

**Femmebook:
Women, Facebook and the #NoMakeUpSelfie**

Amber Smith

Under the supervision of Dr. Philippe Ross

Research Paper submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Master of Arts degree in Communication

Department of Communication Studies
Faculty of Arts
University of Ottawa

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to critically examine how young women conform to and subvert our culture's dominant gender norms and the role social networking sites, such as Facebook, play in this process. The study used a qualitative research approach and semi-structured interviews to collect data. The findings indicate that Facebook is an essential communication tool in the lives of young women that serves to reinforce and disseminate social and gender norms. The study found that gender norms are so deeply ingrained and normalized in our society that women conform to them, often without realizing they are doing so. The #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign provided a case study where women were unwittingly reinforcing existing—not entirely positive—gender norms which reinforced culturally held beliefs that a women's femininity is her strongest and most valuable asset.

Acknowledgements

Writing a Research Paper requires energy, motivation and conviction and is an endeavor that is seldom achieved alone. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to everyone who has supported me throughout the course of this academic milestone. I express my warmest thanks to Dr. Philippe Ross for his support and guidance throughout this process. I would also like to thank my family—Howard, Belinda, Luke, Riley and Roxie—and friends for their endless love, patience and support over the years. Finally, I would like to show gratitude to my examiner, Dr. Florian Grandena, for his insight and feedback.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The year 2014 marked Facebook's 10th anniversary. The site started out as a way to connect a student community and, arguably, grew to become one of the most prominent communication platforms of the Western world. 19 million Canadians access Facebook every month and 14 million Canadians login on a daily basis (Canadian Press, 2013). According to recent statistics daily Facebook use in Canada is higher than the global average and even the US average (Canadian Press, 2013). 74% of Canadians log into Facebook daily as compared with the global average of 60%, while US users have a 70% daily login average (Canadian Press, 2013). Over the years Facebook has changed and evolved and the way people use the site has changed along with it. After a decade of growth and development it seems like the perfect cultural moment to take a closer look under the Facebook patina.

Social networks, such as Facebook, have created abundant possibilities for discovering and learning new information, sharing ideas and interacting with others. As the Internet and social networking sites have steadily risen in prevalence scholars from various fields have sought to explore and understand the sociological and cultural implications of the ways in which individuals display facets of themselves and the messages that are conveyed in these interactions.

One of the main contributing factors to the pervasiveness and amplification of social media use has been the increased availability and mobility of the Internet. In the Western world the Internet more broadly has become an integral part of the way we work, play and interact with others. These days being connected depends not on our proximity to each other, but instead, on how far we are from our available communication technology (Turkle, 2011). Until recently connecting to the Internet was a deliberate act that could only be done in front of a computer

screen, bounding your passage into virtual space to the amount of time one could spend in front of a computer (Turkle, 2011). Now, with the advent of Smartphones our Internet usage is no longer tied to a physical PC and desk but instead can be carried around in our pocket, ready to serve us at a click of a button, whether we're on a bus, hiking through a forest or cruising at 40,000ft onboard a Boeing 747.

For many people social networks have changed the way we interact and communicate. Facebook provides a window into other people's lives, which, in turn, can yield many positive and negative consequences. For Turkle, for example, this blurring of boundaries between intimacy and solitude creates a networked life that allows us to hide from one another, while remaining tethered, an effect she describes as being "alone together" (Turkle, 2011, p.1). Turkle (2011) sees this dichotomy as being an inherently negative one and she invokes the metaphor of addiction to describe our networked culture. Similarly, Gonzales and Hancock (2010), found in their study on objective self-awareness that exposure to Facebook had a positive influence, especially on self-esteem. Gonzales and Hancock found that by allowing people to present positive or preferred information on Facebook it served to enhance awareness of the "optimal self" which, in turn, actually improved self-esteem (Gonzales and Hancock, 2010, p. 4).

While there may not be consensus on the effects of our Facebook communication and networked culture, it can be agreed that social networks have provided us with the tools to communicate easily with much larger, more diverse audiences than was possible before the advent of the Internet and social media. With social networks, interactions that would have once been one-to-one can now be easily broadcast to thousands of our "friends" with the click of a button. Turkle (2011) compares our friends to fans, as we now have the ability to communicate

with a large audience that is made up of a number of smaller groups and peer networks. Having the ability to be constantly updated about the lives of everyone, from close friends to colleagues and acquaintances, can have a myriad of effects on different people. Some feel inspired, while others find themselves comparing their life to those of others and finding their own to be lacking. While Facebook does provide a window into people's lives it also represents the edited highlights of our lives, as we have now, arguably, become our own public relations spin-doctors.

Modern Day Case study: The #NoMakeUpSelfie

There is a well-known idiom that says a picture is worth a thousand words. In 2013, however, a picture was worth just one word—the word of the year—with the Oxford Dictionaries proclaiming “selfie” as the word of the year for 2013. The Oxford dictionary describes a “selfie” as "a photograph that one has taken of oneself, typically with a Smartphone or webcam and uploaded to a social media website" (Selfie, 2014). The word has evolved from being a niche social media tag to a mainstream colloquial term and has become a prominent social media fixture.

As the selfie has continued to gain popularity many savvy marketers have tried to ride the proverbial coattails of this cultural phenomenon and harness its power to increase both commercial and charitable gains alike. One of the most recent and popular selfie campaigns was that of the #NoMakeUpSelfie, which rose to prominence in March 2014. The aim of the campaign, which originated in the United Kingdom, was to raise cancer awareness and to collect donations for cancer research (Dockterman, 2014). The campaign, which was primarily aimed at women, asked participants to post a photo of themselves with no make up and make a charitable donation to support cancer research. Along with their selfie and donation the viral element of the

campaign was the call-to-action for women to tag and nominate their friends to post their own selfie and spread the campaign, in a style reminiscent of the old chain letter hoaxes. However, while the idea of the campaign might have been well intentioned, the original goal of raising funds for cancer research quickly fell to the wayside and the “awareness” campaign disintegrated into a “mass exercise in narcissism” (Hughes, 2014). Many women posted photos of themselves with the #NoMakeUpSelfie hashtag without any knowledge or mention of the charitable intent of the campaign leaving critics, such as Guardian journalist Sali Hughes, wondering whether the outcome justified the means (Hughes, 2014).

The #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign was problematic for a number of reasons. Firstly, the campaign’s primary function of “raising awareness” for cancer seems outdated and redundant and it remains difficult to see any connection between cancer awareness and posting makeup-less photos on social media sites. Second, this social media awareness campaign is a classic example of why people criticize and dislike these “slacktivism” social media campaigns. The term “slacktivism” was originally coined to refer to bottom-up activities done by young people to affect society on a small, personal scale and was used in a positive context (Christensen, 2011). However, today the term has become somewhat of a buzzword and is used in a more negative context to refer to activists that are more effective in making the participant feel good about themselves than achieving any activist goals (Christensen, 2011). Although slacktivism is not necessarily restricted to Internet activities the criticism is frequently linked to the Internet and social networking sites (Christensen, 2011).

However, one of the most problematic aspects of the #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign—and one that ties into the central thesis of this study—is the underpinning assumptions about female

beauty standards. One of the foundational concepts of the campaign was to normalize women not wearing make up, by asking them to be brave enough to expose their true face to their friends on social media (Hughes, 2014). However, in doing so the campaign suggests that a woman baring her face without makeup leaves her exposed and vulnerable. Although one of the goals of the campaign was to empower women to feel more comfortable in their own skin and raise self-esteem for women, I would argue that this could not be further from the truth. If anything it makes it seem like “a big deal” to show people what women really look like. Thus this awareness campaign turned into a self-congratulatory game that made women feel obligated to play along with this who-can-be-prettier-without-makeup competition. Moreover, it is questionable whether these so called “no make up” selfies are truly a reflection of what women really look like without make up at any given time. It can be argued that the women who participated in the campaign were trying harder than normal to look good, perhaps compensating for how ugly they feel without make up. When a woman feels compelled to retake a photo numerous times just so she can be left with one photo she feels comfortable enough to post to Facebook, this does not evoke a notion of empowerment; it is arguably a cry for affirmation. This also speaks to how self-conscious women feel when communicating with such a large, diverse audience. In the end it seemed that the campaign was simply perpetuating false notions of what being a woman and being beautiful really are. This links, and can be explained through, longstanding issues of representation of women in the media.

Women in the Media

The images of women in the media are often rather unrealistic portrayals of gender that can make trying to live up to these culturally imposed standards of beauty difficult or unhealthy. The media’s world of women is often characterized as particularly “feminized”—where physical

beauty, sexual attractiveness and product consumption, to supplement the former, supersede any other trait a woman possesses (Stern, 2007, p.2). In fact, body image dissatisfaction among young women is so prevalent—between 40% to 60% of young women report being dissatisfied with some aspect of their appearance—that some researchers claim it is a normative component of life in Western society (Martins, Williams, Harrison & Ratan, 2009, p.1). Cultivation theory provides one explanation for how standards of beauty and gendered behavior propagated by the media become viewed as normal and desirable attributes (Martin et al, 2009, p.3). While most academics would never go as far as to claim a direct causal link between the images shown in the media and the ‘implications’ of those images, this model does speak to the role media play in young women’s internalization of the ideal standards of beauty and comportment (Martins et al, 2009, p.3). Both in the media and in quotidian life stereotypes about women being a weaker, passive and more powerless sex, as compared to their male counterpart, continue to exist and be propagated (Sullivan, 2003, p.123).

With the advent of social media, it would seem like the perfect cultural moment for women to say what they like online to each other and to the world and break away from culturally imposed versions of femininity. However, these old gender stereotypes have become so deeply ingrained in our society that they can be hard to shake. As women try to live up to the societal expectations placed upon them, they tend to play up or play down certain aspects of themselves depending on what they feel is expected or would be most favorably received in a given situation. In this sense a women’s identity can be thought of as made up of multiple selves.

Media, and social networking sites such as Facebook, play a key role in promoting and reinforcing what Judith Butler calls “gender norms”. Butler (1990) explains that people are not

born enacting gender, but rather learn to “perform” their gender based on what their culture has taught them is the correct or acceptable behavior for their given gender. In essence, Butler (1990) argues that women are not born enacting gender that is inherently feminine, but that women learn to act “womanly” by performing a culturally learned version of womanhood. The media use displays of gender to position men and women in particular ways. In the case of women, sexuality is often touted as a desirable and intrinsically feminine trait. Consuming these “gender displays” reinforces preconceived notions and expectations of gender. As a result, many young women yearn for the unattainable perfection and “womanliness” that is expected of them which can be at odds with their desires to “be themselves”. While the implications of Facebook use in contributing to young women’s communication practices and articulation of self have yet to be realized, the possibility that online communication may be changing these is worthy of study (Stern, 2007).

