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Image Management on Facebook: Impression Management, Self Esteem and the Cultivation Theory

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Image Management on Facebook: Impression Management, Self Esteem and the Cultivation Theory

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Abstract

Image Management on Facebook: Impression Management, Self Esteem and the Cultivation Theory

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Within the cultural context of social media networks, this study explores the image management behaviors of untagging and selective posting of photos on Facebook. Through a survey, respondents answered questions regarding whether they engage in these behaviors and why they do so. This study sought to find a relationship between high self-monitors and the behaviors of selective photo posting and those with low self-esteem and the behaviors of selective photo posting. It is predicted that those who are high self-monitors and those with low self-esteem are more likely to engage in selective photo posting. This study also applies the Cultivation Theory to practices of image management while providing insight into the implications image management may have on our society.

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INTRODUCTION

Since its introduction, social media has had a significant impact on its users. New Internet behaviors have created behavioral norms that exist on these social media platforms. How users interact, speak to one another, and present themselves on the Internet and social media sites have created a whole new realm of behavioral norms to follow. Some of these behaviors can be detrimental to users' well being. This study explores the relationship of image management on the social media site, Facebook, particularly the behaviors of untagging and selective posting of one's photos in an effort to maintain a certain image. This study also applies the Cultivation Theory to social media sites in an effort to build support for the argument that image management creates a social network world that is "prettier" than the real world. This may have detrimental effects, such as the lowering of self-esteem and the increase of eating disorders.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A growing body of research indicates that we engage in image management in various social situations. Most research has focused on image management in face-to-face situations, particularly as it pertains to career success and performance appraisal. Previous studies have focused on how personality traits and certain situational factors affect image management (Boline & Turley, 2002, p. 141). However, in today's society, face-to-face interaction is being replaced by various technologies. Little research exploring image management online has been done, especially within the newest form of online interaction – social media sites.

Image management can be defined as "a process by which individuals present information about themselves to appear as they wish others to see them" (Kacmar et al., 2007, p. 16). Erving Goffman, who studied human interaction, first introduced the idea of impression management. Goffman described the social world as deceptive. In "The Presentation of Self and Everyday Life" (1959), Goffman describes human social interaction as a theatrical performance, meaning that people act as performers to give off certain impressions in certain social situations (Manning, 2009 p. 8). Therefore, we intentionally mislead people in efforts to give off a certain impression that we feel will benefit us within a specific social situation. Goffman uses the term "fabrication" to describe the way an individual misleads others (Manning, 2009, p. 9). Through fabrications, we frame ourselves to be who we want to be.

Goffman's impression management work has developed and continuous to be a popular research topic addressing studies of identity and social interaction. Many impression management studies use the theory of self-monitoring to measure how an

individual works to achieve a desirable self-image. Self-monitoring can be described as an "internal state combining self-observation and self-control" (Scher et al., 2007, p. 186). Self-monitoring is an internal process in which a person tries to control the impressions they give off to others as a means of self-presentation (Scher et al., 2007, p. 187). In trying to give off certain impressions of one's self, a person controls their behaviors to ensure that they are socially appropriate. Lennox (1984) describes two sources of information that a person uses to assess how to act: one's personal disposition and situational cues (p. 199). Some people, known as low self-monitors, rely more on their inner states and feelings in assessing the appropriateness of their behavior while others, known as high self-monitors, tend to respond to their social environment's cues when deciding how to behave appropriately (Lennox, 1984, p. 199). High self-monitors adapt their behaviors to specific social situations. They look at the way others are behaving in the immediate social scene for cues on how they should behave. On the contrary, low self-monitors use their internal factors – their attitudes, opinions, beliefs, and dispositions – as cues on how they should behave in certain situations. Therefore, they are less affected by situational factors than high self-monitors. Their behaviors are more reflective of their personality (Lennox, 1984, p. 199). Studies have shown that high self-monitors are more likely to conform than low self-monitors and show more inconsistency between their behaviors and attitudes (Scher et al., 2007, p. 187). It is thought that high self-monitors are more concerned with what others think of them than low self-monitors, making them more likely to conform in social situations (Sher et al., 2007, p. 190).

Studies show that high self-monitors are more concerned with what others think and are more likely than low self-monitors to "achieve desired images while

avoiding undesired ones" (Turnley & Bolino, 2001, p. 251). They are skillful in controlling their self-image and often use impression management tactics. Jones and Pittman (1982) came up with a list of impression management tactics (Turnley & Bolino, 2001, p. 352). These include:

- Ingratiation – using flattery in efforts to get others to view you favorably

- Self Promotion – displaying your successes and skills in efforts to appear competent

- Exemplification – striving to be seen as dedicated by exerting yourself to the fullest

- Supplication – displaying your needs and shortcoming in efforts to appear needy

- Intimidation – striving to be seen as threatening or dangerous by intimidating others

Turnley and Bolino's study (2001) found that high self-monitors would more frequently achieve the desired image of "likeable" when using ingratiation, "competent" when using self promotion and "dedicated" when using exemplification than low self-monitors (Turnley & Bolino, p. 353).

