

Online Communities: An Intersection Between Computer-Mediated Communication,
Subcultures and the Presentation of Self in the Global Age

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Criminology

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Table of Contents

ABSTRACT	III
INTRODUCTION.....	IV
CHAPTER 1: CONCEPTUALIZING SUBCULTURE	1
CHAPTER 2: REBRANDING SUBCULTURE AND THEORETICAL CRITIQUES.....	36
CHAPTER 3: THE INTERNET AND SOCIAL NETWORKING: THE RISE OF COMPUTER-MEDIATED	54
CHAPTER 4: DEVIANCE, DRAMATURGY AND THE ART OF BLOGGING	71
CHAPTER 5: DRAMATURGY, ONLINE COMMUNITIES AND SUBCULTURAL ENGAGEMENT: AN ILLUSTRATIVE CASE STUDY OF THE #LIFTBLR COMMUNITY	89
CONCLUSION.....	133
REFERENCES	135
APPENDIX A	146
APPENDIX B.....	149

Abstract

There has been extensive literature on the subject of subcultures in the fields of criminology and sociology. The term has undergone decades upon decades of revisions and debate amongst scholars. Despite the vast amount of literature available on the term subculture, there is unfortunately no clear-cut definition of what a subculture is, especially after what many sociologists referred to as the Post-Subcultural Turn. While that is problematic in and of itself, the term subculture still has yet to be framed and understood in light of recent technological advancements and strides towards globalization. This thesis will attempt to shed light on the muddled conceptions of the term subculture, as well as expanding subcultural theory to include subcultural engagement in online settings.

Chapter 1 will provide a chronological account of the term subculture, including many of its evolutions, revisions and interpretations based on different schools of thought. Chapter 2 will follow up by discussing many of the criticisms directed at past conceptualizations of subculture, and where the term subculture should be heading with regards to expanding its conceptualization without conflating it with other terms. Chapter 2 will finish by suggesting a new path towards conceptualization by adapting subculture to include how subcultures are being formed and maintained through the use of the Internet. To make sense of subcultures using social networking sites in future chapters, Chapter 3 will delve into some of the main technological developments of the Internet including computer-mediated communication, social networks, and how they function as virtual conduits for facilitating social interactions and the spread of knowledge. Chapter 4 will pick up from Chapter 3 by discussing deviance in online settings, as well as introducing a new Goffmanian approach to understanding the presentation of self in online settings. Lastly, Chapter 5 will seek to answer three main questions about subcultures and their existence in online settings:

1. How do social networking sites operate as virtual conduits for the presentation of self?
2. How do subculturalists use social networking sites to create a sense of online community and membership?
3. How do subculturalists employ presentation of self strategies?

These questions will be answered by employing an adapted Goffmanian approach to the presentation of self in online settings while also rethinking the concept of subcultural style. Lastly, this thesis will seek to provide guidance on where gaps in the literature still exist and can be explored in the near future.

Keywords: subculture, community, online community, computer-mediated communication, blogs, presentation of self

Introduction

This dissertation is the final stage of the Masters degree program at the University of Ottawa. This Master's Thesis was created with the overarching goal of providing the reader with a comprehensive and exhaustive literature review that examines the concept of subculture, how it has changed, the failings of past and current conceptualizations and where the concept of subculture can and should be expanded upon. For this thesis, it was important to first create a chronological account of the term subculture, and how scholars from distinct schools of thought chose to theoretically build upon or diverge from original conceptualizations. Conceptualizing the term subculture was a lengthy and combative process as will be demonstrated in Chapter 1, and yet to this day, it is my conclusion that the term subculture still lacks a refined definition. Furthermore, the term subculture as it has currently been conceptualized possessed many critical flaws that needed to be addressed.

To fully address the limitations that plague current subcultural conceptualizations, it became necessary to look at critiques that were conveyed by both subcultural theorists and those that claimed to be post-subculturalists. These limitations were acknowledged and explained in Chapter 2. The critiques regarding current conceptualizations of subculture were diverse and in many cases suffered from a failure to adapt to current technological times and the diversity present within Western society. Major critiques outlined in Chapter 2 during the Post-Subcultural Turn included applying the concept of subculture to the Internet and social networking sites (SNSs), and accounting for the alleged loss of the 'politics of style'.

By acknowledging the limitations of current conceptualizations in subcultural theory with regards to framing it in the context of online communities and the global village, I became interested in exploring how subcultures could be understood by examining online communities

that exist on social networking sites. For this research, it was feasible to conduct research on only one social networking site, and thus the blogging website Tumblr was selected due to its versatile and user-friendly interface. It was also my intention to study online communities to examine if as post-subculturalists argued, the ‘politics of style’ had truly been lost due to capitalistic processes such as the commoditization, hybridization and appropriation of visible cultural symbols. This led me to question if the ‘politics of style’ could still exist but in new formats provided by social networking sites, with my research specifically referencing the website Tumblr. Before I could find the answer to this question, it was crucial for me to understand why and also how social networking sites operated, as well as how social media platforms related to concepts of community.

Chapter 3 is where I look at how social networking sites and more specifically blogging, acted as a means of forging and maintaining identity and group membership. This helped me to better understand more about the organization of an online community and specifically what benefits and services social networking sites seek to provide users. During this process, it became apparent that there were many similarities between common themes that are documented in the literature about online communities, and past aspects documented by researchers about the nature of subcultures. This overlap between characteristics of online communities and subcultures was an encouraging discovery for me as a researcher, and it supported the route that I was taking with regards to my thesis project, which sought to answer if conceptualizations of subculture could be adapted to include the existence of subcultural activity that takes place on the Internet. While researching social networking sites and online communities, it became clear that amongst cyberspace literature and identity, the best approach to understanding how identity

and group membership was created and maintained was to use Erving Goffman's (1959) theory of the Presentation of Self.

Of course, in the past, Presentation of Self as a theory had been created to explain face-to-face interactions. However, over the course of the last few decades, the original Presentation of Self theoretical literature has expanded to include self-presentation strategies that are used by individuals in order to seek specific attribution goals (Jones, 1990), as well as expanding Presentation of Self theories to encompass computer-mediated communication, or online social interactions. These theoretical implications were documented in Chapter 4, with the goal of explaining online interactions, and how those online interactions also involved attribution goals by the communicators (or bloggers) to online anonymous audiences. Bernie Hogan (2010) adapted Goffman's dramaturgy theory to online interactions the most effectively, and so his framework was the one I chose to use when coming to understand how social networking sites, online communities and self-presentation intersect. I however note that when using Hogan's adapted framework, it had its own limitations when it came to determining how to gauge self-presentation strategies. While Hogan is important for noting the existence of exhibition spaces and artifacts, he failed by oversimplifying his own concept of "artifacts" as will be explained further in Chapter 4.

While acknowledging both the strengths and limitations of Hogan's dramaturgical approach, I chose to expand on his concept of artifacts, by creating a new term known as "borrowed artifacts". This was the result of using Hogan's approach to code blog posts for presentation of self strategies used by bloggers during an in-depth content analysis. During the coding process, it was difficult to gauge the self-presentation strategies used by bloggers due to the lack of personal knowledge I possessed of the bloggers. This allowed for Bernie Hogan's

concept of artifacts to be broken down into two concepts for this theoretical project. The distinction between the two terms was necessary for research conducted in the subsequent chapter, as only artifacts could be studied for presentation of self-strategies because the content and intent of the blog post was created or clarified by the blogger.

Chapter 5 was created with the intention of answering the more practical research questions of my master's project, as well as if the theoretical limitations of subcultural style could be overcome. This chapter therefore focused on exploring online communities and their relationship to subcultural membership, identity and self-presentation and the possible overlap between artifacts/borrowed artifacts and subcultural style. My research began by examining the technical affordances available on Tumblr as a socio-technical platform (posting, reposting, likes etc.). Once a firm understanding of how Tumblr was used as an SNS platform was garnered, I chose to observe one of Tumblr's more accessible online communities known as the #Liftblr community. The #Liftblr community was used not to study shoplifting in and of its self, but to discover how subcultures and deviance are proliferated on social networking sites. To study concepts such as self-presentation, the strategies used by members of the community when communicating to other members, as well as framing content in the context of subcultural membership, a qualitative content analysis of publically available blog posts and comments from #Liftblr blogs was conducted. This content analysis included a study of artifacts versus borrowed artifacts on exhibition spaces, as well as blog posts (artifacts only) being coded for five types of self-presentation strategies to understand communicative attribution goals. The five strategies present within my coding scheme included, Ingratiation, Supplication, Exemplification, Competency and Intimidation. Lastly, the #Liftblr online community was examined by situating

it in a subcultural framework, and examining how subcultural membership, identity and if the ‘politics of style’ exists online on SNSs such as Tumblr.

The nature of this research was exploratory first and foremost, intending to broaden conceptualizations of subculture to online communities by studying social networking sites and the technological services they provide to members. This research however, was limited to only one social networking site and that is Tumblr. It would not be ideal to assume all social networking sites work the same way, but many do work similarly and can still be understood through a Goffmanian framework. While the #Liftblr community was described in Chapter 5, it was my intention to use it as an illustrative case study to further modern conceptualizations of subculture when adapted to social media. The implications of such research (online deviance, the online publication of deviance and online subcultural membership), are not new and have been documented in the past, the main goal of this research was to focus on how conceptualizations of subculture can be refined for further use when studying online communities and the access they provide for subcultural participation. Due to the goals of my research, it was necessary for myself as a researcher to expand Hogan’s online adaption of dramaturgy in order to create a viable way to code online content for presentation of self strategies on social networking sites. This approach allows researchers to be able to gauge self presentation strategies with more accuracy, and can be applied to many social networking sites. While this Master’s Thesis makes recommendations for reconceptualising subculture to account for technological advancements and Post-Subcultural critiques, reclaiming the term subcultural style for online settings and using a further adapted Goffmanian approach to code for presentation of self in computer-mediated-communication; it is my hope that this research is able to inspire new avenues and methods of

conducting online research for both online communities and subcultures that are otherwise difficult to access.

Chapter 1: Conceptualizing Subculture

Introduction

Chapter 1 will address the origin of the term subculture, as well as past conceptualizations of the term. The term subculture can be described as ambiguous in the sense that the term had held different meanings and has evolved quite a bit over time. What subculture was originally conceptualized as is not what the term currently represents today. Furthermore, during the 90s and early 2000s, the term subculture was afflicted by what many would describe as ‘the Post-Modern Turn’ (Bennett, 2011). This chapter will focus on addressing the many varying conceptualizations of subculture before the ‘Post-Modern Turn’ and will do so by providing a broad chronological account of the literature. By taking a chronological approach, this chapter is intended to outline the evolution of the term subculture as it existed through the decades, from pivotal sociologists.

i. The Original Concept of Subculture

Before I can begin to discuss the many conceptualizations of the term subculture, it is important to first briefly identify how the term culture was originally conceptualized. According to one of the earliest conceptualizations of culture, Edward Burnett Tylor (1889) defined it as

...that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society. (pp. 1)

It is important to introduce this definition of culture to address the way in which the term subculture relates to culture. For Tylor (1889), the prefix of ‘sub’ in the term subculture therefore denoted a subcategory of a culture (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967).

Milton Gordon (1947) was then the first sociologist to expand upon the notion that not every member of a society subscribes to the culture that is presented as the national culture in

that society.¹ Instead, Gordon (1947) proposed that subcultures exist in societies as a subdivision of the national, or as I prefer to refer to it, the dominant culture in society. Gordon further goes on to conceptualize subcultures as differentiating from the dominant culture due to variations in members of a society's social situation. These variations in social situation include class status, race, ethnicity, rural or urban residence and religious affiliation. By acknowledging that members of a society can experience life differently based on their social situation, Gordon (1947) argued that these factors when combined created subcultures based on shared experiences.

While Gordon argued that social situations such as race and religious affiliation can be shared, the subcultures that arise are not entirely homogenous. To elaborate further, Gordon (1947) argues that the term subculture should be used broadly and as a tool of inclusivity, rather than creating boxes to generalize groups of people. As a result, Gordon argued that distinctions between subcultures must be made by expanding the term subculture as a broad culture that is made up of many groups of people that form separate units of the subculture. In The Concept of the Sub-Culture and Its Application, Gordon (1947) uses the example of how:

...[l]ower-class white Protestants in one medium-sized New England city would presumably belong to the same sub-culture as lower-class white Protestants in another medium-sized New England community hundreds of miles away, though each group would constitute a separate unit. (pp. 41)

Gordon's initial work on conceptualizing the term subculture opened the doors to many new questions and insights into the field of sociology. By creating such a broad conceptualization of the term subculture, Gordon was able to create six avenues for future research and applications by generating different themes to explore. These themes include (Gordon, 1947, pp. 42):

¹ While Palmer (1928) in Field Studies in Sociology: A Student's Manual discussed the idea of mapping subcultures, it was Gordon (1947) that gave a more robust first conceptualization of the term subculture.

1. How do subcultures rank on a scale of differential access to the rewards of the broader American culture, including both material rewards and status?
2. How is the experience of growing up in a particular sub-culture reflected in the personality structure of the individual?
3. In what way are identical elements of the [dominant] culture refracted differentially in the subculture?
4. What are the most indicative indices of participation in a particular subculture?
5. What explains the “deviant,” that is, the person who does not develop the subcultural or social personality characteristic of the particular subculture in which [they] was born and nurtured?
6. In upward social mobility, does a change of “subcultural personality” invariably accompany acquisition of some of the more objective indices^[11]_{SEP} of higher status, such as wealth or more highly valued occupation? If not, what stresses and strains result?

The applications for the term subculture listed above have been explored in later research by various social scientists. The produced research avenues have added depth and complexity to current conceptualizations of subculture. These explorations into subculture will be explored in greater depth in the following sections.

ii. Early Conceptualizations of Subculture

Komarovsky & Sargent (1949) were the next social scientists to touch upon the subject of subculture. They defined subculture as

... cultural variants displayed by certain segments of the population. Subcultures are distinguished not by one or two isolated traits – they constitute relatively cohesive social systems. They are worlds within the larger world of our national culture. (pp. 143)

Komarovsky & Sargent were aligned with Gordon’s integrative and inclusive approach to conceptualizing subculture in which individuals experience the impact of subculture as a unit. To elaborate further on this point, Komarovsky and Sargent explained that “a[n] [African-American] is not a member of three separate subcultures: lower class, Southern, and rural, but is a Southern-rural-lower-class [African-American]” (pp. 144). Komarovsky & Sargent (1949) concluded that socio-economic status and ethnic minority status are two primary variables that

function as significant determinants of personality, specifically within broader American cultural patterns. This was an endeavour further explored upon by many social scientists, the first of which was Albert Cohen and his ground-breaking study of delinquent boys.

ii. Durkheim, Sutherland, Merton & Cohen

Before delving into the work of Albert Cohen, it is important to note that Cohen was strongly influenced by two prolific sociologists before writing Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang. These two sociologists were Robert K. Merton who laid the groundwork for understanding social structure and anomie and Edwin H. Sutherland who was the sociologist that created ‘differential association theory’.

In 1938, Robert K. Merton published an article known as Social Structure and Anomie. In this paper, Merton was interested in exploring how some social structures “exert a definite pressure upon certain persons in the society to engage in nonconformist rather than conformist conduct” (1938, pp. 672). Merton (1938) began his discussion by emphasizing two elements of the social and cultural structure; culturally defined goals, purposes and interests; and institutional norms. Cohen would later rely on this groundwork when relating working-class delinquency to middle-class goals and values. It is also important to note that while Merton (1938) was taking a more exploratory approach in this paper, he later expanded upon his theories in the book Social Structure and Anomie (1957).

Edwin H. Sutherland first published the book Criminology in 1924 and has since then expanded this piece to include more emphasis on organization and the systemization of knowledge regarding crime. This resulted in the eighth edition of Criminology which was co-authored with Donald R. Cressey. In earlier works of Criminology (1970), Sutherland in his

study of delinquency and crime created the theory of 'differential association'. Sutherland explained that as a general theory of crime, 'differential association' proposes that much like operant conditioning in psychology, individuals through engaging in social interactions are able to learn values, attitudes, techniques and behaviours associated with deviance. Sutherland also argued that differential association was more likely to take place in areas that were considered to be socially disorganized and lacking in strong social institutions. As a result, the idea of differential association theory indicates that if individuals are exposed to deviant behaviour, they will learn how to commit deviant behaviour and even normalize it psychologically. This is further explained by Sutherland in the Nine Propositions of Differential Association Theory (1970, pp. 75-77):

1. Criminal behaviour is learned.
2. Criminal behaviour is learned in interaction with other persons in a process of communication.
3. The principal part of the learning of criminal behaviour occurs within intimate personal groups.
4. When criminal behaviour is learned, the learning includes (a) techniques of committing the crime, which are sometimes very complicated, sometimes very simple; (b) the specific direction of motives, drives, rationalizations and attitudes.
5. The specific direction of motives and drives is learned from definitions of the legal codes as favourable or unfavourable.
6. A person becomes delinquent because of an excess of definitions favourable to violation of law over definitions unfavourable to violation of law.
7. Differential associations may vary in frequency, duration, priority and intensity.
8. The process of learning criminal behaviour by association with criminal and anticriminal patterns involves all of the mechanisms that are involved in any other learning.
9. While criminal behaviour is an expression of general needs and values, it is not explained by those general needs and values, since noncriminal behaviour is an expression of the same needs and values.

This line of developmental in criminological theory starting from Durkheim's study of suicide to Sutherland's theory of differential association and finally to Merton's analysis of anomie and social structure was then followed by Cohen's analysis of delinquent gangs.

In Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang, Albert Cohen (1955) focused on delinquent subcultures with predominantly white working-class males as the basis for his research. Cohen starts by defining culture and subculture as:

...[k]nowledge, beliefs, values, codes, tastes and prejudices that are traditional in social groups and that are acquired by participation in such groups... Every society is internally differentiated into numerous sub-groups, each with ways of thinking and doing that are in some respects peculiarly its own, that one can acquire only by participating in these sub-groups and that one can scarcely help acquiring if he is a full-fledged participant. These cultures within cultures are "subcultures." (pp. 12)

Similar to Komarovsky & Sargent (1949), Cohen (1955) also argues that when it comes to the creation and maintenance of subcultures, many of which can be found in what he refers to as 'delinquent neighbourhoods'. Subcultures therefore have their own characteristic niche in social structures through certain socio-economic geographies where they will flourish, while in other locations that subculture is not likely to catch on. Cohen, however, differentiated from previous sociologists in which he placed more emphasis on values and behaviour rather than social position in society to explain individual membership to subculture, instead choosing to focus on the notion of deviance as a learned behaviour and attitude.

Cohen (1955) in his research initially decided to focus on how young working-class males went through the social process of becoming juvenile delinquents. During his time, Cohen was critical of the explanations for juvenile delinquency as provided by psychogenic theories. These psychogenic theories argued that inhibition not to commit deviant activities are learned (as opposed to impulses which are natural) and as a result strengthened or weakened when a child is reared in certain social environments. This parsimonious explanation pushed Cohen to take a more complex stance of understanding juvenile delinquency, in which he put forward strong evidence for a new angle of study; combining psychogenic theories with 'cultural transmission theory'. Instead of focusing solely on the psychology of the juvenile, Cohen argued that the

process of becoming a delinquent lay in the cultural pattern with which the juvenile associates, and that many juveniles associate with deviant subcultures. These delinquent subcultures as characterized by Cohen (1955) are non-utilitarian, malicious, negativistic, versatile in their range of activities and levels of participation, and, encourage short-run hedonism. The nature of these delinquent subcultures also emphasize what Cohen (1955) refers to as group autonomy, in which there is loyalty, solidarity and alliances present within the subculture that supersedes all other relationships (pp. 31).

As a result, Cohen was the first social scientist to remark upon what he referred to as the polarity between subcultures and the dominant adult culture in society. Cohen described the delinquent subculture as having:

...[n]ot only a set of rules, a design for living which is different from or indifferent to or even in conflict with the norms of the “respectable” adult society. It would appear at least plausible that it is defined by its “negative polarity” to those norms. That is, the delinquent subculture takes its norms from the larger culture but turns them upside down. The delinquent’s conduct is right, by the standards of his subculture, precisely *because* it is wrong by the norms of the larger culture. (pp. 28)

This is not to say that Cohen had completely abandoned the use of psychogenic theories, but instead that he added different layers to them in combination with cultural transmission theory. Cohen still used psychogenic theories as a basis for understanding why deviant acts were being committed by youths. Cohen then differentiated his viewpoint with psychogenic theories by explaining that while the psychogenic assumption of all human action – not delinquency alone – is an ongoing series of efforts to solve ‘problems’ and the actions people commit are dependent on the problems they contend with, it still lacked depth. This perspective was especially true when it came to explaining the existence of subcultures.

Cohen explained that the ‘problems’ people contend with are produced from two main sources, the social actor’s ‘frame of reference’ and the ‘situation’ that the social actor confronts

(pp. 51). Following Symbolic Interactionism, the 'situation' refers to what society the social actor lives in as well as the goals and values of the society that are imposed on the social actor, while the 'frame of reference' by contrast refers to how the social actor views their society and their situation (age, sex, racial and ethnic category, occupation, economic stratum and social class of the social actor). Cohen argued that when many social factors are compounded, it places limits on the opportunities of the social actor to believe in and achieve the values and goals of the society that are imposed on them.

Cohen, following Merton, also highlights the importance of social structure and social milieu in determining the creation of problems and problem-solving. While different individuals respond differently with the same or similar problems, these differences need to be accounted for. For example, *why do some individuals resort to delinquency while others abstain?*

Psychogenic theories regarding learned inhibition, was once again lacking in Cohen's opinion.

Cohen then introduced the concept of group membership and standing, explaining that:

More specifically, the consistency of our own conduct and of the frame of reference on which it is based with those of our fellows is a criterion of status and a badge of membership. Every one of us wants to be a member in good standing of some groups and roles... For every such role, there are certain kinds of action and belief which function, as truly and effective as do uniforms, insignia and membership cards, as signs of membership. The degree that we covet such membership, we are motivated to assume those signs, to incorporate them into our behaviour and frame of reference. (Cohen, 1955, pp. 56-57)

In Cohen's opinion, consensus (i.e. some form of conformity) is not only rewarded by acceptance, recognition and respect; it is probably the most important criterion of *validity* of the frame of reference, which then works to motivate and justify the conduct of the social actor.

According to Cohen (1955), this is how delinquent subcultures are formed and maintained, with the subculture acting as a solution to the problems interpreted by social actors. The crucial social condition for the emergence of a new subculture is the effective interaction of

a number of social actors with similar 'problems of adjustment'. Cohen (1955) argues that when incorporating cultural transmission theory with regards to group membership, it is easier to change individuals in a group rather than individuals separately, and to do that the group standards must be changed. Thus the emergence of 'group standards' of this newly shared frame of reference, is the emergence of a new subculture (Cohen, 1955, pp. 64). It is cultural because each social actor's participation in the system of norms is influenced by his perception of the same norms and values in other actors and it is subcultural because the norms are shared only among those social actors who stand somehow to profit from them and who find in one another a sympathetic moral climate within which these norms may come to fruition and persist. In this way, Cohen (1955) argues that culture is continually being created, recreated and modified wherever individuals sense in one another like needs, generated by like circumstances, not generally shared in the larger social system and furthermore, the social actor is also involved in a continuous process of the realignment of groups. The migration of individuals from one group to another, from one culture to another is what Cohen refers to as the "...unconscious quest for a social milieu favourable to the resolution to the problems of adjustment" (Cohen, 1955, pp. 58). What Cohen (1955) refers to as the continued serviceability and viability of a subcultural solution, entails two things: 1. the emergence of a certain amount of group solidarity; and 2. heightened interaction among the participants in the subculture. It is only in interaction with those who share the subcultural values that the social actor finds social validation for their beliefs and social rewards for their way of life. In many cases, subcultures – and more specifically delinquent subcultures – represent a new status system that sanctions behaviour that is labelled as forbidden or frowned upon by the larger dominant culture.

As mentioned previously, Cohen chose to focus on delinquent subcultures, which were found to be in the working-class with predominantly white males. He argued that while these young males were a part of delinquent subcultures, that had not always been the case; in fact, most of these young males through interactions with their families were raised under a frame of reference that valued middle-class standards applicable to the male role. According to Cohen (1955, pp. 88-91), these middle-class values included:

1. Ambition is a virtue; orientation towards long-term goals and long-deferred rewards.
2. The middle-class ethic is an ethic of individual responsibility; applauds resourcefulness and self-reliance.
3. Middle-class norms value possession and growth of skills and tangible achievements.
4. Middle-class norms value “worldly aestheticism,” being able to suppress short-term satisfaction and self-indulgence in favour of long-term goals.
5. Rationality is highly valued.
6. Middle-class value system rewards and encourages manners, courtesy and personability.
7. The middle-class ethic emphasizes control on physical aggression and violence (which are subversive).
8. One must not waste time but always have laudable and constructive pursuits and hobbies.
9. Middle-class values emphasize respect for property; nature of property rights and the significance of property.

When taking into considering that the middle-class value system was the main frame of reference as part of the dominant culture, it set unrealistic expectations for male youths that were part of the working-class. The ‘middle-class measuring rod’ acted as a new status system and tool of comparison in which children of different social levels were directly compared in terms of the same set of ‘achieved’ criteria as their middle-class peers. Cohen (1955) argued that in societies where opportunities for achievement are class-linked, ‘status frustration’ is generated to the degree that the status system is democratic and to the degree that the status universe is maximized. This results in certain children being denied status in the respectable society because

they cannot meet the criteria of the respectable middle-class status system and fosters resentment. As a result, delinquent subculture deals with these problems by providing a criterion of status, which these disadvantaged youth can meet, and it encourages their participation in that subculture as well as their disenfranchisement from the dominant culture.

In Research in Delinquent Subcultures, David Matza (1958) had many differing views from Cohen and chose to address them accordingly in this academic text. Firstly, while Albert Cohen hesitated to portray delinquent subcultures as oppositional, Matza was quick to use that label. Another major differentiation between Cohen and Matza was that while Cohen combined modern psychogenic theories and cultural transmission theory to explain the phenomenon of delinquent subcultures, Matza preferred to use the psychological theory of ‘reaction-formation’ to conceptualize the existence of delinquent subcultures, by putting more emphasis on positivist criminology. Matza (1958) even goes as far as to say that Cohen, in not so bold terms, had been portraying delinquent subcultures similarly; as subcultures that exist as an oppositional response to the ‘pious legality of bourgeoisie existence’. Though Cohen (1955) chose to stress the delinquent’s ambivalence regarding middle-class morality through a sociological positivist lens, according to Matza (1958) that same ambivalence is resolved through a positivist interpretation known as reaction-formation. According to Matza,

Reaction-formation is stressed because it is not only a way of coming to terms with one’s delinquent impulses; it helps to account for the nature of delinquent behaviour itself. (1958, pp. 34)

Furthermore, while Cohen (1955) loosely implied that the relation between delinquent and conventional values was ‘oppositional’, Matza (1958) argued strongly in favour that delinquent subcultures were defined by their oppositional nature. For Matza (1958), youths faced problems of status and self-respect arising among working-class children that were a result of a socially structured inability to meet the standards of the established culture. Thus, the delinquent

subculture, conceptualized with its characteristics of non-utilitarianism, malice and negativism worked in opposition to dominant culture by providing an alternative status system that justified hostility and aggression for youths against the sources of their status frustration.

In an article entitled Lower Class Culture as a Generating Milieu of Gang Delinquency, Walter Miller (1958) built on top of Cohen's theories by arguing that delinquency norms found in some sections of modern cities are simply put, the adolescent version of lower-class culture. Miller (1958) went on to describe the subculture as being part of the lower-class culture, while also managing to be distinctive of lower-class culture at the same time. The standards of lower-class culture, according to Miller, was not merely a reverse function of middle-class culture or as middle-class standards "turned upside down" but as a distinct culture of its own with its own values (Miller, 1958, pp. 19). Miller (1958) also argued that there were Six Major Focal Concerns that were valued highly among this subculture, irrelevant to turning middle-class standards upside down. Those concerns were predominantly masculine-oriented and were described as: Trouble, Toughness, Smartness, Excitement, Fate and Autonomy (Miller, 1958). The behaviour present in this subculture was labelled as deviant, as well as stabilized, recurrent and to a degree ritualized by members of the subculture. Furthermore, from Miller's perspective, the lower-class subculture of the delinquent had its own value system and prescription of conduct that promoted and maintained delinquent identities with youth. While Miller had used Cohen's theory about the delinquent gangs to support his own, Miller (1958) made the distinction that delinquency was motivated by positive influences within the delinquent subculture. Miller concluded that:

If "Conformity to immediate reference group values" is the major component of motivation of "delinquent" behaviour by gang members, why is such behaviour frequently referred to as negativistic, malicious or rebellious? Albert Cohen, for example, in *Delinquent Boys* describes behaviour that violates school rules as

comprising elements of “active spite and malice, contempt and ridicule, challenge and defiance.” [Cohen] ascribes to the gang “keen delight in terrorizing ‘good’ children, and in general making themselves obnoxious to the virtuous. A recent national conference on social work with “hard-to-reach” groups characterized lower class corner groups as “youth groups in conflict with the culture of their communities.” Such characterizations are obviously the result of taking the middle-class community and its institutions as an implicit point of reference.

A large body of systematically interrelated attitudes, practices, behaviours, and values characteristic of lower class culture are designed to support and maintain the basic features of the lower class way of life. In areas where these differ from features of middle-class culture, action-oriented to the achievement and maintenance of the lower class system may violate norms of middle-class culture and be perceived as deliberately non-conforming or malicious by an observer strongly cathected to middle-class norms. This does not mean, however, that violation of the middle-class norm is the dominant component of motivation; it is a by-product of action primarily oriented to the lower class system. (Miller, 1958, pp. 18-19)

Jerome Rabow (1966) was also critical of Cohen’s research, citing Cohen’s theoretical presentation of delinquent subcultures as lacking valid data and failing to specify how Cohen’s theory of delinquent subculture can be applied to other subcultures. Instead, Rabow (1966) acknowledged that while Cohen’s research was incomplete, the most important takeaway from Delinquent Boys: The Culture of the Gang, was in Cohen (1955) pursuing how subcultures in general originate, as well as asking why subcultures display the content that they do. These avenues of research laid the groundwork for many future sociologists including Robert Merton, Milton Yinger, Stuart Hall, Dick Hebdige and Howard Becker.

iii. Social Structure and Dominant Culture

Robert K. Merton (1957) in Social Theory and Social Structure presented a more in-depth analysis of deviant social behaviour and how it existed within social structures than his previous article from 1938. Merton still sought to understand how some social structures when compared to others, are able to exert pressure upon certain groups of people in a society to

engage in what he refers to as ‘nonconforming conduct’ rather than conforming conduct but had expanded upon his theory of ‘adaption’. While taking this sociological approach, Merton (1957) also acknowledged that biology had a role to play in how deviant behaviour was to be understood, in the sense that nonconforming deviant behaviour could be considered as psychologically normal as conformist behaviour (pp. 132). Rather than focusing on the incidence of deviant behaviour, Merton (1957) valued coming to understand the rates of deviant behaviour, in which his theory sought to all explain all variations of nonconforming deviant behaviour through different modes of ‘adaptation’.