Central Research Question

The purpose of this study is to critically examine how women conform to and subvert our culture’s dominant gender norms and the role social networking sites, such as Facebook, play in this process. The central research questions is: How do Canadian young women use Facebook—a primary mode of new media communication for their generation—to interact with peers in ways that both transcend and play into our culture’s dominant gender norms? If gender is a social construction and performance and social networks have become prominent arenas of interaction and performance, then it is important to understand if and how these networks are being used to transcend and reinforce our currently held views of womanhood.

Structure of the Research Paper

In order to answer the central research question I will first, in Chapter two, review pertinent literature in the field in order to establish a solid foundation for the study and to expose the gaps in literature and knowledge this study will aim to aid in closing. Following this, in Chapter three, I will outline the research strategy employed and present justification for the selected approach with a summary of the particular methods and procedures adopted. In Chapter four, I will discuss and review the key findings of the study and set these within the context of the central research question and literature outlined in Chapter two. Finally, in the concluding chapter, I will present a concise summary of the key insights and findings and discuss the real world implications of the results. Lastly, the limitations of the research will be addressed and a brief outline of the possibilities for further research will be offered.

Chapter 2: Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

This chapter reviews pertinent literature related to gender norms and normative behavior, strategies and theories regarding the establishment and reinforcing of gender norms, and the role social networks, such as Facebook, play in this process. It also presents the theoretical framework used in this study.

2.1 Literature Review

The literature review is split into three sections: section 2.1.1 provides an overview of stereotypes and gender norms and how these relate to women. Section 2.1.2 of the literature review builds upon the concepts discussed in Section 2.1.1 explores surveillance and the establishment and reinforcing of normative behavior. Section 2.1.3 discusses social capital and

the role social networks play in performing and establishing normative behavior with specific reference to Facebook. Some topics covered include gender performance, the dramaturgical perspective, the panoptic gaze and social grooming. Through a review of the relevant literature it can be seen that there is a lack of academic literature that focuses on the reinforcing of normative gender behavior in young, cisgender women through social media. As Stern (2007) points out, while the implications of Facebook use in contributing to young women's articulation of self have yet to be realized, the possibility that online communication through social networks may be changing this is worthy of study. If identity is the story we tell about ourselves, then social networking sites can be seen as key storytelling platforms.

2.1.1 Stereotypes, Gender and Communication

The word 'stereotype' today carries with it a pejorative connotation, yet, when Walter Lippman coined the term it was not necessarily intended as such (Marris, Thornham & Dyer, 1999). Simply put, a stereotype is a fixed, over-generalized belief about a particular group or class of people that serves to simplify our social world (McLeod, 2008). Marris, Thornham & Dyer (1999) maintain,

The role of stereotypes is to make the visible the invisible, so that there is no danger of it creeping up on us unawares; and to make fast, firm and separate what is in reality fluid and much closer to the norm than the dominant value system cares to admit (Marris, Thornham & Dyer, 1999, p. 5).

The most important function of a stereotype is to maintain sharp, clearly defined boundaries (Marris, Thornham & Dyer, 1999). Essentially, stereotypes map out the boundaries of acceptable and legitimate behavior and they are often highly charged with the feelings that are attached to them (Marris, Thornham & Dyer, 1999). This process of over-simplification has both advantages and disadvantages. An advantage of stereotyping is that it enables us to respond

rapidly to situations by comparing them and drawing upon similar past experiences. However, a disadvantage is that it encourages us to ignore individual differences and make unfounded assumptions.

There is a tendency of patriarchal thought to attempt to maintain the distinct ‘otherness’ of women and men (Marris, Thornham & Dyer, 1999). It was once a commonly held belief that gender was a natural attribute, something of an internal essence that would manifest itself in a person’s characteristics (Sullivan, 2003, p. 81). In the case of women, it was believed they were naturally inclined to such traits as passivity, nurturance, maternal feelings and powerlessness (Sullivan, 2003, p. 81). Feminists, however, have countered this essentialism by arguing that gender is a social construction, in much the same way as is the notion of the individual (Sullivan, 2003, p. 81). Identities and gender, it is contended, are context specific and their intelligibility and accorded value are dependent on both culture and history (Sullivan, 2003, p. 83). For example, cultural critics, particularly feminists, have argued that heterosexuality is not a natural, universal phenomenon but instead a culturally constructed institution and one that has become so embedded in our culture that it has become almost invisible (Sullivan, 2003, pp.120-121). By internalizing these socially constructed concepts we are all “both agents and effects of disciplinary regimes” (Sullivan, 2003, p. 84).

Feminist, Post-Structuralist scholar Judith Butler (1990) argues that there is no core, essential self or identity. Butler (1990, p. 140) explains that people are not born enacting gender that is inherently feminine or masculine, but rather that these acts are assimilated by performing a culturally learned version of womanhood or manhood through stylized body acts such as ways of dressing, talking and behaving. Gender is, Butler explains,

...a construction that regularly conceals its genesis; the tacit collective agreement to perform, produce, and sustain discrete and polar genders as cultural fictions is obscured by the credibility of those productions—and the punishments that attend not agreeing to believe in them (Butler, 1990, p. 140).

In essence, Butler argues that people “perform” their gender based on what their culture has taught them is the correct or acceptable behavior for their gender (Butler, 1990, p. 141). Gender roles translate as stereotypes about a given gender that have become so deeply ingrained in our culture that they are considered “common knowledge”. The media use displays of gender to position men and women in particular ways; women are often stereotyped as being emotional, innocent, nurturing and weak while men are seen as independent, aggressive and strong. Consuming these gender displays reinforces preconceived notions and expectations of gender. By accepting these gender roles as the normative and acceptable behavior for one’s given sex we inadvertently participate and allow ourselves to be regulated by this culturally constructed fiction. Of this Butler says,

The illusion of an interior and organizing gender core is discursively maintained for the purposes of the regulation of sexuality within the obligatory framework of heterosexuality. If the ‘cause’ of desire, gesture, and act can be localized within the ‘self’ of the actor, then the political regulations and discipline practices which produce ostensibly coherent gender are effectively displaced from view (Butler, 1990, p. 136).

To illustrate the dichotomy between sex and gender, Butler provides drag as an example. Drag, Butler says, suggests a dissonance between sex and performance, sex and gender and gender and performance because the so-called sex of the performer is not the same as the gender being performed (Butler, 1990, p. 137).

E. Ann Kaplan (2000) also argues that there is no essential self—and therefore no essential feminine behavior, but only a cultural construction—and proposes that “femininity” is just one of the available guises women can use to their advantage. Indeed, the idea of a woman being seductively “feminine” in order to get her own way is a “dramatic cliché appearing in various movies from throughout the last century” (Gauntlett, 2002, p. 12). If gender is a social construction and a performance then it is important to understand if and how social networking sites, such as Facebook, have been used to transcend and reinforce our traditionally held views of womanhood.

Although explanations vary widely many feminist scholars describe the female worldview as significantly different from its male counterpart (Mulvaney, 1994). When exploring gender performance on social networking sites it is important to acknowledge the significance of communication practices and the role they play in shaping our lives (Mulvaney, 1994). Gender is both an influence on and a product of communication and is part of the process by which we learn to behave our sex appropriately (Mulvaney, 1994). Therefore, communication practices not only reflect notions about gender, but they also create cultural concepts of gender (Mulvaney, 1994). From a very early age males and females are taught different linguistic practices (Mulvaney, 1994). Communications practices that are acceptable and expected of men, for example, may be considered inappropriate for women (Mulvaney, 1994). Being mindful that men and women’s values and goals may differ, based on their socializing, we can become sensitive to the fact that their communication will vary as well (Mulvaney, 1994). It is for this reason that it is beneficial to analyze male and female communication practices separately. When attempting to understand how people transcend and plan into dominant gender norms on social

networking sites, as this study does, this reasoning holds true. This current study, given its scope and constraints, will focus on the female perspective.

2.1.2 Reinforcing and Establishing Social Norms

Notions of the essential self and identity draw from an eclectic range of sources, including Foucault, to problematize our modern notions surrounding identity. Foucault, whose ideas around identity, gender and sexuality are intimately connected to knowledge and power, was influential in Butler's own conception of identity. Foucault (1974) in his work entitled *The History of Sexuality*, says that there is no absolute identity because identity is bound up in the cultural discourse of what it is to exist and behave in the context of society and culture. Foucault argues that if identity is created through discourse this makes identity a historically constituted creation and, therefore, different across both time and space (Foucault, 1974, p. 156). With the prevalence of computer-mediated technology it is important to examine how identity presentation has become increasingly complicated through its articulation in the use of social networking sites such as Facebook (Stern, 2007).

In a later work, *Discipline and Punishment: The Birth of the Prison*, Foucault (1977) spoke of how the task of the modern state was to create a citizenry that would police itself. Foucault wrote about Jeremy Bentham's design for a panopticon, a wheel-like structure with an observer at its hub promoting the sense that "surveillance is permanent in its effect, even if discontinuous in its action" (Foucault, 1977, p. 201). In the end the architecture encourages self-surveillance and serves as a metaphor—in a state where the citizens believe themselves to be under constant scrutiny, all eyes turn on themselves. This same metaphor can be applied to the Internet and social networking sites, such as Facebook. When you are always aware someone is

watching, you become more conscious and conscientious of how you act. As Turkle says, “Facebook feels like ‘home’, but you know that it puts you in a public square with a surveillance camera turned on” (Turkle, 2011, p. 243).

The concept of hegemony is also useful in aiding to understand why certain patterns of behavior are recurrent on social networks. Hegemony is the idea that political regimes—or, in this case, dominant behaviors—cannot become dominant without the consent of those that are subject to them (Gramsci, Hoare & Smith, 1971). In order to achieve this, Gramsci suggests the following is in order:

... force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, without force predominating excessively over consent. Indeed, the attempt is always made to ensure that force will appear to be based on the consent of the majority, expressed by the so-called organs of public opinion—newspapers and associations—which, therefore, in certain situations, are artificially multiplied (Gramsci et al, 1971, p. 248).

