PRESENTATION OF SELFIE:

A MODERN UNDERSTANDING OF GOFFMAN'S SELF ON INSTAGRAM

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Abstract

The ability to alter oneself has been explained in 1959 by Erving Goffman as the concept known as presentation of self. Since Goffman's (1959) concept of presentation of self, researchers have compared his findings to how people present themselves on social media platforms. Social media has allowed people the opportunity to communicate with the world at large while creating new or different versions of themselves. Previous literature and research have examined how Facebook users altered themselves for their friends and relationships on the platform. Previously conducted research and Goffman's presentation of self act as the foundation for this study. This study examined how Millennials present themselves on Instagram, how they alter their presentation of self on the platform, and what impacts the communication has on Millennials who use Instagram. The study was conducted through interviews with Millennial participants at a large Mid-Atlantic university. Research findings suggest, similarities between Goffman, self-presentation on Facebook, and Instagram use arose. The interviews showed that users do present themselves differently through a variety of tools, personal opinions, and self-constructed rules on Instagram. Future research will be able to expand on this study's findings to further understand how Millennials use Instagram and how male's use differs from female use.

Keywords: Millennial, Instagram, Social Media, Goffman, Presentation of Self

Table of Contents

Presentation of Selfie: A Modern Understanding of Goffman's Self on Instagram

Since Goffman (1959) offered his original concept of self and presentation, communication styles and methods have changed drastically, specifically via virtual communication. Social media has created a new version of Goffman's (1959) concept of the front and back stage. The front stage has morphed from a performance stage into a public profile page or a home feed. The back stage has transitioned from a metaphorical curtain an actor can hide behind to prepare future actions to a keyboard and computer screen that act as a veil for an individual to edit and calculate their future public appearances.

Due to social media's popularity, communication styles have evolved to reflect opinions in comment boxes, appreciation through a 'like' button, emoticons and emojis, and through tagging users with @ symbols. These methods allow the user to hide behind their computer or mobile device screen and its keyboard, much like Goffman's (1959) concept of front stage and back stage. Previous literature has examined Goffman's (1959) concept of presentation of self on other social media platforms, such as Facebook. However, numerous other social media platforms have come to existence and gained popularity with the public in recent years. One of the more familiar generation to virtual communication and its interaction styles is the Millennial generation.

One of the newer social media platforms to join Facebook and Twitter is Instagram. Since being created in 2010, it has averaged 300 million users on a monthly basis and users have posted more than thirty billion photographs and videos (Instagram, 2015). While Facebook and Twitter allow users to post photographs and video content, Instagram was originally created as a photograph-sharing platform with little to no text.

The platform allows users to view other cultures, celebrities and their lifestyles, and maintain connections with friends and family members. Unlike Facebook, Instagram does not require that users and followers have reciprocal relationships (Manikonda, Hu, & Kambhampati, 2014). Essentially, the individual user may follow more accounts than they have as followers, or vice versa. This is commonly seen with people in the public eye, like celebrities. A celebrity may have thousands of followers but only follow a few Instagram accounts. Additionally, user reciprocity can be altered due to user's privacy settings. This includes making the user profile private so any prospective follower must be given individual approval to view content posted by the private user (Manikonda et al., 2014).

The large number of photographs posted onto the platform has cause the platform to gain notoriety and warrant the public's attention. A recent Pew Report stated that video and pictures have become a social currency (Rainie, Brenner, & Purcell, 2012). This may relate to how individuals use the platform as both users and observers. The importance placed on pictures and video content that are shared on social media platforms may also create issues for users on a personal level. This can be seen with increased self-esteem or issues related to the physical appearance because of advertisements (Media Smarts, n.d.). In an effort to alleviate any potential issues associated with images, like unwanted or negative comments, users may start to edit or alter their presence on the platform. The average user has been shown to wait 6.5 days between posting content, which received, on average, 2.55 comments per posted content (Manikonda et al., 2014). Each picture or video upload can be posted with or without a text caption, which may act as a description of the posted content. Instagram allows users to experience the social media platform in a

different manner than its predecessors. The apparent difference between Facebook and Instagram may impact how the user uses the platform and why they use the platforms differently from others.

With these ideas in mind, this study will examine how users, specifically young adults in the Millennial generation, use the social media platform Instagram in the context of Goffman's presentation of self. By examining their usage of Instagram, a primarily image-based platform the capability altering content before it is publicly posted, the study hopes to gain insight into how users present the best version of their self. The presentation of self has arguably changed from an in-person exchange to one on social media with the creation of Facebook. However, new social media platforms, like Instagram, have created opportunities to further examine how users change their presentation by limiting the posted content to photographic or video content.

This study will update previous literature related to personal alterations and presentation of self on social media platforms. Like previously stated, the public places a newfound importance on photographs, which is vital to the use of Instagram. This study will bridge the gap between Goffman's (1959) presentation of self and a newer social media platform that is growing in popularity and user numbers. This study begins with an examination of Goffman's (1959) presentation of self concept and how it has adapted to current social media practices. The literature review will cover Goffman (1959) and his concepts related to presentation of self. The next section will discuss how Goffman's (1959) presentation of self has adapted to social media based on the concept of the front stage and back stage. The following section will discuss social media user characteristics. Next, the literature review will examine the Millennial generation and why generation

uses social media. This section will discuss the benefits of engagement, positive and

negative attributes of social media, and social capital. Finally, the literature review will

conclude with details about Instagram. The results section will include findings from

interviews. The findings will be analyzed and compared with other research in the

discussion section. The discussion section will also include an acknowledgement of

limitations.

Literature Review

Erving Goffman's concept of self and its additional layers have included the face,

front stage and back stage, ranks, and teams, all of which have been used in researched

since 1959. Some research has examined how Goffman's findings can evolve with

modern culture and its technological advances. After 1959, the United States saw

numerous advances in the technology and communication. With these changes and new

electronic devices, generations have grown up differently with additional access to those

around them. The Millennial generation, also known as Generation Y, Gen Y, echo

boomers, net generation, and nexters, has grown up differently than their predecessors

(Lieber, 2010). The Millennial generation has adapted to changes related to financial and

technological advances. The technological advances allow the generation to create their

own rules, which ultimately has increased their sense of self-esteem and confidence

(Lieber, 2010). One of the newer forms of communication, social media platforms, is

now accessible day or night through computers, tablet devices, and mobile phones. The

following sections will examine Goffman's presentation of self, Goffman's (1959)

presentation of self and social media based on the concept of the front stage and back

stage, social media user characteristics, the Millennial generation and why generation uses social media, and Instagram.

Goffman's Presentation of Self

In 1959, Erving Goffman delved into a concept described by Shakespeare. Shakespeare explained that every man is an actor and the world acts as the actor's stage, the place where the actor presents themselves to a larger audience (Shakespeare, 2012). Goffman's (1959) novel "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" explained the many facets of an individual, how they present themselves to specific audiences, how the person alters themselves dependent on the audience, and the additional techniques and tools an actor may use to present themselves to the specific audience.

One of the important pieces of Goffman's (1959) presentation of self concept is known as the stage, which is broken into two locations – the front stage and the back stage. Goffman's (1959) concept of the front stage and back stage describes the setting and location in which an individual performs for an audience. The front stage is the physical location where the individual, also known as the actor, presents his or her self to a viewing audience. Goffman (1959) defined "activity" as the length of continuous presence in front of a set of observers. However, the audience is unaware of the actor's attempts to tailor their actions to please the viewers and present the best version of themselves. The back stage is characterized as a more private and closed setting where the audience may not be present or aware of any untrue faces or characteristics of the actor. Any preparations the individual may formulate is done to present their most socially acceptable self (Goffman, 1959). The back stage allows the individual the ability to perform for their audience in a different manner that they have not been able to do so

beforehand. The back stage may provide the actor the appropriate place to identify their place within their immediate audience, like as a leader or a follower, or identify additional subcultures that they may identify with outside of a particular audience.

The rank within team members play an important role in their ability to function. The leader's rank causes their relationships within the group to become more complex. Goffman (1959) noted that the number of people with a higher social status is correlated with the sense of connection they have with their team members. Once the relationship between leader and the subordinates becomes familiar, the relationship is still able to transform with each individual transitioning between different roles. Individuals may hold a variety of roles within the group, particularly as an informer (Goffman, 1959). The informer acts as a member of the team by transitioning between the front and back stage while gaining public and personal information about the additional group members. However, the informer does not keep private conversations to themselves, but brings the newly acquired information to the audience's attention (Goffman, 1959). The informer may cause distrust and alleviate any sense of privacy once they become aware of any wrongdoings the actor may have done.

Personal characteristics may cause issues with the surrounding society's expectations or belief systems or create complications in society's understanding of each other (Goffman, 1959). Issues can occur when the individual transitions away from their created or portrayed persona. For instance, an individual who is given instructions on how to act may be more likely to be viewed upon in a negative favor when they go against the predetermined characteristics. The public can view the change in persona as a lie, an act that has been put on by the person for a long period of time, or view the

persona as inconsistent the entire duration of the act. The consistent interaction with the audience allows for the opportunity to perfect the actor's public image, known as impression management. Goffman (1959) describes as 'impression management,' as the act of changing their behaviors to present an ideal version of self for their audience. One way in which an individual is able to change their role is through interaction within subcultures.

Within society, people are categorized by their similar characteristics to create subcultures. These subcultures create collective representation where each group of individuals adapts to stereotypes given to them. Problems can arise when a member of the subculture tries to leave the group or change the characteristics most associated with their position within the group (Goffman, 1959). Groups can be formed based upon their proximity in location or the individual's characteristics that are similar to those around them. Teams are formed once individuals are introduced with others based upon their rank within the setting or through cliques (Goffman, 1959). Cliques are created to act as a form of protection for the individual, the members within the clique and the individuals unrelated to the group (Goffman, 1959). However, cliques much like teams, are susceptible to complications. If members of the clique or team find fault with a member, they will need to maintain their composure in a public setting so that the public is not aware of any issues (Goffman, 1959).

In addition to individuals acting out predetermined characteristics, they have the capabilities to alter their characteristics based upon their setting and surrounding guests. Within society, people are categorized by their similar characteristics to create subcultures. These subcultures create collective representation where each group of

individuals adapts to stereotypes given to them. For instance, a female may present herself as less intelligent to look more pleasing to nearby males or to gain more attention or can apply additional makeup to change her physical appearance. As a woman changes her physical appearance for the audience, she is inadvertently presenting her social status. Depending on how a woman alters her physical appearance, she may be given a position within society.

Goffman (1959) compares a woman who has altered her outward appearance to match that of society's expectations with her ability to gain respected employment. The clothing that a person selects to showcase in public allows people to create opinions and judge them for imperfections and dissimilar personality tastes (Goffman, 1959). The styles of clothing, the accessories they wear, and the way in which they style their hair and/or makeup allow for a mask to be created. By wearing a mask, the individual must be cognizant of which mask he or she wears when in a setting or with a select group of individuals. In doing so, the individual must be aware of the concept of front region control (Goffman, 1959). The individual may show different faces to different groups of audience members or audiences.

By wearing a mask, the individual must be aware of the concept of front region control (Goffman, 1959). The individual may show different faces depending on the audience they are with so that they show one face to one group. Additionally, time is needed between presenting oneself to each group so that the faces are able to transition from one group to the other effectively (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) noted this is commonly seen in the consumer retail or service industry where an employee must either portray one face to all audiences or make a conscious transition between clients or

customers. However, this may cause problems when a bystander joins the presentation while the individual is transitioning or has already used one face that may not be the same as what the individual desires to showcase at the moment.

The audience presented in each setting plays an integral part in the individual's continuation or discontinuation around audience members for future incidents. Audience segregation assures that each actor will only show one face to the surrounding individuals, which will be different from the face they present to an alternative audience (Goffman, 1959). Message design can support the two different faces presented by the actors if the actor is able to maintain the different personas that directly correspond with the audience and their expression styles (Dainton & Zelley, 2015, p. 64). The audience is under the impression that the persona being presented to them is the truest version of the actor (James, n.d.). The audience is choosing to believe that the person in front of them is the honest portrayal of the actor's beliefs, personality and characteristics.

However, when a person is unfamiliar with those immediately around them, they will only publicize so much about themselves until they get to know everyone. Goffman (1959) found that the process to disclose personal information is known as the feeling-out process and is imperative to continuing the process of to know another individual, or join a new team and its members. Once the individual has successfully joined the team, they must maintain the face they began the relationship with, even during times of duress. When the individual has an opposing view or thought, he or she must consciously decide whether to voice their opinions in fear of repercussions. The team members may ostracize the individual if they disagree with the verbalized opinions causing an additional fear to maintain the mask the individual joined the group (Goffman, 1959).

Disagreeing team members can vocalize their dissimilar opinions or they can communicate their feelings with non-verbal cues including derisive collusions (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) noted that the team members are able to provide simple and often undetected non-verbal cues to the sequential team members when in a position of opposition. Additionally, the team members can show their distaste with a particular individual through whispering. Whispering not only shows a lack of inclusion of nearby team members, but acts as a form of secret telling (Goffman, 1959). The act of whispering actively shows the audiences that the whisperer's intentions may be different than the mask they have been portraying to the audience. Similarly, expressing an opinion without filter or censorship indicates the individual's mask may not be as truthful as the individual has been presenting (Goffman, 1959).

Blurting out one's true feelings or keeping the thoughts from other team members by whispering both change the setting and scenes that was previously occurring. When the new scene is created, the current setting is altered with faux pas or negative aspects. (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) found that a scene can be created with other methods including a public display of aggression or verbalized opposition. For instance, if friends are in public and have a disagreement, they may feel comfortable voicing their opinions. If the friends continue to verbalize their issues rather than reach an agreement, the conversation may turn into an altercation that allows the surrounding public to become aware of the incident. In turn, this allows the audience to create their own opinions on the individual's quarrel. In order to combat public displays of altercations, the individual must hold a high awareness of dramaturgical discipline (Goffman, 1959). Goffman (1959) defines dramaturgical discipline as the individual's ability to be self-aware of their

placement in society and society's expectations for how the individual should present the best face possible.

Whether the individual is an actor or the individual is a team member, both roles rely on the individual's ability to alter their face per the setting and scene. As an actor, the individual may alter their mask to fit the situation based upon the importance of their success. For instance, during a job interview the individual makes a more conscious effort to appear competent for any future roles. This is reliant on how the individual perceives society's expectations for the job candidate (Goffman, 1959). The individual must be aware that if they forget their current mask, the audience will have the ability to judge the individual. The audience will have numerous methods of viewing the individual's blunder including: to ignore the misstep in exposing the individual's true face, accept the excuse given by the individual as satisfactory, regard the individual negatively by ignoring their future actions, or to ban the individual from the team (Goffman, 1959). Throughout the interactions and time spent with the audience and group members, the individual must be conscious of the face they portrayed at the beginning of the relationship for consistent relationship with those around them. The audience must understand their role as viewers as well as understand the possible change they can foster by transitioning from front to back stage.

Goffman's portrayal on the self as an actor, an audience member, or group member has maintained some semblance of truth throughout the years. Each individual presents themselves the way in which they deem as appropriate based on societies guidelines. The individual must understand their role within their groups, be aware of the audience watching them, and understand repercussions may occur if the individual

forgets which mask they are currently presenting. Individuals are able to alter their

physical appearances through clothing, hairstyles, and make-up, which can symbolize

their desire to be accepted into a particular clique or showcase their rank within society

from a power leadership standpoint.

One example of how Goffman's (1959) presentation of self has been used with

technology is through Woll and Young's (1989) research. Woll and Young (1989) based

their study about video-dating on Goffman's (1959) presentation of self. Throughout the

study, Woll and Young (1989) included Goffman's (1959) terminology of impression

management and self-presentation to understand how people present themselves in video-

dating applications. Woll and Young (1989) hypothesis that people present themselves in

2 manners, to be the Mr. or Mrs. Right, or to look pleasing to a variety of people to play

the field. Both males and females were shown to place importance on constructing their

profiles with the assumption that males concentrated more so on their profile. Most of the

video-daters admitted to being more straightforward on their profile rather than trying to

stand out among the other daters. The daters also admitted to placing a lot of thought

behind their profile photograph. The effort related with creating the daters profile has

numerous similarities with the modern day profiles associated with social media. The

person places importance on how they present themselves to the public through sharing

their personality characteristics and how they present themselves visually with their

profile picture. Many of the findings by Woll and Young (1989) parallel research

conducted to understand Goffman's (1959) presentation of self and social media.

Even though Goffman's research has been used as a foundation for other research,

like Woll and Young's (1989) study, his original work has been criticized. Giddens

(2009) discussed that Goffman made note throughout *Presentation of Self* that he had many shortcomings with his own research. Goffman (1959) discussed professionalism as a way for a person to gain or maintain their level of competence. However, Giddens (2009) discussed competence as not the level of professionalism, but the person's ability to do something, like job requirements and duties. Giddens (2009) defined issues with Goffman's presentation of self into four categories which include the status of dramaturgical metaphor and an absence of discussion about power. The first issue related to Goffman's concept relates to the comparison of life to that of a performance or play. The second criticism relates to the lack of power structure mentioned in *Presentation of Self* as a separate section rather than have it sprinkled when related to a specific example (Giddens, 2009). Giddens (2009) also criticized Goffman for not discussing power as a ritualistic experience depending on the physical location or professional status.

Social Media as Front Stage/Back Stage

Goffman's presentation of self concept (1959) has been maintained throughout the years, with some variations, due to communication advances throughout the years. Most recently, the Millennial generation has altered the concept of the front stage and back stage with its use of social media platforms. On these social media platforms individuals are able to present themselves on a digital stage rather than Goffman's (1959) metaphorical stage. Profile pages and home feeds have replaced the front stage with the keyboard and an individual's ability to edit, censor, change, and delete posts has emerged as the back stage. The back stage provides the individual the ability to perform for their audience in new ways. The individual user is able to strategically present his or her self

as well as alter their performance based upon reactions and the interactions yielded from their observers on the social media platform (Hogan, 2010).

Millennials are able to use Goffman's (1959) concept of presentation of self on social media platforms by monitoring their actions and what they make available to their audience of friends, followers, and the general public. The front stage has transitioned from a proverbial stage to what is being presented on social media platforms, like pictures or video posts with captions on a profile or home feed. The back stage has added a layer of complexity through the options to edit posts, postpone publicizing content until all filters and text captions represent the truest self, and delete posts if the public does not receive them in the same manner the user intends. This allows users the opportunity to present and idyllic self, a version of self that may not be their true self but one that is preferred by those around them.

The front stage has now become a metaphor for the space between the self and the computer keyboard and the audience and their computer screens. The front stage can be best understood as the feed, or acquaintances' public information, on Facebook; their published thoughts on Twitter; or photographs with text and related hashtags on Instagram. Sas, Dix, Hart, and Su (2009) categorized the modern front stage in three categories: searching for events, reminiscing and re-experiencing events, and humorous entertainment that may reveal new personal information. Since news feeds in social media continuously update with new posts and photographs, the front stage is constantly changing for entertainment purposes and to update the audience. Where Goffman (1959) portrayed the front stage as a place to act as a means of entertainment for the presented

audience, social media platforms have allowed people to prepare public statements with edits and delete posts that yielded few responses.

Social media platforms allow the audience to ignore what is happening around them by scrolling up or down the news feed for more compelling posts or to leave the platform all together to bypass posts that are unappealing or written by unacquainted individuals. The front stage differs from Goffman's (1959) concept, as the idea of props and settings may be intangible or nonexistent within the post. However, social media has encouraged the development for a modern day props. Photographs and video content uploaded on Instagram can act as a prop from the back stage for a more credible and relatable post. Because photographs allow the audience to see what a person is experiencing, the picture acts as a prop to encourage the communication process by gaining comments and likes from the audience. Additionally, pictures can enhance the current self's setting so that the audience is better able to understand the textual component of the post. The presented pictures allow the audience to reminisce with the individual, engage with the user in the future, share any emotional response because of the post, or start a new conversation thread (Sas et al., 2009).

The front stage also contains elements that are visual and auditory, much like Instagram can present video or picture content to the audience (Brignall & Valey, 2005). This can show physical appearances, dialect, and social-standing characteristics like materialistic tendencies. These must be presented and adjusted to match audience reactions through likes and comments so that the user maintains the presented self to the best of their capabilities. Social media platforms arguably keep and attract members because they are not only communication platforms but also surveillance tools.

Surveillance can be done in various ways, including the ability to learn more about an individual based upon their posts and publically posted information that enhances face-to-face communication and the ability to learn more about someone they recently met (Sas et al., 2009).

Goffman's (1959) concept tends to be goal-driven and the presentation of self tends to be a combination of a means to obtain a self-proposed goal and the self that the audience finds appealing. The back stage is the area where the user is able to alter their presentation and literally and metaphorically add filters to their public image social media. By applying visual filters to a picture before uploading content, the user is able to visually alter how they are presenting themselves and their content to followers (Smith & Sanderson, 2015). The act of adding filters during the back stage process may change how the audience perceives the user on the front stage and home feed. Additionally, the user is able to change their physical appearance whether by photo-shopping, using editing apps, or posing to create more physically appealing stances. The user actively controls the way they are presented to their followers and the public by deciding when and what to post. Thereby controlling their performance as an actor. However, this cannot control how the audience interacts with the user.

Goffman (1959) believed that the individual's concept of self is shaped by the interaction they receive from others, much like how an individual's followers become the social media audience with the capability to like or comment. Each individual segregated their audience so they can present a different role depending on the audience. This allows the user to have some versatility and ability segment their self depending upon the platform and to show a true representation of self. The front stage allows for a wider

range of judgment from the audience where the back stage allows the user to polish their

performance for the audience. Positive emotions can be gained in front stage or and back

stage interactions including the act of publicizing appreciation as the user by showing

thanks to the audiences' positive comments or by posting positive experiences as status

updates to showcase a specific audience member for their well-doing (Sas et al., 2009).