Merton (1957) began his explanation by narrowing in on cultural goals and institutional norms of a given society, in which the elements of culture and social structure are the culturally defined goals, purposes and interests of the society and the methods of obtaining or achieving those goals, purposes and interests. Merton (1957) argued that:

Every social group invariably couples its cultural objectives with regulations, rooted in the mores or institutions, of allowable procedures for moving towards these objectives. These regulatory norms are not necessarily identical with technical or efficiency norms. ... In all instances, the choice of expedients for striving towards cultural goals is limited by institutionalized norms. (pp. 133)

Merton went further than his previous paper to explain that social controls that operate through social institutions could also be described as being ‘in the mores’. Mores in assessments of social control can vary; they can be *prescription, preference, permission and proscription* controls for individual conduct (Merton, 1957). For Merton, the cultural emphasis placed upon certain goals varies independently of the degree of emphasis upon institutionalized means; therefore there are certain situations that arise where in there is more emphasis on the value of the certain goal and little to no concern with the institutionally prescribed method of achieving that goal.

While prescription mores exist in relation to institutional controls that emphasize conformity, Merton (1957) also argued that conformity for individuals requires a sacrifice; and

that the sacrifice entailed by conformity to institutional norms has to be compensated by socialized rewards. Similar to Cohen (1955), Merton acknowledged that there is in fact, a lack of equity in society due to barriers that exist to prevent individuals from having the same chance to achieve cultural goals than others such as class, race and gender. Merton (1957) therefore argued that "... the distribution of statuses through competition must be so organized that positive incentives for adherence to status obligations are provided for *every position* within the distributive order", otherwise aberrant behaviour would ensue (pp. 134). For Merton, aberrant behaviour could be regarded sociologically as a symptom of dissociation between culturally prescribed goals and socially structured avenues for realizing those goals. While Merton argued that no society existed without norms that govern conduct, the emphasis of following those norms to achieve cultural goals, for example accumulating wealth in American society, is what encouraged deviant behaviour. For Merton, he then posed the question: *which of the available procedures is most efficient in netting the culturally approved value* (pp. 135)? This question according to Merton can be related back to both individual and group deviance, in which methods for obtaining culturally valued goals can be steeped in deviant behaviour through the process of 'adaptation'.

Through the adaptation strategy of *Innovation*, individuals and groups can strive to meet culturally prescribed goals of the society, but by using new and illegitimate methods to obtain those goals. Through the adaptation strategy of *Retreatism*, individuals and groups reject both the cultural goals and institutionalized means of the society; in which individuals and groups exist in society while also being separate from the greater society. Lastly, through the adaptation strategy of *Rebellion*, individuals and groups reject the current social structure and wish to modify the social structure. Individuals and groups that fall into the *Rebellion* strategy have acknowledged

the arbitrariness for success in the current social structure and that in and of itself delegitimizes its existence, therefore reform is needed to make the cultural goals more attainable for everyone in every position in the society to obtain said goals through equal effort and merit. Along a similar argument as Cohen (1955), when the institutional system is regarded as the barrier to the success of legitimate cultural goals, the adaptation strategy of *Rebellion* is necessary for individuals to both obtain said goals through deviant means and reform the current social system. Where Cohen failed in creating a generalizable theory, Merton succeeded by focusing on social structure, he created a theory of individual and group deviance that could be applied to all types of subcultures, not solely white working-class males.

In Delinquency and Opportunity, Cloward & Ohlin (1960) improved on the groundwork established by Cohen, specifically about what kind of environment gave rise to delinquent youths. As Cloward and Ohlin maintain, adolescents who form delinquent subcultures, have internalized an emphasis upon conformist goals (1960, pp. 86). Then, Cloward & Ohlin drew upon Merton's (1957) anomie-strain theory and argued that lower-class boys were faced with inadequacies of legitimate avenues of access to cultural goals and, unable to revise their ambitions downward, they experienced severe disappointments, hence their involvement in higher levels of delinquency than middle and upper-class youths. Cloward & Ohlin (1960) also outlined three different types of subcultures; *Criminal*, *Conflict* and *Retreatist* subcultures.

Criminal subcultures emerge in areas where there is a lot of organised adult crime, and as a result a lot of criminal role models for youth to admire and learn from. In *Criminal subcultures*, youths climb up the professional criminal ladder by committing crimes and reoffending; and the individuals usually commit utilitarian crimes that yield financial rewards. *Conflict subcultures* emerge in areas where there is little organised adult crime, so instead of learning how to commit

serious monetary crimes, youth instead focus on gaining respect through gang violence. Lastly, *Retreatist subcultures* are for youths who have considered themselves failures both in conventional society and *criminal subcultures*. As a result, these individuals retreat to drug and alcohol abuse to deal with the fact that they have been rejected from other subcultures.

At the same time as Merton's (1957) research of social structure, Sykes & Matza (1957) produced new research pertaining to youth delinquency and deviant subcultures. In Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency, Sykes & Matza (1957) argued that while most people remain sensitive to conventional codes of conduct and conform as per Merton, other people choose to deal with their 'sensitivities' in order to engage in a deviant act for the first time. Sykes & Matza (1957) describe delinquent subculture as being characterized by:

...a system of values that represents an inversion of the values held by respectable, law-abiding society. The world of the delinquent is the world of the law-abiding turned upside down and its norms constitute a countervailing force directed against the conforming social order. (pp. 664)

Sykes and Matza have suggested that delinquents and members of deviant subcultures actually feel strong impulses to be law-abiding citizens and to conform to institutional norms and methods, but deal with these conforming impulses through techniques of neutralization.

According to Matza (1958), individuals possess two levels of values. The values that guide behaviour most of the time are respectable and conventional; and that of the law-abiding citizen. However, a second set of values exists, known as subterranean values. These subterranean values are for the most part kept under lock and key – they are values relating to sexuality, avarice and aggression – but occasionally when provided the opportunity, individuals may become vulnerable to acting according to their subterranean values.

Matza and Sykes (1957) then sought to understand how subterranean values could be utilized to motivate deviant behaviour in usually law-abiding citizens, and argued that individuals when committing deviant acts use techniques of neutralization. Neutralization refers to justifications for deviance that are seen as valid by the delinquent but not by the legal system or by society at large. In some cases, a nonconforming act may appear necessary or expedient to a person otherwise law-abiding. Similar to Merton's research on social structure and deviance, Sykes & Matza came to the conclusion that deviance undertaken in the pursuit of legitimate interests and cultural goals, results in the deviant act becoming neutralized and naturalized in the sense of the deviant act being understood as if not quite proper at least not as deviant and therefore justifiable. They also conclude that subcultures are not separate from the dominant culture as those who are part of subcultures can subscribe to certain parts of the dominant culture while disregarding other aspects, concluding that subcultures do not always have to be fully oppositional to the dominant culture.

To summarize this section, using Merton's theory about social structure and adaptation, authors within this section have used this theory to focus on the intersection between youth and deviance. Despite this common thread among much of the literature, it has served to narrow the scope of the term subculture, as well as to unintentionally conflate subculture with youth delinquency. This is perhaps due to the main focus of subcultural studies being produced based on male-perpetrated youth delinquency. This next section will seek to delineate some of the conceptions of subculture by introducing the concept of contraculture, while future sections will be returning once more to a broader and more sociocultural approach to understanding subculture.

iv. A Muddled Conceptualization of Subculture

In Contraculture and Subculture, John Milton Yinger (1960) reviewed past conceptualizations of the term subculture. For Yinger, in the analysis of delinquency, adolescence, regional and class differences, religious sects, occupational styles, and other topics, past research has created many different understandings of subculture which has inevitably resulted in a muddled conception of the term. When looking at subculture in the context of the research areas above, subculture can be understood as norms that vary from more general standards as manifestations of distinctive sub-societies, or put more simply subculture has been used as a term whenever a sociologist desired to emphasize the normative aspects of behaviour that differed from some general standard such as the dominant culture in the society or the legal system.

To try and bring more clarity to the term subculture, Yinger (1960) created a new term known as ‘contraculture’ to help distinguish between normative systems of sub-societies and emergent norms that appear in conflict situations. For Yinger, culture and personality have always been empirically intertwined in past conceptualizations of subculture, and yet there is this ambiguity of what the term subculture actually means. Therefore for Yinger it was important to distinguish a new way in which the term subculture was being used, and that was to describe this specific kind of dynamic linkage between norms and personality, what Yinger defines as “...the creation of a series of inverse or counter values (opposed to those of the surrounding society) in face of serious frustration or conflict” (pp. 627).

To elaborate further on the concept of contraculture, Yinger suggested utilizing the term to describe a normative system of a group that was characterized by conflict with the values of the total society, where personality variables would be directly involved in the development and

maintenance of the group's values including the ways its norms could be understood in reference to the dominant culture. While most sub-societies fall along a range with regards to sharing the same values as the dominant culture, the values of most subcultures probably conflict to a degree with the larger parent culture (Yinger, 1960). The distinction to be made with contraculture however, was that conflict was to be the central element to its existence; many of the values to be found in a contraculture subculture, were valued because they specifically contradict the values of the dominant culture.² Strangely, Yinger's concept of contraculture seems to be reminiscent of Albert Cohen's (1955) concept of 'negative polarity'. Negative polarity as described by Cohen referred to the negative nature of norms adopted by the delinquent subculture, in which they reflected norms that directly opposed the parent culture (1955, pp. 28). Contraculture according to Yinger, are subcultures that's norms also exist in direct opposition to the parent or dominant culture and do not share any norms with the dominant or parent culture.

And choosing to build off of Robert Merton's (1957) theories on deviance and social structure, the nonconformist conduct or 'innovations' of lower-class are not simply subcultural acts defined as innovative by middle-class persons; they are in part a reaction to status frustration and the arbitrary disjunction between institutionalized means and cultural goals. When the disjunction between methods and success is reduced, the variations in value and deviant behaviour are reduced as a result. Once again, Yinger makes the case like so many others before him that subculture is used to designate both the traditional norms of a sub-society and the emergent norms of a group caught in a frustrating and conflict-laden situation. In Yinger's

² While conflict is an essential element in past conceptualizations of subculture (such as Merton and Cohen), with contraculture, the entire subculture conflicts with the dominant culture, there are no shared norms or values; it exists in complete opposition to the dominant culture (Yinger, 1960).

analysis, there are important distinctions to be made in the origin, function and perpetuation of traditional and emergent norms, and that the use of the concept contraculture for understanding oppositional values in relation to the dominant culture would improve clarity for the study of subcultures and cultures as a whole. To a degree, 'contraculture' is a return to the psychogenic model, but with contraculture, the entire subculture conflicts with the dominant culture as there are no shared norms or values; it exists in complete opposition to the dominant culture.

Subcultures exist with some similar norms with the dominant culture, contracultures exist with no similar norms to the dominant culture. They directly combat current norms, values, and mores.

iv. Society, Subculture and Consensus

Raymond Williams (1961) in The Long Revolution sought to historically document the birth of the popular press and the growth of the literate public in the United Kingdom and how it related to social, economic and cultural life. Williams (1961) first described culture as a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour. Therefore, the analysis of culture from such a definition was the clarification of the meanings and values implicit and explicit in a particular way of life and a particular culture. For Williams, the theory of culture now involved the study of relationships between elements in a whole way of life. As a result, Williams focused on studying the modes of change with regards to meaning and values to discover certain general causes or 'trends' by which social and cultural developments could be better understood. While Williams proposed an altogether broader formulation of the relationships between culture and society

based on working-class culture, he took an organic and consensus-based approach to understanding culture.

In Outsiders: Studies in the Sociology of Deviance, Howard Becker (1963) also utilized a consensus-based approach to understanding individual and group deviance.³ Becker began by explaining that all social groups make rules and attempt, at some times and under some circumstances, to enforce them. Additionally, social rules define situations and the kinds of behaviour appropriate to them, specifying some actions as ‘right’ and forbidding others as ‘wrong’ (Becker, 1963, pp. 1). More to the point, when a rule is enforced on the person who is supposed to have broken the rule, they are then labelled as an ‘Outsider’ (Becker, 1963, pp. 1). Deviance for Becker, is therefore defined as the infraction of some agreed-upon rule that was created by people in positions of power; and that certain social groups create deviance by making rules whose infraction constitutes as deviance. Becker argued that:

From this point of view, deviance is *not* a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an “offender.” The deviant is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behaviour is behaviour that people so label... Deviance is not a quality that lies on behaviour itself, but in the interaction between the person who commits an act and those who respond to it. (1963, pp. 9-14)

‘Outsiders’ was then used as a term to refer to people who were judged by others to be deviant and thus to stand outside the circle of ‘normal’ members of the group or society. While the term outsiders is arguably definitive, Becker made clear that who was the outsider and who was being judged was in the eye of the beholder. For example, Becker (1963) made that case that modern societies are not homogenous organizations, they are made up of groups that are highly

³ While Howard Becker (1963) has been known to be critical of consensus theory, he is still none the less a consensus theorist. Despite discussing the concept of Outsiders, Becker acknowledges that the vast majority of people in society choose to follow the social contract, despite maybe not agreeing with it.

differentiated between social class, ethnicity, job and cultural lines, and that through a result of this differentiation, not all of these groups share or agree upon the same rules. Becker, however, argues that there are ruling classes in society that make rules that are applicable to the entire society. According to Becker:

Those groups whose special position gives them weapons and power are best able to enforce their rules. Distinctions of age, sex, ethnicity, and class are all related to differences in power, which accounts for differences in the degree to which groups so distinguished can make the rules for others... Instead [rules] are the object of conflict and disagreement, part of the political process of society. (1963, pp. 18)

Becker after having acknowledged that the rules of society are not for everyone, was then concerned with answering the question of: *Why do conventional people not follow through on the deviant impulses they have?* Becker was then able to answer this question by creating his theory called the *Sequential Model of Deviance*. For Becker, the normal development of people in society can be seen as a series of progressively increasing commitments to conventional norms and institutions, and the 'normal' person when they discover a deviant impulse in themselves, chooses to suppress that impulse by thinking of the negative consequences acting on the impulse would produce for them (Becker, 1963, pp. 27). Becker was not interested in rule-followers however, but instead rule-breakers; not the people that commit a deviant act once, but in those who sustain a pattern of deviance over a long period of time and specifically those that organize their identity around a pattern of deviant behaviour.

The *Sequential Model* was meant to outline the transition from casual experience to persisting patterns of deviant activity; as well as the development of deviant motives and interests. Becker remarked that:

Before engaging in the activity on a more or less regular basis, the person has no notion of the pleasures to be derived from it; he learns these in the course of interaction with more experienced deviants. He learns to be aware of new kinds of experiences and to think of them as pleasurable. What may as well have been

a random impulse to try something new becomes a settled taste for something already known and experienced. The vocabularies in which deviant motivations are phrased reveal that their users acquire them in interaction with other deviants. The individual *learns*, in short, to participate in a subculture organized around the particular deviant activity. (Becker, 1963, pp. 30)

This idea of individuals interacting with other deviant individuals and learning deviant behaviours and attitudes is once again influenced by differential association theory (Sutherland & Cressey, 1970) and cultural transmission theory (Cohen, 1955). Furthermore, according to Becker (1963), deviant motivations have a ‘social character’ even when most of the deviant activity is carried out in a private, secret and or solitary fashion.

Another part of the *Sequential Model of Deviance* is the process of an individual being publicly labelled as deviant. This is one of the most crucial steps in building a persistent pattern of deviant behaviour and identity; being caught publicly and labelled. Being caught and branded as a deviant impacts both social participation in deviance as well as self-image⁴ with a dramatic change in the individual’s public identity. This is when Becker saw fit to introduce the concept of Master and Subordinate statuses. While a Master Status is defined as a status that overrides other statuses such as race, gender and sexual orientation; Becker also makes the claim that the status of ‘deviant’ is a Master Status. An individual that receives the status of deviant as a result of breaking a rule, proves to be more important than most others, as the individual will be identified as a deviant first before other identifications are made. When treating a person based on having a deviant Master Status, Becker argues that it produces a self-fulfilling prophecy. It encourages the individual to act in the ways that people expect the individual to act based on their image of the individual. Another aspect of an individual being labelled as deviant is the

⁴ Lemert (1951) in Social Pathology: A Systemic Approach to the Theory of Sociopathic Behaviour also explains this notion of self-image through the use of two concepts; primary deviation and secondary deviation. Primary deviation refers to the deviant act itself, engaged in by the social actor. Secondary deviation, on the other hand, refers to how the social actor internalizes a deviant identity.

treatment of being labelled a deviant affords them. By treating people as deviants, it denies individuals the conventional means of carrying on the routines of everyday life open to most people and because of this denial, the individual out of necessity develops illegitimate routines in order to survive. For example, individuals that hold deviant as a Master Status are denied 'respectable jobs' by the discovery of their deviance such as a criminal record, and as a result, they may drift into unconventional, marginal occupations where their deviant past does not hinder their opportunities for success. This is the basis for how deviant subcultures are formed according to Becker.

From a sense of common fate, from having to face the same problems, grows a deviant subculture: a set of perspectives and understandings about what the world is like and how to deal with it, and a set of routine activities based on those perspectives. Membership in such a group solidifies a deviant identity. (Becker, 1963, pp. 38)

Deviant groups more so than deviant individuals are able to develop complex self-justifying rationale (or ideology) for their actions. When using these self-justifying rationales, they give deviants a reason for continuing to participate in deviant activities and in the deviant subculture. Secondly, when one moves further into the deviant group, they learn how to minimize the risk (avoid trouble such as being caught) of participating in deviant activities and how to recruit others using this shared knowledge. These aspects of reinforcing deviant subculture were also noted by Sykes & Matza (1957) in their work Techniques of Neutralization: A Theory of Delinquency, although they explained the strategies used by delinquent subcultures in greater depth. Again, Becker using a consensus-based lens argues that deviant subcultures exist in opposition to the agreed upon rules of the larger society. In England, Dick Hebdige, who would

take up American sociologies of deviance, was influenced by Becker, Williams⁵ and others but followed a different route to understanding the existence and maintenance of deviant subcultures.

vi. Hebdige: A Revolution in the Conceptualization of Subculture

In Subculture: The Meaning of Style, Dick Hebdige (1979) held a conflictual view of society, influenced to a degree by concepts from Marxism. For Hebdige (1979), the study of the relationship between culture and society became a study of relationships in a whole way of *conflict*. Hebdige first began by describing culture as both a process and a product. Hebdige goes on to explain that:

All human societies *reproduce* themselves (ideologies) in this way through a process of ‘naturalization’. It is through this process – a kind of inevitable reflex of all social life – that *particular* sets of social relations, *particular* ways of organizing the world appear to us as if they were universal and timeless... However in highly complex societies like ours, which function through a finely graded system of divided (i.e. specialized) labour, the crucial question has to do with which specific ideologies, representing the interests of which specific groups and classes will prevail at any moment, in any given situation. That is, we must ask which groups and classes have how much say in defining, ordering and classifying the social world... Some groups have more say, more opportunity to make the rules, to organize meaning, while others are less favourably placed, have less power to produce and impose their definitions of the world on the world. (1979, pp. 14)

Relating back to Marx, Hebdige argued that the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time also its ruling *intellectual* force. Then, Hebdige used Antonio Gramsci’s theory of ‘hegemony’ to explain that the consensus can become fractured, challenged, overruled and resistance to the groups in dominance cannot always be dismissive or automatically incorporated (Hebdige, 1979).

⁵ Raymond Williams, as is recorded in the bibliography of Subculture: The Meaning of Style (1979), was also the first director of the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies.

Youth Subcultures for example, as explained by Hebdige, exist as a breakdown in consensus in the post-war period. Once again bringing up the notion of culture acting as a product, Hebdige chose to make his case by introducing the concept of ‘style’ (which would later become central to Cultural Criminology). Appearance according to Hebdige, culture-signs and ‘style’ in a subculture, specifically reflects transformations that go ‘against nature’, interrupting the process of normalizing hegemony. Style, therefore, exists as gestures and movements towards speech that offends the ‘silent majority’ and also challenges the principle of unity and cohesion, which contradicts the myth of consensus (Hebdige, 1979). In Subculture: The Meaning of Style, Hebdige studied many distinct subcultures in Britain including Punk, Rastafarianism & Reggae, Hipsters, Beats & Teddy Boys, and Glam & Glitter Rock. Hebdige explained that:

...[i]t is on a plane of aesthetics: in dress, dance, music; in the whole rhetoric of style, that we find the dialogue between black and white most subtly and comprehensively recorded, albeit in code. (1979, pp. 45)

Another aspect that Hebdige chose to address is the use of mass media as a communicative tool for interaction in society, including subcultures.

[The media] provide[s] us with the most available categories for classifying out the social world. It is primarily through the press, television, film, etc. that experience is organized, interpreted, and made to *cohere in contradiction* as it were. It should hardly surprise us then, to discover that much of what finds itself encoded in subculture has already been subjected to a certain amount of prior handling by the media. (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 85)

The media not only provide groups with substantive images of other groups, they also relay back to working-class people a ‘picture’ of their own lives which is ‘contained’ or ‘framed’ by the ideological discourses which surround and situate it.

Subcultures are, at least in part, representations of these representations, and elements taken from the ‘picture’ of working-class life (and of the social whole in general) and they are bound to find some echo in the signifying practices of various subcultures. (Hebdige, 1979, pp. 28)

Hebdige then refers to subcultures as representing ‘noise’ (as opposed to sound), by explaining that subcultures create noise that interferes with the orderly sequence, which leads from events

and phenomena to their representation in the media. Subcultures are therefore considered as a method of semantic disorder by Hebdige; they represent symbolic challenges to the symbolic order.

‘Style’ as a symbolic challenge has a double response; it is celebrated, as well as ridiculed and reviled by those who define subcultures as social problems. Subcultures as a result of existing against the natural order, are then according to Hebdige, used by the ruling class to incite moral panics about race, sexuality and aggression. They use the style of the subculture in order to label subcultures as social problems by:

1. Using a subculture’s stylistic innovations to first attract media attention.
2. Discovering deviant or anti-social acts and using them to frame the subculture as full of members that transgress sartorial codes.

According to Hebdige,

It is through this continual process of recuperation that the fractured order is repaired and the subculture incorporated as a diverting spectacle within the dominant mythology from which it in part emanates: as ‘folk devil’, as Other, as Enemy (1979, pp. 94).

The process of recuperation takes two characteristic forms:

1. The conversion of subcultural signs (dress, music, etc.) into mass produced objects (i.e. the commodity form)
2. The labelling and re-definition of deviant behaviour by dominant groups – the police, the media, the judiciary (i.e. the ideological form).

Subcultures are therefore not just groups of people, they are also alternate expressive forms of culture and ideology. Hebdige argues that subcultures exist to express tension between groups in power and groups that are condemned to subordinate positions and second-class lives, and this tension is expressed through subcultural style. While the ruling ideology is produced and reinforced through family life, the education system, mass media and of course cultural and political institutions; subcultures and style exist outside these areas of society. Therefore, subcultures can then be conceptualized as existing in contradiction or as noise towards the ruling ideology.

Lastly in Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain, Stuart Hall & Tony Jefferson (1976; 2006) provided their own conceptualization of subculture by using the groundwork provided by other sociologists such as Albert Cohen and Howard Becker. Initially inspired by Outsiders (Becker, 1963) and labelling theory, Hall & Jefferson decided that focusing on labelling theory and transactional social processes was an oversimplification to understanding subcultures. Instead, Hall & Jefferson sought to explain:

...[b]oth social action *and* social reaction, structurally and historically in a way which attempts to do justice to all the levels of analysis: from the dynamics of 'face-to-face' interactions between delinquents and control agents to the wider, more mediated, questions – largely ignored by 'pure' transactionalists – of the relation of these activities to shifts in class and power relations, consciousness, ideology and hegemony. (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, pp. xxxiv)

Similar to Hebdige, Hall & Jefferson (2006, pp. 5) who were also a part of the Birmingham School incorporated Marxism into their analysis about subculture, aligning with Hebdige that the world tends to be organized in terms of the structures that express the power, the position, the hegemony and the interests of the powerful in that society. Despite the idea of hegemony, this does not necessarily mean that there is only one set of ideas or cultural forms in a society (Hebdige, 1979; Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Through this argument, groups or classes of people who are not part of the ruling class still manage to find ways of expressing and realizing in their culture their subordinate position in society and subsequent experiences (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). According to Hall & Jefferson:

...[o]ther cultural configurations will not only be subordinate to this dominant order: they will enter into struggle with it, seek to modify, negotiate, resist or even overthrow its reign – its *hegemony*. The struggle between classes over material and social life thus always assumes the forms of a continuous struggle over the distribution of 'cultural power.' (2006, pp. 6)

While subordinate cultures may not always be in open conflict with the dominant culture, they can for long periods of time coexist with dominant culture by negotiating the spaces and gaps in

it for subordinate subcultures to exist (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). According to Hall & Jefferson (2006), when it comes to modern societies, the most fundamental groups are the social classes. As a result the major cultural configurations will originate as ‘class cultures’ (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, pp. 7). Relative to these cultural-class configurations, Hall and Jefferson define subcultures “- as sets – smaller, more localized and differentiated structures, within one or other of the larger cultural networks” (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, pp. 7). Therefore, subcultures must first be related to the ‘parent cultures’ of which they are a sub-set of. But, subcultures must *also* be analyzed in terms of their relation to the dominant culture – the overall disposition of cultural power in the society as a whole (Hebdige, 1979; Hall & Jefferson, 2006).

While first focusing their analysis on Youth Culture, Hall & Jefferson (2006) were able to incorporate three terms to explain the nature of post-war social change. The three key terms listed were ‘affluence’, ‘consensus’ and ‘embourgeoisement’ (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, pp. 13). ‘Affluence’ referred to the increase in working class consumer spending. ‘Consensus’ referred to the acceptance by both political parties of all the major social issues (mixed economy, increased incomes, welfare-state ‘safety net’) post-war to unify people of all social classes together, on the basis of a common stake in the success of the new post-war system. Lastly, ‘embourgeoisement’ was the result of combining affluence and consensus to explain how working-class life and culture was ceasing to be a distinct formation in the society, due to rapid assimilation towards middle-class patterns, aspirations and values. In summation, Hall & Jefferson (2006) concluded that ‘affluence’ and ‘consensus’ together were promoting the rapid ‘bourgeoisification’ of the working classes, which in turn created new social configurations and values (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, pp. 14).

Hall & Jefferson levelled critique at work produced by Cohen (1955) and Cloward &

Ohlin (1960) during the fifties and sixties. Hall & Jefferson argued that while Cohen, Cloward & Ohlin and other sociologists attempted to place delinquent subcultures within a larger class framework, they failed to fully understand the creation of subcultures. For Hall & Jefferson, how the subculture problem was presented as a problem of the disjunction between the middle-class *goal* of success and the restricted *means* for achieving them was problematic and simplified at best. A youth group or subculture was defined as the result of status-frustration, or anxiety because of rejection by middle-class institutions; or even the inability to achieve dominant goals because of blocked opportunities for success. Hall & Jefferson critiqued the presented consensual view of society, in which everyone subscribed to the American Dream and youth cultures were simply composed of youths who could not succeed by society's definition (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, pp. 20). Instead, Hall & Jefferson aligned more closely with Graeme Murdock (1973) and Mike Brake (1973). Brake conceptualized the formation of subculture as:

...[a]ttempts to solve certain problems in the social structures, which are created by contradictions in the larger society. . . . Youth is not in itself a problem, but there are problems created, for example by the conscription of the majority of the young into the lower strata of a meritocratic educational system and then allowing them only to take up occupations which are meaningless, poorly paid and uncreative. Working-class subcultures attempt to infuse into this bleak world excitement and colour during the short respite between school and settling down into marriage and adult-hood. (Brake, 1973, pp. 36)

Murdock's (1973) conceptualization of subcultural formation is very similar to Brake's (1973), whereby subcultures create context for the creation of meaningful styles of leisure while attempting to contend with obstacles faced by the working-class. Murdock concluded that,

Subcultures therefore offer a collective solution to the problems posed by shared contradictions in the work situation and provide a social and symbolic context for the development and reinforcement, of collective identity and individual self-esteem. (1973, pp. 9)

Hall & Jefferson (2006) were heavily influenced by both Brake (1973) and Murdock (1973) and

chose to expand their concept of youth subculture by analyzing the dialectical relationship between the ‘hegemonic’ dominant culture, and the subordinate working-class ‘parent’ culture of which youth is arguably a fraction. The hegemonic cultural order tries to *frame* all competing definitions of the world within *its* range, as well as prescribing the limits through which ideas and conflicts are re-organized and resolved (Hebdige, 1979; Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Hall & Jefferson further argue that cultural hegemony provides:

...[t]he horizon of thought and action within which conflicts are fought through, appropriated (i.e. experienced), obscured (i.e. concealed as a ‘national interest’ which should unite all conflicting parties) or contained (i.e. settled to the profit of the ruling class) (2006, pp. 29).

This then leads to what Hall & Jefferson refer to as the ‘subcultural response’ (2006, pp. 35).

Hall & Jefferson begin by arguing that despite subcultures as being thematically defined by many sociologists as a means to problem solve, there is no ‘subcultural solution’ to issues such as working-class youth unemployment, educational disadvantage, compulsory miseducation, dead-end jobs, the routinization and specialization of labour, low pay and the loss of skills (2006, pp. 35). Subcultural strategies cannot answer the structural issues in society that affect the working-class as a whole. Therefore, when the post-war subcultures address the problems of their class experience, Hall & Jefferson (2006) argue that they do so in ways that often reproduce the gaps and discrepancies between real negotiations and symbolically displaced ‘resolutions’. Subcultures solve issues, but do not resolve the problems at their core, in which the social problems such as unemployment and educational disadvantage at the material level remain fixed and unchanged. The ‘subcultural response’ is made up of various forms of adaptation, negotiation and resistance, elaborated by the ‘parent’ culture in its encounter with the dominant hegemonic culture. With regards to youth cultures, their subcultural response is to take some

things principally from the working-class ‘parent’ culture: but they apply and transform the solutions to the situations and experiences characteristic of their own distinctive group-life and generational experience (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Despite the seeming distinctiveness of youth subcultures with aspects such as cultural signs and style, youth subcultures still develop certain outlooks, which originated from the parent culture.