In essence, for ideas to become dominant they must become so “natural” that the subjects do not question them and simply accept them as common sense (Gramsci et al, 1971, p. 248). Although this idea still grants the subjects agency it does suggest people only go along with ideas because the dominant cultural norms are seemingly unquestionable (Stern, 2007, p. 99). The concept of hegemony is useful in understanding how patterns of acceptable behavior are established and reinforced on social networks. Within this theoretical approach it can be argued that identity performances on social media sites are done to maintain norms for our audience on social networks who, unwittingly, survey. (Cover, 2012). Those who engage with the narrative of performance will look for coherence on behalf of power formations of normalization (Cover, 2012).

Turkle (2011), in her book entitled *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology And Less From Each Other*, explores the role technology plays in this online hegemonic process. Turkle quotes Winston Churchill as saying, “we shape our buildings and then they shape us” and Turkle uses this as a launching point for her main thesis—arguing that we make our technologies, and they, in turn, shape us (Turkle, 2011, p. 19). Essentially, Turkle argues that we have created our own panopticon and become complacent as a result of its surveillance. Over time, Turkle believes, “these performances of identity [on social networks] may come to feel like identity itself” (Turkle, 2011, p. 12). Turkle also encourages readers not to take relationships forged through a virtual medium at “interface value” (Turkle, 2011, p. 18). For Turkle (2011), for example, her use of the word identity is tied to a person’s “essential self”. When we go online we perform our identity for our audience but, for Turkle, this is not an authentic version of our true selves and, therefore, not our “real” identity. Turkle notes that early in her study a college student warned her “not to be fooled by anyone you interview who tells you that his Facebook page is ‘the real me’. It’s like being in a play. You make a character” (Turkle, 2011, 183). The student went on to say that when he was writing his Facebook profile he felt like he was “assembling cultural references to shape how others would see him” (Turkle, 2011, p. 185). Turkle presents authentic identity as something that exists only with a physical person and online identity as being a kind of Internet doppelganger. Turkle says:

Today, people are being helped to develop ideas about identity as multiplicity by a new practice of identity as multiplicity in online life. Virtual personae are objects-to-think-with (Turkle, 1995, p. 260).

2.1.3 Social Capital and Social Media

Facebook has created a new space where women can subvert and play with gender norms in ways that early feminist theorists would not have imagined possible. Furthermore, while there have been many studies on Facebook use, there is a significant lack of literature on Facebook use dealing specifically with women. As Facebook continues to constitute a significant portion of many young women's media diets, it also needs to be understood as an important system of symbols which can have broad social impacts.

If we accept that gender performances are subjected to a culturally and historically specific context then we must also accept that by performing and abiding by the prescribed 'right' behavior for our given gender, that we are also playing a role in enforcing and disseminating this normative behavior. If Facebook is one of the most pervasive and frequently used tools in our communication tool kit, then it also stands to reason that this medium plays a pivotal role in the establishment and reinforcement of accepted societal conventions. We have become so used to being under surveillance that we subject ourselves to it voluntarily and without qualm—our friends, family and acquaintances making up the audience to the play that is our lives.

It can be argued that gender displays are sites through which social capital can be negotiated, in much the same way as Facebook can be used to accumulate and negotiate social capital. The core idea of social capital is straightforward—it is the accumulation and leveraging of the resources available to people through their social interactions (Valenzuela, Park & Kee, 2009). Through social networks people can accumulate their social capital as a result of their daily interactions with friends. In a study by Valenzuela, Park & Kee (2009) users reported their

main reason for joining and continuing to use Facebook as being to keep in touch with friends and strengthen their bonds this can be seen as a conscious investment in their social capital.

Cover (2012) points out that a user's friends and network of connections on social platforms act as a 'willful act of context creation' that contextualizes one's identity (Cover, 2012, p. 183). This perspective, which draws to some extent on Erving Goffman's work, is notable as it places identity within the context of surveillance and recognizes that people are reflectively aware of the impressions they are fostering for their Facebook audience (Cover, 2012).

Erving Goffman (1959), in his theory called the Dramaturgical Perspective, uses the metaphor of life as theater and he argues that all human interactions are very much like a grand play. The metaphor hinges on the notion that life is basically a series of performances carried out in various settings and before various audiences. Goffman (1959) is not as concerned with sweeping generalizations but instead focuses on the simple day-to-day interactions that, together, constitute the human experience. Goffman explains that in a play actors attempt to convey to the audience a particular impression of the world around them—working individually and collectively to present a shared and unified image of reality (Goffman, 1959, p. 10). Goffman goes on to argue that the world is much more like a stage than we realize. What is notable is that Goffman does not see the self as an organic entity, but rather sees the self as a product of the performance (Goffman, 1959, p.10). The problem that arises from authentically embracing a "role" as an identity is that it increases the potential for alienation, and awareness of this fact is critical to Goffman's analysis.

While Goffman certainly did not write on the topic of social media, his Social Theory approach to life's daily interactions can be carried over to help us better understand the theatrical stage that is Facebook. Goffman says that people engage in "front stage" and "back stage" behavior (Goffman, 1959, p. 13). Front stage actions are visible to the audience and are part of the performance (Goffman, 1959). People spend time on Facebook working on their front stage performance by logging in often and keeping up their image via their profile page and interacting with other users. People engage in back stage behaviors when no audience is present (Goffman, 1959, p. 13). On Facebook back stage activities include inbox messages and chat messages which are more covert forms of identity performance. Facebook, through its different tools and privacy settings, allows users to partition their page into front and back regions so that they may present different identities to different audiences.

Goffman also observed that performers strive to maintain control over their persona and minimize any characteristics that may be undesirable or contrary to an idealized version of themselves when portraying themselves to others (Goffman, 1959, p. 4). Social networking sites such as Facebook provide a complex, and oftentimes awkward, site of performance where users attempt to control their self-presentation as they address a broad audience—an undertaking which recalls Goffman's notion of impression management (Goffman, 1959, p. 49).

In a way similar to Goffman, Westlake (2008) presents two interesting perspectives on the performance of self on Facebook. Westlake argues that the "Gen Y" Facebook community, made up of young adults, use Facebook to define the boundaries of what constitutes normative behavior through unique performances of an online self. Firstly, the author describes Facebook use as engagement with Foucault's panoptic gaze—when people offer themselves up for

surveillance by publicly sharing on Facebook they establish and reinforce social norms (Westlake, 2008, p. 38). Westlake also references Goffman's dramaturgical model of analyzing performances of the self and how it can be used to analyze Facebook activity (Westlake, 2008, p. 35). Goffman says that it is commonplace for different social groups to express age, sex, gender, class etc in distinctive ways based on complex cultural configurations (Westlake, 2008, p. 35). In other words, to be a given kind of person is to sustain the standards of conduct and appearance that are required and attached to one's social grouping (Westlake, 2008, p. 36). Facebook, then, can be seen as a forum for policing and establishing normative behavior and Westlake believes this form of social policing can be more powerful than being surveyed by Big Brother because it is a network of your peers that affirms or denies the performance of self you present on Facebook. While Facebook operates as a forum for establishing social norms, the continual reinvention of Facebook by independent developers and users creates an opening through which "Gen Y" can push the boundaries of their online performances of self.

When scrolling through the Facebook newsfeed of a young woman one would perhaps stereotypically expected to come across many selfies and tagged photos of groups of friends together. By using this stereotype to form an expectation it is easy to assume that Facebook and other social networking sites promote narcissistic behavior and replace meaningful face-to-face friendships with a shallow list of acquaintances. However, studies have shown that Facebook users have more a complex understanding of the role these sites play in facilitating self-presentation and identity construction than researchers first imagined (Strano, 2008). Facebook users are aware of the way the site has changed the game in terms of online identity performance. Users now have the ability to take aspects of their offline identity and share those coupled with other information that may not be readily discernable in brief offline interactions

such as inner qualities like intelligence and character (Strano, 2008). In addition to sharing photos and profile information Facebook also provides alternative methods of expression through use of emoticons, links and multimedia.

Although there are many ways to perform identity on Facebook, the profile image is arguably the most pointed form of self-presentation on the site. When users search for each other on Facebook, post a comment or send a message to another user the profile image is displayed alongside their text (Strano, 2008). Strano estimates that users change their profile images seven times a year while she points out that few people change framed photographs of themselves in the offline world that frequently (Strano, 2008). As the profile picture acts as the most pointed form of self-presentation on the site, there is an unspoken expectation to update and improve this image in a manner one would never be scalable in the offline world. However, because this photo stands in for the user's physical body in the online setting, there is an expectation that this photo must be regularly maintained in order to establish the user's continued engagement on the site. Also, the results of Strano's study demonstrated that women tend to change their profile image more often and use their profile images and other Facebook photos to emphasize friendships (Strano, 2008). By 'showing without telling' Facebook users seek to make certain implicit claims about the depth and extent of their social ties aimed at generating desirable impression. One of the most popularly used forms of photography applied by women in their profile pictures is the selfie. Furthermore, one of the most popular varieties of selfie, and one that has received much notoriety, is the "duck face" selfie. The "duck face" is an expression in which the subject of the photo, typically a woman, pushes her lips together to create a pouty expression in an attempt to give more definition to her lips and cheek bones and, ultimately, make her look more attractive.

Dunbar sees these social displays as replicating many of the functions of gossip and social grooming. While Dunbar's research was done in a time before social networking sites existed the same concepts he applies to face-to-face social networking can be carried over to understand online social networking sites. Dunbar proposed that gossip, people-curiosity and small talk, all of which are often popularly chalked up as mere distractions or deviations, are actually, in fact, the human version of the social grooming that primates participate in (Dunbar, 1996, p. 36). For primates, the activity of social grooming plays an essential role in forging and displaying bonds, affirming relationships and asserting and learning about hierarchies and alliances (Dunbar, 1996, p. 36). Dunbar suggests that our insatiable appetite for gossip should not only be looked at as a culturally shaped construction but also as an effect of our disposition towards sociality (Dunbar, 1996, p. 174). Dunbar suggests that social networking should be seen as an activity where social grooming occurs. Social networking sites, such as Facebook, work much the same way as these sites facilitate a means of bonding, improving one's reputation and status and creating social solidarity between peers. Tufecki (2008) builds on Dunbar's social grooming theory as it applies to social networking sites saying:

Users display their own bonds and observe those of others through profile 'friends', leave semi-public messages for each other (which serve mainly as acknowledgment), present a public self for their community, and watch and participate as all others also engage in these activities in an interlocked dance of community formation. At their core, these sites are about mutual acknowledgment, status verification and relationship confirmation (Tufecki, 2008, p. 547).

In essence, it is through social interactions, the kind which social networks promote, that people affirm their relations, construct their status and ultimately produce the social 'me' (Tufekci, 2008, p. 547).