A similar study done by Bolino & Turnley (2003) found evidence that high self-monitors prefer to use positive impression management tactics (ingratiation, self promotion and exemplification) to negative tactics (supplication and intimidation) (p. 141). This same study also suggests that individuals who engage in positive impression management tactics are seen by others as more favorable than those who use all types of impression management tactics (Bolino & Turnley, 2003, p. 141). This study asserts that women are less aggressive in using impression management tactics than men and

therefore, are more likely to engage in positive tactics rather than negative ones (Bolino & Turnley, 2003, p. 141). Bolino & Turnley suggest that this may be because women follow the less aggressive tactics of the female gender role, which "discourages aggressive or assertive behavior" (Bolino & Turnley, 2003, p. 148). Therefore, men are more active and aggressive in managing their impressions while women are more likely to do so passively (Bolino & Turnley, 2003, p. 148).

When it comes to applying impression management to social media sites, little research has been done. However, some research has been done on identity construction on social networks. Identity is "that part of the self by which we are known to others" (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008, p. 1817). The Internet has forever changed the way we construct our identities. A study conducted by Strano (2008) addresses this phenomenon by exploring self-presentation through the main profile picture on a user's Facebook page. Facebook is a social networking site used predominantly by adolescents, teens and college students, but quickly growing a following by older populations. Facebook currently has more than 800 million active users with 50% of its active users logging on at least once a day (Facebook.com). The network provides the user with a profile to share his or her personal information and communicate with friends and acquaintances. Strano's study argues that Facebook profile images "can be seen as a form of 'implicit' identity construction in which users display personal characteristics through images" (Strano, 2008, p. 2). These images can now be easily altered through the help of digital photography, which allows the user to shape his or her photograph "into an idealized image representing social norms about desirable personal characteristics and socially accepted norms" (Strano, 2008, p. 2). This study also found gender and age implications in identity constructions on Facebook. Older Facebook users (31 years and

over) are the least likely to change their pictures, and this may be because they tend to be newer social network users who have not yet adjusted to the social norms of social media (Strano, 2008, p. 10). The study also found that women are more likely to change their profile pictures more frequently than men. The researcher suggests that this may be due in part to our society emphasizing the importance of a woman's appearance. Women are also more likely to choose a profile picture because it presents them in an attractive way, suggesting that women are more focused on beauty (Strano, 2008, p. 10).

Similar studies done on dating sites show that women choose profile pictures based on beauty and that "women may change their profile image more often in an effort to better approximate a beauty ideal" (Strano, 2008, p. 10). Other studies on dating sites have found that "people on Internet dating sites tended to 'stretch the truth a bit' in their online self-presentations" as they "selected photos to cover up undesirable features of their bodies, such as being overweight or too short" (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008, p. 1819). Additionally, women are more likely to choose a picture in which they are smiling in an effort to construct images of light-heartedness and beauty (Strano, 2008, p. 11).

A similar study was done on identity construction in Facebook and was centered on how Facebook users shape their identities "implicitly rather than explicitly; they 'show rather than tell'" (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008, p. 1816). This study found that users' Facebook selves "appeared to be highly socially desirable identities individuals aspire to have offline but have not yet been able to embody for one reason or another" (Zhao, Grasmuck, & Martin, 2008, p. 1830). This suggests that Facebook users may use photos that portray them to be better looking, more popular, or happier than they

actually are in reality. Therefore, there is evidence that one's online presentation and offline behavior and personality may be incongruent with one another.

Social identities on MySpace, a social network now losing popularity due to Facebook's growth, have also been studied. One such study found MySpace to be a place college students use for "identity exploration, engaging in social comparison and expressing idealized aspects of the selves they wish to become" (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 446). This study focuses on personal identity among young adults. In high school and college, young adults go through a stage of identity development before discovering their adult roles (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 447). It suggests that "the way individuals present themselves to others through impression management is involved in the development of the self" and that "individuals develop a sense of self from creating an impression they wish to give to others" (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 447). In this way, social media users are able to use their profile as a way to promote aspects of themselves in which they perceive as being desirable (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 450). This study also finds that social network users seek to captivate an ever-increasing audience of social acquaintances, rather than a close-knit group of friends (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 450). Therefore, users understand that unrealistic image management is more likely to be believed by distant acquaintances rather than close friends who know the users' real world image. This "online performance of self allows one to alter one's physical appearance, likes/dislikes, humor, popularity, etc. in a way that offline interactions would not permit" (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 450). When MySpace users receive approval through complimentary comments, this reinforces the act of these self-displays and provides "social verification"