Just as Hebdige (1979) declared that commodities existed as cultural signs, Hall & Jefferson also agreed with this assessment. Commodities have already been steeped with meanings, associations and social connotations by the dominant hegemonic culture, some of these meanings as appearing ‘natural’ (Hebdige, 1979). ‘Natural’ signs however only appear that way because the dominant culture has so fully appropriated them to its use, that the meanings which it attributes to the commodities have come to appear as the only meaning which they can express. In fact, in cultural systems, there is no ‘natural’ meaning as such. Hall & Jefferson (2006) further elaborated that objects and commodities do not mean any one thing; they have certain meanings only because they have already been arranged, according to social use, into cultural codes of meaning, which *assign meanings to them* (pp. 42-43). This means that the symbolic aspects of commodities cannot be separated from the structure, experiences, activities and outlook of the groups as social formations; subcultural style is based on the infrastructure of group relations, activities and contexts (Hebdige, 1979; Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Hall & Jefferson then make that claim that:

Working-class subcultures are clearly articulated, collective structures – often, ‘near-’ or ‘quasi’-gangs. Middle-class counter-cultures are diffuse, less group-centred, more individualized. The latter precipitate, typically, not tight subcultures but a diffuse counter-culture *milieu*. Working-class subcultures reproduce a clear dichotomy between those aspects of group life still fully under the constraint of dominant or ‘parent’ institutions (family, home, school, work), and those focused on non-work hours – leisure, peer-group association. Middle-

class counter-culture *milieux* merge and blur the distinctions between ‘necessary’ and ‘free’ time activities. Indeed, the latter are distinguished precisely by their attempt to explore ‘alternative institutions’ to the central institutions of the dominant culture: new patterns of living, of family-life, of work or even ‘un-careers’. Middle-class youth remains longer than their working-class peers ‘in the transitional stage’. (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, pp. 45)

While both working-class subcultures and middle-class counter-cultures are seen as marking a ‘crisis in authority’; the ‘delinquency’ of the working-class subculture and the ‘disaffiliation’ of the middle-class counter-culture is an indicator of the weakening of the bonds of social attachment and of the formative institutions which manage how youths develop (Hall & Jefferson, 2006, pp. 48). Hall & Jefferson finish by concluding that youth subcultures exist as symbolic or ritualistic attempts to resist the power of bourgeois hegemony by ‘consciously adopting behaviour that appears threatening to the dominant cultural hegemony.

vii. A Move to Expand Conceptualizations of Subculture

This section concludes the genealogical account of the main conceptualizations of the term subculture. While there have been many variations and understandings of the term subculture, it is also important to note that the term has received wide amounts of backlash and criticism from other sociologists. During the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a strong movement to rebrand the term subculture, as many sociologists argued that subcultures were created by subcultural theorists, and not vice versa (Hall & Jefferson, 2006; Newburn, 2013; Nwalozie, 2015). Amongst a growing list of critiques, one of the most damning was that when producing research, subcultural theorists determined what subcultures should necessarily represent, rather than studying and understanding the subcultures and subculturalists themselves. The many critiques lobbied against past subcultural theories as well as the notion of rebranding

subculture will be addressed in the next chapter. Furthermore, how the term subculture should be adapted due to technological advancements will also be briefly discussed.

Chapter 2: Rebranding Subculture and Theoretical Critiques

Introduction

During the 1990s and early 2000s, there was a strong movement to rebrand the term subculture, as many sociologists argued that subcultures were created by subcultural theorists, and not vice versa (Hall & Jefferson, 2006; Newburn, 2013; Nwalozie, 2015). Among many critiques, one of the most damning was that when producing research, subcultural theorists determined what subcultures should necessarily represent. The critiques lobbied against past subcultural theories and rebranding the term will be addressed in this chapter. Chapter 2 will describe eight important criticisms, as well as where the future of the term subculture can be expanded in order to correct these perceived flaws. While the first chapter provided a chronological account of the term subculture, this chapter will be focusing more on grouping subcultural theories into the two main schools; the Chicago and the Birmingham schools of thought.⁶ This chapter will then discuss the critiques that have plagued each school, specifically with regards to methodological reasoning. Lastly, this chapter will introduce a new conceptualization for the term subculture, and the method through which this new post-modern conceptualization can be understood. This is done with the intention to introduce the term subculture and to broaden its application to the existence of the Internet, Social Networking Sites and online communities.

Chicago School v. Birmingham School

As mentioned previously, there were two subcultural waves within the literature; the Chicago School and the Birmingham School. The Chicago School originally utilized the term

⁶ While the Chicago school is American, and the Birmingham school is British; both schools share a common flaw of subcultural theory in which they both represent and are limited to Western culture, more specifically Western youth cultures.

subculture in order to explain youth delinquency. The key ideas of the Chicago School can be found in the works of Edwin Lemert (1951), Albert Cohen⁷ (1955), Walter Miller (1958), David Matza (1964), Richard Cloward and Lloyd Ohlin (1960), Edwin Sutherland and Donald Cressey (1970) and Howard Becker (1963). Though the Birmingham School drew on the Chicago School, it also focused on the link between youth deviance, gangs and the geography from which these youths emerged from as well as the newly discussed notions of style and authenticity and the impact of mass media. The key ideas of the Birmingham School can be found in the works of Raymond Williams (1961), Phil Cohen (1972), Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson (1976) and Dick Hebdige (1979).

1. Defining Subculture

As seen in Chapter 1, the term subculture has gone through a lengthy and often combative process of conceptualization. This evolutionary process is, in fact, the first criticism directed at the term subculture because it has not been adequately defined. At times, the term subculture has been conflated with youth delinquency, when the term subculture has been used by sociologists to discuss the values of groups such as the Amish, Mormons, delinquents, inmates in prison, ethnic groups, social classes, and other heterogeneous groupings in Western society (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967). Furthermore, sociologists such as Bennett (1999; 2011) and Nwalozie (2015) argue that the term subculture is too vague, and as a result is used by sociologists as a convenient ‘catch-all’ term for any interaction between youth, style and music.

⁷ Albert Cohen (1955), studied delinquency subculture by focusing on gang delinquency among working-class youth in slum areas which, he argued developed a distinctive culture as a response to their perceived lack of economic and social opportunity within American society. His work was influenced by the work of Robert Merton (1953; 1957), and his propositions of social structure and anomie.

The term subculture has, therefore, been overused and misused in the sense that the term is used whenever a sociologist aims to show a distinction between normative and other behaviours. The term subculture has thus become muddled, and as John Milton Yinger (1960) pointed out, there is a need for a more thorough definition of subculture as well as new separate terms such as ‘contraculture’ in order to help distinguish between normative systems of sub-societies and emergent norms that appear in conflict situations.

Another aspect of this issue of misusing the term subculture, is that of the confusion of labelling theory. To recount, the main concept of labelling theory is that acts or behaviours do not initially have any inherent, objectively deviant characteristics but that instead, it is through a process of labelling that individuals who commit those acts become recognized as deviant (Goffman, 1963; Maratea & Kavanaugh, 2012). This results in part from the fact that being publicly identified as deviant results in a ‘spoiled’ identity; and it cultivates a ‘stigma’ that devalues a person’s standing in the group or community (Goffman, 1963). When the term subculture is slapped on groups, there is no doubt that further marginalization occurs, and yet the term subculture as per sociologists is meant to describe marginalization rather than perpetuate it as is what occurs with labelling theory (Jencks, 2005).

2. Subculture and Gangs

A second criticism that relates to the definition of subculture is that of the term ‘gang’ having become synonymous with the term subculture in literature. Past research on subcultures has mainly focused on young working-class males and their participation in deviant activities as a group (Cohen, 1955; Cohen & Short, 1958; Miller, 1958; Cloward & Ohlin, 1960). Due to the past strong focus on sociologists using youth delinquents and gangs for their research on

subculture, over time Brake (1987) among others have argued that the meaning of subculture has become a term interchangeable with gangs.

Brake (1985) first argued that it was important to differentiate between gangs and subcultures. According to Brake (1985), subcultures can be summed up as actions, values, style, imagery and lifestyles that are portrayed through face-to-face and mass media communication; extending far past geographic localities and forming symbolic communities. Gangs, on the other hand, are informally structured 'near groups' comprised of a closely connected 'core' but with a network of members whose participation varies (Brake, 1987). It is vital to make this distinction between subcultures and gangs, rather than allowing the two terms to become interchangeable and thus skewing the ultimate definition of a subculture. A gang may belong to a subculture or have elements of multiple subcultures, but not all subcultures are gang-related, and that is a paramount fact. Nwalozie made this argument by summarizing a list of different types of subcultures, including but not limited to: occupational subcultures; religious subcultures; drug subcultures; consumer subcultures; immigrant subcultures; and Internet or cybercrime subcultures (Nwalozie, 2015, pp. 3).

3. Subcultures as Deterministic

Another criticism directed at subcultural theory is that it is overly deterministic in nature. Subcultures as previously argued, have long been associated with youth delinquency, gangs and group criminal activity in the literature. In this sense, the idea of group loyalty and group actions has in some aspects been the main focus of subcultural theory, while putting less emphasis on individual autonomy and free-will (Nwalozie, 2015). This is detrimental to subcultural theory as individual autonomy and to what degree individuals associate and

participate within the subculture can vary; for example being part of a subculture without adopting certain aspects of it with regards to attitude and behaviour.

Sociologists such as Hebdige (1979) and Hodkinson (2011) have argued that collective experience with regards to participation in subcultures vary; from having little to no participation but having identified as part of the subculture, to having lots of participation within the given subculture. There is also a distinction to be made between face-to-face interactions and computer-mediated communication (CMC) with subcultural theory (Hodkinson, 2011).

Subcultures can communicate across distance and time – which again makes them distinctive from gangs – and this becomes more apparent with the use of CMC and the Internet. This means that individuals do not need face-to-face interactions with other members, nor participate in certain behaviours such as criminal activities, but can instead be part of the subculture purely by online participation in online communities and shared attitudes. Miles (1995) makes the argument that in certain circumstances, the association to the subculture through music and style can often skew the perception of the subculture. Miles (1995) stated that sometimes the subcultures place too much concentration on symbolic aspects of subcultural consumption at the expense of the actual *meanings* that young consumers have for the goods they consume. In this scenario, membership to the subculture can certainly not be determined by specific actions as would be implied by many subcultural theories. Subcultures should therefore not be understood in a deterministic sense, as participation and association in subcultures have many layers that cannot be simplified to that of gangs.

Lastly, Roger Sabin (1999) in Punk Rock: So What? is highly critical of the cultural agenda of subcultural theories. Sabin argues that with regards to subcultural theory, determinism has been a big issue within current conceptualizations of subcultures. Due to theorists relying

more on theory, rather than ethnographic studies of subcultures; "... Too often 'big theories' have been relied upon (Marxism, the sociology of deviance, semiotics, etc.), which picture those involved in subcultures as passive pawns of history, their lives shaped by grand narratives beyond their control" (Sabin, 1999a, pp. 5). By positioning theory over ethnographic studies in subcultural studies, the lives of those studied is treated not as a representation of their subjective experiences, but more as "...an expression of their 'subjectivities' – the texts, discourses, frameworks and social positions *through which* their lived reality is 'spoken'" (Muggleton, 2000). This is problematic, as subcultural theorists have arguably moulded current conceptualizations of subculture in order to fit inside a nice and neat theoretical box; rather than coming to understand subcultures as complex and fluid with their own uniqueness to them and their members.

4. Subcultural Theory as Too Narrow

The focus of subcultural theory has predominantly focused on one group of people, and that is urban working-class adolescent males (Nwalozie, 2015). Occasionally, the studies drifted to lower-class working males, but the focus was mainly on youth delinquency. These groups of males are also, in most studies, Caucasian. Subcultural theories as a whole, need to be diversified and represent not just one vulnerable group of people, but in fact many different groups of people in order to garner a true and versatile understanding. Western society is not homogenous (Nwalozie, 2015), and thus its theories on groups of people, should also not be derived from groups that are homogenous in nature unless that is the goal of the research.

5. Subcultural Theory as Being Male-Oriented

To further the critique that subcultural theories are too narrow, it has come across in the literature by many female sociologists that the given understanding of a subculture is male-oriented. The Birmingham School, which aimed to expand on the suppositions provided by the Chicago School, failed to acknowledge the relationship between girls and young women and youth subcultures. Male sociologists have often argued in the past that all females are heterosexual and 'goal-oriented' (Bennett, 1999; McRobbie, 1984). There have even been remarks by certain sociologists that while boys are busy being boys, girls are busy finding ways to collect boys like postage stamps (Cohen, 1955)⁸. Female involvement in subcultures has therefore been largely overlooked and largely underestimated, especially with youth delinquency (McRobbie, 1984).

6. Subcultural Theory as an invention; not an observation

Critics of the Birmingham School such as Steven Redhead and David Muggleton have been hyper vigilant with the conclusions produced in subcultural works such as Subculture: The Meaning of Style (Hebdige, 1979), Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain (Hall & Jefferson, 1976), Working-Class Youth Culture (Mungham & Pearson, 1976) and Profane Culture (Willis, 1978). The common error found in these works according to Muggleton was a methodological one relating to the lack of ethnography present within the

⁸ Albert Cohen (1995) posited that delinquent patterns are characteristically *masculine* (pp. 139), and that female delinquency is probably motivated by different problems than male delinquency (pp. 144). Furthermore, Cohen (1955) held the view that female delinquency is more specialized, where as male delinquency is more versatile. With regards to motivation, Cohen (1955) argued that women's status, security, response and acceptability of her self-image inherently came from her satisfaction from her interactions with the opposite sex and her perceived level of sexual attractiveness (pp. 144). This line of theoretical thinking was most definitely a product of its time, and most notably a female perspective on delinquency from the account of a male, which has problematic elements in and of itself.

studies.⁹ Muggleton (1997; 2000) argued that while sociologists have a clear-cut authority with regards to producing academic material, the authority of the sociologists provided a ‘scientific’ analysis that spoke on behalf of and also *over* the voices of Others and subculturalists. In these studies, theorists failed to take the subjective viewpoint of youth subculturalists seriously, and thus to some degree; subcultures are not studied seriously because their members are not taken seriously (Muggleton, 2000; Evans, 1997). Caroline Evans (1997) pointed out that within British Academia and the Birmingham School, in the field of popular culture and subcultures, it is cheaper to do theory than it is to conduct in-depth ethnographies; and so subcultural theories are limited in their methodological approach. This was a critique echoed by Sarah Thornton (1995) in her work, Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital. Thornton also declared that her work mimics the methodological approach of ethnographic studies originally utilized by the Chicago School rather than the Birmingham School. This was due to the fact that Chicago School sociologists were in favour of prioritizing researching empirical social groups over elaborating and creating new theories with regards to subcultures.

Muggleton (1997) also criticizes the theory-heavy Neo-Marxist analysis provided in Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-war Britain (1976) by Hall & Jefferson to explain youth subcultures, declaring that these sociologists placed too much emphasis on class structure and social organization to explain behaviours and attitudes rather than actually listening to the voices of Other-ed groups in societies and members of subcultures (pp. 193). Another shortcoming of subcultural theory and the lack of voice provided by subculturalists can be seen in the absence of documented home-life. The focus of subcultures has for the most part been on

⁹ David Muggleton (2000, pp. 3), while being critical of the works produced by the Birmingham School due to their lack of ethnographic methodology did clarify that Paul Willis’ Profane Culture (1978) did not suffer this same critical flaw.

youth delinquency and gang involvement, and thus the home-life of subcultural members is often overlooked. Clarke, Hall, Jefferson and Roberts (2006) make that point that although subcultures are important to youths, due to varying levels of participation and membership with the subculture, membership to the subculture may be less significant than what young people do most of the time (Clarke et al., 2006, pp. 16).

Steven Redhead (1990) goes further in this vein of analysis, stating that subcultural theories never had 'authenticity' to begin with because subcultures were produced by modernist subcultural theories, rather than subcultural theories capturing the essence of subcultures. The truly 'lived' cultural experience of subcultures, rather than the cultural experience simply observed in subcultures, is arguably more nuanced and complex than what past subcultural theorists have documented; and thus no subcultural theory adequately captures this experiential notion of subculture, relating once again to the critique of subculture lacking a true definition in at least the postmodern sense (Redhead, 1990; Muggleton, 1997). Furthermore, Redhead posited in a Bruno Latour manner that modernity is all that exists (1990). Redhead discusses the 'Modern Condition' in which there only exist modernities, conflicting and overlapping with each other, and 'new' modernities sit alongside 'old' modernities (Redhead, 1990, pp. 5). While many have argued that there has been a postmodern shift with regards to academia and understanding the world; Redhead argues that postmodernity is simply the radicalizing of modernity and that current conceptualizations of postmodernity have always existed as multiple modernities. Even still, Redhead's view is postmodern without labelling it as such, in which there is not one-theory that fits subcultures, and in fact, there are many different complex understandings and experiences that exist alongside past conceptualizations of the term.

7. Subcultural Theory in the Post-Modern World

In Resistance Through Rituals (1976), the Birmingham School sought to account for the style-centred youth cultures of post-war Britain. In this text, one of the major tenets of this theory was that youth subcultures were distinctive in the way they identified themselves through commodified signs such as fashion (for females) and style (for males) (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Hebdige, 1979; Muggleton, 1997). As Muggleton explained:

At the visible level of ‘spectacular’ style, the studies of youth subcultures which came out of the ‘Birmingham School’ (Hall & Jefferson, 1976; Mungham & Pearson, 1976; Willis, 1978; Hebdige, 1979) stressed the subculture’s active appropriation and transformation of signs through the subversive act of *bricolage*¹⁰, contrasting this by implication with the ‘passive’ consumption of mainstream fashion and, hence, dominant identities by conventional youth culture. Thus, although the wholesale adoption of modern mainstream fashion seems to be defined in contrast to the active and creative postmodern consumer, it also provides the norm of ‘passive’ conformity to the dominant modes against which the acts of *bricolage* by modern youth subculturalists were a form of resistance. (Muggleton, 1997, pp. 192)

This process of *bricolage* was documented by Hebdige (1979) – and other sociologists belonging to the Birmingham School – to have started to occur during the 1950’s through to the 1970’s with the creation of distinctive groups such as the Bowie-ites; Teddy Boys; Mods; Rockers; Skinheads; Punks; Soul Boys; Two Tone; Ravers; Reggae (Rastafarian Movement) and so on. During the transitional period to the 1980s and 1990s, Thornton (1989), Muggleton (1997) and Jameson (1985) argued that there was a shift in style; denoting a new postmodern trend towards stylistic eclecticism. While Hebdige argued that subcultural membership was expressed through

¹⁰ Dick Hebdige adapted the concept of *bricolage* during the 1970s; he was a member of the Birmingham School. *Bricolage* was used by Hebdige to denote the act of individuals wearing ‘signs’ through a process of commodification and consumerism. As Hebdige (1979) argued in *Subculture: The Meaning of Style*, opposition towards the dominant society is expressed through commodities and thus spectacular style. Eventually, *bricolage* as a form of resistance was ‘caught-on-to’ by industries and was therefore co-opted by certain industries, resulting in the commodification of these resistance signs, which were then restyled and sold back to consumers.

style, critics of this would argue that that may have been the case before, but after the 1980s, style and subcultural expression was co-opted by the media and fashion industries in order to further consumer culture. This postmodern shift resulted in the death of the social and the destruction of historical meaning behind the style of distinctive subcultures in lieu of aestheticism (Thornton, 1989; Muggleton, 1997). Angela McRobbie argued that during the 1980s, there was a cultural shift to:

... ransack history for key items of dress, in a seemingly eclectic and haphazard manner... The instant recall on history, fuelled by the superfluity of images thrown up by the media, has produced a non-stop fashion parade in which 'different decades are placed together with no historical continuity' (McRobbie, 1989, pp. 132)

As Muggleton explained, "Style [was] now worn for its look, not for any underlying message; or rather, the look is now the message. (Muggleton, 1997, pp. 194)" Therefore, the meanings of subcultures became somewhat lost in translation due to the processes of cultural appropriation and commodification. Consumption of style became more important than the cultural meaning behind the style. With regards to subcultures, especially ones that exist as contracultures that operate in conflict with mainstream society, the clothing that was once exclusively associated with that culture became mainstream through the use of mass media (i.e. television programs, fashion advertisements etc.) (Thornton, 1989). Taking a post-modern approach to understanding this issue of consumption, the struggles that provided definition for that style no longer exist in the same capacity that they used to. As a result, the history and context behind the styles of subcultures has been lost in the post-modern sense.

This line of thought regarding subcultural expression through style was also argued through the works of Jameson (1985) and his concept of *pastiche*.¹¹ In a world of *pastiche*,

¹¹ *Pastiche* as an artistic term refers to the imitation of another artist's work. With regards to Frederic Jameson (1985), the concept of *pastiche* referred to a world in which stylistic

subcultural expression has lost its unique distinctiveness that separates it from other styles and fashions. With nowhere left for subcultural styles to progress, subcultural styles underwent a process of hybridization, in which the style progressed by imitating other styles and mixing them to create something seemingly new. For subcultural expression to expand, it has in fact lost its authenticity by imitating the stylistic expression of other subcultures. The style of subculture has, therefore, become whatever pop media icon is being reflected in consumer society, and has arguably, lost its sense of ‘authenticity’ (McRobbie, 1989; Thornton, 1989; Jameson, 1995; Redhead, 1990; Muggleton, 1997). The original ‘politics of style’ has been lost as subcultural ‘style as resistance’ has been appropriated to the point where what it stood for is lost, and all that remains is a hybridized version of what it used to be, and the capitalistic gimmicks of aestheticism.

In The Clubcultures Reader (Redhead, 1997), David Muggleton discusses the concept of ‘The Post-subculturalist.’¹² In Muggleton’s essay,

... modernist theory stressed a series of distinct subcultural styles unfolding in linear time until the 1970s, the postmodern 1980s and 1990s have been decades of subcultural fragmentation and proliferation, with a glut of revivals, hybrids and transformations, and the co-existence of myriad styles at any one point in time and individual subculturalists moving quickly and freely from one style to another as they wish; indeed, this high degree of sartorial mobility is the source of playfulness and pleasure. [Subculturalists] do not have to worry about contradictions between their selected subcultural identities, or agonize over the correct mode of dress, since there are no longer any correct interpretations. This is something that all post-subculturalists are aware of, that there are no rules, that there is no authenticity, no reason for ideological commitment, merely a stylistic game to be played. (1997, pp. 198)

innovation was no longer possible, and that the only available option left was to imitate ‘dead styles’ that already existed.

¹²“The Post-subculturalist” according to Muggleton (1997) no longer has any sense of subcultural ‘authenticity’ (pp. 198). They are no longer aware of the politics of resistance associated with subculture, due to subcultures imitating each other and losing their distinctness as well as that the cultural symbols produced by the subculture have been by and large rebranded for consumerist purposes.

In the postmodern world, with the fragmentation of spectacular style, post-subculturalists such as Muggleton argue that style –as it was used to visibly differentiate subcultures in the past– is now used to express individualistic identity rather than subcultural identity (Jencks, 2005). If this is the state of subcultural visibility, with the subculture being in a constant battle for cultural signs and appropriation from other subcultures, then style can no longer be used as an indicator of subcultural expression. While Muggleton (2000) promotes a *neo-Weberian approach*¹³ to understanding subcultures through the postmodern lens, Andy Bennett (2011) takes a different approach to understand what he considers the *Post-Subcultural Turn*.¹⁴

Bennett (2011) agreed with previous critics of subcultural theories, relaying that over the course of the 1990s and early 2000s, a body of work emerged within the subcultural literature that argued that the concept of subculture, as it had been understood and applied to the study of style-based youth cultures during the previous 25 years, had become redundant as a conceptual framework. Bennett began by listing the number of critiques aimed at dismantling the validity of the Post-Subcultural Turn, stating that:

Indeed, exponents of the latter have raised a series of critical concerns about the

¹³ Muggleton (2000) describes a new approach to understanding subculture that involves directly interacting ethnographically with the members of a subculture by using a *verstehen* methodology. In the neo-Weberian approach, interviews are conducted to make sense of how members of subcultures interpret and make sense of postmodern characteristics. This approach emphasizes Max Weber’s “...the need for sociological explanation to recognize the subjective goals, values and motivations of social actors” (Muggleton, 2000, pp. 5). This is an approach in direct contrast with the neo-Marxist approach used by the Hall & Jefferson (1976).

¹⁴ Bennett’s (2011) term, *the Post-Subcultural Turn* is used to refer to the most recent attempts in subcultural literature to reconceptualize the term subculture. The general focus of the Post-Subcultural Turn as described by has been greatly influenced by the work of David Muggleton (2000; & Weinzierl 2003) in which he argued that youth identities and social identities have become more reflexive, fluid and fragmented due to an increasing flow of cultural commodities, images and texts through which more individualized identity projects and ideas of self could be constructed.

Post-Subcultural Turn. A common criticism of post-subcultural theory suggests that, as an approach, it is theoretically too loose to offer a cohesive set of alternative, analytical and empirical concepts for the study of youth culture. A further criticism of post-subcultural theory is that it adopts a naive, and essentially celebratory, stance regarding the role of the cultural industries in shaping the identities and lifestyles of youth. Thus, it is argued, despite the claims of post-subcultural theory concerning the decline of class-based youth identities, one does not need to look very far to see evidence of the ongoing role played by structural inequalities in shaping the life chances and cultural affiliations of youth. Other critical observers have suggested that, in emphasizing reflexive individualism as a motor-force in the construction of contemporary youth identities, post-subcultural theory effectively depoliticizes youth culture. A final criticism suggests that post-subcultural theory's positioning of youth's stylistic affiliations as a moveable feast overlooks more established examples of youth cultural style that do not seem to obey the new laws of fluidity and temporality observed by post-subcultural theorists. (2011, pp. 494)

While Bennett is quick to acknowledge these critiques, Bennett still argues that the *Post-Subcultural Turn* has succeeded in addressing some of the drawbacks of the past conceptualizations by creating new conceptual frameworks, most notably *lifestyle*¹⁵; *scene*¹⁶; and *neotribes*¹⁷ (2011, pp. 494-496). Still, Bennett, compared to other theorists held a rather moderate view of the conceptualization of subculture. By comparison, Steve Redhead (1990) started the rebranding of subculture through *post-subculture*; and then the *Post-Subcultural Turn* was further modernized by David Muggleton (2000). Muggleton's post-modern perspective was expected to fill the gap created by subcultural theory, and or even to make-up for its limitations, but even this view needed to be tweaked quite a bit. Weinzierl and Muggleton (2006) in their attempt to confront the theoretical reliance of subculture from the Birmingham School, concluded that a rejection of past understandings of subculture was necessary to actually begin to understand subcultures, they argued for a complete rethinking of the term subculture. Chijoke

¹⁵ See David Chaney (1996) in *Lifestyles*.

¹⁶ See Will Straw (1991) in *Systems of articulation, logics of change: Communities and scenes in popular music*.

¹⁷ See Michael Maffesoli (1996) in *The time of the tribes: The decline of individualism in mass society*.

Nwalozie (2015) in his attempt to track the rebranding of subculture concluded that:

Rethinking subculture and subcultural theory implies seeking alternative ways of using the concept and theory to address youth criminal activity globally. Rather than employ alternative terminologies such as post-subculture, which eventually became counter-productive and indeed repetitious of the classic subculture, a persuasive suggestion is that the usage of subculture and subcultural theory be widened to embrace a universal explanation of youth criminal life. The notion of globalization or rather the world being a “global village”, coupled with modern technology, may have a major role to play here, in the sense that youths of nowadays are far more informed by the social media networks to behave in similar ways. (pp. 11)

While subcultural theories should not be limited to youth studies, Nwalozie broached the idea of subculturalists being informed by social media networks and computer-mediated communication (CMC). Thus far in the literature, subcultural theorists have failed to meet the gap in research that has been created through the use of computer-mediated communication. A new postmodern approach to understanding subcultures has become necessary, now more than ever in the age of globalization and technological advancements.

Where do we go from here?

It has become clear, that the concept of subculture is in need of a serious reboot in terms of reconceptualizing its framework in the postmodern sense (Redhead, 1990; Muggleton, 1997; 2000; Weinzierl & Muggleton, 2006; Bennett, 2011). Not only that, an area that has yet to be fully explored is subcultural participation and publication on the Internet. The Internet is the fastest mechanism for information sharing, specifically for cultural sharing. It is also known that Anglo-American societies make up a large portion of Internet traffic on social media networks (Nwalozie, 2015). It has also been documented in the literature that Anglo-American culture has an overpowering influence on cultural identities, and tends to influence other societies around the world. Brake (1985) found that many cultural signs were ‘borrowed’ rather than ‘authentic’,

echoing Muggleton's conclusion though in a different way. For example, Brake (1985) argued that the use of hip-hop by Black Canadian youths was borrowed from the African-American culture from which it originated, as well as the apparent borrowing of punk hairstyles from England by White youths in both Canada and America. Through the use of the Internet, cultural and subcultural sharing has flourished, and thus many subcultures exist now as subsets within the larger more encompassing 'global village'. This is why it is important to rethink the term subculture, and how as a concept, it must like humans, adapt and evolve to include technological advancements such as the use of the Internet and online communities.

A Distinct Approach to Methodology

As stated before, the main critique of the Birmingham School was a lack of ethnographic methodology, including speaking over the voices of the subculturalists they were attempting to understand. This was also characterized by their lack of willingness to situate themselves within the subcultures they were studying on a participatory level (Thornton, 1995; Ferrell, 1997) as well as placing too much emphasis on cultural symbols that would eventually become co-opted by the media and consumerism to the point of losing their authenticity and socio-political value (McRobbie, 1989; Thornton, 1989; Jameson, 1995; Redhead, 1990; Muggleton, 1997). The Chicago School, while eager to use ethnographic methodologies, suffered several weaknesses including early applications of ecological and strain theories being viewed as overly deterministic, while also focusing too much on certain lower-class and minority populations; predominantly white-working-class males.

In order to address many of these criticisms, I will be utilizing a mixed-methodological approach. First I will create a Tumblr account, for the purpose of studying the technological

affordances and benefits of the user-interface the website provides for its members. I will do this by integrating myself within a social media platform, and selecting a subsequent deviant online community to observe without actually participating or engaging socially with the community. I am using this approach precisely to understand how online communities operate on social media platforms, by becoming a user, as well as inferring how these subculturalists are using the social media platform by observing how they engage with each other online. I am not seeking to understand why they are committing deviant activities, only how they are using the Internet to participate in an online subculture.

Furthermore, for my methodological approach, I will be conducting a content analysis of blogs that belong to a deviant online community that is dominated by female subjects.¹⁸ While seeing how subculturalists use social media platforms online is important, it is also important to note that like face-to-face interactions, computer-mediated communication also involves considerable presentation of self strategies (Bortree, 2005). In this regard, not only will I be discussing how social media platforms are being used by subculturalists, I will also be discussing how they are incorporating specific presentation of self strategies in their online publication of deviant activities and subcultural membership. For this analysis, a Goffmanian approach will be used to situate the social media platform in terms of dramaturgical analysis, as well as self-presentation strategies in the subculturalists use of the social media platform.

Subcultures, with the utilization of the Internet and social media, are no longer geographically limited to certain areas or countries. The flow of subcultural information has arguably, undergone its own process of globalization. In order to address this new spread of

¹⁸ I am choosing an online community to observe that is dominated by females due to the criticism that the majority of subculture research has been produced by observing male subjects. This is not only to produce more research on female deviant behaviour and subculture, but to see if there are any noticeable differences that have been overlooked by past subcultural literature.

information, Chapter 3 will be discussing the use of the Internet and Social Networking Sites, followed shortly by addressing the online publication of deviance and subcultural signs and behaviours.

Chapter 3: The Internet and Social Networking: The Rise of Computer-Mediated Communication and its Implications

Introduction

In recent years, the rise of social media and computer-mediated communication (CMC) in the cyber-world has become a major hot spot for research. As it has been explored in Chapter 2, recent technological advancements in the form of social networking sites and online communities now pose challenges to the use of the concept, 'subculture'. The cyber-world represents a new form of space that is simultaneously both public and social, while remaining private and solitary through the use of anonymity. These cyberspaces are able to facilitate the rise of virtual communities that challenge traditional notions of identity and community, and as some scholars suggest can radically alter conceptions of community and the nature of communities. While there has been quite a lot of literature on the use of CMC; exploring websites and social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, Tumblr, it is still a relatively new and unexplored technological development. Before attempting to situate deviant subcultures and their online engagement through the Internet, it is important to first have a solid understanding of how online communities are created and utilized by individuals and groups. This chapter will therefore be exploring the new area of CMC research with regards to community, as well as theories of how social networks develop and emerge.