The actor is able to present a more authentic version for audience interpretation in

what Goffman termed as impression management (1959). Impression management can be

maintained or altered depending on what the user posts for the audience's consumption as

a way to present a socially favorable self. By continually using the social media platform,

the actor is able to change their presentation over a span of time to mimic what society

deems as appealing. However, how the actor may change their posts depends on how the

post is received by their audience to be considered socially desired. This may be done so

that the audience forms a positive opinion about the user and is reconfirmed with each

future post. The actor may alter what and how they present themselves to the audience in

the backstage and should be done so minimally so that the audience is unaware of any

changes to the actor's presented self.

Deliberately choosing which face or personality characteristics to share on social

media may show the audience a false version of who the user. The faces that the social

media user presents may not be a representation of an authentic self as they are

transitioning between the front stage and back stage to showcase in the best light possible

for future interactions with the audience and to ensure that those interactions are seen as

appealing as possible (Sas et al., 2009). This can be facilitated by deliberately posting

photographs of the self that have been critiqued and even edited before being made

public. Posts and text-based publications can be edited, causing spontaneous and impromptu posts to become deleted and edited from public view. Actively editing posts allows the self to guarantee a sense of humor, wit, caring demeanor and publically acceptable façade. This is similar to Ting-Toomey's theory of face work (1998**)**. Ting-Toomey's (1998) face work theory involves the actions that an individual may employ to present a version of self to the public based upon what the public has deemed as socially desired. Goffman (1959) described this process as symbolic expressions, which includes the preparation and deliberate alteration of self before public consumption. The end result of deliberate posting has led to increased satisfaction in self-expression and positive feelings after knowingly entertaining the audience (Sas et al., 2009). The user is able to express themselves in a matter of ways, which fall into three categories and why the user may choose that form of self-expression on social media.

Sas et al., (2009) categorized self-expression into three categories to better understand the self's reaction and premeditated reasons for social media engagement. These categories are genuine self-expression, appreciative expressions, and competitive expressions. Genuine self-expression has been classified as a post or public notification related to the self's positive and significant events in their life, which allows the self to present the best and most accomplished self available. Appreciative expressions consist of gratification and public awareness to a member of the self's circle of acquaintances that they would like to recognize in a positive manner so that the public can also show appreciation. This shows the level of appreciation the user had for another while showcasing himself or herself as someone who recognizes good deeds and is able to gain attention from others without solicitation. This can be seen in Ting-Toomey's (1988)

Face Negotiation Theory, which describes how an individual may complete acts that may

not be their norm in order to maintain social status. The competitive expressions refer to

the self's likability and how personable they are able to be with those around them and

their audiences (Sas et al., 2009). An individual who consciously or subconsciously

publicizes their wit and creativity on posts and comments is one example of competitive

expressions.

While expression can prepare the self for public consumption, it is not the only

method of back stage preparation or guise for the self. The audience is not only an

observer on social media, but can be facilitated through messaging and email

correspondence. Most private interactions between an audience and the self provide

additional relationship dynamics including emotional support, mood stabilization, the

ability for storytelling of past events, and anticipatory statements for future events (Sas et

al., 2009). The individual may simultaneously edit photographs but be consciously

hiding some interests and feelings from the audience. Here, hidden or unpublicized

feelings are contained in the proverbial back stage, which can be contradictory from front

stage interactions. The preparative steps created in the back stage are only relevant if a

person is able to ensure that those steps are not visible in the more public social media

spaces like the wall of an acquaintance or interest organization.

Hogan (2010) created distinctions about Goffman's concept by defining

performance as the behavior and space that is available to the actor. Hogan defines

exhibition as the space where the actor can document their experiences, past and present,

much like the social media equivalent to the timeline or personal profile. By combining

the concept of performance space and exhibition, the audience is able to view the actor in

present time and view previous posts that were made public by the actor. Instagram's home timeline and its archiving feature allow the audience the ability to see and remember the actor's past acts and interactions.

Privacy. One way the actor can control how the audience perceives them is by setting privacy settings. Privacy settings can allow the actor to control who has access to their posts and, in essence, how the actor presents themselves on the social media platform. However, privacy settings may allow the audience the ability to interpret the actor in a different manner. The audience may view a private user as someone who is trying to hide what they are doing and how they present themselves to strangers. And to see an actor's profile, the audience member must ask permission from the user to access posts (Manikonda et al., 2014). If the actor sets their profile to private, they may use the privacy from strangers or a larger audience as a means to present their true self rather than one that is created for mass approval. Additionally, the number of followers might not correlate with the number of immediate relationships the actor has with offline individuals (Hogan, 2010). For example, posts that the user presents themselves may be for two different audiences when posting. The first audience is comprised of individuals whom the actor hopes to gain approval from and the second audience is comprised of individuals who find the actor as inappropriate or challenging. This may be the reason why some users set their profile to private or hide specific account details from a particular audience. This allows the actor to control where their posted content is visible and how those audience members are likely to react to the posts. Not all users set their profile to private, which may increase the number of followers they have, but may also increase how many followers are unknown users.

Finally, Hogan, Jones and Creek (1985) note a relationship between people who present themselves in a positive light and social survival. A modern day understanding of this can be seen with the number of likes a user receives on a picture or video upload, or through number of followers a user has. The number of followers to following ratio may impact the user's self-esteem and feelings toward Instagram. For instance, if the user has 1,000 followers, but they are only following 300 accounts, the user may feel more popular as they have more people caring about what they post about. The popularity contest created via followers and by number of likes an adaptation from Goffman's (1959) impression management concept. The user can manage the impressions they place upon their audience by posting selected or specific images, when they post content, and how they enhance the post with text content in the caption. These methods are similar to how a person can alter the person they present to the public in real life situations, much like Goffman's (1959) concept of presentation of self.

Goffman and Facebook

Facebook has created opportunities for people to communicate with others from around the world, create organizations and groups away from the users' immediate location, and forge new relationships with likeminded people. Facebook has become one of the most widely used platforms (Ross, Orr, Sisic, Arseneault, Simmering & Orr, 2009). Facebook users can add personal information, like previous schooling, on their profile as a means to share themselves with the public. Facebook also allows users to manage, their privacy settings including the ability to make a profile private with limited view-ability or search-ability (Ross et al., 2009). This provides the user the ability to showcase the information they deem suitable for public consumption or think will be best

received by audiences. If the user does not want to include their educational background, address, or interests, they do not need to add the information to their profile for others to see or judge. This action can be understood as a back stage effort that maintains a more positive light from the audience in the front stage environment.

Another way a user can create a positive presentation to the audience is through their posts. For instance, if the user has a positive event or experience during the day and shares the details through a post with their audience, the user may be seen in a positive light. Sas et al., (2009) note that once the user posts a positive experience on Facebook it allows for the opportunity to engage with the audience in a more interactive manner that could include likes or comments. The front stage presents the audience with the opportunity to observe the user and encourage similar future posts through liking or commenting, or dissuade the user from continuing similar posts by not liking or commenting (Sas et al., 2009).

Statuses that include photographs can be seen as using a prop, much like Goffman's (1959) tools to enhance the back stage-front stage presentation. Photographs on Facebook can be used to elicit positive or negative emotions from the audience or gain a sense of deeper understanding of the user (Sas et al., 2009). Sharing experiences through photographs or text updates allows the user to present what they want the audience to see through specific statements or day-to-day life experiences. The audience can then regulate the user's future posting with interactions like commenting on a status, which can be seen as a modern adaptation to societal norms through positive reinforcement (Sas et al., 2009). Sas et al., (2009) compared commenting to Goffman's (1959) concept of whispering. This occurs when an audience member comments an

inside joke or a statement that only the user would understand. This mimics Goffman's (1959) whispering concept because it is a conversation between the audience member and user that causes a sense of curiosity from others in the audience. This can be seen in vague user posts that do not include a specific person but reference a known individual in a negative statement. The audience then wonders who the status is about and creates their own opinions. This has led to the concept of the "cyber self" in which online communication platforms, such as Facebook, ability to create a persona that has been altered based upon previous interactions with the audience (Brignall & Valey, 2005, p. 341).

Walther, Van Der Heide, Kim, Westerman and Tong (2008) state that individuals that use social media are aware they are only seeing a selected or calculated version of an individual. This can be done by exaggerating specific personal characteristics, posting specific life events, and sharing limited personal details (Walther et al., 2008). This is validated through rules that the user creates in order to maintain reasons related to why and what he or she posts. For instance, users may have rules or strong feelings related to the number of hashtags they use or the number of selfies they post as a means to manage what part of themselves they share with the audience. Hancock and Toma (2009) note one way a user is able to present themselves as a means of impression management can be done with their profile picture. This picture allows the audience to see a visual representation of the user, which may act as another modern example of Goffman's (1959) version of a prop. Ellison, Heino and Gibbs (2006) explain that altering oneself has become commonplace on social media even though individuals with online relationships may forge connections in real life that could contradict previously known

details. Another way users regulate their attempts at impression management by belonging to different groups or community pages on Facebook (Skues, Williams, & Wise, 2012).

Newman, Lauterbach, Munson, Resnick, & Morris (2011) noted that Facebook has acted as a way to maintain pre-existing relationships, like friendships forged during high school. When managing the pre-existing relationships on Facebook the user may use the platform as a means to stay familiar with their friends and self-regulate their self-presentation (Newman et al., 2011). This can be see through Goffman's (1959) notion that people will maintain the characteristics they presented in previous company as a means to save face. By maintaining a presented self to a specific audience, the user can present themselves as authentic. This can be seen on social media platforms by posting about certain hobbies or a change in physical appearance. For instance, a user may post a photograph on their Facebook after editing the picture to include whiter teeth, less wrinkles, or weight loss. However, once the user posts an altered picture, they will need to continue altering their future pictures to maintain the physical appearance they have presented. This will allow the user to save face and present a version that the audience may start to consider as the true self (Goffman, 1959). Any change in self-presentation may be considered as troublesome on Facebook, as audience members are able to scroll down the user's timeline and view previous posts. The ability to change what a user presents to the public is just one aspect of social media.

Social Media

Facebook and other social media platforms allow their users and platform members the opportunity to communicate with others and as a way to observe others on

the platform. This can be used in a range of ways, including the ability to learn more about an individual based upon their posts and publically posted information to enhance face-to-face communication and the ability to learn more about someone they recently met (Sas et al., 2009).

      Social media benefits and challenges. New social media platforms have been created and continue to succeed because they allow the users to engage in conversations, collaborate, and foster a sense of community (Smith, & Sanderson, 2015). Hashtags on Twitter allow users to join a larger conversation, like a world news item. However, not all conversations are positive in nature. Hashtags allow users the opportunity to be seen by a large number of people and ultimately, gain unsolicited attention. The curtain between users and their public allows users to more freely express themselves while taking more time to edit their presentations before posting for public consumption. Instagram has become one of the fastest growing platform, which may create more opportunities and more audience members to share negative opinions or comments on the user's posts.

      Online communication allows for a wider range of representation of ages, races, genders, sexual orientation and physical appearances (Brignall, & Valey, 2005). However, these differences can cause for negative interactions on social media through harassment, bullying, and abandoning conversations or groups of people without immediate repercussions. Additionally, because of the expansive nature of the Internet and social media platforms, a decreased sense of community may occur. This can cause social isolation, and decrease privacy because a person may feel lost in such a large community. Because social media platforms have so many users, one person may feel unheard or unseen in the larger community. For instance, a user may comment on a

popular user's picture but because so many other users have also commented, the one statement may go unnoticed. The user may share too many personal details on their account and unsolicited opinions, which may decrease their sense of privacy. However, positive aspects related to social media could include opportunities to create new connections with individuals from different cultures. For instance, a user in America may read about an experience in South Africa, comment on the post and join a conversation with other users from different countries, increasing their sense of community.

Users are able to comment on strangers, friends, foes, and loved ones' posted pictures without much censorship. This can cause more frequent cyberbullying and online harassment cases, which could cause for self-esteem issues or other personal damage to the individual receiving negative comments (O'Keefe, & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). These negative occurrences may cause psychological traumas or create a chain effect of negative commenting or relationships on the platforms. To combat these occurrences, many social media platforms set age limits to create profiles. The minimum age allowed to create a social media account is 13 years old due to legally set mandates like the Children's Online Privacy Protection Act (O'Keefe, & Clarke-Pearson, 2011). Those over the age of 13, like those in the Millennial generation, are able to access their social media profiles whenever and wherever they are by using their smartphones. This advancement in technology allows users to log onto their profile whenever they see fit and can present themselves however they see fit, even if it is different than their real persona.

Social media user characteristics. What once was used anonymously as a way to obtain information, the internet has quickly become a venue for social interaction and a

platform to quickly share news on a global scale. Since social media emerged, certain

personality types have become associated with specific tasks and interaction styles

(Correa, Hinsley, & Zuniga, 2009). Correa, et al., (2009) found that people who are more

social and open to new experiences are more apt to utilizing social media platforms than

those who tend to be shyer or reserved in nature. Additionally, individuals who have

higher levels of neuroticism tend to use more communication tools on social media

platforms.

A study conducted by Correa et al., (2009) examined the relationship between

young adults and the concept of the Big Five framework. The Big Five framework is used

to evaluate personality types and was used to find possible correlations between

personality and social media usage. Results showed that extraverted individuals tended to

have a higher number of social connections on-line and off-line as well as a higher sense

of self-esteem. People with neurotic tendencies were more likely to use communication

tools on social media platforms, like chatting, than have person-to-person interactions.

Users with more openness to experiences tend to be more curious, which may relate to a

user following more unknown accounts rather than only following immediate friends or

known people. Individuals with emotional stability used social media platforms less than

those who are emotionally unstable (Correa et al., 2009), who may use social media as a

way to foster additional relationships and monitor established relationships through social

media posts and profiles. Additionally, people who were more open to new ideas and

experiences were more likely to be creative and innovative with their personality and

thus, showcased this through their social media platforms. There were also gender-

related relations between male and female users, wherein female users who were

characterized as open to experiences were more likely to use social media platforms more frequent than their male counterparts (Correa et al., 2009).

Positive emotions have also been found in social media interaction and may be one of the reasons of Millennials are interested in social media (Correa et al., 2009). Positive emotional responses and positive experiences on social media may create a desire to continue using social media. For example, if a user posts something they find enjoyable and that content receives a high level of interaction from their followers, the user may be more likely to post similar content in the future. Millennials' need for validation can be achieved with audience participation in posts, pictures, and status updates through the use of likes, comments, and sharing (Lieber, 2010). Fredrickson (2001) noted that the 'feel good' factor of positive emotions creates continued interested in social media and the desire to attract the audience's attention.

Additionally, social media can be classified as computer-mediated communication, which creates a sense of immediate gratification within relationships (Langer, 2014). This allows for cue reduction, anonymity, and selective self-presentation, all of which are lacking in face-to-face communication. Cue reduction includes a lack of visual cues to include non-verbal communication methods denoting emotions and bodily reactions during interactions. Anonymity allows for individuals to share their voice and opinion without feeling fully responsible for the actions and consequences gained after publicly publishing negative or harmful posts and by presenting edited or selective information, the individual can present a socially acceptable face. This manipulation can cause a false sense of understanding the individual, which may affect the user's

reputation because of posting unedited or socially questionable images and opinions

(McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002).

Millennial Characteristics and Why the Generation Uses Social Media

Those who are considered most confident and familiar with social media

Millennials, a generation that has grown up with technology and the advancement of

virtual communication. The Millennial generation has been noted as the technologically

savvy generation, since they are the first generation to grow up with technology rather

than adapt to technology as it became available, like previous generations (Consumer,

2014). Millennials includes those who were born between 1980 and 1999 with the current

age range between 18 and 30 years old (Fry, 2015). However, the age range for this

generation depends on the source. For instance, Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) defined the

generation as those who were born between 1979 and 1994. The Pew Research Center:

U.S. Politics & Policy (2015) defines the Millennial generation as anyone who was born

between 1981 and 1997. However, Bump (2014) notes the generation is classified as

those born in 1982 until 2002 with the possible generational definition end date as 2004.

The Millennial generation does not seem to have a well-defined range of birth years.

Because of this, other generations expression confusion and disgruntled feelings toward

the Millennial generation. (Pew Research Center: U.S Politics & Policy, 2015). One thing

that does not alter based upon the source is how the generation is characterized.

Millennials are generally seen as selfish, narcissistic, and unmotivated (Hope,

2014). However, the generation is perceived as working well in groups, interested in

impacting those around them, and feeling at ease in conversations (Gillespie, 2014; Junco

& Mastrodicasa, 2007; Ciborowski, 2014). Due to inflation and padded grading in school

and additional recognition programs, Millennials have gained a higher sense of worth than their predecessors (Myers, & Sadaghiani 2010). Brignall and Valey (2005) believe that Millennials "may be perceived as rude, insolent, disconnected, spoiled or apathetic" due to growing up with the internet (p. 343). By having fewer real life or in-person relationships, Millennials may act differently or more reserved during in-person conversations, which can be perceived by others as rudeness. However, Millennials may feel more comfortable holding conversations on social media platforms because they grew up with technology that allows them to craft their messages before sharing them with others.

Additionally, Millennials have a drive to succeed and increased drive related to achieve career goals (White, 2015). This parallels how Millennials use social media and illustrates their dependency on audience participation when using social media. If Millennials do not receive interaction on their posts, they may edit them or delete the content as to not decrease social rank or popularity. Myers and Sadaghiani (2010) noted Millennials grew up comfortably expressing their thoughts and opinions with others and are comfortable questioning authority figures. This can be seen with posts that may be viewed as inappropriate from an audience member's viewpoint, but the Millennial believes they are expressing their opinion on social media.

Arguably, narcissism can be seen in how Millennials use social media, specifically Facebook (Skues et al., 2012). Narcissistic tendencies emerge on social media as Millennials have an exaggerated ability to control their public image by posting what they deem as important or worthy (Skues et al., 2012). This can be achieved by posting status updates describing a life event they just participated in, posting a picture of

a monumental experience, or sharing another Facebook user's post about an experience they shared. This is an example of how impression management is present on social media (Goffman, 1959).

Millennials have also used technology and social media for entertainment, education, and most importantly, a form of interpersonal communication (Brignall, & Van Valey, 2005). This provides the generation communication options that their predecessors didn't have available. For instance, Millennials have been able to create relationships with individuals from different countries rather than only people available in their immediate location. The generation has likewise been considered more open minded to individuals with different characteristics than themselves (Pew Research Center, 2010). Additionally, the generation is able to walk away from virtual situations or conversations they find unappealing with more ease and less repercussions than one might experience with in-person discussions. The negative implications of social media on Millennials reinforce their interest in altering their self in the back stage for public consumption. By altering the ways they present themselves on virtual platforms, they are able to eliminate unwanted conversations, decrease the chance of online bullying or discrimination, and create a self that is attractive to others both visually and personality wise. However, not all interactions or use of social media is negative in nature. Social media has been shown to increase a person's self-worth or self-esteem.

Benefits of engagement. Millennials use social media for a variety of reasons to impact their self-worth, gain validation, and make social connections that may not be occurring in-person. Leung (2013) noted that younger individuals use social media as a means to show encouragement, share common interests and hobbies, share beliefs, vent

their feelings, and engage with friends and family. These uses emerge in numerous ways, such as a person venting frustration in a status update geared toward friends and family members or engaging in a group page based upon a common interest such that the user gains social interaction (Leung, 2013).

An individual is able to feel a sense of validation through the number of likes or comments received on a post. Millennials were found to use social media for personal acceptance and as validation from relationships with individuals in their own age range (Ulrike, Arjan, & Zaphiris, 2008). By combining the need for acceptance in social situations and the immediacy of gaining recognition through interactions on social media, a Millennial may be reinforced to continue using the platform. This can be seen on sites like Instagram where Millennials have a large number of followers, many of which may not be anything more than a passing connection or a stranger, rather than deep, trustworthy relationships.

Social media also provides users an opportunity to be entertained. Social media can be used to pass the time, to have an enjoyable time with friends, or to decompress during the day (Leung, 2013). Entertainment may be gained through the user viewing other profiles, engaging with others on fan or group accounts, or creating relationships with new people based upon similar interests. Participating on Twitter and Instagram's interest accounts or by following hashtags permits the individual the opportunity to better understand others. Following hashtags on sites like Twitter and Instagram gives the individual an opportunity to follow and join ongoing conversations. Using social media gives Millennials the opportunity to be acknowledged while gaining respect from their peers and those they interact with (Leung, 2013).

Finally, users may be entertained by the ability to connect with people who are both in their immediate vicinity and in cultures outside of their travelable distance. Because of the accessibility and ease of communicating with individuals in other countries, Millennials gain an increased level of cultural consciousness, which may differ from members of other generations who they interact with in their immediate location. The level of connectedness gained from social media platforms allows individuals to understand differing personal, to strengthen relationships, and share feelings and opinions (Sas et al., 2009). By interacting with individuals in different locations, like intercontinentally, Millennials can simultaneously increase their knowledge base and their acceptance of others who are different from them. This can be a major draw for an individual to create a profile on a particular platform, especially if it helps an individual further develop a relationship with an individual in their remote location for an offline relationship (Sas et al., 2009). This can add to an individual's social capital in face-to-face connections in offline social settings and relationships by providing the individual with a boost in their self-esteem (Sas et al., 2009). However, not all relationships can be measured in the same manner.

Social capital. Boyd (2008) noted that Millennials use social media as a form of social ranking to place them within society's understanding of being valued or determined as a status symbol. This includes manipulating public profiles to attract the best relationships possible and help outsiders recognize the user as important or someone they should foster a relationship with. By only showcasing specific aspects their self on their online profile, Millennials are able to mask any unwanted characteristics they deem as socially unworthy or passé. The Millennials social credit may be related to the number

of followers they have on social media. In turn, Millennials gain more social capital by having the more followers listed on their social media accounts (Coleman, 1988). Coleman defined the individual's social capital as the benefits gained from treatment and engagement with individuals or groups. This parallels the social capital that is achieved through the number of friendships and the interactions on the Millennial's profile (BetterTogether, n.d).