In another study, DiMicco & Millen (2007) sought to gain an understanding of the issues related to managing different social networks through one platform. In particular the study looked at how users of these networks present themselves when they are using one site to keep in contact with both their past social groups from school and their current social connections in the workplace (DiMicco & Millen, 2007, p. 383). The outcome of this initial case study was a framework for understanding how users manage self-presentation while maintaining and transitioning between social relationships in social networks. This study is important in helping to establish how women evolve their use of social networks during times of transition, particularly during the transition from being an adolescent and student towards being a young professional—to reflect their past social connections and also their new workplace connections. This study also helps solidify the important and long-term role social networks play, as women are willing to evolve their use and performance on these sites so they may continue to engage with them, instead of abandoning them altogether.

It can be argued that gender displays can be sites through which social capital can be negotiated, in much the same way as Facebook can be used to accumulate and negotiate social capital. Cover (2012), works within a post-structuralist framework and presents Judith Butler's concept of performative identity (Cover, 2012, p. 177). Cover sees social networking sites as tools for performing, stabilizing and developing identity as a narrative in line with cultural demands (Cover, 2012, p. 177). The study found that users are beginning to recognize the

problems of the multiplicity of the networked audience in terms of who is accessing information and how it is being utilized (Cover, 2012, p. 179). The use of social networking accounts by third parties to better market to each specific Facebook user based on the information generated and revealed online raises concerns about privacy and digital surveillance around online social networking as a tool for identity performativity (Cover, 2012, p. 191).

2.1.4 Synthesis and Research Questions

Through the foregoing review of literature there are several key themes that emerged that have been synthesized to shape the research problem and questions. The first is that gender is a social construction and cultural critics have argued that what our society has internalized and deemed as the “correct” or acceptable behavior for each gender is not a natural, trans-historical phenomenon, but rather a culturally constructed concept that has become so embedded in our culture that it has become almost invisible (Sullivan, 2003, pp.120-121). Gender norms are culturally and historically specific which means that their intelligibility is context-specific, as is the value accorded to them (Sullivan, 2003, p. 83). By accepting these gender roles as the normative and acceptable behavior for one’s given sex we inadvertently participate and allow ourselves to be regulated by this culturally constructed fiction. If gender is a social construction and a performance then it is important to understand how these concepts continue to be perpetuated and reinforced.

The second key theme is that with the prevalence of computer-mediated technology it is important to examine how gender performance has become increasingly complicated through its articulation in the use of social networking sites such as Facebook (Stern, 2007). Facebook is a space where people can subvert and play with gender norms. There is a dichotomy between

Facebook being a safe place for people to be themselves, but also a space where dominant patriarchal discourse remains. Due to the popularity of Facebook and because it is such a key communication platform we have become accustomed to communicating with a large, diverse audience. As a result, we have internalized the idea of being under surveillance and thus we all play a role in policing and enforcing normative behaviors to ensure continuity. Facebook use can be seen as engagement with Foucault's panoptic gaze. This form of social policing can be more powerful than being surveyed by Big Brother because it is a network of your peers that affirms or denies the performance of self you present on Facebook. Finally, the literature also shows the importance and long-term role social networks play, as women are willing to evolve their use and performance on these sites so they may continue to engage with them (DiMicco & Millen, 2007, p. 383).

Through an analysis grounded in pertinent literature, it can be seen that although there is academic research that focuses on both culturally constructed gender performance and the role Facebook plays in promoting and reinforcing social norms there is a significant lack of literature that combines both elements, specifically with a focus on women. The purpose of this study is to critically examine how young women conform and, possibly, subvert gender norms and role the Facebook platform plays in this dichotomy.

The central research questions is: How do Canadian young women use Facebook—a primary mode of new media communication for their generation—to interact with peers in ways that both transcend and play into our culture's dominant gender norms. In order to answer the guiding research question, I propose to answer three sub-questions: what are the dominant gender norms and stereotypes for young women in Western society? How are gender norms and

stereotypes disseminated and reinforced? What role does a social media site, such as Facebook, play in the enforcing and policing of these normative behaviors?

2.2 Theoretical Framework

While conflicts about self-presentation and identity are not new or unique to Facebook, what is new is that Facebook enables these age-old problems to be played out in a very public way (Turkle, 2011). Sites like Facebook facilitate opportunities for the performance of identities that are parallel with and extend beyond their offline counterparts (Ginger, 2008). Facebook enables its users to have playful interactions with a large audience of ‘friends’ and this allows users to perform multiple identities and negotiate sexuality and stereotypes through the same site at the same time (McClard & Anderson, 2008).

In order to shed light on the central research question and sub-questions and, later, think through the collated data the first step was to establish what specific areas and topics the study would be interested in broaching. In order to understand how women conform to and subvert our culture’s dominant gender norms it is necessary to establish what these genders norms are and hypothesize how subversion and conformity to them could play out on Facebook. Roles theory operates under the assumption that we all hold a variety of roles and that those roles dictate our behavior on the stage of life (Poire, 2006). Each role has its own set of expectations associated with it and performance includes all behaviors associated with a particular role (Poire, 2006). Accordingly, the behavior of men and women is governed by the stereotypes of their social roles. Stereotypically women have been thought of it as being naturally inclined to such traits as passivity, nurturance, maternal feelings and powerlessness (Sullivan, 2003, p. 81). To flesh this out it is fitting to look to Goffman’s (1959) earliest delineation of roles—drama—theory (Poire,

2009). As we saw in the literature review Westlake (2008), similarly, references Goffman's dramaturgical model and Roles Theory and how these can be layered on top of Facebook activity in order to provide analysis and draw out meaning.

In order to understand how women use Facebook to interact with peers in ways that both transcend and play into these social roles the #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign will be used to explore how women create meaning and experience gender norms on Facebook. The case study of the #NoMakeUpSelfie will serve as a conduit to understanding the central research question. Through the #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign this study will provide a unique vantage point from which stereotypes, gender norms and women can be explored through the Facebook platform.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The ways people use and relate to social media is constantly evolving. Due to the fluid and ever-changing nature of social platforms it is important to include primary data collection to compliment the preexisting literature. While literature provides the groundwork, conducting fieldwork to collect data allows us to better understand how these theoretical points play out in real life.

3.1 Data Collection Procedures

This study used a qualitative research approach to collect the data necessary. The design of the research was ethnographic in nature, as the aim was to understand young women's experiences using Facebook over an extended period of time. Ethnography is a qualitative research design aimed at exploring cultural phenomena (Philipsen, 1992). Today, ethnographers

are becoming increasingly interested in the virtual world as a new site of research and are exploring the impact digital media have on individuals and on society as a whole (Hine, 2000).

The data collection strategy for this research paper was to conduct semi-structured interviews with young women in order to gain a better understanding of their Facebook use and practices and the resulting implications. This method of data collection was suited to the topic at hand because the study was interested in understanding how gender norms and roles were established and reinforced on social networking sites—categories that are socially constructed based on socio-cultural context. By virtue of the qualitative design of the study, the point of the analysis was to show how theoretical points play out in practice and how various views converge or diverge. In order to allow for more in-depth discussion and to allow the data to develop organically, without researcher circumvention, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the main method of primary data collection. The semi-structured interview style was well suited for this study as it allowed the researcher to guide the participants and discussion without limiting it and impeding natural tangents that could add value to the study.

3.2 Participants

Young adulthood is a time when young women construct and negotiate identity as they move away from their adolescence and begin to take on more adult responsibilities. Psychologist Jeffrey Arnett calls this pivotal transition from adolescence to adulthood, which happens between the ages of 18-25, “emerging adulthood” (Arnett, 2000). Arnett argues that this emerging adulthood phase of development is critical to a person’s adult development as it is during this time that long term social skills, including those critical for self-dependence, career orientation and relationship maintenance are established (Arnett, 2000). Using Arnett’s notion of

“emerging adulthood” the demographic of the research paper was narrowed to focus on studying Facebook use by young women ages 18-25. Although restricting the participation age does exclude certain students at the university, for example certain graduate students and mature students, I am nonetheless satisfied that this was the best route to take for this study as it allowed the researcher an in-depth understanding of a specific demographic.

3.3 Sampling

Upon Ethics approval being obtained the next step was to set up the study in the Integrated System of Participation in Research (ISPR) database. The ISPR survey resource is a new resource to the Department of Communication and provided a data bank full of University of Ottawa students interested and willing to participate in empirical research. This tool was invaluable to the research at hand because it allowed access to a huge number of women in the required age demographic that were willing to participate in the proposed study. When the study had been set up and approved in the ISPR database timeslots were made available on the website and students could login in and sign up for an interview session. An overview of the study information provided on the ISPR database is included in Appendix I. For this study the researcher wanted to recruit between 6-12 participants. As an incentive to participate in studies students who participate in research and studies are entitled to compensation in terms of points toward their academic grades.¹

In total twelve women participated in the interview portion of the study. Every effort was made to preserve and protect the participants’ privacy and anonymity. All responses of individual participants were kept strictly confidential and kept in a secure place. Finally, the

¹ Points are awarded in the ISPR system based on the time commitment required. The breakdown is as follows: less

names of the participants and the names of friends and family mentioned by the participants were changed in order to protect anonymity.

The primary group of women who participated in my research included nine Caucasian women and three African-American women. All participants were current students at the University of Ottawa, residing in Ottawa, but many of the women had been born and raised in different parts of the country and one woman was born outside of Canada. All the participants had a Smart Phone and a PC or laptop and had regular access to the Internet. In order to give the reader a better understanding of the women who participated in the study a brief description of each based on the information they supplied in their ISPR profile and the researchers own observations and interview notes is provided in Appendix II. The purpose of this exercise is to highlight the diversity among the study participants.

3.4 Data Collection Tools

Once the proposal was reviewed and accepted the next step was the Ethics review and approval. The Ethics application and approval process took approximately 4 months—from December 2013 to March 2014. Upon Ethics approval being obtained the primary method of data collection—the semi-structured interviews—could begin.

The first step in the interview process was to design an interview guide to structure the interviews. As the aim of the study was to understand how Canadian young women use Facebook to interact with peers in ways that both transcend and play into our culture's dominant gender norms, an interview guide that was in line with the research questions and theoretical framework needed to be established. In order to have the most comprehensive overview of how

the study participants use Facebook the interview guide was broken down into key themes in order to elicit specific themes from the participants in line with the particular concerns and theoretical considerations. An interview guide is attached in Appendix III.