After presenting a firm understanding of social networks, this chapter will then begin to narrow in on the use of blogs.¹⁹ Finally, this chapter will conclude by briefly introducing

¹⁹ Blogs will be briefly explained in Chapter 3 in order to provide a fuller understanding of their use prior to the illustrative case study of shoplifting blogs that will be presented and discussed in Chapter 5.

deviance in online settings, as well as the publication of deviant activities on social networking sites.²⁰

i. The emergence of computer-mediated communication

In 1983, Cathcart & Gumpert were among some of the first sociologists to argue that media exists as an important component of human communication. They began by applying Berelson & Steiner's (1964) definition of communication, which described communication as the transmission of information, ideas, emotions, skills, etc. by the use of symbol-words, pictures, figures, graphs, etc. (Cathcart & Gumpert, 1983). When applying the concept of communication towards technology, Cathcart & Gumpert came up with the term 'mediated interpersonal communication' in order to describe any situation where a technological medium is introduced into a face-to-face interaction (1983). Mediated interpersonal communication is characterized in four different ways:

- 1) *interpersonal mediated communication*: telephone conversations, letters, CB radio, electronic mail, audio and videocassettes.
- 2) *media stimulated interpersonal communication*: para-social interactions, broadcast-teleparticipatory communication, etc.
- 3) *person-computer interpersonal communication*: computers utilized as proxies.
- 4) *unicommunication*: the utilization of such artifacts as T-shirts and bumper stickers for interpersonal communication. (Cathcart & Gumpert, 1983, pp. 270-271)

Cathcart & Gumpert's (1983) conceptualization of mediated interpersonal communication has been the basis for new areas of research with regards to communication and cyberspace and how people form relationships using the Internet. Furthermore, another implication of their research was that the interposed medium being used in communication determines the quality and quantity of information and also shapes the relationship of participants.

²⁰ Deviance in online settings as well as the publication of deviance in online settings will be further explored in Chapter 4.

Twenty years later, mediated interpersonal communication – now broadly referred to in the literature as computer-mediated communication – has become a large emerging area of interdisciplinary research. Cyberspaces can then be viewed as virtual conduits, in which their main function is to connect individuals from diverse locations while facilitating the growth of communities and identities through CMC (Heim, 1993; Williams, 2006). In 1995, Sherry Turkle asserted that computers exist as a ‘second self.’ Turkle (1995) then expanded on the notion of the computer existing as a second self, in which cyberspaces exist as social spaces where individuals can try out different roles, identities, and ways of acting. According to Turkle:

In cyberspace, we can talk, exchange ideas, and assume personae of our own creation. We have the opportunity to build new kinds of communities, virtual communities, in which we participate with people from all over the world, people with whom we converse daily, people with whom we may have fairly intimate relationships but whom we may never physically meet. (1995, pp. 9-10)

While individuals can use cyberspace for the reasons outlined above by Turkle (1995), even still individuals when testing out these new roles are still concerned with how others perceive them, as Goffman (1959, 1963) so thoroughly demonstrated in his studies of the presentation of self.

With the growing accessibility of CMC within cyberspaces, Adler & Adler (2006) assert that this form of communication can directly affect the intensity, duration and consistency of interactions with a wide range of physically diffused and like-minded groups while also promoting anonymity, which serves to protect and potentially discredit identities of individuals who interact in these cyber-communities. With regards to the study of subcultures and deviance, there is a link in the literature that has yet to be fully explored, and that is the creation of cyber-communities for subcultural communication. The ability for geographically remote individuals to interact with others in relative anonymity has helped facilitate the emergence of cyber-communities (Maratea & Kavanaugh, 2012); which has allowed participants in deviant

subcultures to "discuss their problems in a sympathetic and non-censorious environment that may be lacking in their everyday lives" (Ferreday, 2003, pp. 284). Furthermore, Williams (2006) explored how members of subcultures were able to strategically create usernames and signature files to use as subcultural identifier(s) online that marked participants as in-group members. While this area of research will become the focus of this thesis in later chapters, for now, the focus must be on how social networking sites (SNSs) are created, developed and eventually used to host cyber-communities of a wide variety.

ii. The use of Social Networking Sites

In the last fifteen years, social networking services have become a highly popular online activity (LaRose, Kim & Peng, 2011). Social network sites (SNSs) exist as popular online hangout spaces for both youths and adults, where people sign in online to socialize with their friends and acquaintances, to share and provide information with interested others, and to more or less see and be seen (Blood, 2002; Boyd, 2011). A study conducted by Lenhart in 2009 found that 75 percent of young adults online, aged 18 to 24 have at least one social media profile. One of the functions of social networking sites (SNSs) is the creation of virtual communities otherwise referred to in the literature as cyber-communities. Rheingold (1993) defined virtual communities as "...social aggregations that emerge from the Net when enough people carry on ... public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling, to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace" (pp. 105). As a result, SNSs such as Facebook, MySpace and others are not communities but instead function as social venues in which many different communities may form (Parks, 2011).

According to a national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for Internet and Technology (2016)²¹, these were some of their key findings.²² First, approximately 86 percent of Americans are Internet users. Secondly, Facebook continues to be America’s most popular social networking platform by a substantial margin with nearly eight-in-ten online Americans (79 percent) now using Facebook. The study also found that approximately 24 percent use Twitter, 31 percent use Pinterest 32 percent use Instagram and 29 percent LinkedIn.²³ On a total population basis (accounting for Americans who do not use the Internet at all), that means that 68 percent of all U.S. adults are Facebook users, while 28 percent use Instagram, 26 percent use Pinterest, 25 percent use LinkedIn and 21 percent use Twitter. Furthermore, this study also found that people who use these other SNSs are more likely to have a broad social media matrix.²⁴ This means that individuals that use ^{[[[]]]}_{SEP} other social media sites and also use Facebook comprise 93 percent of Twitter users 95 percent of Instagram users and 92 percent of Pinterest users.²⁵

Since the increasing usage of multiple social networking sites has been established in the literature (Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Lenhart, 2009; Parks, 2011), it is important to understand how these social networking sites function, and how they provide a platform for cyber-communities. Due to the inherent communicative nature of SNSs, it is important to frame them in terms of networks of personal relationships (Parks, 2011). SNSs as a result hold “... expectations of sociability, meaningful connections to others, conviviality, perhaps even empathy and support” (Parks, 2011, pp. 106). In order to look at cyber-communities on the Internet, it is important to

²¹ The national survey conducted by the Pew Research Center for Internet and Technology included 1,520 adults and occurred between March 7-April 4, 2016.

²² See **Appendix A** for further clarification of the statistics presented.

²³ See **Appendix A, Figure 1** and **Figure 2**.

²⁴ A social media matrix refers to when an individual uses more than one social media outlet.

²⁵ See **Appendix A, Figure 3**.

first describe how community has been conceptualized through cyberspace literature. Parks (2011) documented the evolution of the conceptualization of community in this text below:

Those who favour a “strong” conceptualization [of community] usually restrict the term to groups of people who share physical space, are relatively self-sufficient within that space, and who are linked by ties that include kinship (Bell & Newby, 1974; Kinton, 1975; Weinreich, 1997). Over time, however, theorists have moved away from conceptualizing community as a geographic entity to conceptualizing it in psychological terms or as a quality of sociality (Amit, 2002). In this “weak” sense, community is viewed as a culture, a set of ideas and interpersonal sentiments rather than a physical place (Anderson, 1991; Bender, 1978; Calhoun, 1980). Within this framework, “virtual communities” are defined as social groups that display the psychological and cultural qualities of strong community without physical proximity (Willson, 2006). (pp. 107)

Furthermore, Parks was able to summarize five major themes that have been touched upon within the cyberspace literature with regards to community.

Five recurrent themes on community in cyberspace literature Parks, M. R. (2011)	Characteristics of deviant subcultures Cohen, A. (1955)
<p>The ability to engage in collective action (authenticity, group think of members, and how members identify with the community). Communities created and sustained through ritualized sharing of information (must be on a regular basis). Large patterns of interactions between members (“public commons” and contributing to the community [not being a “free-rider”]). Interlinked private networks (found in the basic architecture of SNSs). Members exhibit attachments to one another and to the community (described as ‘shared, close, and intimate’).</p>	<p>The ability to engage in non-utilitarian, malicious, negativistic action. Versatile range of activities and levels of participation, including short-run hedonism. Strong emphasis on group autonomy, in which there is loyalty, group think, solidarity and alliances present within the subculture that supersedes other relationships. Constant interactions with members, usually within a geographic locality or region.</p>

Table 1: A comparison of similarities between themes on community in cyberspace literature (Parks, 2011, pp. 107-108) and delinquent subcultural membership as per Albert Cohen’s initial conceptualization (1955, pp. 31).

This is reminiscent of when Albert Cohen (1955) first described the nature of delinquent subcultures. There are many similar themes between conceptualizations of delinquent subculture and community such as consistent social interactions, having a platform (virtual or physical) to communicate and participate, strong emphasis on the collective group’s goals, attitudes and actions, as well as the formation of strong personal attachments to members. The communication between communities and subcultures then seem to share strong similarities in their emphasis on

group participation and communication, as well as having *access* to spaces where the community or subculture can engage in meaningful social interactions. By understanding this shared characteristic of access whether it is online or face-to-face, it is now vital to map out how computer-mediated communication is created on social networking sites in order to facilitate communication between communities and subculturalists.

iii. Social Networking Sites: How do they work?

Contained in the volume, *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, are a collection of in-depth examinations of the presentation of self and social connections; and how they relate to the creation and use of SNSs (Papacharissi, 2011). To begin with, Barabasi (2011) begins by explaining how online communities are able to use SNSs for their goals and purposes. Barabasi introduces the topic by declaring:

Networks exist for a reason. They spread ideas, they spread knowledge; they spread influence. What happens if you give a piece of information to an individual, who passes it on to friends, who then passes it on to their friends, and so on? What does this information network look like? (Barabasi, 2011, pp. 12)

According to Barabasi (2011), SNSs operate like protein in the human body, where cells and social networks can converge with the same architecture.

Figure 1: Barabasi (2011, pp. 6) illustrating the similarities between a protein cell network and a social network.



Figure 1.2 Protein interaction network of yeast, an organism often studied in biological labs. Each node corresponds to a protein and two proteins are linked together if there is experimental evidence that they interact with each other in the cell. The color of the nodes denote their essentiality: dark grey proteins are those without which the organism cannot survive, while light grey are those that the organism can live without. Note the uneven link distribution: most proteins link to one or a few nodes only, while a few proteins act as hubs, having links to dozens of other proteins.

By taking this approach to understanding the growth of social networks, it is exemplifying the broader theory of *Evolving Network Theory*, in which social networks do not suddenly appear but gradually, grow, expand, and increase accessibility and visibility (Barabasi, 2011). Evolving Network Theory is most notably applied to describe the progression of *scale-free networks*, where networks exist from the beginning, and grow overtime by adding links until suddenly, a large network emerges.

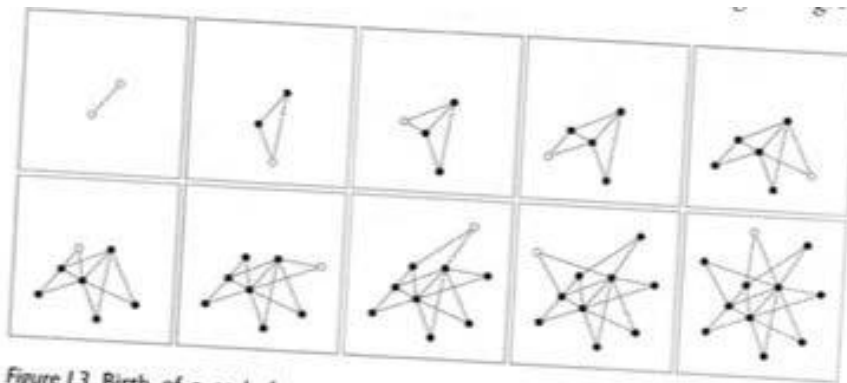


Figure 1.3 Birth of a scale-free network. The scale-free topology is a natural consequence of the ever-expanding nature of real networks. Starting from two connected nodes (top left), in each panel a new node, which is shown as an open dot, is added to the network. When deciding where to link, new nodes prefer to attach to the more connected nodes. Thanks to growth and preferential attachment, a few highly connected hubs emerge.

Figure 2: Barabasi (2011, pp. 8) uses this illustration to describe the birth and development of a scale-free network.

Finally, when a scale-free network is shown to have a high fitness level – with fitness level referring to their ability to attract more network links and connections – a strong network should emerge like **Figure 3** according to Barabasi (2011). This is also taking into account *Granovetter's Theory*, which argues that information gets stuck and recycled within communities, and takes time to spread because ties between separate communities are weak (Granovetter, 1973). Granovetter argues that the strength of a tie refers to the amount of time, emotional intensity, intimacy and reciprocity involved in the relationship (Granovetter, 1973).

Therefore, for information to continue to spread and expand the network, it is intermediate ties that facilitate the most growth in social network sites (Barabasi, 2011).

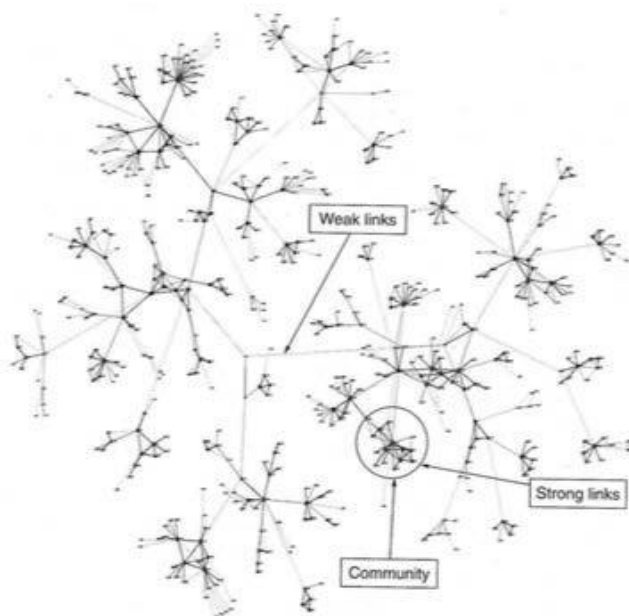


Figure 1.4 A mobile phone network, where each node is a mobile phone number and two nodes are connected if they have called each other. The link shade denotes the frequency and the duration of the calls—dark links denote frequent interactions (strong links), while light grey links are those that are hardly used (weak links). Note the presence of obvious communities, and that the strong ties tend to be located within these communities, in contrast with the weak ties, that tend to be linking different communities together, in line with Granovetter's weak tie hypothesis

Figure 3: Barabasi (2011, pp. 12) is illustrating what strong and weak ties look like on social networks, as well as how communities appear as clusters of links.

Putnam (2000) expands on *Granovetter's Theory* by exploring bridging and bonding social capital, in which social capital focuses on the relationship between individuals. Through a network of relationships, the individual can accumulate social capital and can, in turn, receive opportunities to obtain or use other forms of capital (Putnam, 2000; Parks, 2011). Putnam (2000) then goes on to define two major types of social capital on SNSs; *bridging social capital* and *bonding social capital*. According to Putnam (2000), bridging social capital is for information diffusion, it is created through exposure to heterogeneous networks, with the majority of

networks representing weak ties. Bonding social capital on the other hand is created among groups of strongly connected individuals such as one's family and friends, and is already composed of strong ties (Putnam, 2000). Much like *Granovetter's Theory*, which argues that intermediate ties are the most useful for information diffusion, Putnam (2000) argues the same in which *bridging social capital* provides access to a wider range of information and diverse perspectives, while *bonding social capital* is linked more so to social support and substantive support such as financial loans.

The importance of weak ties is that they are used to create bridging social capital (Parks, 2011). Weak ties serve as bridges to connect otherwise disparate groups of individuals (Granovetter, 1973; Parks, 2011). Gaps between groups are known as "structural holes" (Burt, 1992), and it is individuals whose networks span these structural holes that are at an advantage. Individuals that have many weak or intermediate ties have access to a more diverse set of information and as a result, can better control the flow on information between groups, which results in the ability to build more bridges and have more bridging social capital (Parks, 2011). Williams (2006) once posed the question: Is the Internet more conducive to creating bridging or bonding social capital? According to Williams, they found that due to the low cost of entry combined with relative or full anonymity, this combination was able to create greater bridging outcomes. While SNSs can encourage both bridging and bonding social capital, the majority of connections on an SNS are pre-existing compared to random, but has the greater potential to create more bridging bonds (Williams, 2006; Parks, 2011).

Whether it is bridging social capital or bonding social capital that has been generated, it is important to understand that one of the main functions of SNSs and CMC, is the convergence

of communicative sources, not limited purely to social purposes but expanded into the sharing of information as a whole.

iv. Mass and Interpersonal Information Sources: Media Convergence on SNSs

Due to recent technological developments, and more specifically with CMC on SNS platforms, new communication technologies are changing the manner of reception through which individuals are able to acquire information from institutional, interpersonal, and peer information sources (Walther, Carr, Choi, DeAndrea, Kim, Tong & Van Der Heide, 2011).

According to Walther et al., this social phenomenon has been labelled as *media convergence*. To further expand on this concept, Walther et al. wrote:

“Media convergence” is a term that has been used to connote several phenomena that are brought about by advancements in telecommunication technology that may change some aspect of the communication process. Sometimes the term refers to the blending of previously individuated mass media: One can watch movies on one’s computer, for example. We wish to discuss another kind of convergence: The potential for simultaneous communication via computers of both conceptually mass and interpersonal channels. For example, one can examine the NYTimes.com while chatting about its contents with a friend via Instant Messenger; one can draw political news from a blogger, and post an individual reaction on that blog as a comment. Moreover, in addition to mass and interpersonal sources, new communication technology has made incredibly salient another information source, virtual communities and other forms of peer-generated information, which is accessible at a previously impossible level. This addition may further affect the balance of sources of social influence in several sources. (Walther et al., 2011, pp. 17-18)

In the past, mass media research and its own version of media convergence were the focal point of communication research was, for example, how mediated messages affect large audiences.

Today however, technology has generated new forms of communication, specifically in social networking sites that are able to “... bridge the structural and functional characteristics of mass/interpersonal/peer communication. (Walther et al., 2011, pp. 18)”

To review once again, Cathcart & Gumpert (1986) created the term mediated interpersonal communication (MIC), which became the foundation for current conceptualizations of computer-mediated communication (CMC). According to Caplan (2001), CMC involves mixtures of traditional features of mass and interpersonal communication in unique and recombinant ways, for example in CMC, senders can be sources of mass communication and an interpersonal partner at the same time. Another example with CMC is when the receivers in CMC can be anonymous audience members, – conveniently labelled as lurkers – and can also be the targets of instant personalized messages (Walther et al., 2011). The main point to emphasize with CMC is that, when compared to face-to-face interactions, CMC messages are not constrained by time and space. Walther et al. argued that when it comes to CMC, mass and interpersonal processes work together, but also in isolation of one another.

Walther et al. explained that:

Traditionally, mass communication processes have been conceptualized as one-way message transmissions from one source to a large, relatively undifferentiated and anonymous audience. Interpersonal communication involves smaller numbers of participants who exchange messages designed for, and directed toward, particular others. Interpersonal communication has been considered a two-way message exchange between two or more individuals in which communication strategies are shaped by the instrumental and relational goals of the individuals involved, and knowledge about one another's idiosyncratic preferences. (Walther et al., 2011, pp. 18-19)

This line of thinking becomes even more apparent with regards to CMC on SNSs, where a deliberate hybridization of mass and interpersonal communication are happening at the same time. For example, when somebody makes a post on Facebook or Twitter, the post is considered to be a public interpersonal message on an SNS.

Computer-mediated communication as a social phenomenon has particularly dynamic properties that facilitate selective self-presentation in the pursuit of relational goals, facilitated by unique characteristics of the channel and the context in which it is deployed (Turkle, 1995; Walther, 1996; Papacharissi, 2011). Internet and cyberspace users are aware of the impressions

they construct in the pursuit of social interactions, information seeking and online relationships. One of the processes when seeking social interactions and online relationships is the type and amount of self-disclosure cyberspace users are willing to communicate to other cyberspace users.

Like Sherry Turkle (1995), Zizi Papacharissi (2011) has also described the computer and the persona(s) we use online as purposefully crafted second selves. Papacharissi makes the case that "[t]he self, in late modern societies, is expressed as fluid abstraction, reified through individual's association with a reality that may be equally flexible. The process of self-presentation becomes an ever-evolving cycle through which individual identity is presented, compared, adjusted, or defended against a constellation of social, cultural, economic, or political realities. (2011, pp. 304)" This view of the self resonates with Goffman's (1959) theories on the Presentation of Self, specifically with regards to viewing cyberspace and SNSs as sites of self presentation and identity negotiation. Papacharissi explains that one of latent functions of SNSs is to enable individuals to create multiple versions of themselves where the individuals can directly control the manner in which they are perceived by audiences. For example, SNSs enable members to construct a member profile, connect to known and potential friends, and view other members' connections. The appeal of SNSs is therefore not solely to social interactions, but also to stage performances (Goffman, 1959). As a cyberspace platform, most SNSs encourage the presentation of self online through the use of publicizing text, photographs, videos and other multimedia capabilities (Papacharissi, 2011). The online performance itself however is centred around public displays of social connections, which are then used to authenticate identity and introduce the self through the reflexive process of fluid association with social circles such as by 'liking' or 'sharing' posts (Papacharissi, 2011). In this regard, individuals that use SNS platforms are able to simultaneous create, present and promote their self.

The architecture of CMC technology that relies on networked platforms of interaction once again falls back on this notion of media convergence and fluidity of mass and interpersonal communications. While SNSs such as Facebook and Twitter have been popular SNSs explored by researchers, another SNS or cyberspace communicative platform that has been overlooked by the literature is the use of blogs. This next section will explore what a blog is, and what it is used for.

v. Blogs

Blogs have existed for a while, but did not gain real traction until 2004, where they were described as ‘election must-reads’ (Kaye, 2011). Research has shown that the popularity of blogs has also been on the rise and has seen a significant increase in numbers since the fall of 2005 (Lenhart & Fox, 2006; Kaye, 2011). According to a study conducted by the Pew Internet and American Life Project, approximately 8 percent of Internet users (approximated to about 12 million American adults) possess a blog while 39 percent of Internet users, (approximated to about 57 million American adults) read blogs (Lenhart & Fox, 2006).²⁶

Kaye (2011, pp. 210) compared the use of blogs versus the use of other SNSs and found the following:

²⁶Lenhart & Fox conducted a telephone survey of a nationally-representative sample of bloggers while working for the Pew Research Center for Internet and Technology. Lenhart & Fox (2006, pp. 24) disclosed the following in their methodology section: The Blogger Callback Survey, sponsored by the Pew Internet and American Life Project (PIALP), conducted telephone interviews with 233 self-identified bloggers from previous surveys conducted for PIALP. The interviews were conducted in English by Princeton Data Source, LLC, from July 5, 2005 to February 17, 2006. Statistical results are weighted to correct known demographic discrepancies. The margin of sampling error for the complete set of weighted data is ± 6.7 percent.

- Both offer news and opinion, promote discussion and community, are online venues for communicating with others and for making new online friends, and connect users with similar interests and view points
- Blogs promote themselves as providers of information and opinion
- SNSs promote themselves as places to widen social circles, to make friends and find personal information
- Blogs promote cognitive processes

Rebecca Blood (2002) in The weblog handbook: Practical advice on creating and

maintaining your blog was one of the first scholars to explore CMC through the use of blogging platforms. Originally, blogs were referred to as ‘weblog’, then to ‘wee-blog’ and finally to what they are referred to as today; blogs (Blood, 2002, pp. 3). Unlike creating a post on Facebook or Twitter, Blood observed that “Blogs tend to consist of much shorter entries, many per day, the blogger seemingly striving for communication more than self-enlightenment” (2002, pp. 7).

Blood also noted that bloggers see their weblogs less as filters and more as platforms for directed self-expression and self-disclosure. Bloggers are also committed to providing their readers with the best available links, and may find themselves and comparing two or three versions of a news story, as well as providing ‘expertise’ knowledge on a wide range of topics whether it’s fashion or politics (Blood, 2002; Kaye, 2011).

Tumblr as a social media platform is most renowned for its abilities for complete personal customization for bloggers (Duffy, 2013; Power, 2014; Schott & Langan, 2015). It is in this regard that Chen (2010) argues that blogs can be viewed as fundamentally different from previous Internet communication such as email and personal homepage because they manufacture a virtual environment that is completely controlled by the author; and that unlike face-to-face communication the author of the blog is able to express him or herself uniquely through the content on the site. Chen (2010) in his cross-cultural study of blogs between people in Taiwan and the United States further elaborates by stating that:

Compared to ordinary face-to-face situations, a hyper-personal message sender (the blogger) has a greater ability to strategically develop and edit self-presentation, enabling a selective and optimized presentation of himself to others. Therefore, some authors manage to create a persona, making themselves a “celebrity” among the community of bloggers. These bloggers are among the most well-known and regularly linked by others. (Chen, 2010, 29)

Chen (2010) was not the first scholar to make the connection between blogging and Goffman’s concept of dramaturgy; in fact, most of the literature relating to blogs and presentation of self use Goffman’s dramaturgical approach to frame the blogger as a social actor.

Papacharissi (2002) was one of the first scholars to argue that Web pages enable Web authors to stage an online performance through which the individual’s personality or aspects of it are revealed for a particular audience by studying Web home pages. Papacharissi (2002) then argued that personal home pages present a medium for self-presentation, whereas blogs in most cases are presented as a medium for self-disclosure. This same sentiment was echoed by both Chen (2010) and Blood (2002), who asserted that individuals create blogs as a vehicle for self-expression and self-empowerment. By comparing blog posts between Taiwan as a collectivist culture and the United States as an individualistic culture, Chen (2010) further concluded that while findings showed that Taiwanese bloggers paid closer attention to their social relations, American bloggers instead were more focused on self-disclosure of information and less on their relations in how they viewed blogospheres as a front stage for CMC.

vi. Deviance and Blogs: An Intersection in Cyberspace

When it comes to identifying these cyberspaces in which deviant cyber-communities exist, it ranges from a wide variety of CMC platforms. These websites include social media

platforms such as Tumblr, Facebook, Twitter, LiveJournal as well as chatrooms, newsgroups, email discussion lists, and message boards for individuals to post where participants can seek advice, social support and companionship from others (Adler & Adler, 2006; Obst & Stafurik, 2010; Williams, 2006). Adler & Adler (2006; 2008; 2012) found that the Internet through these different websites has provided places where previously non-existing deviant subcultures can thrive and expand. Adler & Adler in their discussion of online deviant subcultures are mainly referring to people that pursue what might otherwise be considered solitary forms of deviance such as but not limited to:

... sexual asphyxiates, self-injurers, anorectics and bulimics, computer hackers, depressives, pedophiles, and others, now have the opportunity to go on-line and find international cyber communities populated 24/7 by a host of like others.
(Adler & Adler, 2006, pp. 144)

Chapter 4 will focus on deviance in online settings, as well as the publication of deviant activities on social networking sites. Chapter 5 will then draw upon concepts discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 in order to explore the intersection between publicizing deviance on personal blogs, as well as reconceptualising past understandings of subculture to include subcultural engagement and membership through online communities.

Chapter 4: Deviance, Dramaturgy and the Art of Blogging

Introduction

While Chapter 3 focused on the rise and usage of social media and social networking sites, this chapter will focus on introducing an interdisciplinary approach to understanding how the transmission and publication of subcultural knowledge and identities works through social media websites. This chapter will do so by first introducing deviance in online settings. Then a Goffmanian dramaturgy framework that has been adapted to computer-mediated communication will be explored. Lastly, this chapter will briefly cover the social media blogging website, Tumblr, and how this website is being used as a communicative platform by subculturalists in the form of online communities (as introduced in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3).

i. Deviance in Online Settings

The Internet provides countless opportunities for CMC in a wide range of contexts, including government, academic and personal use. The Internet as Gainer Proudfoot, Boyle & Clements (2013) can be understood as a catalyst for increased CMC and collaboration within societies, with CMC being used as a tool for a variety of applications in an array of contexts. However, not all cyberspaces where CMC takes place are without fault. The existence of the Internet and cyberspace offers new insight with regards to cyber-deviance within the sociology community by providing rich research opportunities for the field of criminology at the intersection between deviance and the emerging field of CMC. While the creation and expansion of the Internet has the vast majority of literature emphasizing the importance of connectedness to other human beings as seen through a sense of online community and social support (Obst & Stafurik, 2010), there is also a dark side associated with the expansion of the Internet that cannot

be ignored (Gainer Proudfoot et al., 2013; Pyrooz, Decker & Moule Jr., 2015).

Online forms of deviance have been created and popularized such as the pirating of digital goods; the creation of viruses and cyber-attacks; victimization in the form of fraud; harassment and stalking; and online sexual deviance, particularly involving children, all of which are facilitated by CMC (Adler & Adler, 2006; Pyrooz et al., 2015). Through the expansion of the Internet, a range of deviance has been made available to people who would not ordinarily have access to participation in deviant activities.

Adler & Adler (2006) argue that through the expansion of CMC facilitated through the Internet, three main areas of deviance arose: illicit markets; Internet fraud; and Internet communities. CMC users can utilize anonymity on the Internet to access illicit markets, where with their identity and location protected, local authorities would not otherwise be able to locate them, which allows these users to find deviant goods and services to buy, sell and or trade (Adler & Adler, 2006). In their study of gang communication on the Internet, Pyrooz et al. (2015) found that gang membership used CMC through social media websites such as, but not limited to Facebook, to facilitate increased involvement in crime; using the Internet as a communicative venue for gangs and gang members to expand criminal activities. Although illicit markets and Internet fraud are more well-known forms of cyber-deviance today (Adler & Adler, 2006), the creation of Internet communities on websites is just as important for proliferating online deviance; specifically in the creation of deviant cyber-communities.

ii. Cyberspace and Deviant Subcultures

The increased ^[L]_[SEP]interconnectedness of technology continues to revolutionize how individuals and groups communicate and transmit knowledge. While computer-mediated communication has largely improved the ability to communicate efficiently, effectively and without notable geographical barriers, cyberspaces that encourage CMC have also provided the means of expressing new forms of deviant behaviour (Adler & Adler, 2006; Gainer Proudfoot et al., 2013; Williams, 2006).