Millennial users may increase their social capital with the amount of interaction on their page through posts, likes, comments, hashtags, or tagging of other accounts in the comments or caption space. Granovetter (1982) described relationships as having either weak or strong ties. Weak ties can be understood as acquaintances whereas a strong tie is defined as close friendships or long-term relationships. These ties may be seen on social media between individuals who have long-standing relationships versus those who have met more recently or on a one-time basis. Weak ties can act as padding to the Millennial's friend list and ultimately their social capital, by only acting as a name rather than an actual connection. For example, both strong and weak tie relationships have been shown to increase a user's sense of self and their self-esteem (Breines, 2014). This may indicate that quantity of followers is valued more importantly than the quality of a relationship, as the high number of followers signals a more popular individual with a high social capital (Granovetter, 1982). Ellison, Steinfeld, and Lampe (2006) found that social capital is gained and most impressionable to younger individuals. This is notable because social media allows the younger generation to connect with individuals in their social circles at school and provides the opportunity to develop new relationships with individuals on social media.

Instagram

Instagram averages 55 million photos or videos per day with a total of 16 million photos shared on the platform between its creation and 2010 (Hu, Manikonda, & Kambhampati, 2014). The photo platform allows users to become aware of social, political, and local issues by searching hashtags and using an "explore" feature (Instagram Blog, 2015). Many users include personal details about themselves in the bio section on their profile page, which provides characteristics and personal information related to the individual, and may be private through the locked account setting. When a user's content is available to view, the content may be grouped into specific categories. Eight categories include: self-portraits (also known as selfies), friends, activities, captioned photos (like memes), food, gadgets, fashion and pets (Hu et al., 2014). Many of these categories have correlating hashtags or more popular accounts that will share other users' posts through "regramming". Regramming refers to the act of sharing a post with the original poster's user information included in the comments section or as a text box placed on the original content (Regram, 2012).

In 2010, Instagram only allowed users to only upload and post pictures with alteration edits, like filters (Instagram Blog, 2011a). However, the platform has continuously updated its capabilities to allow for fifteen-second videos, additional filters, and editing tools that adjust a filter's brightness, contrast, color, and saturation (Instagram Blog, 2011b). Because of its regular updates, Instagram allows for new and different user experiences every few months. A recent update in 2016 altered how users could search hashtags, discover new people, and explore what people like them are posting (Instagram Search, 2015).

Similar to Twitter including hashtags and tagging other users by using the 'at' symbol, shown as @ and known as a handle, before their profile name. Hashtags (tags), shown by using the # symbol followed by words or sentences without spaces between the words, allow users to join larger conversations on the platform with various users. Users can create their own hashtag, like event specific tags for weddings or vacations, or add a well-known hashtag, like #love, to their picture caption (Curtiss, 2013). Hashtags allow the posted content appear in a public timeline, which also allows unknown individuals to join group conversations and become aware of individuals with similar interests and personality types. Hashtags also allow users to summarize their comments or feelings related to the photo in one or more words without needing spacing or correct grammar. Finally, filters can be applied to each photo to change the appearance of the original photo through different lighting or color alterations. Filters can alter how the original photo is interpreted by others or invoke a different feeling toward the image.

Manikonda et al., (2014) noted that Instagram permits users to use the platform in an asymmetrical manner, meaning users do not need to have a reciprocal connection with another user in order to their account. This may allow for a more voyeuristic usage of the platform, additional unreciprocated interactions, and unfavorable experiences from one of the interacting accounts. Since Instagram is not a reciprocal social media platform, a disjointed and unequal relationship may occur between the user and their audience. If the user and audience do not reciprocally follow each other, the audience may feel unconnected from the actor whom they assumed they had a mutual relationship with. This can be seen with celebrity accounts or with acquaintances. However, the lack of a connection off the social media platform may positively impact the relationship the actor

and audience have. Following unknown users may allow Millennial users the opportunity to learn about different people and continue to be interested in different cultures, which can be done by using the "explore" feature on Instagram. While the original concept of Instagram was related to uploading pictures to share visual content with friends, family, and others, it has changed its tools and capabilities throughout its five-year existence to meet consumer interest. Arguably, these features reflect concepts found in Goffman's (1959) presentation of self, so this study aims to conceptualize that framework in the context of one of the newest social media platforms, Instagram.

Gonzales and Hancock (2011) note that users continually update their profile as a means to update the audience of their personal characteristics and interests. This can be done as a means to increase the user's self-esteem. In order for the user to continually increase and maintain their level of self-esteem, they are more likely to post positive content, like life achievements and successes (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). For instance, if the user updates their profile picture frequently, they are able to continually present opportunities for their audience to engage with the new content through likes and comments. This may reassure the user with compliments and elicit positive reinforcement to continue taking pictures of themselves. This act becomes more frequent on Instagram as the platform is picture based and relies on photographic content to have the audience engage with the user. This thesis research study will use previously conducted research and an understanding of Instagram to act as a foundation to form research questions and interview questions.

Because Instagram is based on photographic content, this thesis will examine how its users are able to maintain or increase their self-esteem through likes and comments on

their photographic posts. Additionally, the number of likes is not the only means of encouragement for users to continue participation on the platform. For example, the number of friends one has is shown to correlate with the users' social capital (Lee, Moore, Park, & Park, 2012). In the context of Facebook, Lee et al., (2012) described this as social compensatory friending, which is the process of accepting additional friends to compensate for any lack of connections with people in the user's real life. This thesis will examine how the number of followers on Instagram impact a user as a means of feeling popular or liked via their online persona. Another way the Millennial can achieve higher numbers of followers is to have a public or private account on Instagram. Previously, Ellison (2007) found that individuals with public settings on Facebook were more likely to feel like they are able to gain additional friends. This thesis will look at the number of followers an Instagram user has and examine if that may relate with their privacy settings.

Finally, Skues et al., (2012) note that university students tend to use social media, particularly Facebook, on a more frequent basis than individuals in other demographic categories. Because university students are becoming increasingly interested in Instagram, this thesis will use previously conducted research on how and why Millennials use Facebook in order to update previous findings with information about a newer platform. This thesis will examine how Millennials present themselves on Instagram by understanding content they will and will not post, how they caption and filter their posted content, why they use one privacy setting over another, and how they maintain their presentation of self on the platform. Because Instagram users are able to edit and delete posted content, this thesis will examine how and why users are using these features.

Newman et al., (2011) note that Facebook users log onto the platform at least once a day

with the main reason for logging on to keep track of friends and family members as well

as use the platform as a mode of entertainment. Due to similarities between Facebook and

Instagram, users are able to access the Instagram to maintain relationships with friends

and family members. This study will examine if these characteristics for using Instagram

to monitor relationships is similar to previously conducted research.

As such, this study will examine the following research questions to better

understand Millennials and their use of the social media platform, Instagram. Because of

the variation between sources when defining the Millennial generation, this study will

include those between the ages of 19-year-old to 29-year-old.

RQ1: How are Millennials, i.e. young adults, using Instagram to present

themselves?

RQ2: How are Millennials altering themselves on Instagram?

RQ3: What is the impact of communicating on Instagram for Millennials?

Methodology

Based upon previously conducted case studies and literature, this study used

qualitative interviews as means to obtain data. Previous literature acted as a foundation to

formulate questions for one-on-one interviews. Based upon Instagram demographic

statistics, this study will include the demographic of users who are between the ages of 19

and 29 (Smith, 2015). Additionally, these individuals may have similar life experiences,

like being a college student or college educated, which may assist in understanding how

they present themselves on the platform and why they present themselves in such

manner.

To better understand the user and their presentation of self, this study examined how and why the participant used hashtags and filter options or alternative applications to edit photographs, like makeup enhancement applications or photo-shopping, the image before posting. If the user does alter the way they present themselves on the social media platform Instagram, why do they feel the need to do so? This study examined the following research questions to understand Millennials use of Instagram and how their use promotes their best version of self.

Qualitative method and research design. The interview process was used as a way to gain personal opinions from Instagram users on how they present themselves on the platform, how they alter themselves on the platform, and how their interaction on Instagram impacts them (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). By conducting interviews, the participants were able to express their opinions and feelings without being led to one pre-selected answers, like surveys. The participants were able to explain why they and how they use Instagram rather that rate their use of Instagram through scale or ratio questions associated with quantitative research (Wimmer & Dominick, 2011). By narrowing the scope of the study to focus on Instagram user, the participants were able to focus on one topic while answering structured interview questions. Since Instagram is a social media site that provides a way for people to communicate with each other, a personal one-on-one conversation via interviews provides a more open and natural flow between questions. The relaxed atmosphere allowed the participants to answer the interview questions in an open and honest manner. Open-ended questions allowed the participants the opportunity to share their opinions and feelings without being swayed from one end of a scale to another (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). This process allowed the participant the

opportunity to be probed with additional questions or for additional details if the answer needs further elaboration.

The interview questions were structured to allow the participants the opportunity to become more comfortable as questions progressed from simple to more difficult in nature. The questions toward the end of the interviews may have needed more time to personally reflect before responding. The first section of interview questions included general information questions to better understand the participant in relation to their affiliation to the large Mid-Atlantic university. The second section related to their use of social media in general, which included questions about social media platforms that they have used in the past and how they use Instagram. The third section included questions related to the types of picture they post on Instagram and what types of pictures they view as an observer. The fourth section asked questions related to the participant's use of Instagram, which included questions about their followers, how they interact with others, and how they use filters. The fifth and final section included questions about what personality characteristics the participant shared with their followers and how they view others on Instagram. Additional questions can be seen in Appendix A.

Research sample. Participation in this study was voluntary and their identity was kept confidential. Participant representation through direct quotations is equally represented throughout the results section. To preserve each participant's identity, all identifying information is removed from the results section. The interview candidates included students and young adults associated with the large Mid-Atlantic university. Each participant was required to have an established Instagram account and have maintained their profile with picture and/or video content posts. Each participant was

recruited through word-of-mouth by the large Mid-Atlantic university's staff members.

Rather than selecting students from one or two university classes, students and young

adults were asked to participate from various majors and/or academic backgrounds.

Because there is such a variation in the birth years that are considered in the Millennial

generation, the study looked at individuals between the ages of 19 and 29. This allowed

for a range of individuals associated with the generation and to stay within the age range

presented in previous literature. This age allowed for the main demographic of Instagram

to be examined with individuals who have adapted to and used the platform while

attending college or recently graduating from a university institution.

Interviews were conducted with 19 participants from the large Mid-Atlantic

university. Participants identified as undergraduate students, graduate students, and

recently graduated young alumni. The participants ranged in age 19 to 24 years old. The

number of female versus male interviews reflect the population breakdown for the large

Mid-Atlantic university, which reports to have an unequal female (60%) to male ratio

(40%) in the student population (Center for Student Diversity, 2015). The interviews

consisted of 13 female participants and 6 males. The percentage breakdown for the

interviews consist 13 female participants (65%) and 6 male participants (35%).

Additionally, the gender ratio of participants reflects the demographic usage of

Instagram. Females are more likely to use the platform and account for 68% of the gender

population with males only accounting for 32% of the user population (Herman, 2014).

Both genders were represented in the study. However, the ratio to men and

women was not equally represented. There were 13 female participants (68%) and 6 male

participants (32%). This inequality may be due to the large Mid-Atlantic university's

student ratio and the ratio of male-to-female users on Instagram. The large Mid-Atlantic university's student population has a higher percentage of female students making up 60% of the student population and male students accounting for 40% of the population (Center for Student Diversity, 2015). Also, the ratio of female users to male users on Instagram is unequal with more female users than male. Herman (2014) notes that 68% of its users are female with the additional 32% of its user's as male.

Interviews were conducted as a means to gain more in-depth understanding of how Millennials use Instagram and how Millennials are altering themselves on the platform. Generally, the participants described using Instagram as a way to be entertained throughout their day. Accessing Instagram allowed them to kill time, as a means of getting a laugh, to view accounts that match their personal interests, and to see what brands are posting. The participants were selected after volunteering through email correspondence. The youngest participant was 19 years old and the oldest participant was 24 years old. The most frequent ages of participants were between the age of 20 and 22. Each participant volunteered to participate based on the fact they have had an Instagram account and have been active on the platform throughout their time on Instagram. However, the level of activity had varied between candidates. This was particularly different when 2 male participants stated having an account but not posting on an active basis, but used the platform as an observer. Because of this, male participants were suggested to volunteer for the interview process to better understand how males use the platform.

The group of participants were predominately Caucasian in race with some minority races represented. As race was not a criterion for the participant to participate.

Race was not taken into consideration during the interview process. The only racial differences were based on visual presentation rather than verbal mention during the interview process. As an estimate, 4 participants were racially diverse. This will be discussed in the discussion section below as a limitation. All of the participants were juniors to graduate students. None of the participants identified as freshman or sophomores. This is also considered a limitation and will be discussed in that section. Most of the participants discussed having the platform before attending the large Mid-Atlantic university with the creation of their account in their later high school years. The creation of Instagram accounts ranged from late high school years to early college years. The range may be related to the age of the participant and would correspond with younger participants joining the platform in high school while the older participants joining the platform during their early college years.

Interview instruments and criteria. The participants, which were selected by meeting predetermined criteria and their location, were selected based upon their location at the large Mid-Atlantic university, association with the university, and their ability to be interviewed on a short deadline based on their knowledge of Instagram (Patton, 2002). Participants were asked to participate in the voluntary interviews were done through email solicitation from employees at the large Mid-Atlantic university who had been interviewed or knew of the research project.

Each participant's name and identifying traits was reassigned with a letter for confidentiality purposes. The interviews were recorded and transcribed for data entry purposes (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The participants were given a consent form with the knowledge that they were participating voluntarily and could leave the experiment at any

time or leave any question unanswered if they felt uncomfortable or wished to not answer

[See Appendix D]. Because everything that is posted on Instagram becomes public

content, alcohol and drug use may be visible. However, confidentiality was guaranteed to

protect their reputation or credibility of the participant, who may be under the legal

drinking age or are not in a legally mandated state for drug or marijuana use.

The interviews were recorded using the voice recorder program, Voice Memos,

like those pre-loaded on Apple products so that the interview can be downloaded to a

computer for easier listening capabilities and another means of saving the data, like

transcribing the completed interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Interviews were scheduled

after the candidate agreed to participate in the research study after being asked by other

participants through word of mouth or through email solicitations from one of two staff

members who supervised numerous large Mid-Atlantic university student workers. Once

the email was sent from the large Mid-Atlantic university staff member, the participant's

contact information was sent to the researcher to discuss requirements needed to

participate in the participants and schedule a time to conduct the interview based on both

the researcher's and participant's schedule. The interview process began after the

participants accepted to be a part of the qualitative research project. The interviews were

conducted in a quiet location a conference room on the large Mid-Atlantic university

campus. One interview was conducted at the researcher's house due to convenience and

scheduling.

The interview process began in November, 2015 and continued until saturation

was reached in February, 2016 with a lack of new information described in the interviews

(Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The average interview lasted almost 38 minutes with

the shortest interview lasting a little over 25 minutes and the longest interview lasting

over 58 minutes. The interviews ranged in time depending on how thoroughly the

participants answered the questions and how active the individual has been on Instagram.

The semi-structured interview schedule was used as a way to meet the participant's class

schedule and other time commitments (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). The interview

process consisted of 30 questions and 52 probes when needed [See Appendix A]. In

general, the majority of the participants were asked the same questions unless the

participant answered a question in relation to another.

However, when the individual was unable to provide an in-depth answer,

additional probes were asked. Interview questions were structured so that the participant

could describe themselves as a person, how they user Instagram, how they present

themselves on Instagram, and how they view others on Instagram. The questions were

structured to understand why the participant joined Instagram and if they use Instagram

differently than other social media platforms. The questions to how the individual uses

Instagram were based upon previous literature findings on Facebook. These questions

include 'Describe how you use social media in general,' and 'Why did the participant

join Instagram after being active on other platforms?'

Other interview questions related to presentation of self. However, these

questions were constructed differently as to allow for the participant to answer

comfortably about their presentation on Instagram. These questioned were phrased for the

participant to explain how the accounts they follow present themselves on the platform, if

the participant has experience with viewing accounts that are obviously altered through

photo-shopping or changing personality traits. Questions related to presentation ranged

from 'Describe how your friends' posts affect your thoughts of them,' and 'Do you believe your Instagram feed reflects your personality?' Additional questions related to presentation of self can be seen in Appendix A. These questions were constructed so that the participant was able to reflect on his or her use of the account while not feeling threatened or become defensive about the use.

After the interview process had shown saturation, the transcribed interviews were examined for commonalities and themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The coding themes will be discussed in the following section. Saturation was met when the participants discussed no new information related to Instagram, which occurred after the nineteenth interview (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). These commonalities were documented on an excel document as a codebook. Any similarities between how the participants use Instagram and why, were compared as a whole and between the genders. The similarities and findings are documented in the results section of this study. Each interview will be kept for three years per the IRB approval [See Appendix B]. Additionally, the recorded interviews, transcriptions and codebook are kept on a password-protected laptop.

Data analysis. The interview questions were created based upon previous literature related to front stage and back stage research, Goffman's (1959) concept of presentation of self, social media use and Millennial characteristics. The interviews were recorded on Voice Memos, an iPhone recording application, and saved to iTunes on the password protected laptop (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The interviews were conducted and transferred to the password protected laptop, the interviews were transcribed with each participant's identity changed to a letter of the alphabet.

Emergent theory was used to identify themes and ideas related to presentation of self (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Emergent theory allowed the themes to be grouped together and compared to each other in a codebook. The codebook was created and saved as an Excel document on the password protected laptop. In vivo coding was used to group common answers together to form themes between the participants' opinions about Instagram. These themes include Reason for Joining Instagram, Privacy Settings on Instagram, Interaction styles on Instagram, How Males Present Themselves, Sharing Self on Platform, Post Editing and Interactions on Instagram.

This process was structured from guidelines mentioned in Qualitative Communication Research Methods (Lindlof & Taylor, 2010). Lindlof and Taylor defined the codebook as a "tool for the development and evolution of a coding system and is an important means for documenting the codes and the procedures for applying them" (p. 251) [See Appendix C]. By analyzing the content from the transcripts, grouping similar ideas and participant comments were easiest to document via an excel document. Throughout the interview and transcription process, number similarities emerged and were combined into themes, which include the participant's reason to join Instagram, their privacy settings on the platform, the interaction styles of used on Instagram, how males present themselves on Instagram, how the user shares themselves on the platform with their followers, how the user edits their posts, and how their interactions impact them. These similarities are grouped together into themes and will be discussed in the results section below.

During the transcription process, similarities between the interviews formed as an inductive coding process (Bendassolli, 2013). After the transcription process was

completed, another read through the transcripts was conducted to capture additional themes. Through inductive processes, specific similarities emerged between some participants from the same gender or different gender. Schriver (2001) discussed inductive reasoning as an observer to gain data, analyze the data, and group similar commonalities between those who provided the data. Throughout the data collection process, the researcher began grouping commonalities, known as themes, during the first few completed interviews. Once themes started to emerge, a code book was created. The codebook was consistently updated as the interview process continued. As the interviews were transcribed, additional themes were added to the code book. Additionally, the rest of the interviews were coded to existing themes where appropriate. After all of the 19 interviews were transcribed, each interview transcript was revisited to add quotations to the created themes in the code book. However, during the documentation process and writing the results section of the paper, the codebook was edited and comparable themes were combined for a more concise and thorough codebook. The final codebook can be seen as Appendix C.

Results

Interviews were conducted to produce common themes between those who were interviewed as well as commonalities among the male participant perspective compared to female participant perspective. These emergent themes linked to previous findings discussed in the literature review and answer the following research questions. In order to understand how Millennials are using the platform, questions were asked to understand what attracted the user to the platform since they had previously used other social media platforms and continue to use the additional platforms.

Throughout the interview process, a number of themes emerged that will be explained in the results and discussion section. Direct quotations in the following sections have been modified to take out any vernacular, like "ums", "like", and "you know" that interrupts the sentence. The editing to remove these pauses in the sentences does not change the meaning of the sentence or sentiment the participant expressed during the interview.

RQ1: How are Millennials, i.e. young adults, using Instagram to present themselves?

RQ2: How are Millennials, i.e. young adults, altering themselves on Instagram?

RQ3: What is the impact of communicating on Instagram for Millennials?

RQ1: How are Millennials using Instagram to present themselves?

Throughout the interview process, three emergent themes presented themselves as to why Millennials use Instagram and how they present themselves on the platform. To understand how Millennials use Instagram, the participants were asked questions related to what enticed them to join the platform, and how they present themselves to the public based upon their privacy setting. Examining why the participant joined Instagram after being active on platforms, allowed the participant to explain how they presents themselves different from other social media platforms. Once the participant was active on Instagram, they discussed how they are able to present themselves to the audience depending on their privacy setting. Additionally, the male participants described similar use of Instagram than their female counterparts.

Reason to Join Instagram

The participants had three major underlying reasons for joining the platform after they had been active on other social media platforms like Facebook and Twitter. The first reason relates to the participant's interest in a picture-only based platform which would alleviate the numerous text heavy posts on Facebook and the lack of photographic images on Twitter. The second reason to join Instagram is because of the filtering capabilities on the platform. The last reason the participants joined Instagram was due to ability to keep specific people from viewing their profile.

Picture based platform. One of the main reasons why Millennials joined Instagram and created a profile was because of the newness associated with the platform that was unlike other social media platforms. The shift from text-only posts to picture posts have seemingly renewed a sense of curiosity among participants. They want to know what their followers and the accounts that they are following are doing, rather than reading what the actor is doing. One participant expressed that their reason for joining Instagram after they had been active on other platforms. One participant described:

I joined Instagram just because I like pictures. I've always liked looking at people's pictures on Facebook. It's always been my favorite, not hobby hobbies. I look at a lot of pictures and you can get more from a picture than you can than seeing someone's status. You can get the caption with the picture and know exactly what they're trying to say with the picture. It's like 'a picture's worth a 1,000 words,' so I like posting pictures, I like commenting on them, I like seeing them.

Another participant stated "I got on Instagram because it's a different…different aspect of social media. I kind of liked the whole pictures. It was kind of like more telling a story with pictures than typing. Sometimes typing just kind of gets boring and it's kind of impersonal so pictures tells a little more of a story." This sentiment was expressed by other participants.