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(Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 451). "I could say for certain that there is no one out there with a profile that one hundred percent matches who they are," said one of the study's participants. "If you look nice in a photo then you throw it up there" (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 451). This study also showed that through social comparisons of MySpace friends, users "construct a sense of self in relation to what their peers are doing" (Manago, Graham, Greenfield, & Salimkhan, 2008, p. 452).

A more recent study done by Siibak (2009) delved deeper into the meanings of photo selection on social media sites. When researching a popular social networking site among Estonian adolescents, Siibak found evidence that suggests that "girls creating their visual self value both the aesthetic, emotional, self-reflecting as well as aesthetic-symbolical aspects of photographing more than their male counterparts" (Siibak, 2009, p. 1). This gives evidence that girls may choose to post pictures of themselves that show them looking aesthetically pleasing. Siibak also asserts that the female gender role may be at the center of why adolescent girls view beauty as an important aspect of their social media profile picture (Siibak, 2009, p. 5).

Siibak's study used the self-discrepancy theory to explain the reasons behind managing one's social media image. This theory asserts that individuals have three self-domains:

- The Actual Self – an individual's representation of the attributes that he or she believes he/she possesses
- The Ideal Self – an individual's representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another person) wants you to possess

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- The Ought Self – and individual's representation of the attributes that someone (yourself or another person) believes you should possess (Higgins, 1987, p. 319)

The Ought Self comes into play in impression management. Individuals seek to represent the Ought Self by emphasizing the attributes they believe a person ought to possess in a certain social situation. Siibak's study on Estonian social network sites viewed virtual peer groups "acting as important others whose expectations are taken into account when naming the aspects and qualities that would lead to popularity in social networking sites" (Siibak, 2009, p. 6). Therefore, during impression management on social network sites, an individual may post pictures that influence attributes of the Ought Self.

The effects of self-identification and image management on social media sights are important to look at because they have the potential to cause harmful societal effects, such as creating distortions of realistic body image and beauty. These societal effects can be explored through the application of the Cultivation Theory. The Cultivation Theory posits that as individuals consume a certain media frequently, they begin to see aspects of that medium as representative of reality (Gerbner, 1998, p.180). Therefore, as women use the Internet and social media sites more frequently, they may begin to see the unrealistically beautiful photos others post as reflective of normal beauty standards. They may internalize this unrealistic concept of beauty, thereby making it difficult for them to ever be satisfied with their own self-image. George Gerbner, the founder of the Cultivation Theory, theorized that heavy television viewers were more likely to think what they see on television is equivalent to the real world (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, p. 164). For example, heavy television viewers were more likely to

overestimate the incidence of crime in their neighborhoods and in society as a whole. This is because of the high percentage of crime-related television content (Gerbner, 1978). This cultivation takes place over time and is a result of many, many exposures to the medium (Rosenberry & Vicker, 2009, p. 165).

The cultivation theory can be applied to any pervasive medium, such as the Internet. While Gerber researched television because it was the most pervasive medium of his time, the Internet is now the most pervasive medium today. Similarly, social networks can be seen as a pervasive element in the lives of young adults. Gerbner explained that television was "the basis of a broader world view" and a "significant source of general values, ideologies, and perspectives as well as specific assumptions, beliefs and images" (Gerbner, 1998, p. 185). Today, these characteristics belong to the Internet as it has become the medium that regulates what we think and do.

Many studies have focused on the Cultivation Theory as it pertains to self-image and distorted body image problems. Most of these studies look at television and magazines and their role in making females believe ideal beauty means excessive thinness. This study is more focused on exploring whether image management on social networks affects women's perceptions of ideal beauty.

A study done on college women using print advertisements found that making social comparisons to ultra-thin models "is significantly associated with greater internalization of the thin ideal and decreased satisfaction with one's own appearance" (Engeln-Maddox, 2005, p. 1114). This study uses a sociocultural model that describes body image problems and disordered eating as a result of the continued exposure to thin images. This prolonged exposure reinforces the Western ideal of thinness being attractive (Engeln-Maddox, 2005, p. 1115).