Since the publication of Dick Hebdige's (1979) book, Subculture: The Meaning of Style, youth culture researchers have used the concept of subculture primarily to study music and style-based cultural phenomena. To recount, Hebdige (1979) argued that through the musical experience, individuals become a part of something larger than the music, and the associated producers and consumers of the music. Instead, the experience of music and style extends to this idea of community, community membership and identity through participation, traditionally now conceptualized as a 'subculture' notwithstanding the *Post-Subcultural Turn* (Hebdige, 1979; Muggleton, 1997). Participation in youth subcultures, for example, has therefore typically been characterized by the consumption and spread of specific types of music, clothing and participation in face-to-face interactions at music scenes (Hodkinson, 2011; Williams, 2006). With the expansion of the Internet and the cyberspaces it created, J. Patrick Williams, (2006) who studied the music-related straightedge subculture, was one of the first scholars to argue that the Internet now functions as a new social space for subcultural identification and change; and that the Internet through the use of online communities has emerged as a new, but highly contested, subcultural scene.²⁷

²⁷J. Patrick Williams was one of the first scholars to acknowledge the use of online communities by subculturalists, which relates back to the original discussion in Chapter 2. Subcultures, as

Williams (2006) conducted an ethnographic study of straightedge subculture by using a content analysis on straightedge forums to study how subcultural identity and authenticity was communicated among members of the online forum. To illuminate the straightedge culture a bit more thoroughly, the straightedge movement emerged in the United States during the early 1980s from within the music-driven punk subculture as a sort of subcultural reaction to

...the uncritical and apathetic attitudes and behaviours of many mainstream American youth as well as to the emphasis placed on alcohol consumption by adult culture. (Williams, 2006, pp. 17)

Straightedgers subscribed to this new punk ideology of resistance to mainstream cultural values and norms, and they articulated this resistance through the music they consumed, produced and promoted (Williams, 2006). Williams (2006) highlighted a key debate in the literature in which online identities are often represented by the majority of deviance and subcultural scholars as mirrors or extensions of subculturalists' offline identities; however, there are also conflicts amongst subcultures based on authenticity, subcultural identity between these two types of subcultural Internet users (Williams, 2006, Thornton, 1995, Muggleton, 1997). When studying the straightedge subculture's online participation on forums, Williams (2006) identified two different types of straightedgers with regards to online subcultural participation; those that use cyberspaces as a *supplement* to participation in a face-to-face music scene and those who use cyberspaces as a *primary* or *sole* source of subcultural participation. Williams (2006) argued that as individuals interact online through cyber-communities, members of the community can construct and affirm meaningful collective identities based on norms and beliefs that are personally important and that are supported by other members of the cyber community; but that

argued in Chapter 2 are no longer limited to face-to-face interactions, nor are their memberships solely defined by cultural signs and symbols. Instead, as Williams argued, there is great variance in subcultural association and participation, and a great demonstration of such is their use of online community spaces.

those values sometimes only present themselves online rather than offline. Despite this distinction made by Williams, most of the literature on cyber-deviance argues that whether or not participation is mainly offline does not matter, as any exposure to online cyber-deviance on the Internet facilitates deviant activity and maintenance the of the subculture.

To be more precise, multiple scholars are in agreement that the formation and maintenance of deviant identities tends to follow the same basic 'selfing' process that characterizes more conventional identity development (Adler & Adler, 2006; Ferreday, 2003; Maratea & Kavanaugh, 2012; Pyrooz et al., 2015). Utilizing a symbolic interactionist conception, "selfing" is when identity formation occurs through social engagements. Deviance scholars have therefore focused on the role of the audiences in defining certain acts as socially unacceptable either through over-conformity or under-conformity to society's norms (Becker, 1963; Adler & Adler, 2006). The concept of this labelling process according to Howard Becker (1963), is that acts or behaviours do not initially have any inherent, objectively deviant characteristics but that instead it is through a process of labelling that individuals who commit those acts become recognized as deviant (Goffman, 1963; Maratea & Kavanaugh, 2012). This results in part from the fact that being publicly identified as deviant results in a 'spoiled' identity; it cultivates a stigma that devalues a person's standing in the group or community (Goffman, 1963). Deviance therefore, can be viewed as a vehicle through which struggles for power and legitimacy are enacted; by defining a group as deviant, it results in the forging of a system of social stratification and marginalization with some groups elevated by pushing others down (Adler & Adler, 2006; 2008; 2012). Adler & Adler (2006) argue that:

[a]lthough groups resist the label of deviance and its consequences, the process of deviance-making has become so important that it is understood and practiced across a broad spectrum of people. (pp. 129)

Deviance can therefore also be seen not only as a label but also as an ideology of resistance to mainstream cultural values and norms (Williams, 2006, pp. 175). Whether individuals are entering, maintaining or exiting from a deviant career, 'spoiled' identities initially arise from interactions with other deviants through a process of labelling, which discredits the individual in the eyes of conventional society (Adler & Adler, 2006; Goffman, 1963).

Cyberspaces can then be viewed as virtual conduits, in which their main function is to connect individuals from diverse locations while facilitating the growth of communities and identities through CMC (Heim, 1993; Turkle, 1995; Williams, 2006). With the growing accessibility of CMC within cyberspaces, Adler & Adler (2006) assert that this form of communication can directly affect the intensity, duration and consistency of interactions with a wide range of physically diffused and like-minded groups while also promoting anonymity, which serves to protect the potentially discredit identities of individuals who interact in these cyber-communities.

Furthermore, the ability for geographically remote individuals to interact with others in relative anonymity has helped facilitate the emergence of cyber-communities (Maratea & Kavanaugh, 2012; Walther, Carr, Choi, DeAndrea, Kim, Tong & Van Der Heide, 2011); allowing participants in deviant subcultures to "discuss their problems in a sympathetic and non-censorious environment that may be lacking in their everyday lives" (Ferreday 2003, pp. 284). Furthermore, Williams (2006) explored how members of subcultures were able to strategically create usernames and signature files to use as subcultural identifier(s) online that marked participants as in-group members.

Recent literature on cyber-deviance is fundamentally rooted in the same core principles

central to 'classic' deviance theory and symbolic interactionism more generally (Maratea & Kavanaugh, 2012). Maratea & Kavanaugh (2012) assert "real-world experiences can easily translate into deviant online subcultures, where "secret selves" are expressed away from friends, family, co-workers, and law enforcement that may include deviant identities" (pp. 475).

Subculturalists may also identify in terms of a lifelong commitment to a subcultural lifestyle, for example, even if that lifestyle commitment precedes or follows subcultural affiliation both online and or offline (Williams, 2006). Williams (2006), for example, found that some straightedgers talked about being straightedge even before they learned about the subculture; and that straightedge was something inside of themselves that they discovered and only reconfirmed through online participation of the straightedge subculture. Online subcultures, therefore, assist in the construction and reification of online identities, where deviance is facilitated and supported by online communities of like-minded individuals that maintain some level of anonymity (Adler & Adler, 2006; Maratea & Kavanaugh, 2012). The online identities and behaviours as presented in these cyberspaces are then reflections of offline identities and behaviours, with a substantial amount of overlap in offline and online identities and behaviours. Maratea & Kavanaugh (2012) then argue that due to this reflection, but with the protection of anonymity, there is less of a need to necessarily hide the deviant self, and in these deviant cyberspaces that deviant self may even be encouraged (Adler & Adler, 2006; 2008; 2012). For deviant individuals, this integration between the online and offline self creates fluidity rather than a distinction (Maratea & Kavanaugh, 2012). Williams (2006) shared a similar argument in which the expression of "authentic selves" occurs in the face-to-face world as well as in cyber-spaces where subcultural participants express themselves online over periods of weeks, months and years.

In order to understand how individuals are using online communities and social networking sites to present deviant selves online, it is first important to understand how people through symbolic interactionist theory are constructing and presenting identity, both in face-to-face interactions and online through computer-mediated communication. In order to broach this subject matter and make sense of it, Erving Goffman's theory on dramaturgy will be discussed in the following section, and later applied to explicate computer-mediated communication.

iii. Erving Goffman's Theory of Dramaturgy and the Presentation of Self

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach is a metaphorical technique used to explain how an individual presents an 'idealized' rather than authentic version of him or herself. Dramaturgy refers to life as a stage similar to theatre in which the individuals participating are 'actors,' where elements of human interactions are dependent upon time, place and metaphorically the audience. In Goffmanian (1959; 1963) terms, the self is a sense of who one is and the resulting dramatic effect emerging from the immediate scene being presented on the front stage. The theatrical metaphor in defining the method in which one presents themselves – both online and offline – is based on cultural values, norms, and beliefs.

Each actor uses verbal and nonverbal communication to express his or her identity otherwise referred to as impression management. DeAndrea & Walther (2011) argue that individuals have many interpersonal goals and desires and that they typically attempt to communicate both online and offline in a manner that presents themselves favourably during social interactions (Goffman, 1959). DeAndrea & Walther (2011) conceptually define

impression management as the goal-directed activity of influencing the impressions that audiences form of some person, group, object, or event.

Self-presentation strategies may be engaged as a way of constructing the self in a manner that pleases the audience (Goffman, 1959); however, it is also important to note that self-presentation strategies are also dependent on the actor's goals. In the front stage, the actor is trying to present an idealized version of the self according to a specific role while the back stage is a place, relative to a given performance, where the impression fostered by the performance is knowingly contradicted as a matter of course. In the back stage, actors do much of the real work necessary to keep up appearances. In this area of research, one of the disagreements amongst scholars is whether an actor's blog is part of their front stage, their back stage or something else entirely.

Once again drawing on Goffman (1959), one of the main features of impression management is that people use existing knowledge from past social interactions to strategically shape their own self-presentations dynamically and to help explain the behaviour of others. People therefore, strategically alter their self-presentations for particular audiences to reach a certain goal for how the audience perceives them by keeping in mind what information the audience has of the actor (Goffman, 1959). In order to present themselves in a certain light to the audience, five key strategies pertaining to the presentation of self on the Internet have been identified in the literature:

1. *Ingratiation*: A person using this strategy has a goal of being liked by others. Some common characteristics of ingratiation are saying positive things about others or saying mildly negative things about yourself, statements of modesty, familiarity, and humour.
2. *Competence* [also referred to as self-promotion]: The goal of this strategy is to be perceived as skilled and qualified. Common characteristics include claims about

- abilities, accomplishments, performance, and qualifications.^[LSEP]
3. *Intimidation*: Persons using this strategy have power as their goal. Typical characteristics are threats, statements of anger, and potential unpleasantness.^[LSEP]
 4. *Exemplification*: The goal of this strategy is to be perceived as morally superior or possessing high moral standards. Characteristics include ideological commitment or militancy for a cause, self-sacrifice, and self-discipline.
 5. *Supplication*: The goal is nurturance or appearing helpless so that others will come to your aid. Characteristics of this self-presentational approach include entreaties for help and self-depreciation. (Dominick, 1999, pp. 648)²⁸

Bortree (2005) conducted a study of 40 teenage female-run blogs with the intention of coming to understand the challenges and hazards of conducting interpersonal CMC as well as the self-presentation strategies outlined by Joseph Dominick (1999) used to negotiate a dual audience. Bortree found that by creating a blog as this ‘safe’ space for self-expression, teens are able to read about each other’s lives and share their own experiences (Blood, 2002). Bortree concluded that bloggers are able to build and maintain an image that will afford them more access to friendship groups and that their main strategies for self-presentation were predominantly ingratiation followed by social competence and supplication.

Baker (2009) introduced a new perspective, through the concept of ‘blended identity’ whereby the offline self informs the creation of a new, online self, which then re-informs the offline self in further interaction with those the individual first met online. This can be understood in terms of Goffman’s face, whereby an individual is expected to ‘keep face’ by maintaining the initial impression that they have made on an audience and ‘live up to it’ (Baker, 2009). This construction of the face is similar to wearing a mask by Goffman where using blended identity within the Goffmanian framework; the self is merely the mask one chooses to wear in a given situation. The mask is donned when an actor interacts with others online and is

²⁸ Edward E. Jones (1990) first introduced these self presentation strategies in his book, Interpersonal Perception. These terms were then further conceptualized and summarized by Joseph R. Dominick in a later article.

left on for the purposes of face in future physical interaction, with the audience ignorant that a different self lies beneath for use in a different situation (Baker, 2009).

This is an approach shared by Bullingham & Vasconcelos (2013) for their approach to understanding Goffman's framework for presentation of self through blogs. Bullingham & Vasconcelos (2013) argued that within a Goffmanian framework, actors wear masks and that they can be understood as the mask one chooses to wear in a given situation. In this context the deviant cyber-communities as produced in cyberspaces, the production of the mask can be seen as a front stage with the offline life as the back stage, and these particular actors strongly invest in their mask(s) and feel the need to commit deviant activities in order to live up to or maintain their masks online. By investing in a particular mask that makes up their blog; it is with the intention to provoke the desired reaction from other blog users and in the case of Tumblr: likes, reblogs or comments. Whether the user's mask is authentic, in which they are actually committing deviant activity or not to maintain their mask is immaterial, because the impression that the user is giving of their mask through their blog is still maintained. This framework was later contradicted by Bullingham & Vasconcelos (2013) findings in which they argued that the key finding from their interview data collected from 10 bloggers indicated that participants often attempt to re-create their offline selves online, rather than actively engaging with persona adoption.

With the rise in the use of personalized blogs, users are now able to complete control of what they put out there for others to see, using impression management strategies to emphasize and minimize certain aspects of self such as appearance or behaviour. This has become possible because blog users are now both editors and creators because they design and create their self-representations, choosing what to bring to the foreground or hide in the background. Bullingham

& Vasconcelos (2013) further elaborates on this idea of the individual having multiple masks in the same way that they would run multiple blogs; in these scenarios bloggers can create different personas to suit each blog, and so the presentation of self is effectively broken up with its varying readerships receiving different information. Bullingham & Vasconcelos make sure to point out that:

Some of these blogs could be anonymous, with the blogger disseminating risqué or inappropriate subject matter away from their primary blog via a second blog. Here, there is a primary online self, but when needed a second persona is utilized, and to avoid its output compromising either the offline self or the primary online self and thus bringing about a loss of “face”, identity is masked. (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013, pp. 110)

Lastly, there is Bernie Hogan’s (2010)²⁹ interpretation of Goffman’s dramaturgy framework that perhaps is the most enticing adapted framework in which the actor performs in real time for an audience that monitors the actor. Hogan uses the term ‘artifact’ as a result of a past performance in the case of blogging a blog post, in which the artifact does not disappear but instead remains steadfast for others to view on their time. Artifacts are therefore highly conducive to CMC communications such as interacting in social media platforms and blogospheres such as Facebook, Twitter, LiveJournal and Tumblr. Once an artifact or post is created it does not disappear, the performance continues and is instead logged into the Web in usually reverse-chronological order. It is with this argument in mind that Hogan (2010) contends that there must be a distinction between the sorts of online spaces where actors behave with each other (referred to as “performance” spaces) and “exhibition” spaces where individuals submit artifacts to show to each other. An exhibition is still a form of presentation of self and Hogan argues that the distinction between performance and exhibition should be useful to scholars who

²⁹ Bernie Hogan received his dissertation from the University of Toronto in 2009.

are interested in the presentation of self online. In the literature above most have come to the conclusion that blogs and blog posts would be classified as front stage material under Goffman's dramaturgy framework.

Hogan, however, argues that individuals that employ impression management instead suggests the opposite, that these blogosphere sites based on access control to disclosure of personal information are inherently private, and are therefore representative of a 'back stage' instead (Hogan, 2010). Referring back to Hogan's idea of the artifact, he addresses the issue of the back stage and privacy, as well as the deeper issue of whether online content can be considered a performance in the first place. Hogan (2010) asserted that the conflation of Goffman's (1959) idea of a performance and the existence of online profiles is likely because of the notion that because a blog or profile signifies a single individual, it does not merely stand in for that individual but is the legitimate representation of that individual. To address this issue, Hogan (2010) proposed that it is useful to distinguish between performances as an 'ephemeral act' and performances as a 'recorded act' and that once a performance has been recorded, the nature of the performance has altered and thus it should become an artifact. Both performances and artifacts are equally valid presentations of self and continue to signify an individual, but Hogan (2010) contends that evidence of presentation of self should no longer necessarily be bound to the specific audience who were present at the time and place of when performance took place. Instead, with the creation of artifacts, performances can be taken out of a situation and replayed in a completely different context.

Hogan (2010) also introduces the concept of exhibition spaces, which are spaces that require a third party to store data for later interaction; real-time interaction can take place, but it is not necessary. Exhibition spaces deal directly with computer-mediated communication and

categorizes information accordingly; drawing lines between artifacts that are ‘addressed’ and artifacts that are ‘submitted.’ For example, some content is addressed to a particular person or some particular people such as e-mails and instant messaging services; each message denotes a specific sender and a specific set of recipients. In exhibition spaces content is submitted to a data repository; people post status updates to Facebook and Twitter and write blog posts on websites such as Tumblr and LiveJournal. Hogan’s concept of ‘submitted’ content may be produced and submitted with a specific audience in mind, but those who view and react to this content may be different from those for whom it was intended, and thus its viewership is much more unpredictable. Using the exhibition approach to understand submitted artifacts; media such as blog posts are submitted to a third party while also becoming available to a large and potentially unknowable audience (Chen, 2010; Hogan, 2010).

Hogan (2010) discussed the importance of artifacts and exhibition spaces, but one of the more interesting additions to Goffman’s dramaturgy approach is the role of technology and computers as curators of online artifacts. Hogan argues that curators mediate experiences of social information and that good curation presents things to the user that the user finds relevant or interesting. This can be seen in the example of Tumblr in which users are able to subscribe to certain topics of interest denoted in hashtags and follow other blogs, as a result Tumblr will act as a curator for online artifacts and will make certain posts appear on Tumblr users’ dashboards automatically. Curators are therefore responsible for the following functions: filtering, ordering and searching for artifacts (Hogan, 2010). These functions are based on the fact that storehouses keep more artifacts than are generally on display. As such, it is necessary to limit the artifacts in some meaningful way.

While Erving Goffman’s approach to front stage and back stage was extremely relevant

to face-to-face interactions; Hogan's adapted approach to CMC in which social media is viewed as an exhibition space rather than one stage is a much more appropriate framework when analyzing social media. The key distinction Hogan (2010) created between exhibitions and performances is that performances are subject to continual observation and self-monitoring as the means for impression management, whereas exhibitions are subject to selective contributions and the role of a third party curator as seen through the layout and functionality of the website.

iv. An Adapted Approach to the Presentation of Self: Blogging

While there has been quite a lot of literature in the use of CMC, exploring websites and social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook, it is still a relatively new area of research, specifically with regards to impression management and presentation of the self. While the expansion of social media platforms has succeeded in creating non-physical online environments for social interaction, more research has recently been devoted to how individuals present themselves online through social media and how that presentation of self differs when social media users present themselves in face-to-face interactions.

To begin with, microblogging or more commonly known as blogging grew out of a form of Internet posting shorter than a long-form blog post (Duffy, 2013). Blogs as a term was coined from "Web logs", and they generally consist of a collection of longer sections of text. There is a lot of versatility when it comes to blog posts, their topics are universal ranging from Blog posts the author's day-to-day posts to things as complex as essays, news stories and opinion pieces (Duffy, 2013). The most popular blogging site as of now is 'Tumblr'; a social media website that allows its users to share text, photos, links, music and videos in a creative blogging format that is completely customized by the user (Duffy, 2013; Schott & Langan, 2015).

An area that has yet to be fully explored in the field of criminology is the publicization of deviant activities online on cyberspaces and how that relates to presentation of self. With the rise of social media platforms such as Twitter, Facebook and Tumblr, users as explained above use these websites to disclose personal information and this does not exclude deviant activities (Adler & Adler, 2012; Chen, 2010; Schott & Langan, 2015). Though Facebook and Twitter are more unlikely, websites such as Tumblr where an individual's anonymity is encouraged as well as the ability to possess multiple blogs, this website embodies a universality for all types of subject matter including the submission of artifacts pertaining to deviant ideation and behaviour.

One of the first articles that attempted to address posts related to socially constructed deviance was the pro-ana/mia community on Tumblr (Schott & Langan, 2015). Schott and Langan asserted that there has been growing evidence of online communities that provide spaces for the discussion and support of eating disordered practices through legitimization and normalization of eating disorders, posts that motivate members to keep losing weight and or stay thin and even posts that advise members medically how to prevent health complications and socially how to deal with family, friends and peers that are against the individuals 'lifestyle choices'. Schott & Langan (2015) found that while analyzing interactive messaging on these sites, it revealed the attitudinal and behavioural investments of those who identify as 'pro-ana' (supporting anorexia), 'pro-mia' (supporting bulimia), and 'pro-edno' (supporting eating disorders otherwise not specified) as well as communicated values and visual imagery that aligned with this community's norms. At the time when Tumblr allowed these posts on the website, Tumblr used hashtags to organize and filter these posts as well as recommend them to specific bloggers that showed interest in the #thinspiration movement.

In February of 2012, Tumblr announced a new policy that banned the posting of content

that encourages its users to embrace anorexia, bulimia, or other eating disorders; effectively censoring this entirety of these deviant activities on this website. In order to enforce the policy, Tumblr monitored users' blogs, deleted content that was considered to be against the policy and in fact redirected users to support links should they use the search engine function to discover anything related to the #thinspiration movement. Similar censorship cases with Tumblr have happened with regards to self-harm, suicide and mutilation tags and posts.³⁰

Overtime however, Tumblr has seen the need to roll back on their censorship policies and as a result, reversed their censorship policies much to the delight of subculturalists whose means of expression and self-disclosure themselves had previously been revoked. As a result, there are many deviant subcultures that have chosen the Tumblr platform as a means to communicate and perpetuate subcultural norms, values and practices. As it stands now, the existence of deviant subcultures on social media through the publicization and personal disclosure of deviant activities on blogs has yet to be explored as a research topic.

With this in mind, using Bernie Hogan's adapted framework of Erving Goffman's dramaturgy approach to come to understand how blog sites operate as an exhibition space rather than strictly as a front stage or back stage and how the cyberspace of Tumblr itself can operate as a curator of submitted artifacts. As people seek online spaces to negotiate identity, participation and membership to particular online deviant cyber-communities, Chapter 5 will explore how the website Tumblr through its blogging medium exists as a vehicle for the communicative spread of subcultural ideas and collective identity (Hart, 2015; Schott & Langan, 2015).

³⁰ Since this article was originally published, Tumblr has revoked its censorship policies of these communities and instead places a warning before allowing access to these online posts by subculturalists.

Furthermore, Chapter 5 will be examining the shoplifting community or #Liftblr community on Tumblr as an illustrative case study for how subcultures are adapting and expanding through the use of online communities on social networking sites, thus exemplifying a need to expand the term subculture to more modern and broad applications. This examination will also include how bloggers present themselves online through the use of artifacts and how Tumblr as a website operates to perpetuate and maintain the shoplifting community through its curatorial practices.

Chapter 5: Dramaturgy, Online Communities and Subcultural Engagement: An Illustrative Case Study of the #Liftblr Community

Introduction

As explained in the previous chapters, there is a gap in subcultural theory when it comes to explaining online engagement and the publication of subcultural and or deviant behaviours and attitudes.³¹ While technology related to the Internet has evolved rapidly over the last three decades, humans have also adapted to use this technology in both their personal and professional lives. As a whole, cyberspaces have evolved in their function to exist as virtual conduits, in which their main function has become to connect individuals from diverse locations while facilitating the growth of communities and identities through computer-mediated communication (CMC) (Heim, 1993; Turkle, 1995; Williams, 2006; Papacharissi, 2009; 2011). Much of the focus of CMC research is devoted to how we, as human beings are adopting technology in order to adapt to mainstream society and its cultural objectives. The next logical step then should be to expand the study of computer-mediated communication and social networking sites (SNSs) to the study of subcultures. On another related note, the reverse can and should also be noted; that subcultural activities now span the Internet in new ways, and subcultural theories should be adapted theoretically to reflect aspects of technology and globalization that exist in today's society. This final chapter will seek to broadly answer three main questions, in order to contribute to the literature regarding subcultures and cyberspace.

³¹ There is a lack of explanations for subcultural participation in online communities, but it is important to note that it is not only with regards to deviant activities. Many subcultures that exist within society are not deviant or exist in contradiction (also referred to as contracultures) to the parent culture of the society. It is thus important to expand subculture theory as a whole, unrelated to deviance, even though this chapter will be using a subculture that participates in deviant behaviours and attitudes purely for illustrative purposes.

1. How do social networking sites operate as a virtual conduit for the presentation of self?
2. How do subculturalists use social networking sites to create a sense of online community and membership?
3. How do subculturalists employ presentation of self strategies?

This chapter will first discuss how social networking sites, specifically Tumblr, is being used by subculturalists, with a second discussion focusing on how subculturalists are incorporating specific presentation of self strategies in their online publication of deviant activities and subcultural membership. Lastly, this chapter will explore how subculturalists are using websites like Tumblr in order to fulfil impression management goals, by publicizing their deviant attitudes and behaviours under the safety of anonymity while engaging in self-disclosure and social interactions.

To answer these questions, this chapter will provide an illustrative case study by examining one of Tumblr's – one of the more well-known and versatile SNSs' – online communities; the shoplifting community otherwise known as the #Liftblr community.

Methodology

For the first discussion, a content analysis of approximately 300 shoplifting blogs was conducted in order to explain how subcultures have found a new platform for social engagement by situating themselves within online communities on social networking sites. As a researcher, I created a Tumblr account and observed the online shoplifting community in order to gain a more experiential understanding of how subculturalists are using their blogs, and communicating with other subculturalists through their blogs. This approach provided insight into how the Tumblr website was being used, and how as a platform, it could be situated within Bernie Hogan's (2010) adapted theoretical framework for social media. The blogs used for the content analysis

were selected based on convenience (i.e. how easy it was to access the blogs) and their latest activity (blogs that had not posted in more than twelve months were considered inactive and set aside from the content analysis).

For the second discussion with regards to self-presentation strategies being utilized by subculturalists, a more direct content analysis was conducted on 25 shoplifting blogs. According to Goffman (1959), when people interact on the front stage, they attempt to control the impression others have of them (Jones, 1990; Dominick, 1999). Impression management and self-presentation, however, are not limited solely to face-to-face interactions as previous chapters argued, and in fact a personal webpage should be viewed as a carefully constructed presentation of self through computer-mediated communication (Turtle, 1995; Dominick, 1999; Blood, 2002; Papacharissi, 2002; 2009; 2011; Hogan, 2010). This second content analysis was conducted to see what self-presentation strategies are being used by subculturalists in order to fulfil their impression management goals on these blogs. In this content analysis, approximately 200 hundred posts on each of the 25 blogs were coded and analyzed using Jones' (1990) five presentation of self strategies: Ingratiation; Intimidation; Competence; Exemplification; and Supplication. Jones (1990) created this chart to further explain the self-presentation strategies and the attribution sought (or the impression the individual was trying to make on the audience) from the performances.

TABLE 7-3 A Taxonomy of Self-presentational Strategies Classified Primarily by Attribution Sought

	<i>Attributions Sought</i>	<i>Negative Attributions Risked</i>	<i>Emotion to Be Aroused</i>	<i>Prototypical Actions</i>
1. <i>Ingratiation</i>	Likable	Sycophant Conformist Obsequious	Affection	Self-characterization Opinion conformity Other enhancement Favors
2. <i>Intimidation</i>	Dangerous (ruthless, volatile)	Blusterer Wishy-washy Ineffectual	Fear	Threats (Incipient) anger (Incipient) breakdown
3. <i>Self-promotion</i>	Competent (effective, "a winner")	Fraudulent Conceited Defensive	Respect (awe, deference)	Performance claims Performance accounts Performances
4. <i>Exemplification</i>	Worthy (suffers, dedicated)	Hypocrite Sanctimonious Exploitative	Guilt (shame, emulation)	Self-denial Helping Militancy for a cause
5. <i>Supplication</i>	Helpless (handicapped, unfortunate)	Stigmatized Lazy Demanding	Nurturance (obligation)	Self-deprecation Entreaties for help

Figure 4: Edward Jones' (1990) Taxonomy of Self-presentational Strategies referenced in Interpersonal Perception (pp. 198). It is important to note that the strategy Self-promotion is often used interchangeably with the term Competence in most literature on the subject matter.

For posts to meet the criteria for being coded, the posts must have been personalized in some way, such as the blogger created the post, and or if the blogger 'reblogged' the post and contributed to the content in some way (i.e. comment, emoji, picture, video, etc.). The blogs used for the second content analysis were randomly selected from the original batch of 300 blogs, which ensured that the blogs were both easy to access and regularly active on Tumblr.

The results of these content analyses will be explained in detail in the following sections as well as the raw data collected from the content analyses attached in Appendix A.

Ethics

All the information used for these content analyses was hosted on a public domain, with all the data publicly accessible to anyone that would seek out such information. All the bloggers' names have been redacted in order to protect their identity, thus minimizing the risk of compromising the cohort I studied. With regards to the in-depth content analyses of 25 blogs, all blogs were given a number, thus erasing their chosen online username/pseudonym in order to

ensure another layer of anonymity when conducting and publishing this research. Lastly, I did not engage in deception or any forms of illegal or unethical behaviour to obtain this material, I simply observed the publicized online interactions between the social actors.³²

i. Adapting Presentation of Self to Blogs: Bernie Hogan's (2010) Approach

To apply dramaturgical theory to online interactions, it is important to make the distinction that in face-to-face interactions the social actor performs in real time for an audience that monitors the social actor, however with computer-mediated communication the artifact is the result of a past performance and lives on for others to view on their own time (Hogan, 2010). By clarifying this distinction between 'real time' and 'online', it aids in creating an expanded theoretical framework for understanding dramaturgical theory with social processes that occur while the social actor is present and the social processes that occur while the social actor is not present (providing a performance in the form of an artifact that ignores geographic and temporal boundaries). When the social actor utilizes online social networking platforms, the website functions as an exhibition space for the production and curation of artifacts.

An exhibition space, as Hogan (2010) explained, is still a form of self-presentation whether it is online or offline. For example, Hogan (2010) argued "[o]ne can find off-line personal exhibitions in the presentation of photos in someone's house" (pp. 377). The distinction between a real time performance and an artifact in an exhibition is especially critical for sociologists that are trying to fill the gap in literature between the presentation of self in online settings and impression management for understanding online behaviour such as but not limited to the publication of deviant activities (Adler & Adler, 2006; 2008; Papacharissi, 2009; 2011;

³² See **Appendix A, Table 3** for the raw data used for the second content analyses.

Hogan, 2010).

Blogs as an Exhibition Space

One of the most popular blogging sites as of now is ‘Tumblr’; a social media website that hosts over 420 million users. As a social networking and blogging platform, Tumblr allows its users to share text, photos, links, music and videos in a creative blogging format that are completely customized by the user (Duffy, 2013; Power, 2014; Schott & Langan, 2015). This website as a social networking site has a lot of value to online communities and individuals since it encourages anonymity and online social engagement (both publicly and also privately through a private messaging service similar to Facebook chat).

When applying Bernie Hogan’s (2010) dramaturgical approach to computer-mediated communication, Tumblr as an SNS fits the role of an exhibition site. Therefore, posts created on Tumblr are considered artifacts within this framework, while individual blogs are considered personalized exhibition spaces. Social actors that create these artifacts on Tumblr are the bloggers that maintain a membership with the website.³³

On websites such as Tumblr, everyone can have their own exhibit, and quite possibly more than one exhibit (by possessing multiple blogs), that they can personalize in order to fit their aesthetic and display information they perceive to be relevant to them as individuals. To begin with, during the early stages of the customization process, bloggers are able to create their

³³ Laura Robinson (2007) referred to social actors that performed in online spaces as ‘cyberperformers’. Robinson referred to the behaviour of individuals in chat rooms and instant messengers with the behaviour of Flickr.com photo submitters and bloggers, thus considering all content posted online as a performance. Hogan makes a distinction that there are online performances, and there are artifacts, and while performances happen in the moment, artifacts are created and exist beyond space and time limitations.

own username. In the case of the #Liftblr community, most members who were part of the community identified themselves through their username by creating usernames that contained the words ‘lift’, ‘steal’ and ‘klepto’ (an abbreviated term for kleptomania).³⁴ Shoplifting bloggers were also able to customize their blogs to contain a small biography; usually the biography would include their age, gender, and how much money they had ‘saved’ while shoplifting.