Another participant expressed her desire to join Instagram was to alleviate what she considered as boring posts that did not fully show what their audience was like. One participant described:

I joined Instagram because people talk too much on Facebook and you can't talk that much on Instagram, honestly. People post horribly mundane statuses on Facebook and you get way less of that on Instagram. It just highlights rather than scrolling through 400 status updates on Facebook.

These reasons showcase that the Millennial generation may be shifting from text based platforms and using picture related platforms instead. "I think it was because a lot of my friends had Instagram and I also like that it was just photo uploads. I also saw that they were different profiles that had really cool pictures on it... people would post different things on there than they would everywhere else." One way in which the picture was able to be considered cool was to apply a filter.

Filtering. Another major contributing factor for why Millennials joined Instagram was related to filters as a way they could present themselves differently than on other social media platforms. One participant stated that they joined Instagram because the platform provided them an opportunity to enhance their pictures, which seemed to be missing from Facebook, the most consistently used platform mentioned throughout the

interviewing process. "It was probably the filters that people were using. Because you can link it to Facebook and I was like look at these filters. I don't have this on my camera so I installed it so I could do that on my pictures...." Initially, participants joined the platform as a way to enhance their pictures on the mobile platform.

Another participant stated she started using the platform because of the ways she was able to change her physical appearance with the filters. "…it was the filters actually. That was like 'oooohhh, I can change my photo and look nice.'" Another female participant had similar viewpoints on why she joined the platform. "I first joined Instagram when my sister showed me how much better you could make a picture look after putting a filter on it." Regardless of whether the participant related their interest in the filtering process to enhance his or her physical appearances or the environment around them, the filtering process allowed the user the opportunity to enrich the photographic content.

Selecting audience members to view presentation. One of the other reasons that participants joined the platform was due to the ability to keep particular audience members from viewing their profile. This consisted of having closer friends follow the user while keeping family members away from the profile as a means of censorship. Numerous participants explained that they use Facebook make announcements to family members about life events like job or career advancements or school achievements. Additionally, the participants believe Facebook has gained older users, who are not the ideal connections so they have transitioned to share themselves on Instagram with their peers. "[I use] Facebook mostly to communicate with my family so if I post something it's so that my aunts and grandparents know what I'm doing." The ability to block or

change privacy settings has allowed participants to keep certain audience members away.

"My mom now has a Facebook so I really try to make everything as private as possible

because there's stuff I don't want my parents to see." Parents are not the only generation

the Millennial generation are setting privacy settings for or editing posts for. "I'll post a

picture and then I'll go to my Facebook and change [or] add something 'cause my

grandparents are on there. It's like if they want to see something I have to tell them what

it is." The participants were aware who their audience members are and are cognizant of

how they must caption or describe the photographic content when they share a post from

Instagram to their personal Facebook account so that family members are familiar and

aware of what is happening in the user's life.

One participant considered Instagram as a safe haven from their family members

and those older in age who may judge the behaviors or activities displayed. "I actually

blocked a family member because I was like 'I'm not having this,'...my parents are

somewhat religious and I'm like 'I'm not going to post anything they feel is

uncomfortable for them." Another participant stated "I feel like most of my friends on

Facebook that I care about, that I want...them to see [my posts], they are usually on

Instagram." The participants have shifted the importance they place on posting about

their life on Facebook as their friends and the audience members they care about are on

Instagram. Other participants explained having similar feelings "Or if I just go to an

event that's really important to me, I'll post it on Instagram rather than Facebook just

because it's like people on there want to see it more. That's what they're there for..." The

participants have transitioned from one platform to Instagram which they note has a

younger generation based audience. However, this trend may change based upon two

participant's comments. One interviewer stated that their parents noticed the participant did not post regularly on Facebook. The participant's parents joined Instagram as a way to see what their child was doing. Another participant explained her family members and boss were on Facebook, which allowed her to opportunity to express herself differently Instagram. Instagram provides the participant the opportunity to set their account as private as a way to manage who can view their posts. In short, participants joined Instagram because of its picture based quality, the ability to filter pictures before posting, and because it allowed the participants to keep certain people from accessing their account. Once they are on the platform, however, how they present themselves changes based upon their level of privacy.

Privacy Settings on the Platform

One way participants allowed or denied audience members from viewing their posts and content was by setting their user setting their privacy settings. Participants had similar views on why they decided to keep their account open or why the account was set to private. The platform provides the user with two different privacy setting options, open or closed. The open privacy setting allows anyone on Instagram to view their profile, a closed account restricts the user's profile visibility to those who have been permitted access, or the user can change their privacy setting from open to closed at any time.

Open account. The participants are using a self-censorship method to determine how to present themselves on Instagram as a means of security. The overarching reason why participants keep their account open is related to what they are posting. If the person believes they do not post anything that could be incriminating, construed as negative, or anything that is too personal, they feel an open account is appropriate. One participant

stated "I don't feel like anyone's going to stalk me or anything like that... I don't have

any enemies like that. I don't have nothing to hide. I think that's the main reason. I'm just

an open book." This feeling was shared by numerous participants. Another participant

expressed that they didn't feel they post anything that could threaten their safety. One

participant described:

> I guess because I wasn't posting anything too personal. I don't put any location
>
> information or anything like that on my account and in my description or
>
> anything. So it was kind of like 'eh well...I don't really have to change it or
>
> anything because I don't have anything for people to I guess find on based on
>
> stalking me.'

The participants believe they are safe because they don't include personal details

like addresses, pictures that may include their personal information, which could allow a

stranger to better find the user for in person interactions. One user explains that they feel

safe having an open account "Because I don't feel like I share anything that would put me

in danger." Other reasons for participants to keep their account as open is due to feeling

as though they are not being viewed by a larger audience or post anything that could be

deemed as inappropriate. However, not all of the Millennial participants have their

privacy setting as open. The other option available on the platform is private.

  Closed account. The main reason participants have set their account settings to

private as a mean of protecting their professional image. Those who were set to private

tended to be in their late 20's and expressed concerns about their future employment. One

participant stated that her account was private due to her professional status and the

privacy setting was a means of keeping those associated with her position from viewing

her personal life. "I don't want my residents that I'll have in my building in for a conduct

meeting and be like 'oh, I see last weekend you were out with so and so and, like, at

Padonia Ale House, and what about that?' I don't want my students to know my life that

much. They don't need to." By setting her privacy settings to private, the user is able to

keep professional life and personal life separate. Another participant who was concerned

about employment expressed similar feelings. "I don't always want employers or

something. Like if I'm drinking a glass of wine with a friend or something. Also because

it [my Instagram profile] is so personal and you can see where someone is based upon

their location. If they forget to turn it off, that kind of freaks me out." By setting their

privacy settings depending on their personal preference, they can allow specific

audiences to view the profile while maintaining a professional or personal image.

     From a different perspective, one participant felt that making the profile private

provides the opportunity to create a more intimate relationship. They described:

> I didn't want random people to go to my page and be able to see pictures that I
>
> posted. I feel like the reason why I post certain things [is] so I can have an
>
> intimate relationship with the followers that I do have, and that I decide to follow
>
> back, or for them to follow me. I would like to have control over who looks at my
>
> page.

     Finally, another reason some participants have set their accounts to private to feel

safe when posting. One participant set her account to private as a means to create a sense

of security. By setting the account as private, the user has the ability to see who would

like access to his or her posts as well as keep their followers to those they feel

comfortable with accessing the profile. "I always thought from multiple outlets...parents

or business people or even strangers that I don't want them to view my stuff [and] take things the wrong way. I'd feel better if people who I approved of in a sense [accessed my profile]." However, some Millennial users have changed their privacy settings based on changes in their personal and professional lives.

Change in privacy settings. While most users have their account as open or private, some individuals have changed their settings during their time on Instagram. One of the reasons users have changed their privacy settings is due to a change in what they consider as Instagram worthy. One participant described:

> I'm just [like] 'oh well, there isn't really much to hide. Let's say someone I'm just kind of like 'oh my life is so like exciting so great,' if random people want to see it, then, here. Be jealous of my life. But now, it's kind of boring. I just feel like now that more people that I should be more aware of [are on Instagram]…like my parents or something. I just feel like it's something that you have to be more aware of what you put out there.

Not only did participants have a change in opinion on what their audience would view as interesting and would receive likes on the platform, but also started to think about how they would like to be seen by others. Another participant described:

> [I had my account open] because I guess at the time I was like 'oh, I want likes.' I want people, even people that don't follow me... you never know if they'll like your stuff. You just want your likes to be higher and higher, but now I don't really care anymore...So, I feel like it doesn't really matter as much anymore.

It seemed that the longer a participant had an account or the older the user is, the less they care about likes, which may cause them to change their profile privacy settings.

Another reason the participant may change their account setting was due to perceptions of their personal safety once they had been on the platform for a long period of time. "I had like a person who kept always liking my pictures and they would go back to the beginning of time and comment and like it. It's like, 'ok I can't do this anymore,' [and went private]." One participant stated a similar opinion about changing the account's privacy setting because of their familiarity of the platform and the different types of audience members on the platform as it has gained popularity:

> ...there's so many weird accounts out there that can tap into your information and everything like that. If someone actually wants to look at my photos, they need to take the extra two seconds to just request to follow me. I don't want some random person looking at my life. I want some sort of privacy…nothing's that private anymore.

Additionally, one participant stated changing her privacy settings due to the interaction she started to receive. "I think I closed it because...creeps were liking my pictures and being really weird. I was like 'this is uncomfortable,' so I put it on private and then I took it off again for some reason." The Millennial users have changed his or her privacy settings based upon life decisions and professional changes, which may cause a change in how audience members and their followers interact with them on the platform. The participants described two different privacy settings they use on Instagram and one way in which they have changed their privacy setting throughout their time on the platform. Based upon the privacy setting, the user may have interactions with a smaller pool of individuals, like their followers, or the larger Instagram population.

Interaction Styles on the Platform

There are a three means in which a user is able to interact with their followers and vice versa. The different types of interaction that can occur include hashtags and captions as well as likes and comments. All of which can be influenced by self-created rules and guidelines.

Hashtags and captions. One way the participants created a more personal relationship with their followers and audience members is through the captions and hashtags the user includes with the post. The ability to include text or emojis with a picture acts as another way to describe the picture or post. The participants have different reasons on why they include captions and how they include hashtags, if they include either. These reasons include sharing an inside joke, to use emojis to replace text captions or to eliminate their followers from misinterpreting their caption. However, most frequently stated as a reason to include captions was to act as a way to share the user's sense of humor with his or her followers. One participant explained that the caption "has to be sort of witty." This sentiment was shared by a number of other participants. "It'll usually be something short and witty. Or something that describes what the picture is."

While the caption may describe what is happening in the picture or post, it may also share something that happened during the experience the picture was taken to show. For instance, some of the participants discussed using the caption as a way to include an inside joke that may have been said while with the others in the picture. "I usually try to think [of that as] a little bit more than just 'me and my friend whoever.' Something funny. Maybe more kind of an inside joke type caption." One participant stated the reason they caption something is due to the increased interaction that may occur with a

witty or funny caption. "I want the caption to be clever. Clever captions get more likes." The user is able to share themselves with their followers through the picture content as well as the text caption which may increase the number of likes they gain on the post. The same participant explained that others they know are also concerned with a caption, so much that they will ask others their opinion before posting. "You want your captions to be clever and you want people to look at your picture and be like 'That caption, though. That's a good caption!' I have friends who come up with really clever captions and I'm on this one Facebook group where it's an advice group for girls my age and they will post often 'what would you caption this Instagram picture?' It's not just me. It's like a lot of people but I don't go to ask random people."

While most captions include a text component, some users have started to include emojis to the caption or even use only emojis in the caption to alleviate the need for textual statements. For instance, one participant described why she uses emojis in her captions to explain her emotions she felt when she posted. One participant described:

> So I just feel like an emoji would probably describe the emotion I'm feeling or what I think I look like. I have an alien emoji for an image. It was a picture of me and my makeup was done, but I had plain face except the eyes. I had bold eyes and it kind of looked like an alien emoji. So things like [show my] sense of humor, but it's also a description of what I think I look like and I don't have to write 'Hey, I look like an alien.'

This can be done to enhance the individual's sense of humor, like one participant stated. "It's more just on the sense of like randomness. I'm pretty random myself so if I

just put an emoji in there I don't have to explain it or put a story behind it. I can just say look at this emoji and make of it what you will."

Other reasons to include emojis in captions are to add to what the audience may read in the text statements. For instance, one participant stated using emojis as a way to enhance the text caption if it made sense with what else they were posting. "If they're [the emoji] related. Like, my Halloween costume was SpongeBob so I put a pineapple and a crab." The use of emojis is a relatively new ability on mobile keyboards, but appear more common with the participants' use of Instagram. The use of captions helps explain what the user posts and like previously stated by one participant, may increase the interaction the user has with their followers through likes or comments.

Likes versus comments. Instagram allows a wide range of users connect on the platform who can interact with each other through commenting, direct messaging, and regramming. However, interviews have shown that the majority of the users consider likes and commenting to be the most important and noteworthy way to connect. Throughout the interview process, individuals described they like posts more frequently than they comment on other's posts. The participants described their followers act in a similar manner and like the participant's posts more frequently than they comment. One reason for this is due to the ease in which a person can like rather than construct a statement for a comment.

Participants stated that they usually like a picture if it is one of their close friend's posts or if the picture is out of the ordinary. "I don't like people's pictures that I don't know." This is similar to another individual's feelings toward commenting and liking. For example, one participant described they will not comment on a stranger's post and

will only like a post when they enjoy the post. Another participant believed there must be an attachment to the post or the post must relay an emotional attachment in order for them to like the picture. The emotional attachment can come from knowing the person and having a relationship with the person who posted the picture.

Throughout the interviews, the participants described a need for a connection with the person who posted the picture in order to like or comment. The participants described that they were more likely to comment on something if they knew the person on an intimate level or they have a strong relationship with the follower, rather than the person be an acquaintance. "I mean I generally don't comment too much, but I like pictures. I've liked every single one of my brother's pictures. I like most of my other cousin's pictures. I like most of my close friends' pictures." Based on another participant's opinion, the depth of the relationship seems to be correlated with the level of interaction they will have. "I don't feel the need to comment on all these pictures and stuff. Usually when it's me in the picture or someone close I know in the picture or [have a] really close [relationship with them], then I would be more inclined to comment." Another individual expressed similar reasons about what caused them to comment rather than like the post. They described:

> I like their pictures and sometimes I'll comment, but I don't really comment that much. I guess if it's just a really good picture and I want to tell them it's a good picture. Or maybe if they put something funny, if it has me in it, or another friend or something like that... I just say love you or something like that.

Liking as a means to interact with others is not only how the user interacts with others, but also how their followers interact with their profile. One participant described:

They definitely like more. I get some comments depending on the picture. If it is a more personal thing, I'll get more comments. If I tag someone for a birthday thing, I'll definitely get comments from them on the picture. I don't really expect comments to be honest. I would expect likes but not comments.

However, one participant believed that the act of liking and commenting does not provide the same level of interaction. Liking a user's post can be done so with little to no effort while providing the user a sense of importance, a feeling of being more favorably in the audience member's opinion. Another participant described:

Liking is kind of an absent minded thing. It's just scrolling through my news feed and then if it's a good picture, I'll like it. Commenting, I'll do it every once and a while. Maybe if a friend posts a picture of them I'll be like 'Oh, you're so pretty' or something kind of like that. One of my friends from high school, she posted a picture of her being at Myrtle Beach and I was there, too. So I was like 'I'm there too, like, let's get together,' kind of thing. But usually commenting is something I don't really do as much as much as actually liking photos.

This sentiment can be seen with another participant's opinion on how she interacts with others on Instagram compared to how her audience member's interact with her. "I interact a lot with people. I'll throw out favorites [likes] like it's nothing, but people don't favorite my pictures that often, which is sad.... But if you were to post a picture of you and someone that I do [know], I'd definitely favorite [like] it."

Rules for posting. The participants who do post selfies have specific rules or guidelines for how frequently to post as to not be seen negatively by their audience members or to feel negatively about themselves. "Because I don't really like posting

selfies at all and I when I look at Instagram, I want to make sure there's enough time spaced out between [selfies]. I want to make sure it hasn't been like within a week that I've posted. If they're someone where that's all I see, then it kind of frustrates me. It's the people who post selfies like every other post that I'm like why is that necessary?"

Participants believed posting selfies were acceptable if they picture included a fun or exciting background and showed the participant doing something out of the ordinary. "I…wouldn't really post selfies often. If do post a picture of me, I will have someone else take it and will be at a pretty background type of thing." In addition to showing the location of where the user is, the user may post a selfie to show what they are doing or what they are wearing. One participant described:

Usually I'll want what I'm wearing in it too or the background. If it's just me, all the focus is on me, I would have to either be celebrating something. I definitely posted the day I graduated. I'll post a selfie with someone else. [If I see other people post selfies and] if it's excessive, it would annoy me.

Sharing an experience in the background of a selfie is an important guideline to another Millennial. "When I post, I'm sharing something. An experience. I guess I don't really see the point of it. I don't think I'm the most like beautiful woman ever so I'm not obsessed with how I look." Although participants discussed the general interaction styles on Instagram, like hashtags and captions, findings suggest that these difference may exist based upon the user's gender. The participants described 3 different sub-themes related to their interaction styles on Instagram. The following section discusses 2 sub-themes related to the male participants and their use of Instagram.

How Males Present Themselves

Throughout the interview process, male participants described using Instagram differently than the female participants. One of the more apparent differences is the frequency in which the male students post on Instagram. Many of the males at the large Mid-Atlantic university students described using the platform predominantly as an observer rather than actively posting like the female participants.

Male usage. The male participants explained either posting infrequently since joining the platform or have decreased the amount they post. Two male interviews admitted to only having a handful of posts throughout the multiple years of having an active account. When asked about what types of photographs the user posts, he explained it related more to a lack of posting rather than explain what he deems as post worthy. "I think it would be easier to say I have 11 pictures. 11 total posts and that's from last year. Like my birthday. I took a picture there. My brother's graduation. Just landmark events, essentially." Another male participant discussed posting on an infrequent basis because nothing was post worthy, in his opinion. One male participant described:

 [Posting on] Instagram is less frequent than that. Very infrequently. I think I've had Instagram for like 2, 2.5 years and I have 7 posts. None of my posts are post worthy. I just take pictures and want to put them out there. I don't really post on social media. It's more so I use it to observe. I just have it…why not have it.

The other male participants also explained using and keeping the platform as a means to view their friends and the other accounts he follows. Another male participant described:

Well, I like scrolling through. Looking at all the pictures...seeing funny things. I

like posting pictures. I used to post a lot, now I don't post as much.... now, it's

become once a month. It was probably, like, uh, 4 or 5 times a month. I could just

Snapchat the picture instead of doing it straight onto Instagram... I just kind of

lost a little bit of interest.

Another male interview expressed going on the platform primarily to observe, but

that at one point in time he did post more frequently. "I go on Instagram at least 4 times a

day. But I don't post as much anymore. I probably post once every month or so now."

While the female participants discussed viewing others as a reason to access the platform,

the male participants had a decreased number of times they would post on the platform

compared to how frequently they would access the platform as an observer. The male

participants described opening Instagram on their mobile phone to see what their

followers had posted, but they had only posted once every few months.

Males and selfies. Another viewpoint expressed by many of the male participants

related to selfies. Male participants expressed that selfies seem to be more feminine in

nature and they notice that those who do post selfies are females. One male participant

believed:

I feel in a sense it's more feminine sometimes. But, I see a lot of guys do it, but

I'm not one of those guys that are [going to] whip out the selfie cam or whatever.

Every now and then I'll throw a selfie in there, but it's not an obvious selfie. My

first thought about the selfie is a girl [with] the duck lips.

Another male participant expressed viewing selfies to be more feminine and that

males are less likely to post a selfie. He described:

I think for guys posting selfies its very, very weird. Towards other guys, I think it always depends on the situation. Girls post selfies all the time. And then for like guys… one I saw the other day was a major league baseball player selfie with a bunch of fans behind him. It was somewhat acceptable. But if [a] guy's just sitting there in his house by himself, like making a kissy face…

Another Millennial participant states female Instagram users are more likely to post selfies on a frequent basis. "I guess selfies are good too. I don't mind them except for some reason some, mostly girls, do it every day. I'm just like I'm so tired of seeing [selfies]. Put something else up. It's just really annoying."

Males describe selfies as something more feminine in nature, but that they did not believe their audience would be interested in seeing their own selfie. One male refrained from posting selfies or pictures where he is the focal point because he is male. "I don't have a lot of pictures of just me. I think that's kind of weird." One male interview dislikes the lack of control he has over the camera while taking a selfie. One male participant described:

I generally feel out of control not being able to see myself as much. Whenever I'm positioning my head with my phone in my hand it's just, it's tricky. And I just haven't gotten used to that. And it's not something I see myself getting used to. Also, when I see them I just feel self-enveloping.

Another expressed not posting selfies because of how he views himself. "I want to say, I'm pretty ugly so I don't want to see my face. The stigma toward that is it's ok for girls, it's not ok for guys. Which is maybe not the way it should be, but it is." The same participant later discussed other gender differences on the platform, specifically how

females are treated. The participant believed that guys do not write mean or degrading comments on posts, but that girls will write mean comments on other female posts. The same male participant described how female users may feel more pressure to receive a particular number of likes on their pictures. One participant described:

> I don't think any guy's ever going to delete an Instagram. But, I do know a lot of girls that [if] they don't make a certain number [of likes] that they'll delete it. One of my friends is a girl and she posts every day. But if that photo doesn't get like 40 or 50 likes, then she'll delete it.

Another male participant believed his female followers post more selfies than his male followers. When asked why he though females were more likely to post and to post selfies, he responded:

> I guess girls just like the way they look sometimes. I guess that's the only explanation for it. I don't know why, but I see it all the time. I worked at a football game...I see them just selfie-ing and I'm like 'Ok. It's everywhere. It's kind of how it is. 'Cause you see a lot more girls have them [selfies] than guys.

The male participants described using Instagram in two different manners from their female counterparts. The differences between male and female users related to their usage of the platform and how they feel about selfies. However, findings suggest that the participants alter how they present themselves on the platform regardless of their gender.