The first section of the interviews dealt with general questions relating to Facebook use. The purpose of this section was to understand how active each woman was on Facebook and social networks in general and the role social networks play in their everyday life. The second section dealt with identity construction on Facebook. This section dealt with identity performance on Facebook and women's perceptions of their own Facebook activity. The purpose of this section was to gain an understanding of the relationship the women have to the Facebook. This included gaining an understanding, among other things, of how accurately women felt their profile reflects them and whether other users influence what they share and post. The aim was to discern whether women act differently on Facebook than they would in real life and to encourage the women to critically contemplate and reflect upon something that is a daily and public activity in a way that most don't. The third section dealt with issues of gender performance and stereotypes specific to women. The purpose of this section was to understand how women perform their gender on Facebook, whether they feel that gender norms exist on Facebook and whether they feel any pressure to conform to these gender norms in their day-to-day use of Facebook. This section also dealt with how gender norms and performances manifest themselves in the online world and the way these are perceived. In dealing with gender norms and stereotypes this section also directly addressed the main case study, the #NoMakeUpSelfie. The final section was brief and dealt with the difference between online and offline interactions. The purpose of this section was to better understand the overlap between how women's online interactions differ or are similar to their offline counterparts.

The interviews followed a semi-structured format. Before the questions were put to the participants they were pre-approved by the Ethics Committee. Interviews were conducted over a three-week period—all participants who signed up to participate in the study attended their scheduled interview. During the interview time slot all participants gave their informed consent by signing a consent form (see Appendix IV). The interviews generally lasted between 20-40 minutes depending on the depth and detail of the answers given by the participant and whether they had any questions. All interviews were recorded for the purpose of being transcribed later. Once the participants had answered the questions they were asked to access their own Facebook “timeline”—their Facebook profile page. The participants were not given any guidelines regarding what to discuss on their timeline but were encouraged to speak about whatever they felt was important, interesting or relevant. The researcher also requested to “friend” the participants on Facebook and “unfriended” all participants when the study ended. The researcher felt it was important to ask participants to allow her access to their Facebook timeline because, oftentimes, people’s perceptions of their own behaviors and their actual behaviors are very different. Many people are not aware, or perhaps do not put much thought, into what they post on Facebook—it has become an extension of themselves, something they partake in almost involuntarily. Therefore, often the opinions people have regarding Facebook use, both in general and their own, are, at times, conflicting. For example, many of the study participants made reference to women on their Facebook who posted “selfies” and looked down on those who indulged in that sort of vain, self-involved behavior. However, when I “friended” participants and they walked me through their own pictures on Facebook, every participant had at least one selfie—often multiple—that they had posted to the site. Therefore, to ensure what the participants were saying and actually posting to the site matched up being able to access the

timeline of participants was key to gauging the authenticity of the answers given. All participants were informed that they could decline the friend request without any consequence; however, all 12 participants accepted the researcher's friend request.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

The strategy for tackling the data set required multiple steps using a combination of both inductive and deductive reasoning. Upon the completion of the interviews process the researcher transcribed the interviews. Once the interviews had been transcribed the researcher coded the interviews based on a thematic coding scheme and broke down the data into the key themes that emerged from the interview process and the research questions. A break down of the thematic coding used is included in Appendix V.

Prior to conducting the interviews it was anticipated that several themes would emerge. Based on the literature, the following general themes were anticipated to be coded for: identity construction on Facebook, issues of identity and women, gender norms and social capital, women and social media and evolving use of Facebook. It was anticipated that women would spend a fairly substantial amount of time on Facebook managing their identity performance and posting pictures which depicted stereotypically feminine behaviors such as duckface photos, selfies, and pictures of women in groups socializing. It was also anticipated that women would conform to some of the female gender norms the literature suggested such as cattiness in women-to-women interactions and overt femininity during interactions with the opposite sex. During the data collection and interview process several key themes became apparent, many of which had been quite clearly anticipated in the literature review. These were: internalizing standards of beauty, Facebook as platforms to give and receive validation from peers and Facebook as an

essential tool in young women's communication repertoire. One of the most surprising themes that emerged was that women seemed to use Facebook as a platform through which to validate one another. This theme was not anticipated as it seems the unpleasant nature of women-to-women interactions was overstated in the literature and suggested that women on social networks were generally unpleasant to one another due to the disembodied nature of the medium.

The interview participants' answers were treated as the primary mode of data collection and analysis, however, the participants' Facebook timelines were used as a dataset against which to appreciate, where relevant, the validity and truthfulness of the participants' responses. The information the women made available on their timelines also allowed the researcher to make more in-depth observations and memos which enhanced the interview data.

Chapter 4: Results & Analysis

One of the themes that resonated throughout the interview process was that Facebook is an essential tool in young women's communication repertoire. Women use Facebook in a way that is both prolific and ubiquitous. "It's always open", exclaimed Claire, "I'll check it like every 10 minutes". "It would be weird to imagine my life without Facebook", agreed Christine. "Oh my gosh I'm on Facebook all the time, especially during boring classes and exam time. It's so bad, but it's just become a habit, like, I don't even realize I'm doing it. I just take out my phone and I'm on Facebook", admitted Erin. "Like [from the time] I get up to when I go to bed at like 2.30 in the morning and like when I'm in class, I'm always on it", Gabby confessed.

Admittedly not all the participants shared the same reverence and enthusiastic use of the social networking site, but every woman admitted to using Facebook daily to varying degrees. And this sample of women is not unique in the ubiquity of their Facebook use as 14 million Canadians login on a daily basis (Canadian Press, 2013). Almost all the women said that Facebook was one of the main ways they stay connected with friends and even family, for some.

The fact that Facebook is such a significant communication tool for young women is not altogether surprising. Due to its prolific nature, Facebook has established itself as a key social influencer, especially in the lives of young adults. After all, it is during this phase of emerging adulthood Arnett (2000) says long-term social skills are undergoing critical development. However, the depth and feeling of authenticity in the relationships women forge on the site is an interesting take away. Many of the women interviewed described their Facebook use as passive, however, even as passive users of the platform they still had the feeling of staying connected with their network of friends. Christine, when asked about using Facebook to stay in touch, explained, "I like to go on people's profiles to see what they're doing because sometimes I'm too lazy to ask them...Facebook is the easiest way to stay in touch with everyone". All twelve of the study participants echoed these same feelings saying Facebook was their main way of keeping in contact with their friends and even family for some.

The prevalence social networking sites in the lives of young women reinforces that sites, such as Facebook, play a pivotal role in young women's daily communication practices. Social networking sites have become an integral part of their user's lives, as the interview responses attest to. And an important terrain where gender norms and cultural norms are explored, contested and established.

4.1 Results

Through the open and frank discussions enabled by the interview process and the subsequent analysis many interesting findings emerged regarding the #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign. When attempting to understand how the #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign reinforces dominate gender norms the key interview responses could be filtered into two categories.

Roles Theory & internalizing standards of beauty

In interviewing the study participants on the #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign I sought not only to understand their insights into the campaign, but also to observe how their experiences on Facebook surrounding this campaign tied into reinforcing our culture's dominant gender norms.

This study is also interested in understanding the part Roles Theory plays in governing the behaviors and expectations surrounding gender roles and normative behavior on the Facebook platform. In many ways Facebook can be seen as a forum for policing and establishing normative behavior, with your network of peers affirming or denying your performance. As a result of this self-imposed peer policing, users begin to self-surveil, as they are keenly aware of the gaze of others. Indeed, a main take away from the interviews conducted was the role social networks play in women internalizing standards of desirable and expected behavior.

When asked her thoughts on the #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign interview participant, Lauren said, "I think it's a good idea to showcase people without make up and show natural beauty instead of being a "cake face", but admitted, however, that she was unaware of the cancer awareness and fundraising goals of the campaign. Gabby was similarly misinformed, "No I didn't know that [it was intended to raise funds for cancer research]. Like, I saw all these people

being like ‘hey I got nominated’ but I was like ‘nominated for what?’”. When asked, Diana confessed, “I was just really hoping that I wouldn’t get tagged. It’s kind of strange. I wasn’t really sure what it was for. I don’t really know why so many people were doing it, I heard something about how it was in support of cancer research but then I kind of thought it didn’t really seem like it was true at all, so I dunno[sic], I didn’t really look into it.”. When it was confirmed to Diana that the campaign had, in fact, been in support of cancer research she went on to say, “Yeah nobody was saying anything about that! Everyone was just like ‘yay look at me! No make up!’ and all their friends were like ‘wow you’re so beautiful’ and I was like why would you bother doing that! It just seems like self-promotion”.

Diana’s response touches on an important point. While it is encouraging to see that women are turning to social networks to support and endorse one another there is a fine line between compliments and narcissism. Diana’s response also highlights how Role Theory permeates social networks. Role Theory operates under the assumption that we all hold a variety of roles and that those roles dictate our behavior on the stage of life (Poire, 2006). Leaving aside the many flaws of the campaign that can be taken issue with, there is a gender dimension to this issue. Interestingly, this campaign took a universal, gender non-specific issue and turned it into a “women’s issue” by making it solely about surface, vanity and emotion rather than pragmatic action (Hughes, 2014). A campaign that was intended to raise money for a charitable cause became yet another vehicle for women to perpetuate gender roles and internalized standards of beauty. Interestingly, while the campaign itself wasn’t aimed specifically at women, it was predominantly women who felt it was their role to participate.

One of the most unfortunate consequences of this campaign was that it reinforced the idea that women's natural faces are some kind of freak-show curiosity, and also, that a woman's face and image are what she really has to offer the world, even when it comes to fighting cancer. The campaign implied that the most useful way a woman could contribute to solving a huge problem was to take off their make up and “have their appearance scrutinized en masse, as though this was some incredibly meaningful sacrifice” (Hughes, 2014).

Remarkably, however, when asked whether they felt any pressure to act a certain way on Facebook the majority of the interview participants (seven) said they did not feel any pressure to act a certain way on Facebook and were unaffected by what other people post on Facebook. The fact that most women did not feel there was any pressure to act a specific way on Facebook was surprising as the women seemed to mainly engage in the same activities and behaviors as each other and their peers on online social networks. For example, all participants stated that their main activity on Facebook was posting and commenting on pictures and that they rarely shared written status updates. Interview participant Christine noted that she thought people have expectations on Facebook but she did not feel pressured to act a certain way. Another participant, Julia, raised a similar point, stating, “Um I wouldn’t really say pressured but there is definitely a distinct way you’re supposed to act on Facebook. I kind of self-censor and I’m aware of the fact that people are always watching”. Interestingly, while many of the participants acknowledged that they felt there were unwritten expectations of behavior on Facebook, they were also quick to point out that they did not feel “pressured” into conforming to these standards of behavior. For example, when asked if she felt that there was any pressure to act a certain way on Facebook, Diana reluctantly agreed, saying, “I guess, but I wouldn’t call it pressure at all. I’ve heard people say that for profile pictures [there’s pressure] because everyone wants to look their best for those

but, I dunno[*sic*] if I do that. I guess I probably do”. Christine, again, emphasized this point by saying, “Yeah, I guess in a sense people do expect girls to be sexier. I do see it often enough though [on my news feed] that girls feel that they need to post pictures of their body, or pictures in the mirror or selfies—definitely, all the time”.