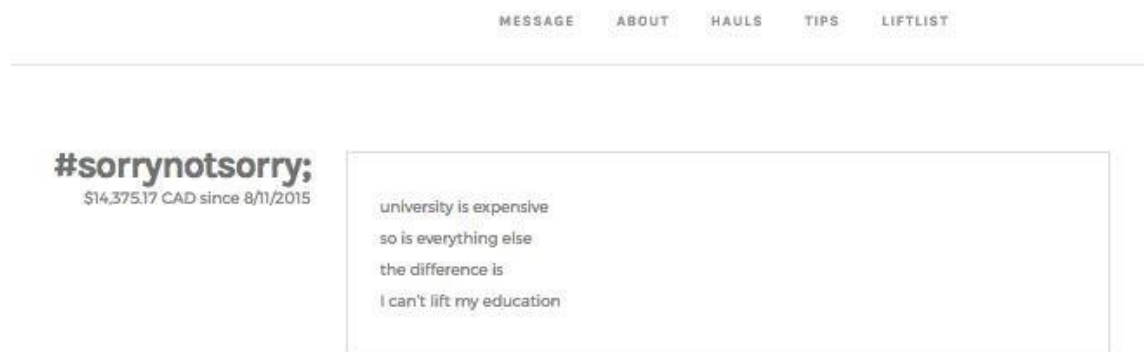


Figure 5: The customized homepage of a #Liftblr member. Below shows their bio, which includes their amount ‘saved’, their reason for shoplifting as well as their access menu to find certain types of posts on their blog.

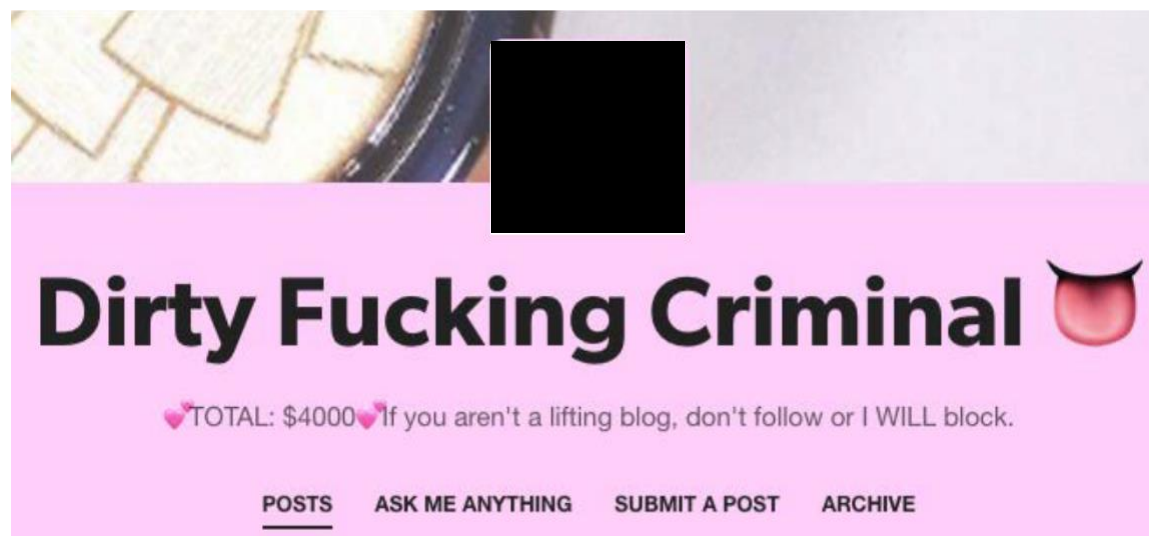


Figure 6: The customized homepage of a #Liftblr member. Below shows their bio, which includes their amount ‘saved’, an avatar picture, and their access menu to find certain types of posts on their blog.

³⁴ This is a similar finding as J. P. Williams (2006), who in his online study of the straightedge subculture, concluded that members of the online community personalized their names to fit with the community by utilizing straightedge terms known within the subculture.

These blogs exist as personalized exhibition spaces, where the blogger can create their own posts, reblog other posts and like other posts. Furthermore, as an exhibition site, Tumblr enables a blogger to be found when others want to look at their artifacts, instead of when the person is able to be present and perform. Once a blogger has been found, there is an option to follow or block that Tumblr user based on whether the information is deemed relevant to the blogger. Tumblr as an exhibition site is not neutral as it operates through algorithms to function as a curator for relevant information for its users. This will be discussed in the next section.

Tumblr as an Online Curator

Tumblr as an SNS and exhibition site has certain properties associated with its architecture that enables the website to act as a curator for Tumblr users. As Hogan explained,

An exhibition site can now be defined as a site (typically online) where people submit reproducible artifacts (read: data). These artifacts are held in storehouses (databases). Curators (algorithms designed by site maintainers) selectively bring artifacts out of storage for particular audiences. The audience in these spaces consists of those who have and those who make use of access to the artifacts. This includes those who respond, those who lurk, and those who acknowledge or are likely to acknowledge. (Hogan, 2010, pp. 381)

Computers, through their programming and the architecture used that make up websites, have taken up the role of the curator when it comes to the Internet (Turkle, 1995; Hogan, 2010). As online curators exist to mediate our experience of social information, they decide what artifacts to procure for individuals and what artifacts to avoid; they decided arguably what is relevant to individuals and what is not based on their programming. While storehouses hold vast amounts of data, many in the form of artifacts, a well-functioning curator ought to be able to limit the presentation of artifacts to website users (Hogan, 2010). According to Hogan, “[g]ood curation presents things to the user that the user finds relevant or interesting. Bad curation is either

overwhelming or unexpectedly irrelevant” (2010, pp. 381). Users of SNSs such as Tumblr, utilize curatorial functions without much thought, though the architecture used on SNSs takes quite a bit of tweaking in order to become optimal for users. To be considered optimal in the curatorial sense, SNSs should facilitate the following functions with regards to artifacts:

filtering; *ordering*; and *searching* (Hogan, 2010, pp. 381).

When it comes to *filtering* artifacts, it means to limit which artifacts are on display (Hogan, 2010). *Filtering* can be accomplished based on the qualities of the artifacts or qualities of the relationship between the social actor and the artifacts (Hogan, 2010). When applying the concept of *filtering* to the Tumblr platform, individuals are able to follow or block hashtags to find or avoid certain content. An example of which, would be going to a #Liftblr blog, then typing ‘/tagged/[insert word]’ to filter out all posts that are not relevant to the hashtag. Furthermore, after selecting blogs to follow, Tumblr uses that information to seek out blogs to recommend users based on their data. An instance of this is when Tumblr sends targeted emails with recommended blogs or posts, or when Tumblr directly sends notifications on the website with what it believes are relevant artifacts. Overall, *filtering* is an important function for curators because it allows the website to retrieve artifacts from a storehouse without having to also display massive amounts of irrelevant data for the user.

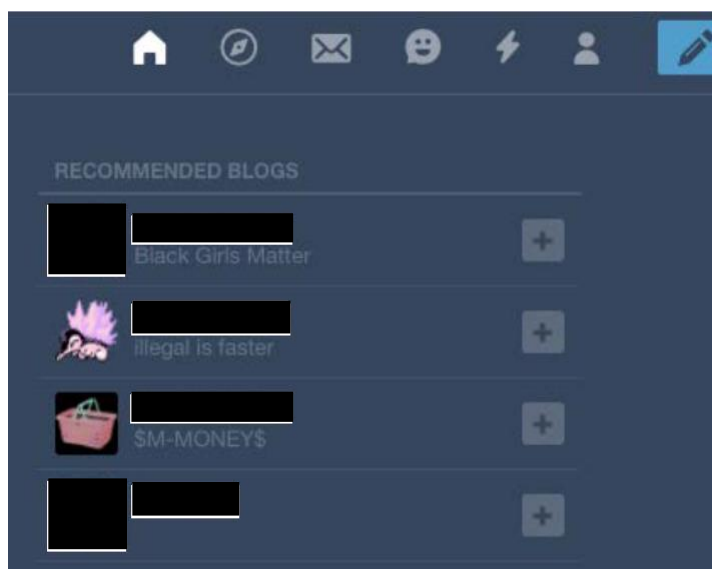


Figure 7: In this photo, Tumblr is recommending specific blogs to follow based on past searches and current followers of the account I created.

Ordering artifacts simply refers

to the fact that data is archived in some way shape or form (Blood, 2002; Hogan, 2010; Power, 2014). Depending on the task or the layout of the website, there is often a meaningful ordering in place that users are aware of (Hogan, 2010). In most instances on SNSs, artifacts are usually presented in reverse chronological order, meaning that artifacts are listed from latest post to earliest post (Blood, 2002; Power, 2014). More sophisticated algorithms can be used to order items by relevance, such as with Tumblr, using hashtags to order posts so when they are searched online, they are separated from other posts that are not relevant. Another example would be checking the archive of the Tumblr blog, and it will order the posts from latest to earliest while also separating posts by the month in which they were published.

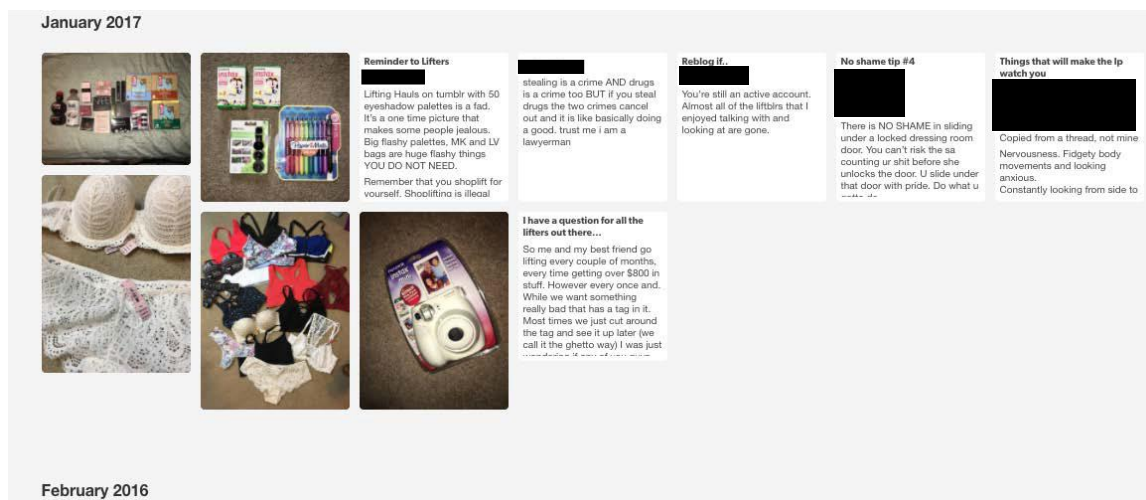


Figure 8: In this photo, Tumblr is ordering posts based on the date they were posted, and organizing said posts in the user's archive.

Lastly, *searching* for artifacts is a function that combines both *filtering* and *ordering* based on user input (Hogan, 2010). Usually on SNSs, the site automatically acts as a curator and provides data it believes will be relevant to the user in an ordered fashion. This is usually in a rather passive manner, for example, the Facebook server presenting users with an automatically updated Facebook feed (Hogan, 2010). This is not always the case with users, many times users make specific search requests on SNSs in order to gain access to artifacts. The *search* function

requires the user to submit additional information to fine-tune the display of content; information that combines both filtering and ordering functions.



Figure 9: In this photo, Tumblr is providing users with a *search* function in order to retrieve specific content from website storehouse.

To summarize, the role of the curator is to organize, store and manage content on behalf of the submitters (Hogan, 2010) or in other terms, the curator's role as a website is to manage the artifacts presented by social actors. With the case of Tumblr, it is a database of artifacts submitted by social actors in the form of blogs, allowing the website to function as a platform for personalized exhibition spaces with the inherent curatorial role of a third party to organize the content submitted. While Bernie Hogan makes the case that the focus of research should mainly be on the new mediated architecture that allows past performances to exist as a lasting artifact, this should not be the only focus of this line of research. Self-presentation and impression management in the age of globalization and technology is a step in the right direction for future research, which is why extending presentation of self theories to online social platforms by considering an exhibition approach alongside a dramaturgical approach will prove to be both a useful and effective means to understanding online behaviour.

ii. Online Communities and Subcultural Engagement

Now that the social networking site Tumblr has been situated within the adapted Goffmanian framework, and its function as an exhibition site has been illuminated, this section

will connect how the website is working with subculturalists in order to create online networks of subcultures that exist beyond geographic and temporal barriers.

Revisiting Chapter 3, Parks (2011) defined community as a culture, a set of ideas and interpersonal sentiments rather than a physical place, and specifically described online communities as social groups that display the psychological and cultural qualities of strong community without the physical proximity. This notion of online communities as explained in Chapter 3, bears a strong resemblance and perhaps even a basis for past conceptualizations of subcultures, sans the face-to-face interactions and geographic proximity to members.

As is the main argument of this thesis, subcultures and conceptualizations of the term need no longer to be limited to geographic localities and real time interactions; instead with the creation of the Internet and the global village, subcultures can exist through online communities as subsets of the global village, and these connections can span the globe, where ever the Internet and access to these social platforms are available. When analyzing the shoplifting or #Liftblr community on Tumblr, those that had participated in the community and its collection of blog posts, created what has been referred to in cyberspace literature as a *scale-free network* (Barabasi, 2011).

#Liftblr as a Scale-free Network

To review, in *A Networked Self: Identity, Community, and Culture on Social Network Sites*, Barabasi (2011) proclaimed that:

Networks exist for a reason. They spread ideas, they spread knowledge; they spread influence. What happens if you give a piece of information to an individual, who passes it on to friends, who then passes it on to their friends, and so on? What does this information network look like? (pp. 12)

As explained previously, the concept of a scale-free network is based on *Evolving Network*

Theory; whereby networks exist from the beginning, and grow overtime by adding links, until

suddenly, a large network emerges (Barabasi, 2011). This theory can be ratified when taking a look as the development and maintenance of the shoplifting community on Tumblr. While Tumblr as a social networking site can be seen as one large network as a whole, in actuality it functions to create smaller and more diverse networks by providing a social media platform that discourages censorship and with its use of personalized blogs aimed at self-expression and self-disclosure (Blood, 2002; Power, 2014), encourages a broad range of subject matter for scale-free networks from politics to porn.

As many social networking sites do in a competitive fashion, Tumblr provides its users with the function to create posts, but also to ‘like’ posts, share posts (also known as ‘reblogging’), follow other members (as well as block other members) and lastly a function common among most SNSs, an accessible and separate private messaging service (Power, 2014). When exploring the technological affordance provided by Tumblr, it is this website’s diverse array of functions that allow the creation and maintenance of many scale-free networks.

For example, a user on Tumblr first creates a blog and specifies their username. In the case of the shoplifting community, the username would be related to the blog’s subject matter and would indicate in some manner that they are pro-shoplifting. Then, users by utilizing the search function and ‘tagging’³⁵ system could then find posts related to shoplifting. They could then choose to like, reblog or report the post, though in most cases, liking and reblogging posts is the norm (Power, 2014). From there, the post can then become visible on the user’s Tumblr blog,

³⁵ The ‘tagging’ system is a combination of *filtering* and *ordering* processes on Tumblr, where posts are filtered by subject matter and ordered from the most recent post at the top of the webpage to the earliest post at the bottom.

and the blog, therefore, displays – in a more post-modern and neo-liberal sense – the aesthetic or the style of the blogger.³⁶

The style of a subculture, one of the major areas of research with regards to the Birmingham School, becomes even more prevalent with blogs that are focused on particular subject matter. As explained previously by Bullingham & Vasconcelos (2013), some bloggers have a ‘main blog’ in which the main purpose of their blog is self-disclosure and self-expression, and also a side blog(s) in which the purpose of these blogs is to create a separate platform in which they engage with specific online communities and publicize specific content for that purpose. This can be seen with many of the members of the #Liftblr community, that in order to maintain some relative privacy from the rest of Tumblr, members urge other members to create side blogs and only post and reblog shoplifting-related posts on their side blogs. Furthermore, members of communities that try to avoid the public eye, police their community’s tags. For example, in the #Liftblr community, members when tagging what stores they stole from, will purposely misspell the store’s name in tags (i.e.: Sephora becomes S3phora, Walmart becomes wlmrt) in order to avoid their posts appearing through Google/Bing searches and thus aims to prevent community members from being easily located and targeted for online harassment and legal prosecution.

³⁶ The Birmingham School was known for highlighting the style of subcultures, in order to determine which individual was associated with which subculture. As Muggleton (1997) among others argued, style became commodified in the traditional sense due to consumerism and mass media, and individual subcultural styles became hybridized with other subcultures. On websites such as Tumblr however, the creation and publication of content has no monetary value or incentive, and so when someone creates a blog post, it represents a form of self-expression and self-disclosure, unique to that individual. People are then able to denote their preferences and style, by creating more blog posts, and reblogging (and also adding on to in a chainmail fashion) the blog posts of others. Thus the ‘politics of style’, has not been co-opted with regards to online communities on Tumblr, because the ‘style’ is generated by the online community members themselves, and remains authentic in the sense that the blog posts are mechanisms of self-expression and self-disclosure.

Figure 10

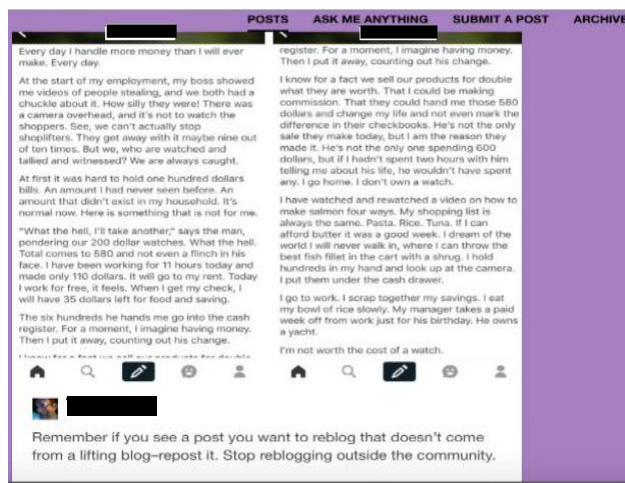


Figure 11

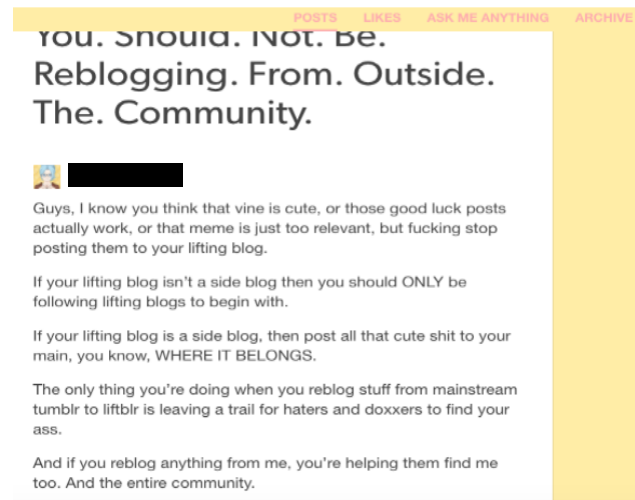
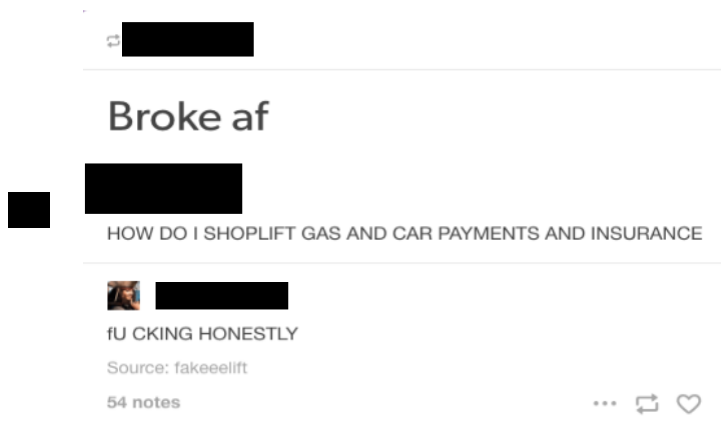


Figure 10 and 11: This figure displays a typical post, where a member of #Liftblr is advising other members of #Liftblr to keep shoplifting content within the shoplifting community in order to both spread knowledge amongst the community, while also preventing the community's knowledge from being discovered by people who are otherwise defined as 'anti-lifters'.

The continual spread of blog posts on sites like Tumblr is how a scale-free network develops. One person makes a post. The post then becomes visible on specific tags and on the blogger's blog. Another person reblogs that post, and their followers are then able to see that post if they haven't already. Another person then reblogs that post and adds a comment beneath



it.³⁷

Figure 12: This is an example of a post that created and then spread through the shoplifting community. This post specifically was reblogged 54 times within the lifting community by different members.

³⁷ This is a prime example of what Walther, Carr, Choi, DeAndrea, Kim, Tong & Van Der Heide (2011) was referring to with the concept of 'media convergence'. Mass and interpersonal sources as well as new communication technologies such as SNSs have succeeded in making online communities and other forms of peer-generated information accessible by blending previously individuated mass media (Walther et al., 2011).

The original creator of that blog post replies, and thus a dialogue is created, meanwhile the post is spreading along a network of blogs that are all interested in the same content.³⁸ This is not to forget that with the ‘follow’ function on Tumblr, users are able to link themselves to others blogs, in which more information becomes accessible directly through this connection. These public communications can then become private, where individuals are able to contact each other privately through a messenger system and forge intimate bonds that are not limited by geographic location. Over the course of time, a large network is created through a coalition of individuals, where bloggers and even subculturalists become connected via their blogs on the Internet, and they are able to create online communities by participating in the spread and publication of certain content-specific blog posts and following specific bloggers.

The spread of these scale-free networks can, therefore, provide support for cyberspace theories such as *Granovetter’s Theory* on the strength of ties and spread of information online which argues that intermediate ties are the most useful for information diffusion amongst online communities (Granovetter, 1973; Putnam, 2000). According to *Granovetter’s Theory*, information gets stuck and recycled within communities, and takes time to spread because ties between separate communities are weak (Granovetter, 1973). This seems to be the case with online communities that are created on Tumblr, where it is not the blogs that are followed, but the sheer amount of blogs followed that provides access to new information. Furthermore, on websites such as Tumblr, there is a great possibility that many weak or intermediate ties will eventually become strong, which speaks to the strength of the community and their want for community distinctiveness and separation as seen in **Figure 6** and **Figure 7**, where members of

³⁸ See **Appendix B** for examples of dialogues created through Tumblr by reblogging and adding on to posts.

the community actively discourage the diffusion of other types of information on shoplifting blogs (Granovetter, 1973).

For information to continue to spread and expand through networks, it has been established that it is intermediate ties that facilitate the most growth in social network sites. However, it also seems that strong ties within online communities seek to only have a selective spread of information where information diffusion should only happen within the community and those who want to join it; not necessarily like intermediate ties where the spread of information broadly to different communities is the main goal. This emphasis on strong ties within the community as seen in the shoplifting community is exemplified by their need to deter certain groups from their community (as seen in **Figure 10** and **11**), but also in their willingness to help others within their community whether that is through shoplifting tips, emotional, or even financial support.

In this regard, SNSs and Tumblr may exist as a larger global network, but their main purpose has actually been revealed to act as a platform for creating and maintaining smaller networks that are continually evolving and expanding (Barabasi, 2011; Papacharissi, 2011). Tumblr as an SNS utilizes blogs and the ability to share blog posts in order to facilitate online communities and the growth of scale-free networks. In addition to this function, not only is subcultural information being shared across these networks, but also the knowledge that individuals are not alone, and in fact are part of a larger group of individuals that may not necessarily ever meet in person but are connected online through common attitudes, behaviours, values and joint social interactions (Parks, 2011). While blogs have been the site of many studies involving impression management and self-presentation in online settings (Bortree, 2005; Chen, 2010; Hogan, 2010; Papacharissi, 2002; 2011; Schott & Langan, 2015), a look at the

presentation of self strategies being used by bloggers for impression management has been a somewhat overlooked area of research, especially with regards to online communities that publicize deviant activities and include subculturalists (Adler & Adler, 2006). This final section will be discussing how bloggers that publicize deviance on their blogs as a form of self-expression and self-disclosure are utilizing presentation of self strategies on their blogs.

iii. The Presentation of Self on Blogs

As stated by both Goffman (1959) and Hogan (2010), with the dramaturgical approach, social actors put on an act for the audience, an act that consists of selective details that one presents in order to craft the desired impression alongside the unintentional details that are given off as part of the performance. Strategies are used by social actors in order to create a certain presentation of self to achieve certain goals (Goffman, 1959, Jones, 1990; Dominick, 1999; Bortree, 2005). According to Jones (1990), there are five main presentation of self strategies utilized by people when performing on the front stage, and as explained by Hogan, by treating SNSs like Tumblr as an exhibition site, these strategies may also be utilized on the presentation of artifacts on personalized exhibition spaces (i.e. blogs on Tumblr). This section will be exploring how artifacts are embedded with presentation of self strategies with regards to online communities, by looking specifically towards the online shoplifting community on Tumblr. Before this discussion can take place however, it is important to make the distinction between ‘style’ and ‘artifacts’.

Style v. Artifacts: Is there a difference?

Using Hogan’s (2010) definition, an artifact denotes a presentation of self that is meant to last, that is depicted to remain visible long after it was created and it can be interpreted over and

over again in different contexts. Unlike a performance in dramaturgical theory, an artifact does not exist in the ephemeral moment, once it is created, it remains in an exhibition space for others to view on their own time whether the social actor is present or not. This is why, in the context of online settings, viewing websites like Tumblr as exhibition sites works effectively in order to understand presentation of self in a new light. However, a subject that is not broached in the literature is, *what happens when someone shares an artifact that does not belong to them?* A more relevant example might be to pose the question, *what happens when someone reblogs a blog post they did not create? Is it still considered an artifact?*

These are complex questions to ask in the scope of things because in online settings, it is common practice for people to share posts/tweets/links they did not create. So in one vein, yes, they are still considered artifacts and people therefore display these, as I like to refer to them, “borrowed artifacts” that do not belong to them in their personal exhibition spaces, because they feel these “borrowed artifact” may represent them in some way, hence their place in their exhibition space. But an individual must abide by presentation of self standards, and create their own artifacts or personalize ‘borrowed artifacts’ in some way in order to provide a goal-directed impression for an audience. In the case of blogs which are considered vehicles for the explicit purpose of self-expression and self-disclosure (Blood, 2002), an individual must create their own blog posts, or take another blog post and add on to it in some way in order to truly communicate a presentation of self strategy. This is because, by simply sharing a ‘borrowed artifact’, the audience may be able to guess what a social actor is trying to communicate, but the message will always remain unclear unless there is some form of personalization and clarification. Even then, sometimes the social actor can be unclear in their personalization of a ‘borrowed artifact’ and further clarification would be necessary for the audience to fully understand the artifact

presented. While artifacts, as taken in the individual sense, can represent individuals, they can also represent groups of people, as is this case with online communities.

Within the subject of online communities and subcultures, the spread of subcultural information and symbols, as denoted in the literature, could reclaim its mantle of 'style' once again. While the Birmingham School focused on music, dance, fashion and linguistics; many of these characteristics became co-opted by mass media and corporations for consumerism (Hebdige, 1979; Muggleton, 1997). That does not mean that subcultural style no longer exists, only that it has become muddled, and much of the 'politics of style' has been lost. In online spaces where media convergence exists, specifically on websites where individuals generate their own information, 'style' and other cultural symbols can, in fact, be reclaimed by online communities and subcultures, but in new ways.

For example with people utilizing Tumblr, when they join online communities, they are exposed to new forms of slang centric to that community, as well as subject matter, symbols, attitudes and behaviours. Within the shoplifting community, an example of 'style' that exists within their community is to post photographs of 'hauls' online (otherwise explained as photographic proof of items they successfully shoplifted). When someone posts a photo of a haul on their blog, it can bridge an overlap between artifacts and subcultural style. The same can be said when someone reblogs a post of a haul, it represents a 'borrowed artifact', but it can also represent the promotion of subcultural values through style.

This is to say that, while not all artifacts that are posted in personalized exhibition spaces are created by the individuals who own that exhibition space, it does not mean that those 'borrowed artifacts' cannot still represent that individual. For many, 'borrowed artifacts' can also

be symbols of memberships, associations, values, behaviours and cultural goals. While it is important to note that artifacts in Hogan's adaptation are meant to represent individuals and act as performances in impression management, it is also pertinent to add that artifacts and as I refer to them, 'borrowed artifacts', can serve a second function in representing groups and in the subcultural sense, depicting 'style' that associates individuals with particular groups.

Figure 13



Figure 14



Figures 13 and 14: Examples of borrowed artifacts that have been reblogged numerous times by members of the #Liftblr community. These artifacts represent subcultural values pertaining to the online #Liftblr community while promoting deviance in real time settings.

Furthermore, subcultural style, which in the past has been criticized for its lack of authenticity (Thornton, 1989; Muggleton, 1997; Redhead, 1990), can once again represent authenticity in online settings. Unlike with fashion, dance and music, which have commercial value, and have been used for capitalistic gain in those industries; online posts (excluding advertisements and other exceptions to the rule such as online information services) do not have commercial value based on their *content*. Instead, websites make money off of the number of people using their domains and the advertisers that use their spaces. Posting on websites, and more specifically SNSs, can in this sense remain authentic with regards to subculture, because

the subcultural content itself has not been commoditized, only the vehicle for subcultural expression has been commoditized. And as discussed previously, SNSs exist not only as places to engage in social interactions and form bonds; they also exist for the purpose of self-expression, self-disclosure as well as self-empowerment.

In this vein of thought, people may be encouraged to promote idealized selves when online, but when given the opportunity of anonymity, individuals are truly able to express themselves whether that is with goal of being well-liked or being reviled (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Jones, 1990). This relates back to subcultural identity, in which individuals, under the guise of anonymity, are able to disclose memberships they otherwise would not publicize in their everyday lives (Adler & Adler, 2006; 2008; 2012), as well as being able to engage with subgroups in society that share the same values, behaviours, attitudes and goals based on the style they present themselves as having online in their archive of artifacts and borrowed artifacts. While artifacts and style have been considered separate in terms of the strains of theories they belong to (and the term borrowed artifacts that I coined to expand on the concept of artifacts and presentation of self), both can be understood as complimenting one another to give a more robust explanation for how individuals present themselves online, both on the individual level, as well as with subcultural membership in online settings.

Strategies Utilized by the #Liftblr Community: An Observation

Within the #Liftblr community on Tumblr, the goal of this content analysis was to see how subculturalists in this particular online community were communicating with each other in the sense of community engagement as well as how individuals utilized presentation of self strategies previously outlined by Jones (1990). As explained in the Methodology section, the

most recent 200 posts on the 25 selected #Liftblr blogs were subjected to a content analysis. Of the 200 posts, **Chart 1** depicts how often artifacts (posts by the blogger or posts that were personalized in some way by the blogger) used presentation of self strategies. As seen in **Chart 2**, the most used presentation of self strategy amongst the 25 blogs was Ingratiation, a strategy that was present in artifacts 73.33 percent of the time, followed by Self-Promotion/Competency which was present in artifacts 44.16 percent of the time in the blog posts. The breakdown of each strategy will be discussed in **Table 3** to explain what kind of online engagement was being used by the shoplifting community (see **Appendix B** for examples of which kinds of posts were coded based on presentation of self strategies).