RQ2: **How are Millennials, i.e. young adults, altering themselves on Instagram?**

Throughout the interviewing process, the participants described how they present themselves as well as understand that those they follow are not fully representing themselves on the platform. The participants explained they will post more monumental

events in their life on their Instagram account rather than post daily or on a more frequent basis if the posts are more mundane. Many of the participants discussed how they are cognizant of how they present themselves differently on Instagram than what they are like in real life.

Sharing Self on the Platform

The participants explained being cognizant of how they present themselves on the platform while knowing that others do not fully present themselves on Instagram. The reasons including wanting to look more entertaining or enjoyable than what they may be like in person, knowing that others do not portray themselves honestly, posting a particular time, and acknowledging friendships.

Appearing more enjoyable or entertaining than in person. Many of the participants expressed a desire to keep negative messaging off their profile because they did not want others to think of them negatively, worry about them, or express concern based upon what was posted. A number of participants stated that they only post when something monumental is occurring in their life that they think will gain likes or comments from their followers. Some of these examples include graduation from high school, new career positions, or life events, like engagements. One participant stated only posting when something exciting happens in his life, which alters the frequency of his posting. "Well I would probably say I usually go for once a week. Once every two weeks. I guess it just depends on when something actually happens. Or something's actually picture worthy, something pretty cool..." One Millennial explained Instagram allows her to choose what she wants to post. For instance, if she does not want to share a negative aspect of her day, life or personality, she does not need to. "I don't like to show my

stressing and frustration on Instagram and everything. But other than that I think everything's [similar who I am]. "

The same individuals explained life's negative occurrences are something to be kept more private because if it is publicized, her followers are given the opportunity to create different opinions of her. "Because I think that's [stress] something that I like to handle more personally. And I don't want everyone to know that you know I'm stressed. And 'cause I don't like being kind of pitied or asked about." Another participant expressed similar opinions about keeping negative events or emotions off her Instagram profile. "I'm more likely to post happier things because no one wants to see me at xyz's funeral wearing all black, being upsetting. If someone dies, people post a happy memory with them…I don't think people follow people to see depressing things." Some participants stated they would rather not post than post something negative. "Just out of curiosity or boredom whatever it is. I don't like to see negative posts so I think that's why I'm less likely to post negative things. Negative just meaning not happy things." Participants feel they would rather not post anything if they have not posting in a while if the only thing to post was negative in nature.

The participants were cognizant that they only post on days they feel positive to showcase the better sides of their personality. One participant described:

> While it doesn't reflect maybe bad days that I've had or something like that I think people would mostly say that I look for the brighter side of things. So it's not out of the ordinary that my Instagram looks for the brighter sides of things in my life.

Many participants stated similar responses to explain why they posts only positively. "Because they're my favorite traits [about myself]. I like the fact that I can simultaneously be fun, ambitions and a go-getter. I like the fact that I can portray all of that into an account. And those are my favorite traits." Others explained Instagram allows them to show their audience members more about themselves as a way to portray how they would like others to view them. One participant said:

I like portraying a classy, fun individual. So I would like to portray that about me. I like the fact that in my pictures I['m] smiling and I want it to look positive and fun and that's the type of post that I have. So I like sharing the positive traits and I think that's a reinforcement for me so when I look back on those times I feel like 'Hey I remember when I had a really good time doing this and I like the way I felt at that moment,' so it's a good reinforcement for me to stay positive and then for others I want them to understand that I'm a positive person and that that's something I put on the forefront as opposed to my sad moments, which happen just like everyone else.

However, a few participants stated they understand that they do not accurately present the best representation of who they are on Instagram. While some individuals explained they keep from posting negative events and emotions on their account so that the audience can see them in a positive light, others actively post to appear happier or to cover up a truer sense of who they are as a person. One participant described:

My Instagram is misleading. It looks like I have way more fun than I do. 'Cause this whole weekend I've been up in my room knitting scarves. But I'll post

pictures of me going out from last week that I never posted and people think I'm

having more than I am.

Another individual stated they post as a way to seem happier than what they may

feel on the inside. "I am just taking pictures of the happy points so in that way, I'm kind

of masking something, but not to the point where I'm trying to hide. Just to the point

where I'm just trying to have a happy community." During the interview process, many

of the participants stated they only post certain aspects of their life so their audience

members can see what side the user is choosing to share. However, the participants are

aware that others do the same actions and not everyone they see on Instagram is

presenting an accurate portrayal of themselves.

Knowing others do not present true self. Because of Instagram's accessibility

and large user population, the user is given the opportunity to post what they want the

larger audience to see. One participant described:

I guess it's because Instagram…people probably just post pictures of how they

want people to think of them. I feel like most people would put pictures they think

they look good in and pictures where they look like they have fun just because

that's what they think that's what people want to see.

Some of the participants described they knew their friends present a different

version of themselves in real-life than what they present on Instagram. Another

participant described:

Everyone always looks better online. One of my friends, her Instagram is very

fun. She looks gorgeous and she seem funny. But in real life, she's kind of boring.

I think people tend to hype up their Instagram's more than they are. My best

friend's like that too. Like, she'll post pictures of her with her girlfriend in Paris...but 98% of the time she's on her couch watching food network... because people want to look better online.

This is similar to another participant's opinion on what their friends post on Instagram. "Well, it's a phrase 'that people will not post their sad moments of social media.' They usually post the 1% of their lives, which is the happy, really fun moments." The happy moments may be pictures, like the vacation in Paris with a significant other, that are shared with the audience although that is a one-time event or does not fully represent what the person is like on a daily basis. This can be done by only posting specific hobbies, life events, and relationships on the platform so that the audience is able to create an opinion on the user based upon those post. "The girls that I follow that work out, they post all the time about working out. I know they're not working out 365 days or 24 hours a day. That's all I see because that's sort of their Instagram personality."

The participants were aware that the personas being shared on Instagram may not match the person posting. "So people pick and choose what they want to show and if they want to show [something], then that's fine." When asked why the participant thinks Instagram users present a segmented version on themselves, many explained they believe it is to make the person feel as though that is who they truly are or to change themselves to be that person. One participant described:

I think that she does it [posting] not [because] she wants to convince herself that that's the kind of person she is [,but] I think it's because she's trying to change. [She's trying] to be that type of person and even though her actions don't speak of it, that's kind of her intent, but I feel like it's not what comes out.

However, if the participant knows the person in real-life, is known in real life, their opinion of that person may change based upon what they see on Instagram. "It will make me either, to be honest, either respect them more or respect them less. It might not change how much I love them, but it might change my respect for them." Some Millennials expressed that if their friends present themselves differently on the platform, they would voice their concern with the friend during in-person interactions. Another participant described:

> I cannot control what you do and it's your page and it's your life. You choose how to live it; you choose to post whatever you like. But it's one of those things as far as me being friends with me and knowing they type of person that they are, I would have that conversation. If I feel like it was something very out of left field and not like them.

Some participants feel that if the person chooses to present themselves differently, that is their personal choice of that person and there is little they should do about it. "I feel like it's up to their discretion as to what they post and the type of person they choose to be. If they choose to be something different that's their personal choice, in my opinion." One participant feels that a person, friend or not, presents themselves differently because of something they are not getting with in-person relationships. "Yeah and I feel like that that's something they need to feel confident in their own personality and if that's what they need then that's what they need. They're different in real life because they don't have that in real life." Some participants felt that once a person presented themselves one way on Instagram, the person may feel obligated or pressured to maintain that version. "When you think of that 18 year-old [I previously talked about],

she started posting when she was probably in high school, when she was really shapeable. So that she lives for these likes now."

Frequency of posting. The number of posts and how frequently the participant posts is another way they can share themselves with their followers. Many of the participants stated presenting themselves on the platform only when something exciting has happened in their life, like taking a vacation. "I think it depends on the type of week. Last week I was on vacation in North Carolina, I posted a lot more frequently than a typical day. So [if] I'm not doing anything on the weekend I can go three weeks without posting." The change in frequency of posting may have changed from when they started their profile on the platform to their current status as a college student or a person looking to graduate. One participant stated some weeks they may post once a week or multiple times a day depending on what is happening around them. "Sometimes it's like twice a day. Sometimes it is once a week. It depends on what is going on in my life." One participant explained once she had a drastic life change, like moving from South Africa to California to Maryland, her posting became more frequently as a way to document what was happening in her life to her audience. She described:

> I think when I moved to California last year [from South Africa]…I think it got a lot more frequent when I moved to another country 'cause then people wanted to actually probably know what's going on in my life. I suppose my life became a bit more interesting because I moved to a different country. I'd say since last year it became a lot more frequent.

One of the more common reasons that caused a change in the participants' frequency of posting was due to leaving high school and starting college. "It was

probably more frequent in high school. But that's because I used to put up pictures of things I baked. I don't really do that here now. Now, I put up pictures of when I go out, which is only once or twice a week so. I only post like one a week." Another participant explained once they transitioned to college, they had a decrease in time available top post on Instagram. They described:

> I've been kind of busy. So I don't think about it as much. [Before I got busier at school] I guess [I was posting] once a week to share my life with people. I post a lot of artwork and if an event happens I want to recognize it so later on in my life I can be like 'Oh, I remember when I posted that. That was a good day.'

Some participants shared concerns that their life has become less exciting, which has decreased the frequency in posting. "I usually put something up maybe once a week or once every two weeks. 'cause my life isn't like that exciting to put something up, like, every day." A very similar sentiment was shared by another participant as a reason to why they have decreased in the frequency in posting. The participant explained posting when they do something out of the norm, like going home and visiting their family or hometown friends.

One participant explained that she took a break from some social media because she felt she was using a variety of platforms too much. One participant described:

> I used to post a lot more frequently, but as part of my cleansing process, which involved deleting Snapchat, I haven't post[ed]. I post probably once every 2 or 3 weeks now. It's usually if there's something that's worth posting now it's not like something like my food or something like that. It's more if I do something really amazing then I'm going to post it.

Another female participant discussed she deleted images from her Instagram as a way to maintain her image and keep only important life experiences on her profile. "I used to post a lot of pictures and as I've said as I've matured a little bit. I've deleted a lot of the posts I had initially."

Publicizing friendship through birthday. Many participants stated the post on their friend's birthday as a way to wish them a happy birthday and to recognize the friendship with their other followers. Birthday posts allow the user to post about their social connections while celebrating the relationship they have with his or her friend. One participant explained they post about a friend's birthday is because they want that particular friend to feel recognized. "If I'm posting something nice about one of my friends on their birthday, it's definitely a post for them." Posting a picture for a birthday may not fit into the participant's normal frequency of posting. However, the participants felt birthdays are important life events and should be recognized. Another participant explained they consider birthday posts as one of the types of pictures they deem as Instagram worthy. While the individual may maintain a more professional image on the platform, they will share a different side on birthday posts as it relates to his or her relationship with that person.

Another individual places a high level of importance on birthdays and consistently likes to post in recognition of her friends' birthdays. "I suppose it's more like I really love birthdays. I like to make a big deal of people's so it's more [to] make sure that they feel acknowledged in every possible way." One participant described using third party applications to post about birthdays to share how he has celebrated previously with the person as a tribute to the length of their relationship. One participant described:

I use this one app called 'Layout' and pretty much it just builds a collage. So you

can customize it and usually that's in occasions...it was my cousin's birthday not

so long ago so I just shouted him out on Instagram and just built like a collage of

it. And it was kind of funny 'cause some of the pictures are really old and some of

them are really new or whatever and we were just being silly. So it was cool to

have all the pictures together in it.

The previous section discussed four different sub-themes related to how the

participants described sharing themselves on Instagram. The participants described the

ways in which they present themselves on Instagram so that they look more entertaining

and being aware that others do not present themselves accurately. The participants

described consciously posting at specific times, like when something monumental occurs

in their life or when it is their friend's birthday. The participant's discussed altering

themselves differently on the platform, which they can do through different means to edit

their posts.

Post editing

Since its creation, Instagram has allowed the user to filter posts, edit captions after

sharing the content to the public, and given the ability through third party applications to

edit the original picture's content. Additionally, Instagram's capabilities have caused

individuals who use the platform to transform their physical image through editing tools,

makeup, and physical positioning.

Filters. The vast majority of the participants discussed filtering content before

posting pictures for their audience. Some participants described using third party

applications to edit photographs through the filtering process. However, many used the

tools available to them on Instagram. One reason the participants filtered pictures was to enhance a physical characteristic of the person in the picture, whether it was themselves or another person in the picture. "I usually just click through them and see which makes the image look lightest and easiest to see. Or my niece has really blue eyes so I like to pick ones to make her eyes look extra blue because they are beautiful." Another participant expressed using filters as a way to enhance her natural physical features like hair or eye color. They described:

> Do I touch up my photos, whiten my teeth? No. If I have red eye or something I might try to fix it. If I can't fix it, then whatever. I definitely will use a filter if it's darker and you can potentially lighten it up. I usually pick one that makes my hair look blonder, just 'cause I like the way I look when I have blonde hair.

Another Millennial explained her filtering habits have changed since using Instagram. Before, the use of filters was purely to enhance their physical appearance within a picture, whereas she now uses filters as a means to improve the quality of the post. "It was just very more of a superficial reason actually. [Now,] it's more of because of the fact that I took a good picture or that I looked good or something of that sort and I had a good filter so I posted it type of thing." One female participant described using a filter not to enhance physical characteristics of her appearance, but to enhance an item within the picture. "I took a picture of my engagement ring and I wanted to make sure that made it brighter and I played with that."

Most of the participants explained they use filters as a way to brighten an image so that it looks more pleasing to themselves. "I actually filter more than I don't filter. I just feel that they [pictures] look better filtered." Similarly, a participant explains that in

general, a filter makes the picture more interesting to look at. "'Cause it looks less boring I guess. When there's no filter, it kind of looks blah. Like boring." The same sentiment was expressed by another individual who believed filters make the posts look better in general. Only a few participants discussed using filters to change the look and feel of the original content. "I use the filters to change the lighting or the mood of the picture. Or if it looks really sad, I make it even sadder. Not that I have a sad picture..." One participant explained she sends her pictures to a 16-year-old to filter the picture before posting because she believed it will receive more likes or comments. "I'll pick a filter…you can adjust how much of that filter you want…Most of the time I'll send it to my 16-year-old friend and be like edit this for me 'cause that's her world. So she'll edit it and send it back to me and I'm like 'yeah, I like it,' and then I'll post it." The majority of the participants admitted to filtering their posts while only a few described editing their posts.

Editing. Instagram allows users to edit captions once a photograph or video has been uploaded and shared. However, only a few of those interviewed discussed actively returning to posted content to edit a caption. One of the reasons a participant returned to the post to edit their posts was to correct grammatical mistakes or to add a sense of humor to the caption. The function is seen as a benefit for the user to edit the text content they add to the post, specifically to present a grammatically correct self. "Only if there's a spelling error or grammar error. 'Cause sometimes in my head I'll know there's supposed to be a word there, but I'll forget to type it in. I'll only really change spelling things." Another participant explained editing their post because they are annoyed when others make grammatical mistakes and does not want their own account to have any. One participant described going back a few weeks after posting to confirm her captions have

correct spelling and are grammatically correct. "I was thinking if somebody commented something [about the caption], then I would go back and change [it], if I would spell something [incorrectly]. 'Cause I'll do it quickly. I'll even go back 3 weeks and be like 'What did I just say?'" However, spelling errors are not the only reason the participants edited the captions after a post has been viewed by the public.

One participant explained editing her captions to show more of her sense of humor. "Usually it's the caption part. I try to put something whimsical, but then I reread it but it's not that funny. So I'll just take it off..." Another individual described a comparable experience "I have edited it if I have thought of a better caption or something, [then] I'll edit the caption." One participant expressed her appreciation for the ability to edit the caption or her content on Instagram so that she can present a more accurate representation. "I don't always where I'm going, but on social media I have more time to process things. I'm an internal processor so it's easier for me to, like, have an idea in my head, and then think about how to act accurately describe it, or something like that." The editing feature on Instagram allows users to make changes to or delete portions of the user's caption, one of the ways the user is able to enhance the photographic content with their personality.

Altering image based on media. The ability to change the photographic content is only able to be done before the user posts through the use of filters, whether through Instagram or third-party applications. Many participants described their desire to filter the picture is because of society's importance placed on physical appearances. Some of the participants discussed their opinions on why Instagram users feel the need to alter their images, whether through makeup, lighting, posing or using third party editing

applications. They believed this was done to better their physical appearance to be seen as more attractive to their followers. The one female participant believed that altering a person's physical appearance is not kept to a specific age group or college student, but can be seen through celebrity's accounts on Instagram. One participant believed:

> Like Beyoncé, how much of her Instagram photos are retouched? Everyone knows that. It's been publicized by outlets, media outlets, that she doesn't even run her own Instagram. So, are you really following Beyoncé, or are you following someone that's posting pictures of Beyoncé?

When people in the public eye are altering their appearance with the public's knowledge those actions are occurring, the younger generation or the average user may feel more inclined to alter his or her posts before uploading the content to the platform. However, many of the participants discussed seeing female friends as those who change their physical appearance on Instagram. Some of the examples that were described were about the participant's female friends. "They don't look bad, but they don't look the same. Some people really can put up a front on Instagram. I know some people who they look one way on Instagram and then you see them in person." One Millennial discussed how their male friends filter and alter their appearance differently than the females. Thye described:

> [He filters to] looks more professional and with that I think that's ok. But, I have a lot of friends that are girls that use filters to try and hide some of their blemishes or impurities, I guess. And just make themselves look better, but it's mostly to attract guys. I just feel like you should be ok with yourself.

Another participant described viewing filters as an enhancement, but if the filter drastically changes the person's appearance, the poster may have additional insecurities or may be using the tools as a way to feel better about herself. One participant described:

I mean if they're going to add a simple filter, then I don't see why it's a problem. But if it's to the point where it's obvious that you edited so much that you're taking away the natural beauty of, say a selfie or something, then that's where I draw the line...where it's too over-shopped.

One female participant expressed deleting the post if the people in the picture do not look physically attractive. "I mean I don't always come looking cute and ready to pose. My friends are always like 'We don't look good. We don't look good, we have to delete it. We have to delete it.' Ok. I guess it's just society. Girls in general just want to look good."

One male participant noticed female users, one in particular, who will present a different physical appearance than what is seen in person. He said:

There's one girl we're friends with who's not ugly. People don't think she's that attractive, but she transforms her Instagram so well that people are deceived of how good looking she is. All [of] our friends with her in real life [are] like she's not that attractive in real life. I think makeup is a very deceiving thing. She must be the greatest makeup person in the world. How much she changes and then all the filters you do. It's hard. Most people don't look the same as [what you see on Instagram.] There's some features, but most people don't look as beautiful as they do on Instagram's photos. Nothing against her for doing that. If you can do that, then do it. But I know what you really are.

This paralleled one female participant who explained how she has continuously changed how she presented herself since joining Instagram. he believed:

I mean with the whole thing being new. 'Cause I really would pose different. I would try to make myself look better than what I was feeling or looking or doing. I think even now [that] I alter it. That's why I don't ever let people take a picture of me. Because I want to have that control of having it up at an angle, making me look thinner and that's how it's always been.

However, one female participant believed there are underlying issues with the occurrence and reasons why a female alters her physical appearance before posting. She said:

They are some serious ethical dilemmas when you think [about this concept of altering your appearance]. This girl is 18 years-old she retouches these photos. I think and I feel bad for her that she lives off of Instagram that much that she's so focused on getting these sponsors. I think it definitely could play into people's perception of themselves if they don't have strong enough confidence. When you think of that 18 year-old [I previously talked about], she started posting when she was probably in high school when she was really shapeable. So that she lives for these likes now.

In addition to editing the text captions, the ability to edit how the person physically looks with the use of filters is another way the person can change how they present themselves to their followers on Instagram.

Deleting posts post-publication. In addition to editing the caption and altering the physical appearance of a post, the user is able to delete a post from the platform at

any time. This is being considered as another way to alter the presentation the user shows

their audience. Some reasons the participants discussed deleting content included a way

to save face for professional reasons, because they received negative comments, thought

the picture reflected them poorly, or to protect themselves.

One participant believed that deleting posts is a way to present themselves in a

better light, especially in relation to their career. They described:

So I mean, I make sure I delete…jobs you got to clear out your like Instagram out

for bad photos and stuff. Instagram's getting more and more notoriety that jobs

and your bosses are actually like looking through your Instagram. I have a job

now so before I started working there, [I thought] 'Oh I need to clear out my

Instagram,' and I looked back like 2-3 years ago.

One female participant described using the delete feature to delete embarrassing

pictures that may have been taken in previous years. She believed:

'Cause if you get negative feedback about something you can just delete it and

take it away. Like Snapchat. Like, once my drunk self Snapchat goes out, it's out

but with Instagram or Facebook, the pictures it's always [there]...I understand the

public doesn't like this, I'll just take it back and nobody will know.

A few participants expressed concerns of how previously posted pictures may

have been embarrassing and no longer reflect who they are. "Not that long ago, I went

through and deleted a bunch of pictures where I was posting pictures every day when

people weren't using Instagram...so I went back and went was just like 'Well, this is

stupid.' This was so long ago.'" Similarly, another participant would review posted

content and reevaluate how that posts could be perceived by their audience. "Sometimes I

would go way into the past. All the older stuff and I'm like 'Oh, why did I even put that up?' Or, I know I look really bad. I don't want anyone to see this. So I will delete those."

Another reason the participants would delete posts related to their safety. One participant believed that she felt safer knowing that she could delete a post if she needed to. She believed:

I like the fact that I can delete the posts. There's also the notion that once you put something online, it's there forever. And that is true. That's very, very true. Even though I'm deleting, it's not like I'm deleting it off of the database. It's just that it won't be on my page. So, I just like the fact that for my own personal security that picture's not there. But at the end of the day, it is there.

Comparable to personal safety, one Millennial felt deleting posts allowed for a sense of privacy from the audience. They described:

I just feel that's a little bit more of a protection of yourself. If you decide later that 'Oh, maybe that's not good to have up,' for, I don't know, future employment. I guess that's kind of embarrassing picture or if even if later you're like 'Oh, I really don't look good in that picture,'...I'd want to be able to delete it.