Facebook as platforms to give and receive validation from peers

The second key finding that emerged in regards to the #NoMakeUSelfie campaign and reinforcing gender roles was the fact that the study participants used Facebook to validate themselves and their peers.

In popular culture there are many stereotypes that have become so deeply ingrained in our society that they have become taken for granted assumptions. As Stern (2007) noted, communication between women, especially private, ephemeral types of written communication, can often be sites where women are unpleasant and catty to one another. Based on this assumption it could be presumed that women on Facebook would exhibit these same catty tendencies, however, when the interview participants detailed their Facebook activities it was revealed that quite the opposite was occurring. Many of the women embodied the feminine quality of “niceness” on Facebook in ways that they would not exhibit in the offline world. In many ways Facebook can be seen as a platform for women to give and receive validation and affirmation from their peers.

As interview participant Christine noted, “On Facebook I would never, like, say bad things to people, it’s, like, the opposite, like saying to other people ‘oh you’re so pretty’ and stuff like that, I wouldn’t act that way in person, you know”. In her interview, Julia said, “I feel like

it's easier to be really nice on Facebook and give people compliments, like, when you see their pictures and stuff, but you don't really tell people face-to-face. Like, you don't really go up to people and go 'you look really nice today'". Many other interview participants echoed this same feeling. Erin said, "I think too it's easier to compliment people on Facebook as well. Like, their photo will just kind of appear in front of you and it's easy to "like" it as opposed to approaching them in person" and Bailey further reinforced the idea saying, "sometimes I know I go out of my way to compliment people and say they have a nice picture or something but I don't know as I'd go out of my way to compliment them in person, depending who it is". Again if we look to Role Theory and Goffman's Dramaturgical approach it is notable that Facebook has become such an important influencer in the way normative gender roles are carried out. While "niceness" is considered a stereotypically feminine trait, it is interesting to see that platforms such as Facebook are changing the way women perform these—women are becoming more comfortable exhibiting these performances online.

The #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign ticked the public altruism box in a way that seemed to make women feel they could not be accused of fishing for compliments because their newsfeeds—flooded with other women participating—confirmed and validated their own participation. When all else failed the charity trump card was called upon in an attempt to justify the selfie as an act of selfless charity. Instead of unpacking the meaning of the campaign or questioning its motive the study participants had become so accustomed to seeing selfies in their newsfeeds and complimenting their friends that many admitting to having engaged with the campaign—be it through liking or commenting on a photo—without even realizing it.

4.2 Analysis

Roles Theory & internalizing standards of beauty

Foucault (1974) said that identity is bound up in the cultural discourse of what it is to exist and behave in the context of society and culture. Feminist scholars also maintain that gender is dependent on both culture and history (Sullivan, 2003). While there is no single source that can be credited as being the primary social catalyst and means of disseminating and reinforcing dominant gender and social norms in society Facebook can be seen as a key arena for performance in these areas. As we've established, Role Theory operates under the assumption that the roles we hold dictate our behavior on the stage of life and Facebook has become a primary platform where these performances take place. As previously noted, an interesting finding that has come from an analysis of the data collected through the interview process and primary research is that while the #NoMakeUpSelfie centered around a gender none specific issue and requested users post a selfie—something that in itself is not a gendered act—women were still the ones who predominantly felt it was their role to participate.

The fact that the women who participated in the study did not believe there was any pressure to act a certain way on social networks yet the majority largely played into the same expected culturally dominant gender norms as their peers suggests that they have internalized cultural standards of femininity, so much so, that they no longer feel they are conforming to them. This finding is in line with what the literature says about gender norms being so deeply ingrained in our society as to appear to be natural or common knowledge. Seven of the twelve participants expressed that they did not feel any pressure to “act a certain way” on Facebook and were unaffected by what other people post on Facebook. Despite this assertion the majority of participants engaged in the same activities, performances and behaviors as the other study

participants while on social networking sites. Again through Role Theory and Goffman's dramaturgical approach we gain an appreciation for the significance of the peer-to-peer policing that goes on on social networks such as Facebook.

The #NoMakeUpSelfie has proved to be an interesting case study, that serves to highlight how gender norms can be reinforced on social platforms and how women can use Facebook as an arena to validate one another. One of the most significant aspects of the campaign, as it relates to this study, is how the campaign took a universal, gender non-specific issue and turned it into an issue that centered around standards of female beauty. The campaign was wildly prolific and quickly spread across Facebook at a viral pace. By having women issue a public call to action to other women what Westlake (2007) calls the Big Brother effect of Facebook was clearly demonstrated—women who were nominated by their peers felt obligated to play along or face the backlash from those that looked on. It wasn't long before the main focus of the campaign became the selfie instead of the charitable donation and those watching from the periphery were largely unaware of the original intent of the campaign.

It is interesting to note that the women who participated in the study, although not direct participants of the campaign themselves, were largely unaware of the campaign's intended purpose. However, instead of being alarmed or questioning the sudden surge in selfies that appeared in their newsfeeds the participants were simply passively aware of the increase in selfies. This highlights that young women have become accustomed to their peers seeking to derive a sense of worth from peer validation on Facebook. Receiving validation and, in return, validating others has become a primary role on the performances that take place on these platforms. All in all, the #NoMakeUpSelfie is a case study that embodies many of the key

findings of the current study and stands as an example of what has become a normative part of the current Facebook experience for young women. The #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign also serves as an example of how important sites such as Facebook have become in the establishment and reinforcement of normative roles. Now with so much of young women's communication happening through social networking sites the #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign serves as an example of how gender roles that exist offline have very much transcended into these online environments.

The concept of hegemony is useful in understanding how women internalize standards of beauty and also how gender roles continue to pervade social networks such as Facebook. Through repetitive exposure to gender norms these performances have become naturalized. Participating in socially normative behavior, whether consciously or not, allows people to be regulated in a way that often goes unnoticed and unacknowledged. Foucault spoke of how it was the task of the modern state to create a citizenry that would police itself and presented Jeremy Bentham's design for a panopticon. It would appear that through social networks the architecture of self-surveillance is encouraged. However, it does not stop there as it's not only your own eyes that turn on themselves. Facebook then can be seen as a modern form of the panopticon in which there is always an awareness that someone is watching.

As Bailey elaborated, "Yeah I think you want to show yourself as being pretty and interesting and exciting, so yeah I think I try to do that. But, like, not in a pressured way, I act how I want. I guess there is a kind of agreed upon stereotype though that girls are gonna[sic] take a lot of selfies and act a certain way and stuff like that". The interview responses of the

participants would then suggest that women do not feel pressure to act a certain way because they know what is expected of them and happily oblige.

In the case of the #NoMakeUpSelfie this begs the question—Is this campaign soliciting donations at the cost of reinforcing the dominant, culturally held belief that a woman’s femininity is her strongest and most valuable available asset? Further to this, it’s interesting to consider why women felt it was their role to participate in these types of performances? Nothing about the campaign—neither the issue nor the call to action—was specific to females. However, the action of requesting participants post photos of themselves drew a female audience and turned this gender non-specific issue into a gendered issue.

Facebook as a platform to give and receive validation from peers

It is interesting to note that women went out of their way to compliment and validate other women on Facebook in ways many participants said they neither felt inclined nor comfortable doing in offline encounters.

Gonzales and Hancock (2010) highlighted that Facebook has a positive effect on self-esteem as the platform allows the user to present their “optimal self”. In essence, the mediated nature of Facebook gives users more opportunities to present themselves positively and deliberately. Coupled with the fact that the interview responses indicated women were more complimentary to one another on social networks than offline social networks present opportunities for women to use these networks to transcend culturally imposed gender norms.

It is also significant to note that while the concept of social norms often carries with it a negative connotation this is not necessarily always the case. The participants' responses indicate the Facebook is a terrain in which encouraging and complimenting other users, especially other women, is the encouraged and socially acceptable norm. The fact that Facebook can act as a forum for women to openly compliment and encourage one another, even if it is mostly on the subject of their appearance, is somewhat empowering. The literature reviewed spoke principally to studies that found that women-to-women bullying was increased and more aggressive online. It can be positive to see that in the public arena of Facebook women are using their voices to empower one another in very public ways.

However, this too is a double-edged sword as compliments and validation are not always positive regardless of context. An alternate reading of the women's complimentary behavior could suggest that, depending on the types of pictures women are complimenting they may, in fact, be unintentionally reinforcing existing gender norms. The #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign can be cited as a case in point. This campaign rapidly turned from awareness campaign to a "mass exercise in narcissism" and, arguable, a cry for affirmation as women posted selfies and played along in a self-congratulatory game of complimenting one another. In the end, this form of validation only served to further reinforce the dominant, culturally held belief that a woman's femininity is her strongest and most valuable asset. The #NoMakeUpSelfie serves as a classic example of how the roles we hold dictate our behavior on the stage of life. Gender roles are equally as pervasive in the social media space as they are in the offline world.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

Summary of Key Findings

In recent years we've seen the media take a growing interest in feminism in daily life and especially the portrayal of women. Although Facebook is not considered a traditional media outlet it nonetheless represents a key social influencer in the lives of its users. The purpose of this study was to critically examine how young women conform to and subvert our culture's dominant gender norms and the role social networking sites, such as Facebook, play in this process. In order to be able to answer this central research question the study explored several sub questions to establish what dominant gender norms and stereotypes exist for women, how they are disseminated and the role Facebook plays in the policing and reinforcing of these normative behaviors. The case study of the #NoMakeUpSelfie also served as a conduit to understanding the central research question

It was found that Facebook is an essential and ubiquitous communication tool in the lives of young women. The findings suggest that gender and social norms that are reinforced on Facebook are equally as pervasive and effective as those reinforced offline given the ubiquity of use. The study found that gender norms are so deeply ingrained and normalized that women often conform to them without seemingly realizing they are doing so. While it was found that women were largely complimentary of one another this finding also suggests that women are unwittingly reinforcing existing gender norms. The #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign provided a case study where women complimenting one another merely served to further reinforce culturally held beliefs that a women's femininity is her strongest and most valuable asset. Through an approach founded in Roles Theory the study observed how internalized gender roles contributed to the #NoMakeUpSelfie campaign developing a gendered dimension. Though neither the issue

nor the call to action was specific to women it was predominantly women that felt compelled to participate. Given the scope of the research project there were limitations to the study. However, the work laid out in this study provides an excellent launching point from which future research can be undertaken.

