contemporary social networking sites (SNSs) make idealized self-presentation and image maintenance difficult because users' audiences are becoming more diverse and individual users must negotiate often unanticipated *other-provided information* in the form of text posts and digital images on their profile pages. This cross-cultural study examines how audience-related variables affect a range of strategic self-presentation and image management behaviors online. Results from samples of Singaporean and American SNS users ( $N = 411$ ) show that while Americans update their profiles with text-based wall posts more frequently, Singaporeans share significantly more photos. Audience diversity is positively associated with active management of other-provided information, and females share more photos and actively manage unwanted photo tagging. Cultural identity and the tendency to 'friend' unknown others interact on managing other-provided wall posts; individualistic cultural identity exhibited positive relationships with these reactions for those less likely to friend unknown others but negative ones for those more likely to friend unknown others. Implications for the theoretical understanding of and practical suggestions about self-presentation online are discussed.

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# The spatial self: Location-based identity performance on social media

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## Abstract

As a growing number of social media platforms now include location information from their users, researchers are confronted with new online representations of individuals, social networks, and the places they inhabit. To better understand these representations and their implications, we introduce the concept of the “spatial self”: a theoretical framework encapsulating the process of online self-presentation based on the display of offline physical activities. Building on previous studies in social science, humanities, and computer and information science, we analyze the ways offline experiences are

# Quantifying the Invisible Audience in Social Networks

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## ABSTRACT

When you share content in an online social network, who is listening? Users have scarce information about who actually sees their content, making their audience seem invisible and difficult to estimate. However, understanding this invisible audience can impact both science and design, since perceived audiences influence content production and self-presentation online. In this paper, we combine survey and large-scale log data to examine how well users' perceptions of their audience match their actual audience on Facebook. We find that social media users consistently underestimate their audience size for their posts, guessing that their audience is just 27% of its true size. Qualitative coding of survey responses reveals folk theories that attempt to reverse-engineer audience size using feedback and friend count, though none of these approaches are particularly accurate. We analyze audience logs for 222,000 Facebook users' posts over the course of one month and find that publicly visible signals — friend count, likes, and comments — vary widely and do not strongly indicate the audience of a single post. Despite the variation, users typically reach 61% of their friends each month. Together, our results begin to reveal the invisible undercurrents of audience attention and behavior in online social networks.

may not see the content, or may not reply. While established media producers can estimate their audience through surveys, television ratings and web analytics, social network sites typically do not share audience information. This design decision has privacy benefits such as plausible deniability, but it also means that users may not accurately estimate their invisible audience when they post content.

Correct or not, these audience estimates are central to media behavior: perceptions of our audience deeply impact what we say and how we say it. We act in ways that guide the impression our audience develops of us [17], and we manage the boundaries of when to engage with that audience [2]. Social media users create a mental model of their imagined audience, then use that model to guide their activities on the site [27, 38, 26]. However, with no way to know if that mental model is accurate, users might speak to a larger or smaller audience than they expect.

This paper investigates users' perceptions of their invisible audience, and the inherent uncertainty in audience size as a limit for users' estimation abilities. We survey active Facebook users and ask them to estimate their audience size, then compare their estimates to their actual audience size using server logs. We examine the folk theories that users have de-

# 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?