The ability to delete a post after publicizing it to the user's audience allows the user the ability to save face and control how and what content is being associated with his or her profile.

Time of posting. Finally, deliberately posting according to a specific time of day or a certain day of the week allowed the participant to alter how their followers view them. A number of participants described the conscious effort they may take to appear more entertaining to their followers. This was described as waiting until a certain time of

day or specific day of the week to post. By deliberately posting, the participant's post could receive artificial interactions on their post because their followers believed they were posting at the same time of the activity. Through the interview process, the ideal time to post was called 'prime time'. Posting during specific times allowed the participant to seem like they are doing something at a particular time, which may not be when the pictures was actually taken, for their followers to see and may receive more likes or comments. One participant said:

Usually I would think it was like noon or like one o'clock. It's more when it comes to night. It's anywhere from like 7 to, I guess, 10 o'clock. I think they call it prime time. Prime time, that's crazy, that doesn't make any sense. And then I would actually post something in the middle of the day and [be] 'like this is weak [number of likes],' and then I'll post something later. Sometimes I'll even just wait. I'll have the picture and I'll wait on it. Then I'll post it [later in the day] and then I notice it gets a lot more likes. I notice whenever I'm home normally it's night time [and] getting ready for bed. I'm like just scroll through and see what everyone's doing today."

The same individual described a time when he waited to post until prime time so that the post would make him look more admirable. "My mom took a picture of me playing flag football and she sent it to me the next morning. So it was maybe 11 o'clock [a.m.]. And I just waited until like 6 o'clock [p.m.] and I posted it just 'cause it was cool." The participant was not the only person to discuss the best time of day to post on Instagram. "It also depends on the time of day. Sometimes people will post at 5p.m. Apparently that's the best time to post, but nothing happens at 5 p.m. to me. I'm usually

at home at 5 p.m. so I don't usually post at 5 p.m." One participant described that posting

on Instagram would receive more likes or comments dependent on certain times of the

day and specific days of the week. She believes people post at certain times because:

> Sundays are bad days in the morning 'cause no one's on Instagram in the
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> mornings. People are sleeping in. People aren't posting too early, but you don't
>
> want to post it too late. So you post it around 7 [p.m.] to 9 [p.m.] 'cause after 9's
>
> too late and no one's on their phones anymore. So I need to post it at 8 [p.m.]
>
> tonight. Fridays around 6[p.m.] 'cause everyone goes out so no one's on their
>
> phones and then Saturday's probably then too. I used to post in the mornings. I
>
> don't do that anymore.

The reason for posting during these specific times equate to a higher number of

likes according to one Millennial participant. "You get a ton more likes when more

people are likely to be on. So, it's for the likes." By posting at the specific times, the user

is able to share their life with others while gaining a higher likelihood of visibility for an

increased number of likes and comments. The previous theme included five sub-themes

that described how the participants could alter their presentation on Instagram through

filters, editing, altering images, deleting posts and postings based upon specific times.

One type of photograph the participants discussed as a way to edit their physical

appearance and show a specific side of themselves was through posting a selfie.

However, findings suggest that the participants were either adamantly in favor of selfies

or adamantly not in favor of selfies.

Perception of Selfies

One of the most controversial or opposing posts on Instagram are selfies. A selfie is considered a picture that is taken from arm's length, with the use of a selfie stick, or using the front facing camera on mobile phones. Throughout the interviews, the participants either described themselves to be in favor of selfies or viewing selfies unfavorably. The participants' explanation of selfies act as a way to alter how they are viewed by their followers to get or not get likes or comments from their followers.

Those who view selfies favorably. Those who post selfies were among the group of individuals who consider favor selfies and like or comment on other's selfies. If the participant posted selfies, they were able to alter how they present themselves on the platform by posting up-close images of their face rather than post a picture depicting something they had done. Showing only their face would elicit a certain interaction from their followers including likes based on their physical appearance. Many participants believed if they looked good that day, they should share that feeling with their followers through posting a selfie. One Millennial expressed positive feelings toward selfies because it is one way to boost the poster's self-esteem. They described:

I think selfies are fantastic because I think that they are a way of encouraging people to boost their own self esteem by showing it off to other people. By saying 'I feel like I look great today, look at how great I look. I am feeling myself, I am feeling good, I want you all to see how good I look today.' I think that is a great thing and we should all be very proud of ourselves.

Other participants expressed favorable opinions of selfies and described buying a selfie stick because of their favorable opinion about selfies. "I have a selfie stick is that

enough explanation?" Those who do like viewing and taking selfies discussed how they like to see other's selfies and why they like to post their own.

Other participants described they post selfies because they want to share how good they look with their followers. "And if it's a selfie, it's usually because I look great. It's usually a selfie that is because it's a nice selfie as opposed to when I'm with other people." However, not all favorable opinions about selfies are related to the participant posting their own, many participants described enjoyed seeing their followers through selfies. "I think it's really good. I follow a lot of YouTubers and stuff like that. I just like how they do their makeup and so I love it. I love selfies." However, the majority of the users did not express favorable opinions toward selfies. Many dislike seeing selfies, which impacts his or her decision to not post selfies of themselves.

Those who view selfies unfavorably. The participants who viewed selfies unfavorably described not posting selfies themselves or liking selfies that had been posted by their followers. By not posting selfies or pictures that only included their face, the participants were able to alter how they present themselves to their followers. Many of the participants who opposed selfies described negative feelings towards their appearance and viewed those who do post selfies to be narcissistic. One participant described their negative feelings toward selfies because in her mind, she cannot successfully take a selfie. Because she is unable to take a selfie, she negatively views other who can and frequently post selfies. "I'm envious because they take hella good selfies and I can't. [When a person posts selfies constantly] It's annoying! Are you that insecure that you need to post, like, 7 pictures a day?" The participants dislike for selfies is apparent as many participants stated feeling that selfies are a sign of narcissistic

tendencies, or are annoyed by those who post selfies at a frequent rate. One participant described:

> Some people only post selfies and it's kind of weird. I mean I do sometimes. But I feel like it's kind of narcissistic to post all pictures of yourself. Some people's accounts only consist of selfies. It's like 'do you post any pictures of your friends?' They all look the same. I guess I'd understand it more if they [the selfie] looked different, like you're in a different place. But if you just have a solid blank expression in every selfie and it's always [the] same angle in the same place.

One participant described they feels as though people who post selfies are more self-absorbed than those who do not and that this has been publicized through research. "Well, studies have shown the more people with more selfies tend to link with narcissistic views." Many participants described judging people who frequently post selfies on Instagram. "Well I guess like with the selfie thing, like, if I kind of knew someone and thought they were cool in person and then I went on their Instagram and all of their Instagram is just selfies, I'd probably think a little less of them." Another participant admitted to judging a person who posts selfies on a consistent basis. They believed:

> Sometimes when I see other people's [selfies] I kind of judge them. Not like in a bad way. I'm not judging them…but it's…yeah. I will still like my friend's selfies and stuff if they look pretty and then I'm like that's awesome, but I feel like it's kind of conceited I guess. I do sometimes take a picture and I think I look really good and I want to post it. So I understand why people do it too. But I think I have like 2 [selfies on my profile].

In addition to judging the person who posts selfies, the user feels frustration or annoyance when he or she scrolls through the home feed and only see selfies. The selfie may be seen as mundane and cause the viewer frustration when another selfie appears on his or her feed. One participant described:

I normally will roll my eyes at them because I'm like 'Ugh, another selfie?' I did a project about selfies and social media last semester and after that I kind of see it as you're kind of getting people to like your picture and tell you you're pretty... it's an attention getting thing and people like selfies so you post them because you think they [the followers] like them.

Similarly, another user said:

If the whole feed is selfies, I… my initial thought is 'you do find yourself very interesting.' Um, but that being said, I know some of my friends seem that way on Instagram and I, like, obviously am friends with them in real life and they're not that way at all. It's just, like the culture. I suppose. I notice different areas will post different things, like, one of my friend's British and she posts a lot of selfies and a lot of things like that and she's really not that way. It's just what they will do.

One participant described she shared her distaste for selfies with her in-person relationships that she wouldn't post a selfie on her own account. She believed:

I made fun of other people for that [posting selfies]. So I don't really want to be the person that does it. And I'm not really cocky. I think sometimes when people post selfies they're kind of showing people that they're really pretty or attractive and they want other people to draw attention to them.

The participants discussed favoring or not favoring selfies in the last theme related to the second research question. The following section discusses the third research question, how interaction on Instagram impacts the Millennial. Types of interaction include likes, which can increase the user's self-esteem, and their number of followers.

RQ3: What is the impact of communicating on Instagram for Millennials?

Interactions on Instagram

Once the participants had described how they present themselves on Instagram and how they alter themselves on Instagram, they discussed how interactions with their followers impact them. The interactions most frequently described were liking and commenting posts. Many participants described feeling better about themselves and wanted to make others feel better about themselves was accomplished through liking a post. Another manner that increased the participants' self-esteem was through a follower to following ratio. The last way the participant was able to feel better about themselves was done by deliberately posting at specific times to seem 'cooler' than they might be.

Likes: Ability to boost a user's self-esteem. The ability to absentmindedly like a picture achieves a level of interaction between the user and audience member. This may be a way to create a sense of a relationship on the platform between the two users or to increase a user's self-esteem. This can be seen with some participants who like the follower, but not necessarily the content in which they post. By liking or commenting on the post, the user may have an increased surge of self-esteem because of the favorable interactions. "Sometimes I just like the person as a person, but not necessarily their picture, I'll just like the photo. I don't really think about like that much...but I do think a comment, that's with intent." Another individual described commenting and liking a

photograph that includes people they are close with as a means to make the poster's day better and boost their self-esteem. "If I'm not tagged in it, I don't. Unless it's, like, the person looks really great and I'm like 'you look really great' self-esteem boosting. I'm really big into self-esteem boosting." One participant believed that when he receives a high number of likes, it boosts his self-esteem and he believes this is similar with other audience members. "It makes them feel good about themselves, too. I mean if I get a 100 likes, I'm like 'Alright!' But if I don't get much I don't say much about it at all. It['s a] self-esteem boost as well." However, the number of likes is not the only number that is deemed important to the participant. The number of followers is noteworthy as well.

Follower ratio. In addition to the number of likes, the number of followers is deemed as important to the participants. "People being more self-conscious about having more likes and also there's a big thing about more followers than they follow. That's a big thing that a lot of people do." The ratio of followers to following was a consistently mentioned. "I don't know if you've heard of the ratio. People keep track of how many people they follow in comparison to how many people are following them because you're supposed to have less [accounts that you are following]." One Millennial had similar sentiments about the ratio and their distaste for having an equal ratio or having a higher follower number. "I definitely I wouldn't want to follow a lot more people than follow me." The number of followers, especially on that is so much higher than the number of accounts the user is following, can raise questions related to the types of relationships the followers may be and how the person gained a high number of followers. "I definitely have had friends point out that I have a lot more followers than people that I follow, but I don't necessarily care about that."

One way a participant could have more followers on the platform can be achieved inorganically. One participant explained how a friend of hers has gained a high number of followers is by using specific hashtags created to gain followers. She described:

I have this one friend who she...now has a 1,000 followers because what she does is she goes on a mass following spree. And follows everyone who #likeforlikes or something so they know they like everyone's stuff. So what she does is goes and follows everyone and waits until they all follow her back and she unfollows them all. So that's why she has like a 1,000 followers, but only follows 300. Then she gets 100 or 200 likes. So I'm like 'Ok I'm not like obsessed like that.' So, I feel like it [the number of followers] doesn't really matter as much anymore.

While this seems like a lot of effort, the number of followers was described by the participants as important. "When I first got Instagram I recognized I wanted more followers, like when I was younger. But now I'm like 'Oh I'd rather have people that I know actually following me.' But other than that I guess the number [doesn't matter anymore]." Another user had similar concerns when he or she first started using the platform. They described:

I used to think a lot about it. Nowadays I don't, at all. I guess back then it was like 'Oh, more followers...one could say more important,'…'Cause I was like 'Oh, I need to [have] followers and, all this stuff so I can even it [the number of followers and following] out and whatnot,' and I was into likes a lot and nowadays 'Oh it is what it is.' I'm posting what I want and not trying to make an image of myself.

The participant's viewpoint on the ratio between the number of followers and those they are following seem to change once the individual has been on Instagram for a longer portion of time. For instance, a few participants realized the number of followers, while important in some respect, is unobtainable given their status in life as a non-celebrity. "Unless you're like an actual star that…you're never going to gain star status. That's from having a lot of followers." The number of followers versus following is important in some regard, but seemed to decrease in importance as the participant became older.

The previously discussed themes and subthemes included beliefs and opinions of the 19 participants at the large Mid-Atlantic university. The participants described how they present themselves on Instagram, how they alter their presentation on Instagram and how their interactions on Instagram impacts them. The participants expressed similar opinions about why they joined the platform, which relate to the platform being picture-based as well as having the ability to keep specific people from viewing their profile. The participant's privacy setting allows the user to have different interactions with their users or the Instagram population at large. Findings suggest that the way in which the participant uses the platform varies between the genders. However, the participants described presenting themselves differently on the platform as well as being aware that others do not accurately present themselves on Instagram. The ways in which the participants can alter themselves on the platform can be done through post editing, filtering, and deleting the content. Based upon their posts, participants were able to have their level of self-esteem increased and have an increased sense of popularity through their follower ratio.

Discussion

The findings of this study show similarities between research conducted on how users alter themselves on Facebook and their presentation on Instagram. This study examined how the Millennial generation uses Instagram and how the users alter themselves, and what impacts the platform has on them. Throughout the interview process, many similarities presented themselves between Goffman's (1959) presentation of self and how the actions occur on Instagram. The following section will relate Goffman's (1959) concept to Instagram based upon previous research and this study's findings.

Similarities with Goffman

Goffman's (1959) presentation of self concept includes the front stage and back stage. This concept has been modernized through previously conducted research. The front stage, according to Goffman (1959), acts as the physical location. On Instagram, this is comparable to the user's profile. The user mimics Goffman's (1959) definition of the actor. The user's profile is the location in which the person is able to share their physical location. Here the user is able to share traits and characteristics to their viewing audience. On Instagram, the audience is considered as the accounts and people who follow the user. The audience is able to view the actor, in this case the user, on the audience's home feed or by going to the actor's profile page.

The front stage, allows the user to present themselves to a larger audience, specifically all users on Instagram. However, the back stage allows the user the opportunity to edit themselves, select when to post for the highest likelihood of visibility from their audience, alter their physical appearance, and choose what personal

attributions are worth sharing through posts. The back stage seems to be more complicated on Instagram than the front stage, mostly through actions available to the users before posting content, like filtering.

Back stage actions. The user has multiple opportunities to alter themselves before they post for the audience to view and interact with. One of these actions involves editing. The ability to edit a post after it has been shared with the public can be viewed a way for the user to save face (Goffman, 1959). The participants understood the importance of social media when applying for jobs and how their accounts can be used against them or in favor of their potential career placement. Based upon the interviews, the participants understood that once something is posted on social media, it does not necessarily stay where it was put. The option to edit or delete a post provided the participants the opportunity to alter how the public views them. Most frequently discussed was the editing captions for grammatical errors. This can be considered a form of saving-face to the user and their audience members, specifically potential employers. Deleting content after posting because the user no longer feels the content accurately represents them, is embarrassing, or may reflect badly to a viewing supervisor can also be considered a way the user is able to save face. The user is able edit and delete posts once it has been shared with the public. However, there are other actions and steps the user can take before posting the content. Filtering can alter the way the person saves face on a visible level. For instance, if the person views themselves as physically unattractive or feels as though they do not meet society's standards of physical attraction, the user may use other methods, like posing, to alter their physical appearances as a means to save face with the audience.

The concept to save-face was discussed more by the male participants, but was confirmed by some of the female participants. A few of the male participants described knowing female Instagram users would pose differently or use makeup to enhance her appearance. Female participants either admitted to posing differently or agreed that they know other female users who do alter their appearances to seem more physically attractive to the larger audience. By changing the individual's outer appearance, the audience may view that person more favorably than what the user experiences in their in-person interactions. Sobieszek (1999) relates how the inner self is subconsciously combined with the physical outer-face by the audience members as a means to judge the person. If this is the case, it can be a reason why some individuals alter their outer appearance before posting on Instagram provided an opportunity to save-face and appear honest in their presentation. However, like most of the participants described, Instagram users are not always believed to present their true self when posting.

Numerous participants described using Instagram as a way to get a better understanding of someone they had not previously had real life interactions with. This is similar to Parks and Adelman's (1983) statement regarding individual's using social media platforms as a way to construct a better understanding of the stranger or audience member. A number of participants mentioned using Instagram as a way to create an opinion of an audience member. For instance, if the participant wanted to learn more about a member of their sub-community, like a class member at the large Mid-Atlantic university, they would search on Instagram to learn more about that individual.

Show certain characteristics. Another back stage action that can change how the user is viewed publically by their audience related to the user's privacy settings. Ross et

al., (2009) noted the ability to change the privacy settings on Instagram are similar to Facebook, which allows the user to grant access to select individuals or the general public. Similar to Facebook, the privacy settings on Instagram provides the user the ability to select their audience members, which acts as a way for the user to save-face. Goffman (1959) defined this concept as the ability to share selected characteristics to the audience so that the audience believes that is the user's true face. The traits the user deems appropriate or shareable are those the user must maintain in order to save face so that their audience believes the viewed person is an accurate portrayal. Throughout the interviews, the participants described only sharing their positive traits or the traits they want their audience to associate with them. This included sharing positive traits rather than showcase any negative feelings the person might have any negative experiences the person may be going through.

By setting the account to private, the participant is able to keep unwanted eyes, like parents and supervisors, from viewing their post. This trend may mimic a recent transition in Facebook demographics where older generations have slowly transitioned to a newer popular social media platform. Previously, older generations flocked to Facebook, causing the Baby Boomer generation to be one of quickest growing demographics on Facebook (VerHage, 2014). This has caused the younger generation to stray away from Facebook and adopt a newer social media platform. The participants described transitioning from Facebook to Instagram once members from older generations created Facebook profiles. In the future, this may occur with Instagram. If the older generation moves to Instagram, the younger generation may adopt whatever platform becomes trendy at the time (VerHage, 2014).

Front stage actions. After the individual has edited and selected what traits and characteristics they want to show to their audience, the audience is given the front stage view of the person. Like Facebook, the front stage acts as the user's profile and the audience's home feed on Instagram. Both show the audience the particular user's post. The audience members associated with the participants were predominantly relationships they already had in person. Many of these relationships include previous friendships, like those established before college in high school, college friends and people from hometowns. These relationships turn into followers and followings. On Instagram, the relationships through followers and followings are able to maintain connections without in-person interactions. These relationships mimic those mentioned by Newman et al., (2011). Newman et al., previously discussed friendships and connections on Facebook are usually relationships that already exist in-person. Instagram allows the user to maintain established connections, particularly ones that may not have daily or regularly occurring interactions. This can be done by constantly accessing the platform and refreshing the participant's home feed.

The home feed on Instagram is equivalent to the home feed on Facebook and similar to what Hogan (2010) deemed as exhibition. Here, the user is able to document their life through present, past, and future hopes of accomplishments in the form of photographs. The home feed allows the audience the setting to view those they are watching as well as provide the space for the participant to update their life through multiple posts or infrequency in posting (Goffman, 1959). By combining the concept of performance space and exhibition, the audience is able to view the actor in present time and view previous posts. This can also be considered the user's profile. The user's profile

collectively accounts for that specific user's history and can be added to through current posts.

Through the front stage presentation on the user's feed, either on the audience's home feed or the individual's profile, the user is able to showcase specific characteristics them deem as post worthy or what they want their audience to see as their true version. Again, this was mentioned by almost every participant when asked what they shared about themselves for their audience. The characteristics the user deemed as appropriate to share with their audience were positive in nature. This is similar as Goffman's (1959) face saving attributes. By maintaining an altered self to a specific audience, the user is able to present themselves as authentic. For example, a handful of participants stated art as a hobby. They used Instagram as a way to share her artistic abilities with her audience through her posts. If the user is truly unartistic, but post in such a manner, their audience will believe that art is an important part of who the user is. If the unartistic individual abruptly stops posting art related content, the audience may become confused or start to feel as though the user has been dishonest.

While the user may not present themselves in a true accurate way, the user is able to be encouraged through their postings from their audience's interactions through likes can cause the user to continue to post specific content. Sas et al., (2009) explained that positive interactions on social media may allow for continued posts, which is similar to findings related to Facebook. Throughout the interview process, Sas et al., (2009) findings were confirmed by multiple participants. If audience members do not interact with the user through likes or comments on a post, this may cause the user to delete a

post. Many participants described feeling discouraged or poorly when a post does not receive their desired number of likes.

Sentiments expressed in the results sections reflect on Newman et al.,'s (2011) findings. In the Newman et al., (2011) study, participants wanted their friends to think their life was perfect and thus related their posts and profile content around that goal. This study found similar statements related to posting Instagram that included only positive content. Additionally, participants described that they only felt comfortable posted positive content, like life experiences or events. The statements paralleled Newman et al.,'s (2011) previous findings about participants who only post content that the user viewed as not being boring and would not clutter someone's feed on Facebook with uninteresting topics. Participants discussed similar feelings about posting multiple times a day on Instagram, especially when the posts were selfies. Like previously mentioned, many participants felt negatively when seeing someone they follow who posts selfies consistently and continually.

People Present False Self

Walther et al., (2008) stated that individuals who use social media are aware they are only seeing a selected or calculated version of an individual. Many of the participants explained knowing that many Instagram users are not presenting a true version of themselves. This can be done through editing, posting at specific times, and filtering the picture before posting to enhance one's physical appearance. However, once the user posts an altered picture, they will need to continue altering their pictures in the future to maintain the physical appearance they had presented. Changing what the audience sees about and from the user is what Goffman (1959) defines as impression management.