Delimitations & Limitations

A key delimitation of the study was the inability to measure what Goffman calls the backstage performances that are enacted on Facebook. While the participant interviews and access to the women's public Facebook profiles allowed the researcher to gain valuable insights into how women act publicly on Facebook the backstage performances of participants were left largely in the dark as it was up to the participants to shed light on these happenings. While all study participants claimed to engage in complimentary and kind behavior in all facets of their online communication the scope of the current study did not allow further investigation into this and the participants themselves cannot be considered credible, unbiased sources of insight into their own behavior. It would be beneficial for future studies to focus on also collecting information from participant Private Messages in order to gain a greater breadth and depth of knowledge. The study also focused exclusively on women, however, it would be beneficial for future research to sample both men and women to further explore whether the user habits and behaviors observed in this study were inherently gender based or specific.

Significance of Study

Today new digital communication technology is more widespread and diverse than ever before and has opened up possibilities for rich, online interaction unprecedented in the history of Internet communication. Facebook provides an intricate arena of interactions and representations

that help to mediate the performance of identity in a way that has never before been possible online. The media's world of women is often characterized as particularly "feminized"—where physical beauty and sexual attractiveness supplant any other trait a woman possesses (Stern, 2007, p.2). However, while some women often seemed to willingly play into the discourses surrounding them in terms of sex and body image they were also willing to articulate their identities as something more than just a surface appearance. Thus, the women who participated in the study actively negotiated the tensions of contemporary feminism in their Facebook use (Stern, 2007, p. 130). In many ways Facebook can be seen as a terrain where women negotiate identity and gender norms while also performing gender as they best understand it. As the features of Facebook continue to expand and evolve so too will the ways in which people use it to perform and manipulate their identities. If Facebook continues to hold court as one of the most influential and pervasive communication platforms the next generation will largely be a group that constructs much of their identity, gender roles and relations, in the intricate arena of Facebook. As Turkle reminds us, the networked culture is very young and, as attendants at its birth, we threw ourselves into the adventure and tend to assume because we grew up with it that the Internet is grown up (Turkle, 2011, p. 294). The fact that dominant cultural and patriarchal discourses are still so present and embedded within a medium, such as Facebook, which is considered progressive in so many ways draws clear parallels for the need to continue to think critically about the way our behavior, perhaps unwittingly, continues to perpetuate age old stereotypes.

Appendices

Appendix I

ISPR Study Information

Study Description: I am conducting a study on how Canadian young women use Facebook and want you to participate! Participation is easy and will only take about 30 minutes of your time while still guaranteeing you 1 full ISPR point and all you have to do is answer some questions about your Facebook use—no preparation needed! During the interview you will be asked to login to your Facebook page (you can bring your own computer to do this if you feel more comfortable otherwise a computer will be provided for use) as the information you make public on your Facebook timeline will be used to guide some of the interview questions. This study will be conducted in English only.

Eligibility Requirements: Young women between the ages of 18-24 who use Facebook.

Duration: 35 minutes

Points: 1

Appendix II

Interview participant notes

Name	Age	Year of study	Program of study	Defining characteristics
1. Christine	18	1st	Communication	Caucasian, from Ottawa area
2. Bethany	19	2nd	Biomedical science	Caucasian from Ottawa area
3. Emilie	18	1st	Science de l'activité physique (Human Kinetics)	Francophone, Caucasian, from New Brunswick
4. Sarah	18	1st	Criminologie	African-American, from Ottawa area, francophone
5. Julia	24	1st	Criminology	Caucasian, from Kingston
6. Erin	18	1st	Psychology	Caucasian, from Kingston
7. Claire	23	2nd	Second language teaching in French	Caucasian, from Sudbury
8. Bailey	18	1st	Conflict Studies and Human Rights	Caucasian, from Ottawa
9. Gabby	19	2nd	Littérature françaises et éducation	African-American (participant declined to answer this question in the prescreen), from Laval
10. Diana	21	3rd	Linguistics	Caucasian, from Nova Scotia
11. Lauren	18	1st	Linguistics and psychology	Caucasian, from Toronto
12. Danielle	19	1st	Sciences politiques et Communication	African-American, from Haiti

Appendix III

Interview guide sorted by key themes

General

1. When did you first join Facebook?
2. What was the reason you decided to join Facebook?
3. In a typical day, how much time would you say you spend on Facebook? Do you have it on in the background when you're at your computer? etc.
4. What is the main reason you continue to use Facebook?
5. Is the number of friends of you have on Facebook important to you?
6. How often (if ever) do you remove old content and "groom" your timeline?
7. What other social networks do you use? Are they connected to your Facebook?

Identity construction on Facebook

1. How would you feel if Facebook was closed and all the information you've posted to the site was lost?
2. How accurately do you feel your Facebook profile reflects the "real/true" you?
3. Does your Facebook profile reflect your professional or private self?
4. Do you think your online personality affects your offline personality?
5. How do you feel when people bring up things you have posted on Facebook in the offline world?
6. Do you feel people have treated you differently in the offline world based on information they have gained from Facebook?
7. Have you ever said something to someone on Facebook that you would likely not say in a face-to-face interaction?
8. How do the responses you get to the things you posts affect what you post/reveal about yourself on Facebook?
9. How do you feel when something you post gets a lot of "likes"?
10. Do you ever consciously think about how you will broadcast an event on Facebook while you are at an event?
11. Do you ever take pictures for the sole purpose of posting them on Facebook or another social networking site?
12. Has the way you use Facebook changed over the years?
13. Does having Facebook and knowing your life is captured, make you want to live a life you hope to have archived? Make you strive to be a better person to produce an impressive profile?
14. Do you think people often look through your timeline without every leaving some kind of message? How does this make you feel?

Issues of identity and women

1. Generally, what kind of posts do you most often share on Facebook?
2. What do you think the things you say on Facebook say about you?

3. Do you try to present your “best” self by posting pictures that depict you in a certain light?
4. Do you ever feel pressure to act a certain way on Facebook? (be sexier? smarter? travel more? etc)
5. Do the interactions you have on Facebook affect your self-esteem, sense of self-worth or how you feel about yourself generally?
6. Have you ever encountered any stereotypes on Facebook?
7. Does your Facebook profile tell the narrative of your life since you’ve joined the site?
8. What do you think about the no make up selfie?

Online vs Offline interactions

1. Is Facebook the main way you stay in contact with friends and family?
2. Is Facebook a way to create new friendships or to maintain existing friendships?
3. How do the people you are friends with on Facebook affect what you post?
4. Do you communicate with people on Facebook that you would not/have not communicated with in the offline world?
5. Do you “check in” to the places you go?

Appendix IV

CONSENT FORM

Title of the study: Femmebook: Women, Facebook and the construction and negotiation of sexuality and stereotypes online

Researcher: Miss. Amber Smith. Miss Smith can be contacted by email at asmit155@uottawa.ca or by telephone at (613) 291-8964.

Supervisor: Dr. P. Ross, along with the affiliation of the Faculty of Arts, Department of Communication and coordinates. Dr. Ross can be contacted by email at pross@uottawa.ca or by telephone at (613) 562-5800 x 8972.

Invitation to Participate: I am extending an invitation to participate in the abovementioned research study conducted by Amber Smith under the supervision of Dr. Philippe Ross. This study will be conducted solely in English. Participation will entail participating in one interview session during which the participant will be asked to share the contents of her public Facebook page with the researcher.

Purpose of the Study: The purpose of the study is to examine how Canadian young women use Facebook to interact with and relate to peers and how this use relates to our culture's dominant gender norms. The study seeks to gain an understanding of the role social media play in establishing and reinforcing social norms, gender roles and stereotypes.

Participation: Participation will entail taking part in one interview session during which the participant will be asked to share the contents of her public Facebook page with the researcher. The interview will be set up using the uOttawa ISPR system and will require a time commitment of 30 minutes up to one hour. The interview session has been scheduled for (*place, date and time of session*). The interview will be recorded for transcription purposes.

Risks: Participation in this study will entail allowing the researcher to view the participant's Facebook page, including all the information they make public on the site. Participants will also be asked to participate in an interview to augment the research findings. The researcher assures that every effort will be made to minimize risks and the participants' privacy and anonymity will be protected and preserved at all times. All responses of individual participants will be kept strictly confidential and kept in a secure place.

Benefits: Participation in this study will help the researcher gain an understanding of the role social media play, not only in the lives of young women but also in their social development.

Confidentiality and anonymity: The researcher assures that the information shared by participants will remain strictly confidential. The data collected will be used for this research project only and confidentiality will be protected at all times. All responses of individual participants will be kept strictly confidential and kept in a secure place. Anonymity will be protected by changing the names of the participants and the names of friends, family etc. mentioned by the participant.

Researcher's signature: *(Signature)* Date: *(Date)*

Appendix V

Thematic coding

1. Internalizing standards of behavior

Most girls said they didn't feel any pressure to act a certain way on Facebook and were unaffected by what other people post on Facebook yet they mostly seem to engage in the same activities and behaviors. For example, all the girls said when they first started using Facebook they would share written status updates often and now they all share mostly photos and funny videos and links—they don't seem to realize the extent to which they are, perhaps subconsciously, influenced by trends and friends on Facebook. During the interview portion almost all the girls said they never tried to portray their “best” self or felt any pressure to act a certain way yet when they took me through their Facebook page they admitted that they liked to make sure their profile picture was always a “good” picture. The fact that these girls don't believe there is any pressure to act a certain way yet all conform to these same standards suggests that they have internalized cultural standards of beauty/femininity so much so that they no longer believe or feel that they are conforming to them. They don't feel pressure to act a certain way because they know what is expected of them and happily oblige.