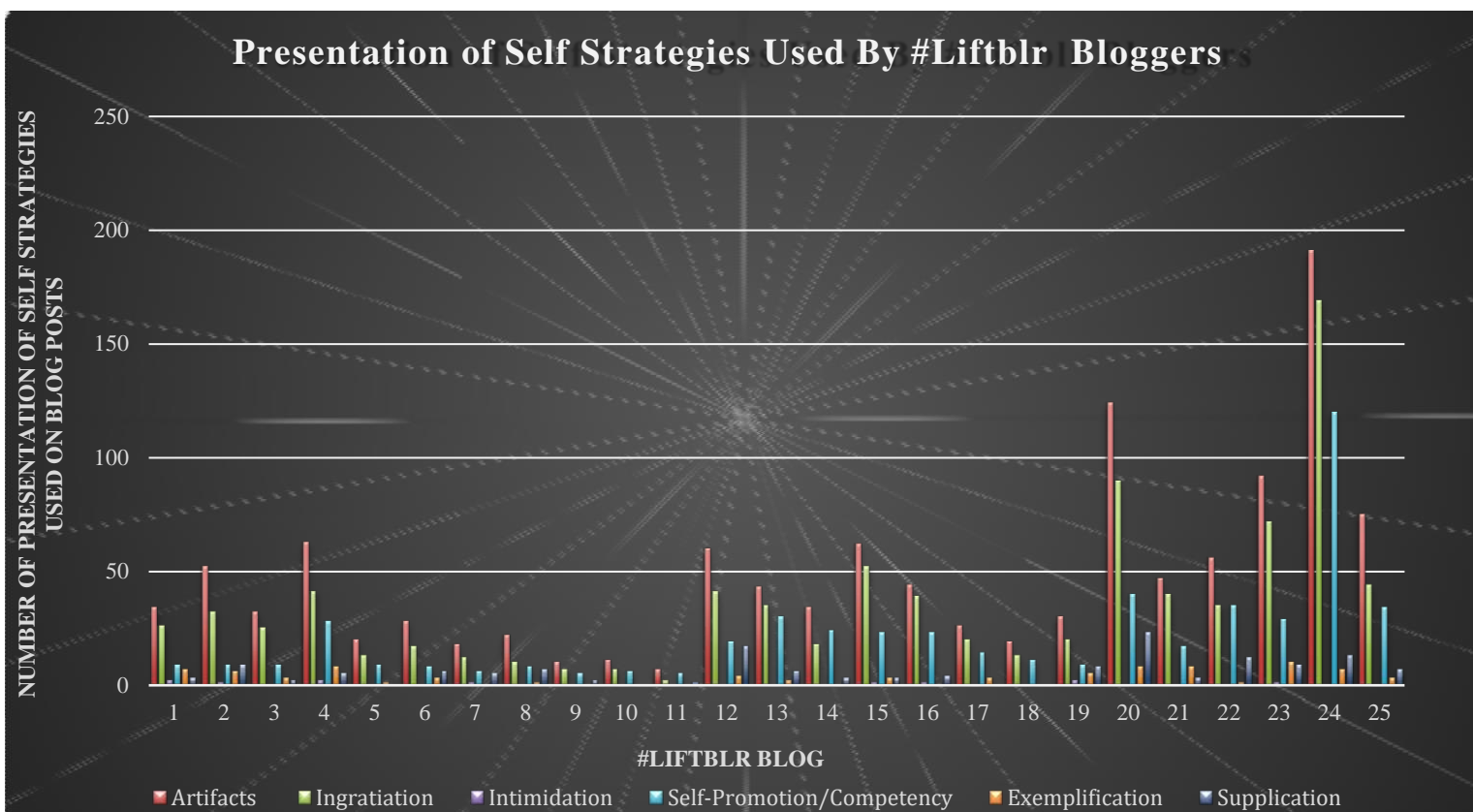


Chart 1: This chart depicts the amount of blog posts that would be considered artifacts and also the breakdown of what presentation of self strategies were utilized by the #Liftblr bloggers in their posts. This chart gives a thorough breakdown of each of the 25 bloggers that were used for the in-depth content analysis.

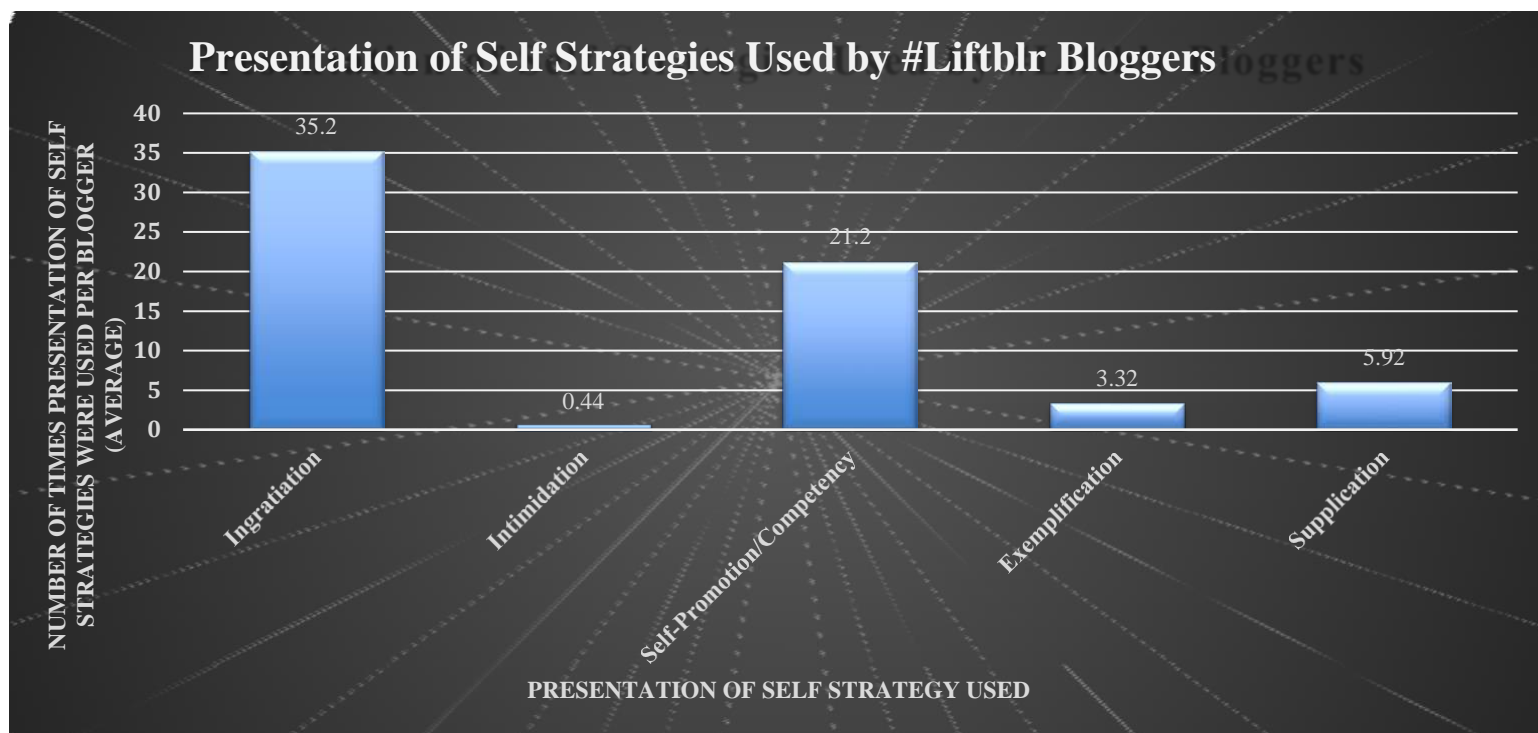


Chart 2: This chart demonstrates how often presentation of self strategies were used by #Liftblr bloggers in relation to one another with an average of 48 strategies used per blogger. Ingratiation was used the most, followed by Self-Promotion/Competency, Supplication, Exemplification and finally Intimidation.

Self-Presentation Strategy E. E. Jones, 1990	Definition of Self-Presentation Strategy J. R. Dominick, 1999	What this strategy looked like with the Lifting Community:
Ingratiation	A person using this strategy has a goal of being liked by others. Some common characteristics of ingratiation are saying positive things about others or saying mildly negative things about yourself, statements of modesty, familiarity, and humour.	Posting humorous or relatable stories. Commenting on the hauls or other posts of other bloggers. Providing support (i.e. financial or emotional) to other bloggers. Providing tips for other blogs on how to shoplift more successfully (overlaps with Self-Promotion/Competence).
Intimidation	Persons using this strategy have power as their goal. Typical characteristics are threats, statements of anger, and potential unpleasantness.	Attacking anti-lifters and their rhetoric. Criticizing and threatening anti-lifters that threaten to dox them, by threatening them with law enforcement or doxing them in return. Ostracizing members of their

		own community that violate codes of conduct such as giving terrible tips for shoplifting, or showing any form of discrimination (i.e. racism, homophobia, ableism, classism, Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism etc.)
Self-Promotion/Competence	The goal of this strategy is to be perceived as skilled and qualified. Common characteristics include claims about abilities, accomplishments, performance, and qualifications.	Posting pictures or stories of their 'hauls'. Posting dollar amounts of how much they have 'saved'. Providing tips on shoplifting and answering 'asks' for members new to shoplifting. Critiquing and offering superior advice to other tip posts.
Exemplification	The goal of this strategy is to be perceived as morally superior or possessing high moral standards. Characteristics include ideological commitment or militancy for a cause, self-sacrifice, and self-discipline.	Raise issues of discrimination and the difficulties of capitalism and poverty. Minimize the harm of shoplifting, by arguing that it is less harmful than systems of oppression and hateful rhetoric. Defend other shoplifters from moral judgments posed by anti-lifters, by comparing it to other deviant and harmful behaviours.
Supplication	The goal is nurturance or appearing helpless so that others will come to your aid. Characteristics of this self-presentational approach include entreaties for help and self-depreciation.	Will constantly seek advice or friendships in posts. Posts stories that would inspire other bloggers to feel pity or sympathy. Begging other shoplifters to trade hauls with them. Making posts that are self-depreciating and indicate low self-esteem.

Table 3: This table presents the data that was collected during the second in-depth content analysis that attempted to understand what Presentation of Self strategies were being used by 25 blogs that held membership with the online Tumblr shoplifting community. These were common to patterns among the artifacts and borrowed artifacts present in the exhibition spaces.

Online Subcultural Engagement and Deviance

Due to the presentation of self strategies being utilized by the online shoplifting bloggers, it would appear that there is overreliance on the Ingratiation strategy; which indicates that being

well liked, respected and forming bonds over the Internet are the main goals of the #Liftblr community, with Self-Promotion/Competence of their skill-set being a secondary goal (See **Chart 2**). Shoplifting in criminology has largely been considered a solitary and thrill-seeking deviant activity, dominated by young women (Katz, 2008). While committing shoplifting is usually done by individuals or small groups of people, the posts created and personalized by members of the #Liftblr community – that are in fact dominated by the presentation of self strategy of Ingratiation – suggest that members of this community enjoy and feel a certain amount of camaraderie within this network of strangers on Tumblr and create and personalize posts based on maintaining this sense of camaraderie within this online network. The sense of shared values, attitudes and behaviour is publicized and reblogged thousands of times over. Members of the community continually give advice on how to shoplift and avoid detection better, while providing support for those that are new or recently got caught. Members constantly compliment each other's stealing accomplishments, and would defend each other from anyone that would try to criticize or legally threaten other members of the #Liftblr community. There is even a code amongst thieves, where shoplifting has been completely justified as righteous action against corporations while stealing from small independent and family run businesses is forbidden, that shoplifting exists as a victimless and meaningless act when compared to the violence of poverty and systematic discrimination of Other-ed people. More than that, there is a sense of empowerment among members of the community that is present in their posts. Members of the #Liftblr work hard to hone and use their skills, whether they steal for enjoyment or steal to place food on the table, and Tumblr has become a place to celebrate those achievements even if they are constructed as deviant in their everyday lives.

This is most likely the case for many subcultures, whether they are deviant in nature or not. Based on the strategy of Ingratiation (Jones, 1990; Dominick, 1999; Bortree, 2005), subculturalists are still seeking validation, guidance and the opportunity to create intimate bonds (Cohen, 1955). Social Networking Sites such as Tumblr have been developed over the last 15 years, and it is with these advancements in online communities, that groups that would usually have a hard time finding a place to meet and engage other members now have a website as a niche for their subcultural engagement. Not only that, but their potential for making connections, finding other members and learning about subcultures they are associated with as well as other cultures provides a unique opportunity to participate in a global village that was previously nonexistent (Nwalozie, 2015).

While the #Liftblr community on Tumblr is a great example of an online community that allows for the proliferation of subcultural signs and the publication of deviance, this thesis does not recommend a one-size-fits-all approach to understanding this subject matter. The shoplifting community in this thesis is simply being used as an illustrative case study and first exploratory step into attempting to understand how subcultures are using social networking sites to communicate subcultural style and expand their reach on a global scale. Many of the pitfalls of subcultural research in the past aimed to discredit or build on one another, this chapter is meant to represent an alternative way of looking at subcultures, in online settings while providing a supplement to aid in further expanding the conceptualization of subculture.

Discussion

Throughout this project, the past four chapters have focused on exploring multiple areas of research as well as locating the intersection between subcultures, online communities and the

presentation of self, this chapter was designed to use an interdisciplinary approach to using an online community as an illustrative case study in order to explore this intersection more fully. While the data produced in this chapter with regards to evaluating the technological affordances of Tumblr, the two content analyses, and the adapted Goffmanian approach towards presentation of self are important insights, there are still more insights to be explored in this final section. This section will begin by reconceptualizing subculture, discussing the reclamation of the politics of style and the drawbacks of using online communities and lastly the presentation of self in online exhibition spaces and the strategies most prevalent.

1. Reconceptualizing Subculture

The term subculture, as this thesis outlined in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, has gone through numerous changes when it comes to conceptualizing the term, from dealing with concerns relating to conflation, determinism, and loss of authenticity, as well as adapting the term to reflect the *Post-Modern Turn*. While the majority of the literature has focused on nitpicking, tearing down or discrediting other notions of subculture, this discussion will instead seek to expand the term subculture by conceptualizing it more broadly and expanding its theoretical applications to online settings.

i. Formation of Subcultures as Online Communities

To begin with, there is consensus throughout the literature that a subculture can be broadly conceptualized as a group of individuals that share values, attitudes, and participate in behaviours that to some degree deviate enough from the parent or dominant culture in a given society that this group of people can be seen as distinct (Cohen, 1955; Matza; 1958; Miller, 1958; Yinger, 1960; Becker, 1979; Hebdige, 1979; Hall & Jefferson, 1976). This consensus of

what a subculture is, also shows significant overlap between many of the aspects Parks (2011) found in cyberspace literature pertaining to online communities. This was an encouraging finding, as the similarities between subcultures and online communities provided reasonable justification that subcultures could be compatible with social networking sites in the form of online communities. The vast majority of subculture literature has focused on offline subcultures, and yet online spaces now provide a platform for subculturalists to engage in computer-mediated communication. While past literature has focused on how CMC bridges the geographic and temporal boundaries that limited subcultural activity and membership in the past (Nwalozie, 2015), it has also allowed communities to form that would otherwise not exist from face-to-face interactions alone. The #Liftblr community is a fine example of this phenomenon; shoplifting is often regarded as a solitary pursuit unless done in groups or pairs (Katz, 2008). Despite this action as being solitary in nature, using the website Tumblr, other shoplifters have been able to locate each other and create an online community in which not only is shoplifting taught and celebrated, associated behaviours and attitudes are also promoted and transmitted throughout a large network of people. The same can be said for other subcultures that have used social networking sites to form an online community for subcultural CMC such as the #thinspo and self-harm communities. This is an important insight, as it means that many subcultures, which possibly could not find a platform to engage in originally in face-to-face interactions alone, or were near impossible to gain access to, have now become more accessible, both to researchers and subculturalists looking for a space to engage with other subculturalists.

ii. Subcultures as Heterogeneous

Throughout the literature, a consistent theme was that members of a particular subculture are similar and to some degree homogenous populations. This argument dates all the way back to Tylor's (1889) original conceptualization of subculture, in which he simply denoted sub-sets of people in a population as subcultures. Gordon (1947) strayed from Tylor's explanation, by arguing that subcultures exist in societies as subdivisions of the dominant culture in society. Gordon then argued that subcultures differentiate from the dominant culture due to variations in members of a society's social situation; including class status, race, ethnicity, rural or urban residence and religious affiliation. To clarify however, these first two conceptualizations as broad as they were, ignored that despite grouping people based on these characteristics, individuals can still subscribe to the dominant culture's goals and means to achieve such goals, while ignoring the existence of subcultures (Becker, 1963; Merton, 1957). Therefore, it was important to make the argument in subcultural literature that subcultures are not solely made up by the distinctiveness of individuals (i.e. race, age, social class, etc.), but are constructed by subcultural values, attitudes, behaviours and symbols that set them apart from the norms of the dominant culture.

Subcultural conceptualizations underwent this transition from being understood as homogenous populations that are grouped together, to groups of people that had similarities but could still be visibly recognized as part of a particular subculture by utilizing cultural symbols or understanding how individuals fit into society based on group characteristics (Cohen, 1955; Miller, 1958; Hebdige, 1979; Hall & Jefferson, 1976). There was also a distinction to be made with a as many argued, are partly based on the dominant culture, where certain aspects of subculture are in agreement to the dominant culture, while other aspects are not and set subcultures apart from the dominant society (Hall & Jefferson, 2006). Examples of subcultures

that share commonalities and to a degree are based on the dominant culture include but are not limited to the Amish, Mormons, delinquents, inmates in prison, ethnic groups, social classes, and other heterogeneous groupings in American society such as youth subcultures, straightedgers, scroungers, edgeworkers, and thinspo members as dictated by current subcultural literature (Wolfgang & Ferracuti, 1967; Williams, 2006; Ferrell, 1997; Nwalozie, 2015; Schott & Langan, 2015). There is however, a point of departure in which I would infer, that subcultural participation not only varies in the manner in which individuals identify and participate within the subculture, but also that due to the spread of subcultural information on the Internet and the Post-Subcultural Turn, membership to subcultures is also incredibly diversified. In the past, members of the Birmingham and Chicago Schools would use cultural symbols and physical attributes to classify members of subculture (i.e. style, music, race, ethnicity, age).

Since the Post-Subcultural Turn however, scholars account for cultural symbols as being commodified and thus what they are symbolizing is no longer an authentic representation of the subculture. Subcultural membership in this sense can no longer be inferred from cultural symbols that a social actor displays, as the symbols themselves have become a commodity for social actors to possess for self-expression rather than group-expression. Another angle of understanding this however, is that subcultural membership is no longer limited to those that choose to display cultural symbols, theoretically subculture has moved beyond notions of physical style and thus members can appear in any way they choose, but it is their values, attitudes and behaviours that define their subcultural membership.

Furthermore, through online engagement on social networking sites in which bridging capital – the transmission of information through networks – is emphasized, subcultural information is no longer limited by geographic or temporal boundaries. Theoretically anyone can

have access to that same information whether they are exposed to it or directly seek it out through targeted curatorial functions (filtering and searching), and anyone who has access to these social networking sites and the Internet, can join these online communities and thus participate in subcultures of their choosing.

This was illuminated throughout my study of the #Liftblr community, in which it was apparent that the shoplifting community based on their self-disclosed member bios were dominated by females that were between the ages of 14 and 25; despite this there was still a large amount of diversity within the community. As self-disclosed on their bios, many members of the community were cisgendered females, but there were instances of transgendered females and nonbinary individuals within this community as well as cisgendered and transgendered males representing the minority.³⁹ While the #Liftblr community only accounts for those that have access to Tumblr and the Internet, it was also disclosed on many blog bios that individuals were diverse in age, race, ethnicity, religion and social class and surprisingly location (while the assumption was that most members were located in the United State of America, many would often indicate if they lived elsewhere and would ask for shoplifting tips that corresponded to their region). The #Liftblr community was not the least bit homogenous in their demographic make-up, and that can possibly be accounted for due to the amount of information diffusion social networking sites provide individuals and communities. As a side note, individuals were also diverse in what they shoplifted; it varied from clothing, food, cosmetics, technology,

³⁹ The notion of transgendered and nonbinary individuals was particularly nuanced. Many of these individuals disclosed in posts that they lacked support for their gender identity financially and or emotionally. A few disclosed that because of that lack of support, many of these individuals felt uncomfortable ‘coming out’ or could not afford to purchase items that would correspond to their gender identity. To bridge the gap in gender identity and gender dysphoria, individuals disclosed that they shoplifted items that they felt they needed but could not voice out loud without facing negative repercussions, or would shoplift items because they could not afford them.

entertainment and sports gear; and this diversity also implies that the community itself has no specific cultural symbol as a style, and instead it is the content of posts on Tumblr and overlapping themes within the community that are promoted and shared that has now become the new style. There is no distinctive look, race, or age of members within many subcultures anymore, instead subcultures are no longer limited to certain populations they way the used to be unless that is by choice and gate-keeping practices that prevent certain individuals from becoming members. Subcultural membership due to the spread of information and the diversity now present within societies both on face-to-face and computer-mediated communication has also adapted. In conclusion subcultures can be summed up as actions, values, style, imagery and lifestyles that are portrayed through face-to-face (Brake, 1985) and computer-mediated communication, but with the use of the Internet and SNSs, subcultures can continue to extend far past geographic localities by forming symbolic communities online.

iii. Subcultures and Contracultures

There needs to be clarification within subculture literature with regards to the amount of opposition a subculture aligns itself with, to oppose or subvert the dominant culture. As Milton Yinger (1960) argued, there are subsets within the broader framework of subcultures because there are some subcultures that exist in complete opposition to the dominant culture, such as those who identify as anarchists. Subcultures that do exist in complete opposition should be categorized into the subset created by Yinger (1960) as *contracultures*.

2. The 'Politics of Style' Reclaimed

As explained previously in Chapter 2, one of the major criticisms of current conceptualizations of subculture is put forward by Post-Subculturalists that claim the ‘politics of style’ have been lost. To refresh, the Chicago School represented a tradition of American sociology that started during the 1920s and extended until the 1950s, relying heavily on an ecological model of society in equilibrium and on the belief that subcultures arose in part as a result of urbanization; heavily influenced by theories of strain and anomie. In the early years, the Chicago School’s main focus of research was on the deviant aspects of youth, urbanism, culture, and deviance in society as a whole. The Birmingham School emerged later during the 1960s and 1970s, with their approach to subcultures focusing on working-class youths. While the Birmingham School comprised most of its research by studying groups of individuals that committed deviant behaviour, most noticeably young white males, other sociologists from this school attempted to apply subcultural theories to understand other groupings of people such as people of colour and women (Becker, 1963; McRobbie & Garber, 1976; Hebdige, 1979; McRobbie, 1984; 1987; Evans, 1997; Sabin, 1999; Bennett, 2000; Cutler, 2006). The Birmingham School also differed from the Chicago school which focused heavily on ethnographies, while the Birmingham School used a more theory-oriented approach to understand subcultures by situating their existence through a Marxist perspective, as well as arguing that subcultures are apparent through the cultural signs that individuals utilize as part of their self-presentation (Hebdige, 1979; York, 1980; Thornton, 1995). Hebdige (1979) in particular, referred to the concept of ‘style’ as gestures and movements towards speech by subculturalists that offend the ‘silent majority’ and challenge the principle of unity and cohesion. Hall and Jefferson (2006) also argue that objects and commodities do not mean any one thing; they have certain meanings only because they have already been arranged, according to social

use, into cultural codes of meaning, which *assign meanings to them* (pp. 42-43). This means that subculturalists assign meaning to subcultural symbols and thus the symbolic aspects of commodities cannot be separated from the structure, experiences, activities and outlook of the groups as social formations.

As discussed in Chapter 2 however, the *Post-Modern Turn* for the term subculture, documented that through capitalism and consumerism, the politics of style and authenticity of subcultural symbols were lost due to processes of the commodification of cultural symbols; which resulted in cultural appropriation and subcultural hybridization (Jameson, 1985; McRobbie, 1989; Thornton, 1989; Redhead, 1990; Muggleton, 1997). This has resulted in the current issues with conceptualizing subculture, where theorists no longer have authentic cultural symbols to use as an indicator of subcultural membership, In addition, researchers have yet to fully adapt the application of subcultural theories to the Internet (the study of cyber-related deviance and gang communication has been touched on in the literature but not necessarily subcultural formation and maintenance).

This thesis, then aimed to expand subcultural theories to the application of subcultural membership in online settings, by taking a broad look at online communities that are hosted on Social Networking Sites. This line of thought was inspired by Nwalozie (2015), who was one of the most recent advocates for viewing subcultures as subsets of the global village, and thus echoing Gordon's (1947) earliest conceptualization of subculture but adapted to the Internet. Earlier in this chapter, Erving Goffman's (1959) Dramaturgical Theory regarding the presentation of self, then adapted by Bernie Hogan (2010) for computer-mediated communication was used to explain how subculturalists are using SNSs and presentation of self strategies – mainly Ingratiation – to forge intimate bonds and seek validation through

participation in online communities; followed by the goal of appearing competent, capable and reliable when it came to subcultural membership and expected attitudes, values and behaviour.

By creating and sharing posts on the Internet within personalized exhibition spaces and online communities, it was explained in this thesis that by analyzing the *content* of artifacts, whether they were borrowed or original content, online participation could then represent subcultural symbols. These posts, based on their content, could be viewed as a new vehicle to communicate subcultural style, with the added benefit of being able to create and customize online participation down to the finest detail, due to SNSs platforms being architecturally designed to provide software that encourages self-expression through personal customization. Social Networking Sites, such as Tumblr, can therefore be seen as platforms for subcultural engagement, and peer-generated sources of subcultural information and participation.

As theorists have argued, subcultural style is based on the infrastructure of group relations, activities and contexts (Hebdige, 1979; Hall & Jefferson, 2006) and members of the subculture assign meaning to subcultural symbols. While subcultural symbols have been described as music, dress and dance in the past, computer-mediated communication exists in such a broad array of forms, that the notion of subcultural symbols and style must be adapted to publications on the Internet, and specifically publications made on personal exhibition sites. There is however a drawback to viewing blog posts as style, and this has more so to do with the negative consequences of attaining a membership on social media. While in Chapter 3, there was discussion of online communities and all the benefits of using social networking sites as it contributed towards notions of community, information transmission, identity and forging meaningful bonds; it is important to also be critical of social networking sites and the information that is gathered from users.

i. Data Mining

In recent literature regarding online communities, many scholars have made the argument that the Internet has undergone a subtle but critical transformation. This transformation implies that in the past, the Internet was predominantly used for information provision using systems that were more oriented towards communication, user-generated content, data sharing, and community building (Fuchs, 2011; Fernback & Papacharissi, 2007). Now however, the Internet and online communities are being mined for the user data they produce in large batches and sell to corporations; this process is referred to as *data mining*. Based on this knowledge it is important to note that social networking sites are not neutral platforms nor are they unique in their business model strategy. Whether it is Facebook, Flickr, My Space or Google apps that are being discussed, the end result is still the same as is the main purpose of these sites; commodifying users through the data they share (Andrejevic, 2008; Fuchs, 2011). Thus, social networking sites are no longer simply consumer services; they are also productive resources controlled by private corporations with the power to set the terms of access for users (Andrejevic, 2008; Fuchs, 2011). While it has been the argument of this thesis that subcultures and individuals are benefitting from the existence and accessibility of online platforms for user-generated content; so are the websites that host these interactions. Andrejevic (2008, pp. 77-78) claims that

It is perhaps symptomatic of a consumer-oriented culture that sites like MySpace and Facebook tend to be portrayed exclusively as consumer products, rather than as productive resources. But social networking sites are not consumer commodities in the simple sense of the term: they aren't goods that are purchased by users, like toothbrushes or cars. They are something closer to communal productions, the economic value of which is privately appropriated by those who own the domain name - and the server space.

On most social networking sites, users of the website don't pay for direct access to the website or

its functions. In order for websites to profit off of their platform, they provide highly targeted, and what Andrejevic (2008) refers to as ‘contextual’ advertising. In simpler terms, the posts of users are not commoditized, but the community itself is commoditized. Andrejevic (2008, pp. 88) recounted that

In 2007 both Facebook and MySpace went public with plans to use the treasure trove of information available^[SEP] to them about users to deliver an unprecedented level of target marketing. As an executive at Fox Interactive Media (which owns MySpace) put it: ‘We are blessed with a phenomenal amount of information about the likes, dislikes and life’s passions of our users ... We have an opportunity to provide advertisers with a completely new paradigm.’ This formulation highlights the overlap between user-generated content and transactionally-generated information gathered by monitoring the online activity of users. Both types of information feed into the marketing algorithms being developed by social networking sites - and together they make up the proprietary information that contributes to the astoundingly high market valuation of popular networking sites. Facebook, for example, was valued at about \$10 billion at a time when its annual profits were only about \$30 million (on revenues of \$150 million). It seems fair to conclude that much of that valuation^[SEP] is based on the anticipated value of the tremendous quantity of information^[SEP] about users it is able to gather, store and sort for marketing purposes. The site’s anticipated value is based on potential advertising revenues - and these in turn are based on the expectation that detailed information about users, combined with^[SEP] the popularity of the site, will serve as the foundation for a highly effective and profitable marketing model.

Christian Fuchs (2011) who studied Google and its associated apps came to a similar conclusion; that based on Google’s privacy policy for individual users, Google’s economic aim was and still is to accumulate profit through data mining. When it came to explaining social networking sites, Fuchs (2011) was quick to explain that the intention of the Internet has always been to be social, but that web 2.0 sites are more adaptive, user-friendly and successful because they combine older applications such as forums, guest books, e-mail, multimedia, and hypertext into one platform. With increased bandwidth and cheaper production technologies, cheap transmission of audio and video files has resulted in increased popularity of user-generated content, another basic function that is integrated into many social networking platforms (including Tumblr).

It is easy to argue that data mining and the exploitation of user-generated information is unethical, it is unfortunately completely legal. When signing up for social networking sites, “users freely agreed to the terms of use - and if they don’t like them, there’s no law that says they have to join Facebook or MySpace” (Andrejevic, 2008, pp. 82). Users, many without reading the terms of agreement for joining social networking sites, have signed away their rights to privacy, and in many cases their basic profile information and privacy controls are used to begin sending targeted advertisements towards users (Andrejevic, 2008; Fuchs, 2011). This is still a very current and ongoing issue in society, when taking into account that Facebook is facing issues with accountability after the data of 50 million Americans was procured by the UK political data analytics firm Cambridge Analytica after originally being harnessed by another company (Pewter, 2018; Wong & Siddiqui, 2018). This data was then used by the Trump campaign in 2016 to target specific audiences with political propaganda and fake news (Pewter, 2018; Wong & Siddiqui, 2018; Dwoskin, Timberg & Romm, 2018).