This can be seen with an example provided by one of the participants. One participant described a female user they had met in person and does not follow on Instagram, but has seen on through the explore feature. The participant described the female who had posted sexually suggestive content. Because of this, she was not accepted into the sorority she was bidding into. Once the sorority became aware of the way she presents herself on Instagram, she was no longer viewed as a fit for the organization. This altered presentation can cause a false sense of understanding who the individual is. The suggestive post may affect the person's reputation because of their unedited or socially questionable images are presented to their audience rather than their true self (McKenna, Green, & Gleason, 2002). In essence, the female's actions and socially suggestive presentation of self had affected her abilities to be considered for positions or certain opportunities. This is similar to Myers and Sadaghiani's (2010) findings which stated that Millennials are comfortable when they are with others, especially those in authoritative positions.

Hancock and Toma (2009) noted one way a user is able to present themselves as an example of impression management can be done with their profile picture. The profile picture allowed the audience to see a visual representation of the user. A profile can also be viewed as a version of Goffman's (1959) prop. The photographic prop can become enhanced with additional captions and hashtags included in the text component of the post. Hashtags allow the user to share their posts with a secondary audience, one that can see what a user posts by joining a larger conversation rather than view the user's post through following their account. The ability for unknown accounts that do not follow the user, is similar to Hogan's (2010) statement. Hogan (2010) conceptualized that the user

posts for two different audiences, one the user is aware of and one the user is unaware of. The second audience can be considered as all of the individuals who use Instagram, while the first audience consists of the followers of the specific user. By joining the larger audience, the user is able to become a part of other people's visibility. However, this can be changed if the user's profile is set to private. Manikonda et al., (2014) explained how audiences were able to gain visibility to a particular user's profile. This can be seen on Instagram and as an option available to each user through their privacy setting.

Social Capital

Hogan, Jones and Creek (1985) noted that there is a direct relation between people who present themselves in a positive light and their social survival. One way this can be done is through the number of likes and followers that can be viewed by the user's audience. For instance, the number of followers and the number of accounts the user is following is placed on the very top of the user's profile. Additionally, the number of likes are displayed underneath each post and can be seen by the audience at large, even when the photo is off of the audience member's feed. Another way social capital can be seen is through the ratio between the number of followers versus the number of accounts the user is following. Many of the participants explained the importance of a follower to following ratio. If the user's followers to following ratio is drastically different, the user is viewed as less popular or more popular. For instance, if the user is following 200 accounts, but is being followed by 1,000 accounts, they are seen as popular. However, like previously stated, some individuals on Instagram do not gain his or her number of followers through organic means. One individual explained using specific hashtags to gain additional followers only to unfollow most of the accounts that follow them so they

can be perceived more popular. Another way social capital can be increased is through posting with friends and posting in recognition of a friend's birthday. The user is able to be seen as popular through the act of posting with other people in the photograph and through celebrating friendships on Instagram. Numerous participants described using their friend's birthdays as a reason to post that day and for them to be recognized as a close friend. This shows the user's audience that they have friendships and, in essence, increase their social capital.

Much like the findings of Lee, Moore, Park and Park (2012), the participants described the number of followers and what that number means to them emotionally. The number of friends on Facebook have shown a correlation to the users' social capital (Lee et al., 2012). The number of Facebook friends paralleled with Instagram users and the number of followers with some slight modification. As previously stated, Instagram is not a reciprocal platform where one user does not need to follow the other back. Because of this, the number of followers is not equal to the number of accounts the user is following. Several participants stated the number of followers they had meant something to them and how that number can be seen as a level of popularity. However, this changed depending on the age of the participant. The older participants described their original feelings toward their number of followers had changed as they got older. The decrease in importance placed on followers may relate to the older the individual is, the likelier that individual has established friendships and forged connections with others (Katie, 2014). This may be due to the individual leaving their hometown to go to college and create new relationships with those at college.

During this transition, the user may have a higher number of followers that consist of high school friends and new college connections. Once the user is at college, their number of followers may not relate to the number of friends they have through in-person relationships. George (2015) explained that friendships tend to lessen in numbers and importance as the individual gets older for a few different reasons. For instance, the friends may no longer see each other on constant basis, like relocating to attend college. Another reason includes the ability to actively select who they want to forge relationships with (George, 2015). This can be seen with virtual friendships through followers on Instagram and the feelings associated with the number of followers as the individual gets older in age. The user may not follow a person back since Instagram is not reciprocal account which provides the user the ability to connect with who they want.

Likes and comments. Sas et al., (2009) discussed positive reinforcement for social norms which can be achieved through interactions between the audience and the user. Positive reinforcement can be achieved when the audience members like or comments on a post. Some participants described posting specific content because of the interactions they had received based on their previous post. For instance, one participant described what types of posts will get a higher number of likes. Because of this, she is able to expect the number of likes a post will get before posting. Other participants described similar examples and how the number of likes may help them decide whether or not to post a specific picture. By expecting the number of likes or comments a post may receive, the user's profile is being shaped by their audience's participation.

One form of interaction on Instagram includes comments. This feature has been compared to Goffman's (1959) concept of whispering on previous social media

platforms, like Facebook, by Sas et al., (2009). Throughout the interview process, almost

every single participant stated receiving very few comments on their posts. However, the

comments that were received seemed to be positive or joking in nature. The positive

comments can increase the level of the Millennial's narcissism. Skues et al., (2012) noted

Millennial's level of narcissism can be elevated based upon their interactions on social

media. Another way the participant's self-esteem and level of narcissism can be increased

is through the number of likes they receive on posts. Throughout the interview process,

participants talked about their desired number of likes they would hope to achieve on

their post, feel that item is worthy, and to feel better about themselves.

Captions and Hashtags as Props

Another comparison between Facebook and Instagram can be seen with hashtags

and captions. The hashtag provides the user the opportunity to join another larger

conversation. For instance, if an artist posts a picture of his or her art, they may include

art related hashtags, like #art or #painting. The user is then able to join a sub-community

or group on the platform for additional interaction. Newman et al., (2011) explained how

groups and sub-community pages on Facebook provide the user opportunities to be a part

of another additional group or community that the user may not fully identify with or

show on their profile because it does not match the persona that they display. Another

way a user is able to access sub-communities or group pages is through following parody

accounts and follow people the user does not know in real-life, but finds interesting. Sub-

communities and parody accounts allow the user to share one side of their personality

without sharing the specific interest or personality trait to their followers.

Hashtags are similar to following unrelated accounts and can be viewed as a sub-community that the user may identify with more than what they post on their profile. An example of this could be a user who has been sharing art related posts so that their audience identifies the user with artistic abilities and interests. However, the user may follow a hashtag related to sports or comic books. While the user can be multifaceted off the platform in real-life, the user has created and maintained a profile heavily influenced by art. If the user randomly posts a sports related picture, the audience may become confused or second guess who the user truly is. The ability to join secondary groups through hashtags is similar to group pages available on Facebook. The user is able to access and follow as many accounts that act as a sub-community as they desire. Based on the participants, the additional accounts the user may follow should not exceed the number of accounts that follow that individual due to social standard associated with popularity. However, one number on Instagram that has become arguable is the number of hashtags that may be added within a caption.

Throughout the interview process, numerous participants stated their self-created rules related to the number of hashtags they consider as an acceptable in a caption. Predominantly, the participants agreed that the number of hashtags should not exceed 5 hashtags with the absolute maximum of 10 hashtags per post. The participants stated those who post a higher number of hashtags are those individuals who are looking for attention or are annoying. Walther et al., (2008) discussed how a user will self-regulate themselves when posting content for their audience. The participants discussed self-regulation concept in two places. First, how the individuals will share only their positive traits. Secondly, the number of hashtags the user will include with their caption

One way the user can increase the number of audience members and interaction

with a larger pool of Instagrammers, is through the use of hashtags. Leung (2013)

explained Millennials use social media as a way to be acknowledged by their peers and

others. A user can achieve acknowledgement on a larger scale by adding hashtags or

tagging people in the captions. The user is able to be acknowledged on Instagram through

adding additional hashtags with their captions, geotagging and tagging friends.

Additionally, many participants described having unknown accounts follow them or like

their content based upon the hashtags that were included in the caption.

Specific Posting as a Prop

Positive emotions had been cited as a continual occurrence throughout social

media interaction and may be one of the causes of Millennials' interest in social media

platforms (Correa, Hinsley, & Zuniga, 2009). Some of the participants described using

the prime time concept as a way to gain additional positive interaction with their

audience. Increased interaction can be done by posting during specific times or by

posting content similar to previously well-received posts. Posting during specific times of

the day or by posting on certain days of week is similar to Goffman's (1959) symbolic

expression. Goffman's (1959) symbolic expression related to the actor deliberately

presenting themselves to the audience. The deliberate nature of posting based on prime

time, is also similar to Ting-Toomey's (1998) facework theory, which relates to a person

presenting a self-based upon social standards, in this case, standards on when to post. The

end result from deliberate posting has led to an increased satisfaction in self-expression

and positive feelings associated with knowing the content was well-received by their

audience. (Sas, et al., 2009). A person's face can be compromised by not understanding

or following cultural beliefs and standards, when emotions are present during an experience, or by only focusing on the individual's situation (Zhang, Ting-Toomey, & Oetzel, 2014). Zhang et al., (2014) explained that to eliminate any threat to the person's face is to become competent in conflict management and to remove emotions from the situation.

When the participants were not posting on the platform, they were using Instagram as a form of entertainment. One of the reasons participants joined the platform due to the level of entertainment that is available to them. Brignall and Van Valey's (2005) found Millennial's interest and continuous use of social media for the value of entertainment, which mimics the participants' reason for accessing Instagram. Leung (2013) paralleled Brignall and Van Valey's (2005) findings related to entertainment as a reason to access the platform throughout the day. Many of the participants admitted to accessing the platform numerous times a day, especially when they were walking to and from class, waiting for something, or before they went sleep.

Altered Image

The platform allowed users to experience their friends and other people through pictures. The ability to show themselves through only photographic content was noted as enticing and different. Because of the picture only criteria, the user was able to weed out text heavy posts associated with Facebook and text-only statements on Twitter. By posting only photographs, the user was able to see more of their followings' life with a better understanding of them because nothing text based could be taken out of context. With the importance placed on the picture rather than text on the post, the user was able to get better understanding of the other. Much like the statement "A picture is worth a

thousand words," the user was able to add their opinions about the picture and the person who posted it rather than read how they should interpret the text in a post (Gaudiano, 2014). Gaudiano (2014) states that more than 80% of virtual content is text based, which may be why users are and were drawn to the picture-based platform, Instagram. However, this opens the opportunity for people to create opinions and judgments based upon a person's physical appearance through photographs.

Noble (2015) noted over half of women that were surveyed in Australia admitted to altering her images before posting on social media. However, these same women thought photo-shopping celebrity images was off-putting and wrong for publications to do so. These negative viewpoints related to magazines and media publications that obviously edit pictures may provide a sense of pressure for when female users post on social media, especially those not in the limelight.

Lo (2015) discussed over 80 percent of women feel social media sets unrealistic beauty standards. One female participant agreed believed social media and photo editing is a perpetual issue that cycles from the media and was continued by those who view the content and post accordingly. "I think that's one of the core problems of like young girls that have self-esteem issues. And you hear about this all the time, but the image portrayed in media...on magazine covers that are photo-shopped. It's so unrealistic. I think it's damaging and it's sad for the celebrities that do it that maybe that don't feel comfortable enough in their own skin." However, Katz (2015) shows over 80 percent of women surveyed believes that social media can be the changing force of society's constructs on beauty standards. Society's beauty standard could change with the rise in beauty experts on social media, more women against photo-shopping, and bloggers sharing their views

on a larger social scale (Katz, 2015). There may be a change in how women post in the future, but when the participants were asked, they blamed any unrealistic and altered female picture posts on the media. Bovy (2013) related social beauty standards on not only the media, but the male gaze. Both may be the reason to cause female users to alter her physical appearance on Instagram. Multiple female participants discussed wanting to look cute and attractive in her posts.

Goffman's (1959) concept of presentation of self has been adapted throughout the years, especially with the advancement of technology and the ways in which a person can present themselves to others. Since Goffman (1959), numerous studies have used his concept to act as a foundation to understand how people present themselves through different forms of communication, like videodating or social media. Most of the research has been conducted by examining Facebook and how its users present themselves on the platform. This study's findings have paralleled Goffman's (1959) concept and findings associated with Facebook.

Limitations

The interview candidates included students and young adults associated with the large Mid-Atlantic university, whether as undergraduate students, graduate students, and young alumni. However, this is a limitation of this study. The findings while consistent between those interviewed, may not be applicable with the larger population. These findings may relate to those currently in the Millennial generation, but may not apply to the younger generation or the members of older generations who are accessing the platform, like the parents and family members of those who were interviewed. Future

studies can use this information and findings to compare to other generations to better

assess the generalizability of the study's findings.

Additionally, the participants related to the demographic population associated

with the large Mid-Atlantic university. The percentage of male to female students may be

drastically different at another university or institution or be more equal in nature. The

ratio between the genders may cause different findings at another institution. However,

the ratio for this study did correlate to the university's student population, the second

round of participant messaging encouraged males to volunteer for the interview process.

This may have skewed the possible volunteers who were female from volunteering and

encourage more male participants. Another limitation to the study related to the

placement in schooling between the male and female participants. Most of the male

participants were undergraduate students while there were a handful of female graduate

students. Through the interview process, many participants explained future career

placements as a means to edit his or her presentation on the platform. This may have been

different given the level in academia the student was currently enrolled in.

One participant described seeing different cultures from various geographical

locations use Instagram differently. This may be a limitation to the study. For instance,

while she lived in California, she noticed people use Instagram differently than those who

used Instagram from her hometown in South Africa. Those in California used the

platform more artistically than those in South Africa who viewed the platform more like

Facebook. If different regions of the country or world use the platform differently, the

local culture may be an influence on those who post in the specific geographic location.

Future studies can expand on this finding to better understand how different cultures and geographic location residents are using the platform.

Because this study was examining how the large Mid-Atlantic university constituents use the platform, the ability to gain participants was done on a voluntary basis. However, there may have been different answers or opinions from those who do not access the platform in any manner. The response rate for volunteers may have been changed if there was an incentive presented to the public or if people were polled at random. Future studies may have the opportunity to select a larger pool of individuals to be interviewed. Another complication with voluntary participants was accepting people who actively use the platform and were interested in participating. Future studies may be able to add to this study by interviewing individual who do not use the platform and compare those individuals to those who do actively access the platform.

As previously mentioned, the participants were predominately Caucasian. The lack of racial diversity may be a limitation within the study as members from a variety of races may use Instagram differently. For instance, throughout the interview process, different dialects and slang terminology were used. These dialects may be common with a specific race or change the meaning of a caption from one race to another. During one of the interviews, a Millennial used the word 'slay' to describe something that can be defined as 'on point' or 'to the nine's.' this term needed to be defined to the researcher, which was a different race than the participant. When asked if slay was the same as another popular colloquialism 'on fleek,' the participant explained that 'on fleek' was no longer popular and should not be used if the person wants to remain credible and cool to those around them. However, one interview, also a different race that the previously

mentioned participant used the terminology 'on fleek' to explain her posts. The racial differences may have caused one participant to deem terminology outdated and uncool while the other considers it still relevant and cool to use. As both of these participants were female, the large Mid-Atlantic university students, and around the same age, one may assume the racial differences may play a part in dialect differences and ultimately add to one user's experience on Instagram than others.

These differences that may be associated with race were not assessed in this study. However, future studies may examine how races use the platform in addition to any changed related to how that race alters their presentation on social media. Different races may be examined to compare one to another, or concentrate on one race to see how that race may differ from a larger range of diversity. Another characteristic that may create different responses unrelated to race may be the year of the individual is in college. While this study set age requirements for the participants to fall into, the study did not seek for each college year to be equally represented. For instance, this study did not set to fulfill interviews from at least one person identifying as a freshman, sophomore, junior, senior and graduate student. Instead, this study accepted interviews who volunteered to be a part of the study as long as they were within the age requirements. After the interview process, the participants identified as juniors or above within the large Mid-Atlantic university school system.

Another limitation related to the student's identification relates to their major and academic qualifications. The participant's majors ranged from instructional technology to communication management. The range of majors were diverse and varied with different co-curricular activities to supplement the student's degree path. Future studies may be

able to narrow a degree concentration to identify how specific groups of students use the platform and how they alter themselves. For instance, the art students identified using the platform in a different manner than other majors. The art students used the platform as a means to share their art with their followers as well as see how other artists use the platform. Additionally, these students were more likely to use less filters than those not in the art programs at the large Mid-Atlantic university. Future researchers will be able dive deeper into how different majors use social media and compare them within the industry or against another industry. Science majors may use the platform similarly to other science majors, but drastically different than communication majors. This study can act as a foundation related to how Millennials use Instagram and be expanded by future researchers to answer a number of new questions that considered limitations. Additionally, future research can use the themes, questions and findings to understand how Millennials use Instagram, how Millennials alter themselves on Instagram, and how interaction on Instagram impacts Millennials through quantitative research methods.

Conclusion

Goffman (1959) conceptualized how people present themselves dependent on the company in which they are with. Through the use of props, impression management and other constructs, an individual is said to alter themselves to appease the majority of those viewing and observing the individual. The audience is comprised of individuals targeted to the specific event and surroundings. The individual altering themselves is considered an actor in front of an audience, which is consist of their peers and those the actor hopes to impress and sway to believe the presented version is the true version of the individual. However, this presented self may not be consisted with the version that is presented to a

different audience. The individual may choose to act one way with one audience and

differently in front of another audience. The hope, according to Goffman (1959), is that

neither audience cross paths or become aware of the other. If the audiences learn about

each other and discuss the actor in which they are familiar with, the actor may lose

credibility due to inconsistencies. Throughout time, this may have become more difficult

to accomplish due to technological advances in the communication field.

Since Goffman, the world has added virtual communication to its communication

abilities. Where people were once only able to present themselves through in-person

communication, people are now able to communicate through email and now social

media, like Facebook. The ability to hide behind the computer screen when talking or

communicating with others, provides the person the opportunity to behave differently,

become a different person or create a version of themselves that they achieve to become.

The stage where the actor once acted in Goffman's (1959) theory becomes the platform

the actor presents themselves on Instagram. Previous research examined Facebook as the

stage and the user as the actor. The auditorium and seats where the audience would once

view a performance, becomes the home screen or feed on Facebook. The actor is able to

perfect and alter his or her performance for the audience while sitting behind the

computer screen. While behind the computer screen, the social media user is able to

articulate themselves before sharing the performance with their 'friends' on Facebook.

The user has the opportunity to select how he or she wants to interact with the audience

members by creating a relationship through friends. However, the audience members

may be skewed through sub-community pages and group accounts. The user is able to

present one personality trait or interest with other audience members than those able to

view their profile through the Facebook friendship. Here the user the able to forge

different and new relationships with outside audiences, those in which may see a different

version of the actor than what his or her friends see through the audience's home feed.

Facebook has allowed people the opportunity to become a different person or

present a different version than what is presented through in-person relationships and

interactions. Because of the parallels between Goffman's presentation of self (1959) and

social media platforms, like Facebook and Instagram, researchers have examined how

people use social media as a means of alter themselves to a larger audience. Previously

conducted research has found correlations between users showing a different view of

themselves on the platform and using social media groups and sub-communities as a way

to access additional audiences. Social media also allows the user to ability to share what

they believe will be most receptive to the audience as a form of impression management.

The user may deem their impression management as acceptable or successful if the user

receives interaction through likes and commenting on posts. A few years ago, Facebook

was the most popular and widely used social media platform. However, as technology

has updated, users have changed what they deem as enjoyable and tools that they desire

while accessing the platforms. Within the five years, Instagram has come to fruition and

has gained popularity with the Millennial generation and those younger.

Because of Instagram's popularity and ease of user through mobile devices,

Millennials have joined the platform and maintained accounts for the picture based

platform. There are numerous similarities between Facebook and the newly adopted

platform, Instagram. Due to the similarities between the platforms, this study examined

how Goffman's concept of presentation of self (1959) could be adapted to Instagram

based on previously conducted research on Facebook. This study used previously conducted research as a foundation for its research questions, which were used to interview Millennials associated with the large Mid-Atlantic university between the ages of 19 and 29 years old.

Throughout the research process, 19 Millennials connected with the large Mid-Atlantic university were interviewed to better understand how the Millennials use Instagram and how the Millennial alters themselves on the platform. The interview process has shown numerous similarities between Goffman's (1959) presentation of self, previous findings from Facebook usage, and Millennials on Instagram. Many of those interviewed discussed altering themselves by posting only positive qualities for the audience to see one version of the user. Other participants discussed being cognizant that others alter themselves through physical changes, like photo-shopping, or presenting different personality characteristics that may not be shown in in-person relationships. Another finding of this study relates to how the different genders use Instagram and how the male gender perceives female users. This difference shows where additional research can be conducted as well as provides the opportunity to future changes related to how people present themselves on Instagram based on socially constructed beauty standards. Throughout the process, the Goffman's (1959) presentation of self has been updated for the newer social media platform, Instagram, and can act as a foundation for future research on the next popular social media platform.

Appendix A

General information

1. Tell me about yourself, how old are you and how are you affiliated to the large

   Mid-Atlantic university?

   a. What are some of your hobbies and/or interests?

   b. What is your major?

Social media use in general

2. Describe how you use social media in general?

   a. What platforms do you currently use?

      i. You use Instagram, right?

3. Why did you join Instagram after being active on other platforms?

   a. Are your other social media accounts linked to your Instagram account?

      i. Do you automatically share your pictures to the other platforms?

         1. Why or why not?

4. Describe how you use Instagram.

   a. When did you start using Instagram?

   b. How frequently do you post on the platform?

5. Why is your Instagram account important to you?

General picture questions

6. What do you think makes a good Instagram picture?

7. Describe the types of pictures you post on Instagram.

   a. What types of pictures do you post more frequently?

   b. Why do you post that type of picture more than others?

8. Explain the types of pictures you would not post.

      a.   Explain if there are any topics or subjects you would not post.

9.   Describe how you feel about selfies.

      a.   Why do you or why do you not post selfies?

      b.   What do you think about others who post selfies?