I do think that people have expectations [on Facebook] but I don't really feel pressured.—Christine

Ya, I guess in a sense people do expect girls to be sexier. I've seen it happen but I've never had it directly happen to me. I do see it often enough though [on my news feed] that girls feel that they need to post pictures of their body, or pictures in the mirror or selfies—definitely, all the time.—Christine

I think mostly I see religious and sexual stereotypes and it's most women that are sexualized. I see a lot of jokes about women on Facebook. —Sarah

Um I wouldn't really say pressured but there is definitely a distinct way you're supposed to act on Facebook. I kind of self-censor and I'm aware of the fact that people are always watching. —Julia

Ya I think you want to show yourself to as being pretty and interesting and exciting, so ya I think I try to do that. But like not in a pressured way, I act how I want. I guess there is a kind of agreed upon stereotype though that girls are gonna take a lot of selfies and stuff like that.—Bailey

There's a pressure to post a lot of pictures and get a lot of likes, especially in the summer time you get a lot of the bikini shot and I'm like “oh my god I could never do that” like I never wear bikini but I see them [the photos] and I'm like “man I wish I could do that” but I don't feel pressured. Like I wanna do it but I don't feel like I have to.—Gabby

I guess, but I wouldn't call it pressure at all. I've heard people say that for profile pictures [there's pressure] because everyone wants to look their best for those but then when you look at

their tagged photos it's like the complete opposite. I dunno if I do that, I guess I probably try and look better for the things I post. –Diana

I don't try and depict myself in a certain way but I do try to put pictures that make me look attractive—Lauren

Ya, I've encountered some stereotypes from younger girls that are still in high school that I have on Facebook who are, you know, trying to be a bit more provocative or guys trying to be more cool and stuff like that. The girls kind of dress a certain way and pose in pictures to get a certain attraction towards the pictures. And those pictures are always the ones that get lots of likes. – Lauren

I keep feeling like I need to change my profile picture often, I feel I can never go for 3 months without changing my profile picture or if I don't change my profile picture then at least I change the background [cover photo]—Danielle

2. Facebook as a platform for girls to validate/compliment one another and also receive validation from peers.

I feel happy that they've looked at that and took an interest in what I'm doing or noticed something I've posted and thought it's interesting. I guess I feel a small sense of pride, like “look someone cares” and it's nice to know people look at the stuff you post. –Claire

I'm extremely choosy on what I put as my profile picture because I have gotten some profile pictures—and this is me being shameful—that have gotten, like, a lot of likes, like it got 141 likes and I did not expect that and that makes me feel like I have an expectation to have really cool pictures for my profile picture so now I'm super choosy. Sometimes I'll think “oh maybe I could put that as my profile picture” and then I'm like nope I'm not going to because I don't think it will get enough likes and I know that it's a ridiculous way to look at things but it happens. When you have [a lot of people like your photo or post] it's like “wow!” it's a weird confidence boost. 141 people looked at my picture and liked it and it makes you feel good and it's a weird rush, you think “I want to match that again”, I want to get just as many likes. –Claire

On Facebook I would never like say bad things to people, it's like the opposite, like saying to other people “oh you're so pretty” and stuff like that, I wouldn't act that way in person you know. I tend to say things that I might be a bit more embarrassed to say in person. –Christine

Um I mean when you talk about the amount of “likes” it's still affects me somewhat, you know you notice “oh wow there's 100 likes on this photo” but it's not necessarily gonna rule my life. For me Facebook is a lot more personal and I wanna share my stuff that's important to me, and if other people like it that's nice. It's nice to have the acknowledgement and it's definitely flattering. If I get a lot of compliments or positive feedback on things it does affect your confidence.—Christine

I definitely pay attention to [the “likes” I get on photos] and it feels good! But I don't post stuff just to try and get likes. –Bethany

Usually I post pictures from when I'm at snowboarding competitions and I get a lot of likes so at the next one I'll do the same and post more pictures. Sometimes it feels annoying because my cell phone keeps buzzing with notifications but it is nice when people like your stuff.—Emilie

Ya I guess it's just easier to compliment people on Facebook. Like in real life you're not gonna go up to a person and say "I like this", so I give more compliments on Facebook.—Sarah

I feel like it's easier to be really nice on Facebook and give people compliments like when you see their pictures and stuff but you don't really tell people face to face. Like you don't really go up to people and go "you look really nice today"—Julia

[If I post something and I get a lot of "likes"] I feel good about myself, I feel like people like it so I feel confident. If I post something and it doesn't get many likes I would probably delete it! [Getting likes] isn't as important to me on Facebook as it is on Instagram because people don't really use Facebook as much to like pictures because they have Instagram, But probably if I have less than 10 likes I would probably delete it. —Julia

Ya if I post something and it doesn't get a lot of likes it does make me question why people aren't liking it so I kind of look around and see what people are posting that are getting "likes"—Julia

Well sometimes I know I go out of my way to compliment people and say they have a nice picture or something but I don't know as I'd go out of my way to compliment them in person, depending who it is. People's photos come up on my timeline so I'm like "ya I'll like their photo"—Bailey

[When someone likes my photo it] definitely boosts my confidence and it makes me feel more inclined to share something like that again.—Bailey

I think it's easier communicating over Facebook sometimes. I find I can articulate myself better when you can plan it out and then send it. I think too it's easier to compliment people on Facebook as well. Like their photo will just kind of appear in front of you and it's easy to "like" it as opposed to approaching them in person. [And when you get a lot of likes] it's a confidence boost! For sure! When I post photos I definitely think about whether or not I think a lot of people are gonna like it, it's definitely a factor if we're gonna be honest. I won't take down a photo if it doesn't get a lot of likes but it's kinda like "aw ok".
—Erin

Well like for pictures like sometimes people will post a picture and I'll be like why does that person have 50 thousand "likes" like I don't get it she's ugly on it [that photo] and like I can't even get like 5 likes. So I can get like annoyed and I guess it can affect my self-esteem sometimes but like it depends if I'm having a bad day or not how much it affects me. —Gabby

Well it makes me feel good at first, ya, it makes me feel good. Like once I posted an article and I got so many responses and I was like "oh my god yay!" and I was like so happy about it because like obviously if you, the more you get the more you're happy be it's not like a drama if you don't get a lot. —Gabby

I feel awesome [when people like my photos], I guess cuz it makes me feel that people noticed. – Lauren

[When I get a lot of likes it makes me feel] Great actually! You feel that people actually see what you are doing. –Danielle

3. Facebook is an essential tool in young women's communication repertoire. Almost all the girls said they were more passive than active on Facebook (mostly private messaging friends, writing on friends' timelines, commenting on tagged photos etc.) every girl admitted to using Facebook daily to varying degrees. Almost all the girls said that Facebook was one of the main ways they stay connected with friends and, even family, for some.

It's always open so I'll check it like every 10 minutes –Claire

I'd say maybe around an hour or 2 hours a day. I kind of check every hour or so for a few minutes, so I just spend chunks of time.—Christine

It would be weird to imagine my life without Facebook. --Christine

I go on pretty often. If I'm in class and a professor is talking about something boring I go on and check it quickly, but I only go on for a couple seconds at a time. Frequently I guess. I check it throughout the day. Sometimes in the evenings I usually have the link open and I chat with people and stuff but during the day I'm on it just briefly. –Bethany

I spend a big block of time and then I'm done for like an hour. In the whole day I probably spend like 3 hours. In the morning I spend a big block of time and then in the evening and in between I just check a few times.—Emilie

I check it a few times throughout the day, maybe like 4 times. Maybe like an hour and a half all together.—Sarah

I dunno how much time I spend in total, that's a good question. I just have it on my phone so I can kind of go in when I need to. –Bailey

Oh a lot of time [on Facebook], probably 3 hours or more, especially during boring classes and exam time. Oh my gosh, it's so bad for you but it's just become a habit, like I don't even realize I'm doing it. I just take out my phone and I'm on Facebook. It's just a distractedable [sic] thing. It's mostly just to check what other people are doing, especially since moving away from home. —Erin

Now I use [Facebook] like 10 times a day, like it's pretty addictive. Like since I get up to when I go to bed at like 2.30 in the morning and like when I'm in class, I'm always on it. If it's boring I'm like "what's happening" on Facebook.—Gabby

It's kind of hard to measure, I've never really checked. I keep checking it repeatedly though, but never for really long amounts of time. –Diana

I'm pretty active on Facebook, I check everyday, like multiple times and I probably post stuff a few times a week.—Lauren

Lately I don't go on Facebook often, but I probably go on Facebook 5 or 6 times [a day] during the week but I'll be spending more time. There was one time when I feel I always have to post something, like I feel I was addicted to Facebook but now I'm cutting out and stopping little by little. —Danielle

4. No make-up selfie

I've seen it on my sister's [timeline] and other peoples. I don't think it's the best thing, like it's not the most effective thing, like when those things go around I don't know what they're about until after they're finished so it's kind of missing the point a little bit. —Claire

I guess it's alright, it's showing that girls don't have to wear make up and stuff but I don't really understand if it's about cancer or something like that. Like I know one person on my Facebook was getting really upset about it and saying it was supposed to be about cancer and now everyone is just posting photos of themselves and trying to make it about them and not the cancer so I guess in a way it has a negative light on it right now. I was almost nominated and I was like "I don't wanna have to do that", I don't think people want to see me with no make up on. —Bailey

I think its kind of silly actually, I think it's just another way to get compliments. Like you can wear make up if you want to but you don't have to, I dunno I think it's kind of silly. Like it's a good message but I think it's about the compliments.—Erin

I dunno I think it's a cool thing, like so many of people's photos are photoshopped and like glamorous so I think it's a good thing to make people more aware that like hey you don't need make up to make yourself better. [*Amber: did you know that the campaign was intended to raise funds for cancer research?*] No I didn't not know that. Like I saw all these people being like "hey I got nominated" but I was like "nominated for what?" And there was that like nominate to drink thing too, that was stupid.—Gabby

I was just really hoping that I wouldn't get tagged. It's kind of strange. I wasn't really sure what it was for. I don't really know why so many people were doing it, I heard something about how it was in support of cancer research but then I kind of thought it didn't really seem like it was true at all, so I dunno, I didn't really look into it. [*Amber: it was supposed to be to raise money for cancer research in the UK*]. Ya nobody was saying anything about that! Everyone was just like "no make up!" and all their friends were like "wow you're so beautiful" and I was like why would you bother doing that! It just seems like self-promotion. —Diana

I think it's a good idea to showcase people without make up and show natural beauty instead of being a "cake face". —Lauren

Well I don't know. Some people I was not expecting to see them without make up and I'm like ok that's ok, that's good, I think it's good for their self-esteem that people like their pictures but

also it's good to show yourself that you don't need to wear products to look beautiful but if people doesn't like their picture then people can feel very vulnerable.—Danielle

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