Unfortunately, many view social networking sites as platforms for democracy and a place to explore parts of their identity that they would not display in their everyday lives (Turkle, 1995; Adler & Adler, 2006; 2008; Blood, 2002). There are however critical issues with regards to privacy when using social networking sites, especially if the user is a member of a vulnerable community. Instead of truly being an online democratic platform, social networking sites succeed in creating a lack of transparency and asymmetric division of power between those that own the domain and mine the data from individuals, and the individual users and communities that are placed into categories for consumerist purposes. Whether it is for the purpose to use targeted advertising, meet consumer needs (Andrejevic, 2008; Fuchs, 2011); or to prey on anxieties and insecurities as well as to manipulate the hopes and dreams of individuals through

the spread of misinformation and fake news (Pewter, 2018). The lack of regulation and accountability with social networking sites in relation to privacy is by far a big concern, and the more information that is willingly put out there about users and the more social networking profiles are customized; the more this information can be used towards predictive behaviour analytics and utilized by corporations to further monitor, manipulate and control members of society through different means (Andrejevic, 2008; Fuchs, 2011).

ii. Invaders in Online Communities

Another issue that plagues online communities, and this was prevalent in my study of Tumblr, is the presence of invaders in online communities. This is not about discussing trolls or harassers in online communities as the literature on cyberspace already dedicates quite a bit of literature towards this discussion. This instead, was an issue that was broached by the Tumblr staff in order to provide clarity and transparency for Tumblr users. Tumblr recently sent out an email to Tumblr users detailing how members of the Russian government created accounts and infiltrated specific communities with the intention of spreading fake news, stirring racial tensions and misogyny, and hijacking social movements with the purpose of discrediting them.⁴⁰

The issue of invaders infiltrating online communities with the intention of changing the nature of that community through means of deception is one that affects all online communities on Tumblr. It necessitates the demand for more self-policing within these communities, and a greater need to instill a firm set of values, and a firm idea of who is a member and who is an imposter. This task, is much more difficult than spotting a troll or a harasser, and it is up to online communities to not fall victim or react the way those who spread misinformation would

⁴⁰ See **Figure 36** in **Appendix B**.

desire. It also requires a more hands on approach from websites such as Tumblr, to monitor its users more closely and to be held consistently accountable for the measures it takes to ensure that its website remains free of specific political influence that would seek to undermine democratic societies. Tumblr's response though limited at this time, is an interesting and encouraging attempt to remain transparent and accountable when contrasted to websites such as Facebook, who were shown to have profited from the sale of user data and the targeted approach of fake news being used as a tool of manipulation in the 2016 elections (Pewter, 2018; Wong & Siddiqui, 2018; Dwoskin et al, 2018).

3. The Presentation of Self within online Exhibition Spaces

i. Ingratiation and Self-Promotion/Competency

One of the main conclusions of the research I produced through my content analyses of the #Liftblr community through their blogs was that when coding their presentation of self strategies, Ingratiation was the most used strategy followed by Self-Promotion and Competency. This insight is one that was echoed by much of the most recent literature on computer-mediated communication and presentation of self strategies. For example Ma (2017) in her research on YouTube beauty vloggers concluded that most youtubers presented themselves with extraverted and likeable personality traits. Bortree (2005) as referenced previously in the literature studied the blogs of teenage girls and coded them for the presentation of self strategies introduced by Jones (1990); similar to how I coded for presentation of self strategies in my own content analyses. Bortree (2005) found that these females used Ingratiation the most followed by Social Competence and occasionally Supplication in order to create and maintain intimacy with close friends. Bortree (2005), similar to my previous section also noted, that the risk of exposure and

loss of privacy were still threats that these women had to contend with due to their use of personal blogs.

Similar to my own findings of how users were using Tumblr, Chu & Choi (2010) in their cross-cultural study discovered that American users of social networking sites possessed greater levels of bonding social capital when compared to their Chinese counterparts, which inferred that the main goal of the American users was not information transmission but to forge and maintain meaningful bonds on SNSs. This was echoed on Chu & Choi's (2010) findings in which they concluded that American users relied most on the Ingratiation strategy while Chinese users relied most on Self-Promotion/Competency.

These findings by Ma (2017), Bortree (2005) and Chu & Choi (2010) are important, because it demonstrates that the results produced during this project are not only concurrent with the findings of cyberspace research today, but also that subculturalists are using social networking sites in the same way that individuals who are a part of online communities are using social networking sites.

ii. Intimidation

Another insight that was produced during this research with regards to presentation of self strategies is the lack of use of the Intimidation strategy. As discussed previously, the aim of many online communities including the #Liftblr community was to promote bonding social capital; and it was through the Ingratiation strategy that bonding social capital could be easily formed. This was an interesting finding, especially for the #Liftblr community as the vast

majority of research on subcultures implies the opposite, that there is a great deal of aggression and intimidation involved in subcultural interactions.

Dating all the way back to early conceptualizations of subculture, the term was often used when coming to understand deviance and youth delinquency; leading to a later conflation of the two terms. From Albert Cohen (1955), who initially characterized delinquent subcultures as non-utilitarian, malicious, negativistic and hedonistic or Walter Miller (1958) who described lower-class culture as middle-class standards turned upside down, or even David Matza (1958) who described delinquent subcultures as an existing oppositional response to the vast majority of society; these conceptualizations have imposed upon later conceptualizations of subcultures there ought to be elements of aggressions and negativity involved in face-to-face interactions with subcultures.

This was contrary to what was found within the #Liftblr community, where the community itself was dominated by the need to be liked, respected and to form meaningful bonds. This difference could boil down to the simple fact that in the past, most of the research on delinquent subcultures was inferred from male subjects, compared to the #Liftblr community which was comprised of mostly females. This however, seems to be a weak argument at best, because the #Liftblr community members were more than capable of using the Intimidation strategy when it came to protecting their community from targeted harassment, threats of law enforcement and when policing members within the community.

Another angle to view this from is the fact that the #Liftblr community conducts most of its interactions online with computer-mediated communication, when compared to early research, which was conducted by observing face-to-face interactions. This is an angle that could work much more effectively and could be developed more in the future research however, it

would be difficult to find a variety of posts containing the Intimidation strategy due to the curatorial function of social networking sites. A function of social networking sites is to enforce community guidelines and expectations for user behaviour, therefore, websites such as Tumblr will delete posts if they meet a certain criteria for being inflammatory, offensive or if they violate the community guidelines of the website in any way. While it is known for certain that Ingratiation is commonly used by subculturalists in online communities, the same cannot be said for posts that could be deleted because they utilize the Intimidation strategy and violate community guidelines.

In general however, it would appear that the main goal of online communities is also in line with the main goal of online subcultural engagement; there is a stronger need for validation and acceptance rather than to be feared, hated and ostracized. The need to belong, to feel liked, to be respected, and to form bonds seems to be the primary reason for why users are not using Intimidation strategies on social networking sites (Bortree, 2005; Ma, 2017; Chu & Choi 2010), and due to the nature of subcultures in which by defying the dominant culture, they seek a place to belong, subculturalists could also be abstaining from the Intimidation strategy for this reason.

Conclusion

The main focus of this thesis was to take on an interdisciplinary approach to expand past conceptualizations of subculture to account for the Post-Modern Turn, the advancement of technology, and the age of instant information sharing through globalization and the development of the global village. A gap in the literature that previously existed before this thesis was how subcultures, through online settings were able to exist, evolve, expand and maintain major constructs such as authenticity and the politics of style. While much of the literature is still at odds with who is deciding what a subculture is, this thesis is not so much about focusing on what a subculture is and is not, but is instead taking a more broad understanding of subculture in order to gain clarity on how subcultures are using the Internet and Social Networking Sites to facilitate the growth and maintenance of subcultural behaviours, values, attitudes and membership.

Another gap that existed in the literature before this research was the unique interplay between theories on impression management and publicizing deviant activity. For years in criminological research, the study of crime, youth delinquency, subcultures and deviance as a whole have been major areas of interest for scholars. While utilizing ethnographic approaches, is one of the more rich approaches the understanding these kinds of subject matter, it can also be hard to gain access to groups of individuals partaking in criminal and deviant activity, as well as ethically and professionally compromising for scholars. This is where taking a content analysis approach or even an ethnographic approach (with the appropriate approval from research and ethics boards) by immersing oneself in online communities is a unique way of gaining access to subcultures and individuals partaking in deviant activities. Even on the micro-level, attempting to understand the presentation of self, community membership and identity formation on the

Internet are not necessarily new areas to explore, but they are new areas for the study of criminology to venture towards, and while using a content analysis or ethnographic approach to social media, it could revolutionize the way criminologists come to understand crime, deviance, as well as opposing 'situations' and 'frames of reference' (Cohen, 1955).

Lastly, a final area of research that has yet to be expanded upon in the literature is the answer of *why* people are publicizing deviant and subcultural attitudes, behaviours and values. This is a complex issue, and while this thesis touched on presentation of self strategies in order to gauge what the particular goals of members of the #Liftblr community were and *how* they were using social networking sites as virtual conduits to connect to other subculturalists, this was only an exploratory attempt that simply scratched the surface of such a layered question. This question clearly provides a future avenue of research for criminologists to explore, and using a more sociological approach to make sense of this question such as dramaturgical theory, appears to be one of the more effective ways of attempting to answer this question.

At this moment, with constant advancements in technology, as well as our continued reliance on technology, there is no other way to go forward in criminology research, than to incorporate technology into studies of crime, deviance and subcultural affiliation. Like humans have adapted to use technology to make sense of the world around us, we must also do so as researchers to make sense of how the impact of technology and cyberspace has created ripple effects in human socialization processes and subsequent group memberships.

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Appendix A

Figure 1: This Figure was provided by the Pew Research Center for Internet Technology (2016) in their report *Social Media Update 2016: Facebook usage and engagement is on the rise, while adoption of other platforms holds steady*. It displays the approximately how many Internet users use the social networking sites Facebook (79 percent), Twitter (24 percent), Instagram (32 percent), Pinterest (31 percent) and LinkedIn (29 percent).

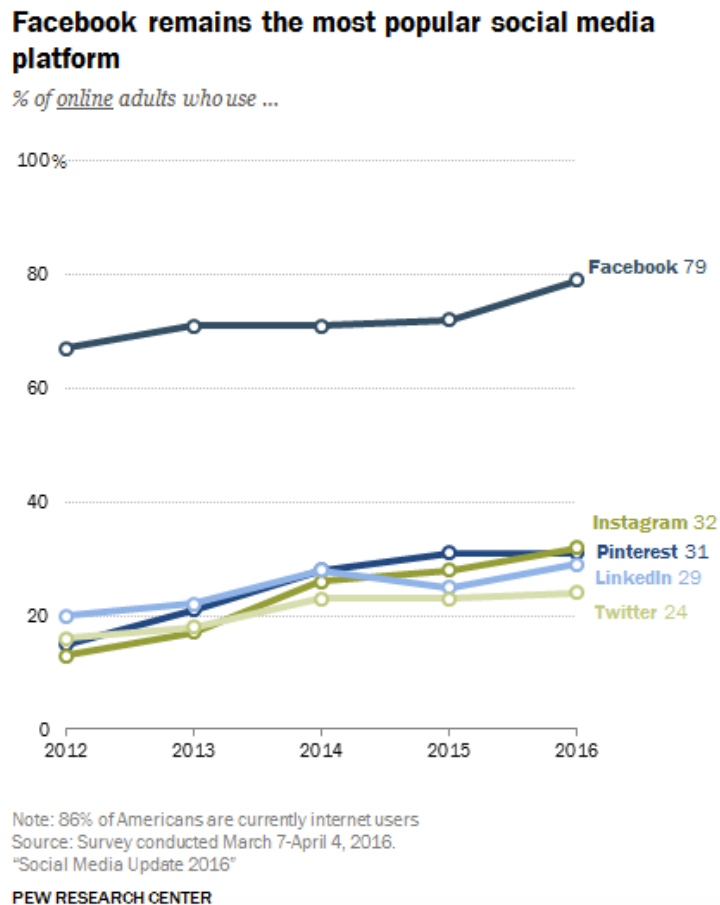
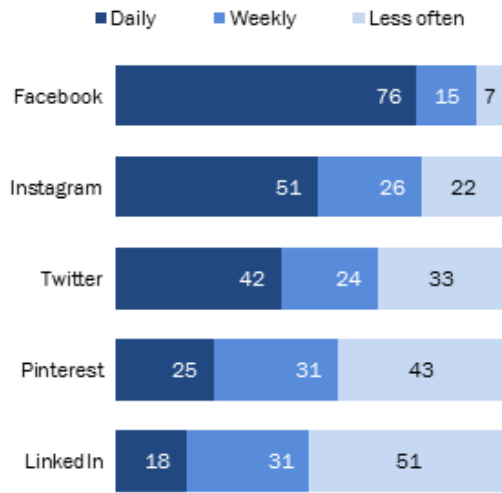


Figure 1

Figure 2: This Figure was provided by the Pew Research Center for Internet Technology (2016) in their report *Social Media Update 2016: Facebook usage and engagement is on the rise, while adoption of other platforms holds steady*. It displays how often individuals use these social networking sites over time periods in percentage.

Three-quarters of Facebook users and half of Instagram users use each site daily

Among the users of each social networking site, % who use these sites ...



Note: Do not know/refused responses not shown.
 Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 4, 2016.
 "Social Media Update 2016"

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Figure 2

Figure 3: This Figure was provided by the Pew Research Center for Internet Technology (2016) in their report *Social Media Update 2016: Facebook usage and engagement is on the rise, while adoption of other platforms holds steady*. It displays the concept of individuals that have a social matrix or individuals that use more than one social networking site.

Figure 3

Substantial 'reciprocity' across major social media platforms

% of users of each social media site who use another social media site

	Use Twitter	Use Instagram	Use Pinterest	Use LinkedIn	Use Facebook
% of Twitter users who ...	--	65%	48%	54%	93%
% of Instagram users who ...	49	--	54	48	95
% of Pinterest users who ...	38	57	--	41	92
% of LinkedIn users who ...	45	53	43	--	89
% of Facebook users who ...	29	39	36	33	--

Source: Survey conducted March 7-April 4, 2016.
"Social Media Update 2016"

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Appendix B

Table 2: This is the raw data from the second more in-depth content analysis in which 25 blogs were coded for artifacts and borrowed artifacts, then the blog posts were coded for Jones (1990) presentation of self strategies. Under the column 'Posts', items with an asterisk denote that the #Liftblr blog analyzed had a maximum number of 'x' amount of posts.

Blog Number	Posts	Artifacts and Borrowed Artifacts	Ingratiation	Intimidation	Self-Promotion/Competency	Exemplification	Supplication
1	200	34	26	2	9	7	3
2	190*	52	32	1	9	6	9
3	200	32	25	0	9	3	2
4	85*	63	41	2	28	8	5
5	200	20	13	0	9	1	0
6	200	28	17	0	8	3	6
7	200	18	12	1	6	0	5
8	200	22	10	0	8	1	7
9	69*	10	7	0	5	0	2
10	42*	11	7	0	6	0	0
11	75*	7	2	0	5	0	1
12	200	60	41	0	19	4	17
13	161*	43	35	0	30	2	6
14	169*	34	18	0	24	0	3
15	200	62	52	1	23	3	3
16	200	44	39	1	23	0	4
17	200	26	20	0	14	3	0
18	98*	19	13	0	11	0	0
19	200	30	20	2	9	5	8
20	200	124	90	0	40	8	23
21	200	47	40	0	17	8	3
22	200	56	35	0	35	1	12
23	200	92	72	1	29	10	9
24	200	191	169	0	120	7	13
25	200	75	44	0	34	3	7

Figure 16: This is an example of #Liftblr subculturalists creating a dialogue within the online community, by reblogging and adding onto the main post.

<p>when yr haul isn't too big</p> <p> [redacted]</p> <p>smaul haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when you can hold tagged items above the towers</p> <p>tall haul</p>	
<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when you haul from multiple different stores</p> <p>mall haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when you lifting in the deep south</p> <p>y'all haul</p>	
<p> [redacted]</p> <p>When you get lots of sweaters and riding boots</p> <p>Fall haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>When you lift everything in a store</p> <p>all haul</p>	
<p> [redacted]</p> <p>When you use the fake phone call method to get out of a store.</p> <p>Call haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when LP catches you</p> <p>bawl haul</p>	
<p> [redacted]</p> <p>When you pull off a huge risky haul</p> <p>Gall haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>When you conceal in the bathroom</p> <p>stall haul</p>	
<p> [redacted]</p> <p>When you gotta fight LP on the way out</p> <p>brawl haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when you lift from an American Girl store</p> <p>doll haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when you steal a bunch of copics</p> <p>draw haul</p>
<p> [redacted]</p> <p>When you come out of a store with nothing</p> <p>No haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when you come home and dump everything on your bed</p> <p>sprawl haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>When you lift from the liquor store</p> <p>Alco-haul.</p>
<p> [redacted]</p> <p>When LP is onto you so you gotta sneak out the back way</p> <p>crawl haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when u lift cough drops</p> <p>halls haul</p>	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when you get caught and cry</p> <p>squall haul</p>
	<p> [redacted]</p> <p>when you hide merch in your own clothes</p>	<p>1,185 notes</p> <p>... </p>

Figure 17-20: These are examples of artifacts that met the criteria and were coded as Ingratiation.

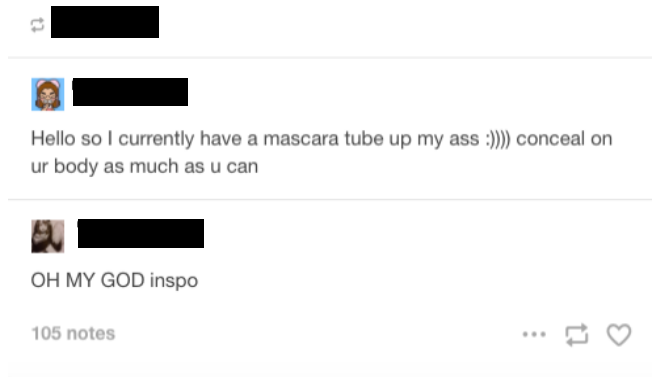


Figure 17

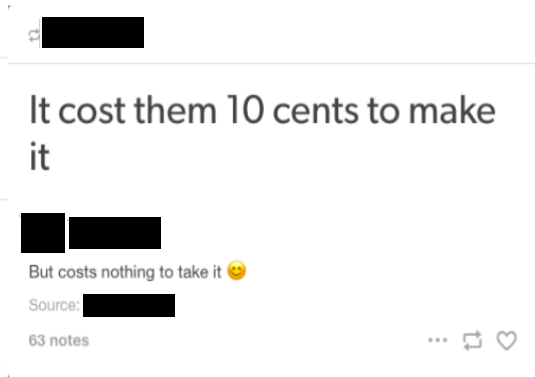


Figure 18



Figure 19



Figure 20

Figure 21: This is an example of an artifact that met the criteria for Intimidation. In the two images, an anti-lifter is being threatened for attempting legal action against a lifter. This kind of behaviour, threatening those that threaten members of the #Liftblr community is applauded. This post, also due to the nature of how it was written, also fits the criteria for Self-Promotion/Competence, so it was coded as two presentation of self strategies.

Anonymous asked:

Hello there, just thought you'd like to know that I've informed the police about you and your 'lifting', Nowak. 905-454-3581 7 Heath Drive, Brampton, ON L6S 1E5, Canada :D

answered:

Good Try!! I always have my IP Address blocked so I can't get doxxed I have no idea how you got this address because spoiler!! I live in Toronto. Also, attempting to doxx a minor is illegal in Canada (I doxxed you but you are over 18 ;). . .) and I have reported this to your local police.

You live in Newmarket Ontario Canada

More Specifically on York Regional RD 74

Want me to go into more detail?

IP Address- 184.146.164.154

Your service Provider- Bell Canada

You used Mozilla Firefox when asking me this question. (who still uses mozilla firefox anyway?)

You use windows 7 (wow you are old school)

You also currently have my page open...

Im not gonna go into as much detail as you did because im not trying to get you spammed with calls. Also you said my last name is Nowak which is a slavic last name and I'll be pleased to inform you that I'm African...

Nice try, trying to combat shoplifting by doing something illegal is not a good idea. But nice try and if you informed the police of some random household in Brampton Ontario I am sorry in advance to them.

LMAOOOOO

Omg

im ded lmao

OH FUCK DUDE

DEAD

XD

Always gonna reblog this

first time ive ever seen this lmao, set fire to their ass real quick

1,033 notes

Figure 21

Figure 22-24: These are examples of artifacts that met the criteria for Self-Promotion/Competency. **Figure 22** and **23** are examples of 'hauls'. **Figure 24** is an example of a lifter that is showing a firm understanding of the law and retail to combat anti-lifter rhetoric.

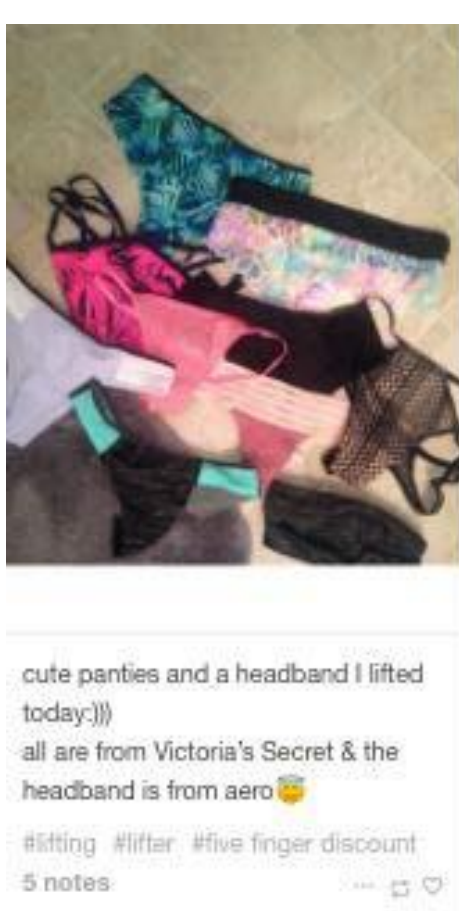


Figure 22



Figure 23

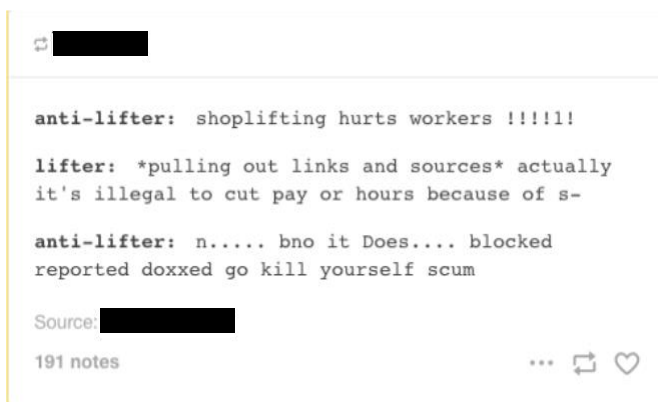


Figure 24

Figure 25-27: These are examples of artifacts that met the criteria for Exemplification, in which they are using moral judgements to justify shoplifting and combat anti-lifter rhetoric.



Figure 25

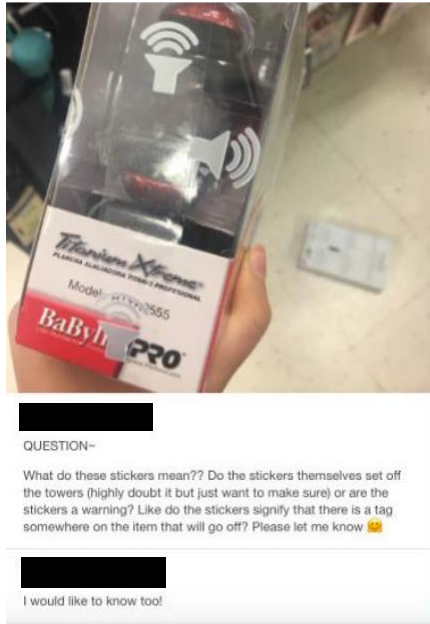


Figure 26



Figure 27

Figure 28-30: These are examples of artifacts that met the criteria for Supplication, in which the blogger is purposely showing a lack of competence, or attempting to invoke pity and or sympathy from other bloggers.



QUESTION-

What do these stickers mean?? Do the stickers themselves set off the towers (highly doubt it but just want to make sure) or are the stickers a warning? Like do the stickers signify that there is a tag somewhere on the item that will go off? Please let me know 🙏

I would like to know too!

Figure 28

In serious need of help

My mom's onto me. Today, she asked me if I was shoplifting, and I acted offended, as if the very implication of me doing such a thing was unheard of. I carried a face cream out as a cover in case I beeped (which I did).

I was so excited about my haul today, but that one question brought my mood down to the negatives. How do I throw my mom off my track?

Figure 29

My Life Is Over

The grocery store I always lift at has put door greeters at every exit so I can't do walkouts anymore....I should have known this would happen because a week ago I heard an employee saying he saw 'them' walk out the exit holding something....typical that other bitches lifting and messed up ruining my chances too. Pray 4 me I can't lift here anymore :(

12 notes



Figure 30

Kimberly N. Houzah was told to leave a Victoria's Secret location in Oxford's Quintard Mall Wednesday because another black female was caught shoplifting.



Another reason why VS is such a horrible fucking company.



Fuck that.



Rob them the fuck blind. Put them out of business.



Send the memo and ruin VS. Let them know what thieves stand for.

Source: the-real-eye-to...

7,280 notes



Figure 31: This artifact met the criteria for Ingratiation and Exemplification. In this post, members of the #Liftblr communicating that not only do they understand issues of race and racial profiling, they are using it as moral justification to rob stores even harder, and be an avenger. This also depicts that the #Liftblr community wants to promote racial equality and acceptance within the #Liftblr community.

Figure 32: This artifact met the criteria for Ingratiation and Exemplification. In this post, a member is displaying the profile of an anti-lifter in order to argue that there is no moral equivalence between a shoplifter and a Trump supporter. They are also intending to project humour into this post, which is why this post was also coded for Ingratiation.



Figure 33-35: These artifacts met the criteria for both Ingratiation and Self-Promotion/Competence. #Liftblr members answered these asks, in order to appear friendly and also to show off their competence as a shoplifter by providing advice. This was a common coding overlap during the in-depth content analysis.

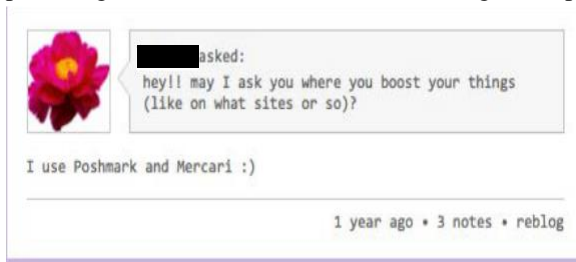


Figure 33

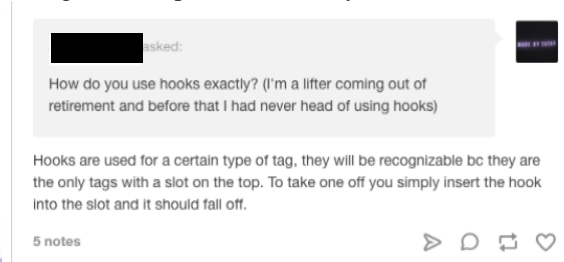


Figure 34

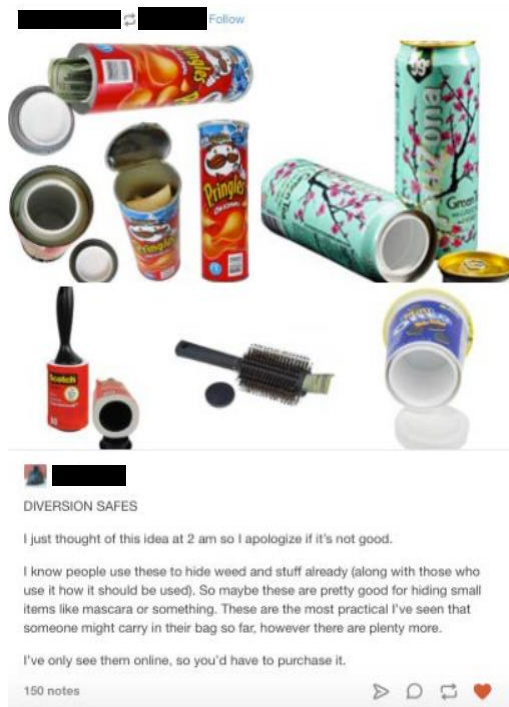


Figure 35

Figure 36: This was the email sent by Tumblr to warn individuals Tumblr users that the Russian government through the IRA was using Tumblr to spread false news and narratives in order to change the nature of specific online communities as well as to undermine democratic societies. As seen below, many of these accounts focused on spreading misinformation through political, feminist, #blacklivesmatter, pop culture and porn blogs. The list of imposter blogs is listed below, although these are only the ones discovered, and the ones Tumblr was willing to notify the public about.

Update on Russian-linked activity on Tumblr Inbox x

Tumblr <no-reply@tumblr.com>

Dear [REDACTED]

As part of our commitment to transparency, we want you to know that we uncovered and terminated 84 accounts linked to Internet Research Agency or IRA (a group closely tied to the Russian government) posing as members of the Tumblr community.

The IRA engages in electronic disinformation and propaganda campaigns around the world using phony social media accounts. When we uncovered these accounts, we notified law enforcement, terminated the accounts, and deleted their original posts.

While investigating their activity on Tumblr, we discovered that you either followed one of these accounts linked to the IRA, or liked or reblogged one of their posts:

- **1-800-gloup**
- **bellaxiao** previously known as: blogmadworldlove
- **bellygangstaboo**
- **blackness-by-your-side** previously known as: black-galaxy-magic, fullyfurrymiracle, u4guy, ufo-pilot-and-his-sexy-spouse
- **blacktolive**
- **cartnsncreal** previously known as: feelmvdraconballs

- **delroyheater** previously known as: delroyheater32, mastercucumber, scrumptiousluminarytimemachine, sexinstructor666, sexinstructor
- **destinyrush** previously known as: delightfullyghostlysong
- **funkycodex** previously known as: craftykryptonitedelusion
- **gogomrbrown** previously known as: go-mrbrown, infectedv0ice, todd-la-death
- **honestlyyoungpersona**
- **hustleinatrap** previously known as: thenaturecanpost, tumblercube
- **ineverstopexploringblog** previously known as: charleneffletcher
- **info-mix** previously known as: americanstatistics, crazypolitician, girlsagainst, illegalmom, just-stat, rochelbarr
- **jamesjelvecchio**
- **jenningsmiracle**
- **lagonegirl**
- **lamcbride**
- **massmedear** previously known as: massblog021
- **mooseblogtimes**
- **morningwoodz** previously known as: 5cubes, bangbangempire, empireofweird, gifempireohh, innerpicsempire, picsempire
- **nevaehtyer** previously known as: laserenita
- **postingwhileblack** previously known as: ghettablata, heygeraldmartinjohanssen, honestinjun, nativewolveshere
- **rebellloutwiththecrowd** previously known as: massivelystrangetyrant
- **shoutoutworldwide** previously known as: blackprideworldwide, krispmentalitycowboy
- **sumchckn** previously known as: blondeinpolitics, blvckcommunity, classylgbothomie, hwuudoin, politixblondie
- **swaginthearin** previously known as: blacklivesmatterusa, carzwithgirlz
- **the-real-eye-to-see**
- **thetrippytrip** previously known as: matrixpath, themostpost
- **thingstolovefor** previously known as: the-inner-mirror
- **this-truly-brutal-world** previously known as: awesomewhitepearl, free-mind-and-soul

You aren't in trouble, and don't need to take any action if you don't want to. We deleted the accounts but decided to leave up any reblog chains so that you can curate your own Tumblr to reflect your own personal views and perspectives.

Democracy requires transparency and an informed electorate and we take our disclosure responsibility very seriously. We'll be aggressively watching for disinformation campaigns in the future, take the appropriate action, and make sure you know about it.

— Tumblr