10. How many pictures do you post on a weekly basis?

      a.   Describe why you feel this is an adequate frequency to be active on the platform.

11. Describe your thought process when you're adding a caption to a picture or video on Instagram.

      a.   Why do you use hashtags?

      b.   What do you feel is an acceptable amount of hashtags per post?

            i.   Why do you feel that number is more suited than a higher or lower amount?

12. How do you feel about the fact that you can edit or delete posts after they are online?

13. Have you ever deleted a picture?

      a.   Why?

      b.   How long was the picture on the platform before you deleted it?

      c.   Have you ever posted something that you originally that you originally debated whether you should delete it? What happened?

Profile questions

14. Describe your profile.

      a.   What is your picture and bio like?

15. Describe your Instagram privacy settings

    a. Has your profile always been under this setting?

    b. What made you decide to use the current setting?

16. Describe your followers.

    a. How many followers do you have?

        i. How does that number make you feel?

    b. How many accounts do you follow?

17. What characteristics of an Instagram profile or person make you want to follow them?

    a. How do you find out about new accounts to follow?

    b. Do you feel you're more likely to follow people you know or don't know on Instagram?

        i. What makes you want to follow someone?

18. Do you have people who follow you that you do not know in real life?

    a. Why are you comfortable being connected to people you don't know?

19. Describe how you interact with others on Instagram.

    a. How frequently do you comment or like a picture?

    b. What causes you to comment or like a picture?

20. Explain how the number of likes or comments affect your future posting.

21. What kind of comments do you normally receive on pictures?

    a. In what ways have comments changed how you approach posts?

    b. Have you received any negative comments?

    c. What did you do?

22. Describe how or whether you generally filter your photos or video content.

    a. If you don't use a filter, do you use the #nofilter?

23. Describe how you select a filter when posting.

    a. Do you use an additional 3rd party editing application before posting?

        i. Why or why not?

24. Describe how your use of filters has changed or differed since Instagram has updated the application to include individual filter settings, like brightness, contrast, saturation, etc.

Personal questions:

25. What about yourself do you like to share with others on our Instagram account?

    a. Why do you share these traits over others?

26. Explain why you feel open to share those traits over others on your Instagram account.

    a. Are you ever worried how your captions or content could be taken out of context?

        i. Why or why not.

27. Do you believe your Instagram feed reflects your personality?

    a. Do you highlight certain traits on your Instagram account over others?

    b. What trait do you feel is best reflected in your profile feed?

    c. When was a time you didn't think it reflected your personality?

    d. If you could change something about your account, what it would be.

28. When you are with someone you follow or know on Instagram, how do they compare to what you see online?

    a. Do you think people you follow accurately represent themselves on Instagram?

29. Explain how your friends' posts affect your thoughts of them as a person?

    a. How does that affect the way you think of yourself/ your relationship with them?

30. Explain why you think people you meet/know in real life do not accurately present themselves on their Instagram account?

    a. Does this affect how you feel about them in your real life interactions with them?

    b. Have you ever met someone in person that you did not know prior to following on Instagram?

        i. How was this interaction different from their Instagram presence?

Appendix B

TOWSON
UNIVERSITY

Date: Tuesday, September 01, 2015

NOTICE OF APPROVAL

TO: Olivia   Orth   **DEPT:**   COMM

PROJECT TITLE: *Personality of Selfie: A Modern Understanding Goffman's Self on Instagram*

SPONSORING AGENCY: None

APPROVAL NUMBER: 16-A019

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Participants has approved the project described above. Approval was based on the descriptive material and procedures you submitted for review. Should any changes be made in your procedures, or if you should encounter any new risks, reactions, injuries, or deaths of persons as participants, you must notify the Board.

A consent form: [√] is   [ ] is not   required of each participant

Assent: [ ] is   [√] is not   required of each participant

This protocol was first approved on: 01-Sep-2015
This research will be reviewed every year from the date of first approval.

Debi Gartland, Chair
Towson University Institutional Review Board

TOWSON
UNIVERSITY

APPROVAL NUMBER: 16-A019

To: Olivia   Orth
           13 Morrislea Ct
           Parkville   MD   21234

From: Institutional Review Board for the Proctection of Human
           Subjects Debi Gartland,Chair

Date: Tuesday, September 01, 2015

RE: Application for Approval of Research Involving the Use of
           Human Participants

Thank you for submitting an Application for Approval of Research
Involving the Use of Human Participants to the Institutional Review
Board for the Protection of Human Participants (IRB) at Towson
University. The IRB hereby approves your proposal titled:

*Personality of Selfie: A Modern Understanding Goffman's Self on
Instagram*

If you should encounter any new risks, reactions, or injuries while
conducting your research, please notify the IRB. Should your research
extend beyond one year in duration, or should there be substantive
changes in your research protocol, you will need to submit another
application for approval at that time.

We wish you every success in your research project. If you have any
questions, please call me at (410) 704-2236.

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       File

Appendix C

Coding Category Reason to join Instagram	Sub-category	Definition	Example
	Picture based platform	Started Instagram because of a picture only content.	"I joined Instagram just because I like pictures. Um, I've always liked looking at people's pictures, like on Facebook. It's always been my favorite, like, not hobby hobbies…I look at a lot of pictures and you can get more from a picture than you can than seeing someone's status. Like, you can get the caption with the picture and know exactly what they're trying to say with the picture. It's like a picture's worth a 1,000 words so I like posting pictures, I like commenting on them, I like seeing them..." "I got on Instagram because it's a different…different aspect of social media. I kind of liked the whole pictures. Um, it was kind of like more telling a story with pictures than typing. Sometimes typing just kind of gets boring and it's kind of impersonal so like pictures…kind of

			tells a little more of a story."
	Filtering	Reason for getting the app after already being active on other platforms was due to the filters.	"It was probably the filters that people were using." "…I think it was the filters actually. That was like oooohhh I can change my photo and look nice." "I first joined Instagram when my sister showed me how much better you could make a picture look after putting a filter on it. I first used my Instagram just to take pictures of random scenery's, but then I started putting up pictures of myself and friends."
	Keeping Family Followers from Viewing Profile	People who have other social media accounts place a separation on who follows on which platform. Facebook is more family oriented while Instagram has a similar age demographic with friend followers.	"[I use] Facebook mostly to communicate with my family so if I post something it's so that my aunts and grandparents know what I'm doing." "Like, my mom now has a Facebook so I, like, really try to make everything as private as possible because there's stuff I don't want my parents to see."
Privacy Settings on Platform			
	Open account	The individuals who have open accounts do so because they don't think they post	"... I just feel like I don't really have any enemies. So I don't have anyone that's

anything that could be construed as negative on their platform.

really gonna check in and...I don't feel like anyone's going to stalk me or anything like that. In general…yet. I don't have any enemies like that I don't have anyone crazy like that and um, also too um, I guess I don't have nothing to hide. I think that's the main reason. I'm just an open book." "I guess because I wasn't posting anything too personal. I don't put any location information or anything like that on my account and in my description or anything. So it was kind of like 'eh well...I don't really have to change it or anything because I don't have anything for people to I guess find on based on stalking me...find out where I live. I watch criminal minds, haha. But I guess that's kind of why I never really considered putting it on private."

Closed account	Use is as a way to keep those they know but don't want to follow them. Like family members or those who may	"I don't always want employers or something. Like if I'm drinking a glass of wine with a friend or something…yeah.

	impact employment possibilities.	Also because it [my Instagram profile] is so personal and you can see where someone is based upon their location. If they forget to turn it off, that kind of freaks me out." "I didn't want random people to go to my page and be able to see pictures that I posted. And I feel like the reason why I post certain things I just so I can have an intimate relationship with the followers that I do have and that I decide to follow back or for them to follow me and so I would like to have control over who looks at my page."
Change in privacy settings	Those who are older within the Millennial demographic, toward the end of their college time, are more concerned with their image for professional reasons and have made edits accordingly.	"I guess, to me I'm just [like] 'oh well there isn't really much to hide or let's say someone I'm just kind of like 'oh my life is so like exciting so great,' if random people want to see it, then, here. Be jealous of my life. But now it's kind of boring. I don't know I just feel like now, now that more people that I should be more aware of [are on Instagram]…like my

parents are, people like future employers or something. I just feel like it's just something that you have to be more aware of what you put out there."

"...like there's so many weird accounts out there that can tap into your information and everything like that. If someone actually wants to look at my photos, they need to take the extra 2 seconds to just request to follow me. I don't want some random person looking at my life. I want some sort of privacy…nothings that private anymore."

Interaction Styles on the Platform

Hashtags and Captions

Those who do you caption pictures and possibly include hashtags do so as a means to be creative and showcase their sense of humor and level of cleverness. Rather than describing the picture through text, people have been going toward using emoji's to describe the picture or eliminate the need to describe the

"I usually try to think [of that is] a little bit more than just 'me and my friend whoever.' Like, something like funny or that. Maybe more kind of like an inside joke type caption." "I want the caption to be clever. Um, clever captions get more likes." "So I just feel like an emoji would probably describe the emotion I'm

	picture. Use the caption to showcase non-physical traits, specifically sense of humor. Attempts to be clever is consistently mentioned as how to caption a picture.	feeling or what I think I look like. I have an alien emoji for an image. It was a picture of me and my makeup was done, but I had plain face except the eyes. I had bold eyes and it kind of looked like an alien emoji..."
Likes vs. Comments	The older the user gets, the less likely they care about likes. People are more likely to like a picture than to comment. This is especially true when viewing accounts that there is not an in-life relationship. Those who do comment will only do so with accounts they have a personal connection with.	"I don't like people's pictures that I don't know." "So I don't comment on people's pages that I don't know. So I have to know the person in order for me to actually comment on their pictures. And I like pictures. When I really enjoy something about that picture, I like it." "I mean I generally don't comment too much, but I like pictures. I've liked every single one of my brother's pictures. I like most of my other cousin's pictures. I like most of my close friends' pictures."
Rules for Posting	The participant who do post selfies have specific rules or guidelines for how frequently to post as to not be seen negatively by their audience members	Because I don't really like posting selfies at all and I when I look at Instagram, I want to make sure there's enough time spaced out between [selfies]. I want to

		or to feel negatively about themselves.	make sure it hasn't been like within a week that I've posted. If they're someone where that's all I see, then it kind of frustrates me. It's the people who post selfies like every other post that I'm like why is that necessary?"
How Males Present Themselves			
	Male Usage	The male interviewees follow the same individuals who are following them to a very close percentage/ ratio and don't see the point in selfies.	"I think it would be easier to say I have 11 pictures. 11 total posts and that's from last year. Like my birthday. I took a picture there. My brother's graduation. Just landmark events, essentially." "[Posting on] Instagram is less frequent than that. Very infrequently. I think I've had Instagram for like 2, 2.5 years and I have 7 posts. None of my posts are post worthy. I just take pictures and want to put them out there. I don't really post on social media. It's more so I use it to observe. I just have it…why not have it." "I go on Instagram at least 4 times a day. But I don't post as much anymore. I

			probably post once every month or so now. But, I'm definitely always going on and looking at other people's pictures."
Males and Selfies	Males post less frequently than females. Think females place a higher importance on interaction, like likes, comments and editing, because of media rules. Think females use the platform differently due to social constructs.		"I don't have a lot of pictures of just me. I think that's kind of weird." Selfies "I generally feel out of control not being able to see myself as much. Whenever I'm positioning my head with my phone in my hand it's just, it's tricky. And I just haven't gotten used to that. And it's not something I see myself getting used to. Also, when I see them I just feel self-enveloping." 'Cus I want to say, I'm pretty ugly so I don't want to see my face. I don't know...for girls [posting selfies] it's fine. The stigma toward that is it's ok for girls, it's not ok for guys. Which is maybe not the way it should be, but it is. Guys are weird, and girls aren't like."
Sharing Self on Platform			
	Appearing More Enjoyable or Entertaining Than in Person	Those who share their self on Instagram are familiar and understand that they	"Well I would probably say I usually go for once a week. Once every two weeks. I guess it

only present their good days and when they have something that is share worthy or like worthy. People will save pictures of a fun time for when they don't have something to post so that they can look more entertaining and busier than they are at the time of posting.

just depends on when something actually happens. Or something's actually picture worthy, something pretty cool..." "Yeah I think aside from me getting stress and everything. I don't like to show my stressing and frustration on Instagram and everything. But other than that I think everything's [similar who I am]." "Just out of curiosity or boredom whatever it is. So I think I reflect that back in my own posts. I don't like to see negative posts so I think that's why I'm less likely to post negative things. Negative just meaning not happy things."

| Knowing Others Do Not Present True Self | Aware of false presentation of others but doesn't affect the observers opinion of the person to a large extent. | "I guess it's because Instagram…people probably just post pictures of how they want people to think of them. I feel like most people would put pictures they think they look good in and pictures where they look like they have fun just because that's what they think that's what people want to see." "Well, it's a |

phrase that people will not post their sad moments of social media. They usually post the 1% of their lives, which is the happy really fun moments." "The girls that I follow that work out, they post all the time about working out. I know they're not working out 365 days or 24 hours a day. But that's all they [post]…that's all I see because that's sort of their Instagram personality."

Frequency of Posting	Only when something monumental or eventful is happening or when it shows the person's social live. Usually weeks between posts rather than weekly or daily.	"I think it depends on the type of week. Last week I was on vacation in North Carolina, I posted a lot more frequently than a typical day. So [if] I'm not doing anything on the weekend I can go three weeks without posting." "Sometimes it's like twice a day. Sometimes it is once a week. It depends on what is going on in my life." "I usually put something up maybe once a week or once every two weeks. 'cus my life isn't like that exciting to put

			something up, like, every day."
	Publicizing Friendship through Birthdays	Use Instagram as a way to celebrate friend's birthday. Like an updated way to write on their wall or make/send a card.	"If I'm posting something nice about one of my friends on their birthdays or something, it's definitely a post for them." "If it's like, a good picture or if it's something exciting that I'm doing. Or it's like someone's birthday I'll post."
Post Editing			
	Filters	Filtering is used to focus and enhance a body feature that the person feels best about. For instance, eye or hair color. Filtering is generally done to make the photo look better if the person is/was interested in art of some sort.	"I usually just click through them and see which makes the image look lightest and easiest to see. Or my niece has really blue eyes so I like to pick ones to make her eyes look extra blue because they are beautiful." "...I usually pick one that makes my hair look blonder. Just 'cus I like the way I look when I have blonde hair."
	Editing	People who feel as though they need to change their appearance is a thing but not seen positively.	"Only if there's a spelling error or grammar error. 'Cus sometimes in my head I'll know there's supposed to be a word there, but I'll forget to type it in. I'll only really change spelling things." "Usually it's the caption part. I try to put something whimsical, but then I

		reread it but it's not that funny. So I'll just take it off..." "I don't anyways where I'm going, but on social media I have more time to process things. I'm an internal processor so it's easier for me to, like, have an idea in my head, and then think about how to act accurately describe it, or something like that."
Altering Image Based on Media	The editing of photos and selectively using angles or makeup to enhance a person in the picture fits with social standards and media expectations.	"They don't look bad, but they don't look the same. Some people really can put up a front on Instagram. I know some people who they look one way on Instagram and then you see them in person." "I mean if they're going to add a simple filter then I don't see why it's a problem. But if it's to the point where it's obvious that you edited so much that you're kind of taking away the natural beauty of, say a selfie or something, then that's where I draw the line...where it's too over shopped." ""I mean I don't always come looking cute and ready to pose. My friends are always

		like 'We don't look good. We don't look good, we have to delete it. We have to delete it.' Ok. I guess it's just society. Girls in general just want to look good."
Deleting Posts Post-Publication	Deleting a picture can be used to save face.	"So I mean, I make sure I delete…jobs you got to clear out your like Instagram out for bad photos and stuff. Instagram's getting more and more notoriety that like jobs and like your bosses are actually like looking through your Instagram. I have a job now so before I started working there, [I was like] 'Oh I need to clear out my Instagram,' and I looked back like 2-3 years ago." "Not that long ago, I went through and deleted a bunch of pictures where I was posting pictures every day when people weren't using Instagram...so I went back and went was just like 'Well, this is stupid.' This was so long ago.'"
Time of Posting	While wanting more likes is not necessarily the determining factor for posting a picture, the time of	"Usually I would think it was like noon or like one o'clock. It's more when it comes to night. It's anywhere

			day is considered in order to obtain the most possible likes on a post.	from like 7 to, I guess, 10 o'clock. I think they call it prime time. Prime time, that's crazy, that doesn't make any sense. And then I would actually post something in the middle of the day and [be] 'like this is weak [number of likes],' and then I'll post something later. Sometimes I'll even just wait. Like I'll have the picture and I'll wait on it. Then I'll post it [later in the day] and then I notice it gets a lot more likes. I notice whenever I'm home normally it's night time [and] getting ready for bed. I'm like just scroll through and see what everyone's doing today." "My mom took a picture of me playing flag football and she sent it to me the next morning. So it was maybe 11 o'clock [a.m.]. And I just waited until like 6 o'clock [p.m.] and I posted it just 'cus it was cool."
Perception of Selfies	Those Who View Selfies Favorably	Those who post selfies, especially numerous times a week/day are viewed as insecure or needing the	"I think selfies are fantastic because I think that they are a way of encouraging people to boost their own self esteem by	

likes/engagement as a means to boost their self-esteem. How the user interacts with the selfie poster varies between encouraging the act by liking as a means to increase the person's self-esteem as they see that as the reason the person originally posted the selfie or unfollow as they feel the person is only posting the picture because they want the reinforcement to increase their self-esteem. Those who post selfies are doing seem to have rules of their own on when to post and not going overboard.

showing it off to other people. By saying 'I feel like I look great today, look at how great I look. I am feeling myself, I am feeling good, I want you all to see how good I look today.' I think that is a great thing and we should all be very proud of ourselves." . "and if it's a selfie, it's usually because I look great. It's usually a selfie that is because it's a nice selfie as opposed to when I'm with other people."

| Those Who View Selfies Unfavorably | Those who would not post selfies are adamant about not posting selfies. When asked what type of picture they wouldn't post, some said posting selfies. Or adamantly vocalized not posting selfies as something they do not do on Instagram. | "I'm envious because they take hella good selfies and I can't. [When a person posts selfies constantly] It's annoying! Are you that insecure that you need to post, like, 7 pictures a day?" "Some people only post selfies and it's kind of weird. I mean I do sometimes. But I feel like it's kind of narcissistic to post |

all pictures of yourself. Some people's accounts only consist of selfies. It's like 'do you post any pictures of your friends?' They all look the same. I guess I'd understand it more if they [the selfie] looked different, like you're in a different place. But if you just have a solid blank expression in every selfie and it's always [the] same angle in the same place." "Well, studies have shown the more people with more selfies tend to link with narcissistic views." Because I don't really like posting selfies at all and I when I look at Instagram, I want to make sure there's enough time spaced out between if I ever post a picture of myself like from say a new hair cut or something. I want to make sure it hasn't been like within a week that I've posted. If they're someone where that's all I see, then it kind of frustrates me. Like I don't want…sorry I don't want to see your face

			every 2 seconds. Um, but if it's something that's occasional, every once and a while, then I think it's fine. But it's the people who post selfies like every other post that I'm like why is that necessary?"
Interactions on Instagram			
	Likes: Ability to Boost a User's Self Esteem	Those who like a picture, do so to improve or increase the poster's self-esteem. May see likes as a way to gain positive feelings about themselves.	"If I'm not tagged in it, I don't. Unless it's, like, the person looks really great and I'm like 'you look really great' self-esteem boosting. I'm really big into self-esteem boosting." "It makes them feel good about themselves, too. I mean if I get a 100 likes, I'm like 'Alright!' I say something about it. But if I don't get much I don't say much about it at all. It['s a] self-esteem boost as well."
	Follower Ratio	People seek to have a higher number or followers than who follows them. This acts as a virtual popularity ranking. People should/do follow less individual than who are following then as a way to appear	"I definitely I wouldn't want to follow a lot more people than follow me." "I definitely have had friends point out that I have a lot more followers than people that I follow, but I don't necessarily care about that." "I guess

more popular and in demand.

when I first got Instagram I recognized I wanted more followers, like when I was you know younger, but now I'm like 'Oh I'd rather have people that I know actually following me.' But other than that I guess the number [doesn't matter anymore]."

Appendix D

Informed Consent Form

I, _____, agree to participate in the study
entitled "Personality of Selfie: A Modern Understanding Goffman's Self on Instagram,"
which will be conducted by Olivia Orth, graduate student of the Communication
Management program at Towson University. The research project is conducted through
in-person interviews to understand young adults' use of Instagram, the social media
platform. The information gained through the interview process will be analyzed for a
master's thesis.

As a participant, I understand my involvement and answers during the interview process
are voluntary. If, at any time during the study, I would like to withdraw from the study or
not answer any interview questions, I have the right to do so. I understand the
interviewing process may take 30 minutes to one hour depending on my responses.

Any answers that I provide during or after the interview process will be used
anonymously in the master's thesis paper. My answers will be recorded and saved to a
password-protected laptop. My answers will be used for transcription, quotations, and/or
data analysis for print publication.

I have been informed and understand that the researcher, Olivia Orth, will know my true
identity but will record and write my answers with a code, like a number or letter. At the
conclusion of the study and after the defense of the thesis, the coding document and any
other documents, which contain my identity, will kept for three years and then destroyed.
Under this condition, I agree that any information obtained from this research study will
be used in any manner deemed appropriate for the thesis publication, provided that my
name is not used.

I understand that there is minimal to no risk associated with participating in this study. I
understand that I am able to withdraw from this study, for any reason, without affecting
my role as a member of the Towson University community.

If I have any questions or problems that arise throughout the study process, you may
contact Olivia Orth at 717-309-8189, the faculty advisor, Dr. Cylor Spaulding at 410-
704-3943, or the Chairperson of Towson University's Institutional Review Board for the
Protection of Human Participants, Dr. Debi Gartland, at 410-704-2236.

_____
Signature of Participant   Date

_____
Researcher   Date

THIS PROJECT HAS BEEN REVIEWED BY THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW
BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN PARTICIPANTS TOWSON
UNIVERSITY.

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