A similar study was done on the effects of fashion magazines on body dissatisfaction and disordered eating among females. This study also connects the media's promotion of the thin ideal to body distortion issues that remain at the center of anorexia and bulimia (Shaw, 1995, p. 15). It compared adolescents and adults and their responses to thin images present in magazines (Shaw, 1995, p. 20). Age, BMI and greater bulimic tendencies were positively correlated with greater responsiveness to images of thin models among adolescents (Shaw, 1995, p. 20). The adults, although still responsive to the thin ideal, were less responsive than adolescents (Shaw, 1995, p. 21). This is thought to be in part because adults, unlike adolescents, are not in a developmental stage in which they are concerned with collecting personal identity information (Shaw, 1995, p. 21). This may be related to the reason why female young adults are more likely to choose social network profile pictures that promote beauty.

Shaw (2005) uses Social Identity Theory, which states that one's social identity is "positively related to the degree of social attractiveness conferred by their membership of a particular social group" to describe why females have greater body dissatisfaction after being exposed to ultra-thin magazine models (p. 21). Shaw also explains that our culture provides cues that teach females at an early age that they are judged by their physical beauty (p. 21). Therefore, females work to conform to the ideal images of beauty that our society has spelled out for them. If they are not able to conform to this ideal image of beauty, they may experience body dissatisfaction, which may lead to disordered eating habits.

It is very possible that image management on Facebook and other social networking sites perpetuates this thin ideal. Female social network users may see image managed photos of their female friends due to the untagging of unflattering photos and

the selective posting of ideal, beauty centered photos. As the female social network user internalizes these standards, she may engage in social comparison, leaving her to judge herself based on an unrealistic, unnatural ideal of beauty. Through bandwagon effects, or the internal drive to conform to others in an effort to fit in, she may then begin to engage in the same untagging and selective posting of pictures to maintain a better image for others to see.

It may also be that social networks provide an environment conducive to peer evaluation and social comparisons, therefore making image management very important. One study looked at the role of the peer environment and its ability to provide a "subculture that emphasizes the importance of thinness through… peer pressure to diet and be thin and teasing from peers about weight and shape" (Gerner & Wilson, 2005, p. 313). Female adolescents believe being thin is connected to a better popularity standing among friends and increases the perception of being dateable (Gerner & Wilson, 2005, p. 314). This is linked to disordered dieting, poor self-image evaluations, and bulimia (Gerner & Wilson, 2005, pg. 314). This study also suggests "girls' friendships with males, more than females, are closely tied to how they feel about their bodies, reflecting a sociocultural emphasis on the importance of physical attractiveness for successful relationships with males" (Gerner & Wilson, 2005, p. 318). This may be tied to social media networks in that female users may look for peer acceptance and popularity while maintaining their images through photos.

HYPOTHESES

This study was based on four hypotheses centered on selective photo posting, which will be defined as the intentional untagging or posting of photos on Facebook. The user intentionally untags or posts certain photos of herself due to the photos' characteristics. For example, an individual may decide to post a photo of herself because she likes the way she looks in it and/or it shows her in a positive light. Similarly, she may untag a photo of herself because it is unflattering or shows her in a negative light. The behavior of untagging a photo occurs on Facebook when your Facebook friend posts a photo of you on your page. You have the option to leave the photo on your profile for your Facebook friends to see or remove the photo. The behavior of removing the photo is called "untagging".

> *H(1)*: The behaviors of photo untagging and selective photo posting among females exist on social media networks.

> *H(2):* Females who engage in impression management are more likely to engage in selective photo posting.

> *H(3):* Females who score low on self-esteem are more likely to engage in selective photo posting.

> *H(4):* The more the female uses social media, the more likely she is to engage in selective photo posting.

METHODOLOGY

PARTICIPANTS AND PROCEDURES

The population for this study consisted of females who have a Facebook account. The target population consisted of females between the ages of 18 and 23 (college-aged women), although women of all ages were able to participate. Before reaching this population, IRB approval was granted by a university's IRB Board. This population was reached by a survey built using Qualtrics (qualtrics.com). A link for the survey was posted on various Facebook pages with an explanation of the survey's use in a graduate student's thesis work. The survey was also disseminated to two university undergraduate classes. The students received a small amount of extra credit in exchange for their participation. The survey's initial page was a consent form, explaining that participation was voluntary, anonymous and that they could discontinue the survey at will.

By disseminating the survey through Facebook, recruitment occurred using a snowball sampling method. The survey was passed along and reposted by the researcher's Facebook friends. While this method has its limitations, using Facebook to obtain participants ensured that all participants had a Facebook account. Through its dissemination on Facebook and in undergraduate classes, 250 responses were collected. These responses were reduced to those answering that they were female and had a Facebook account, reducing the sample size to 183. Of the 183 respondents, 154 respondents were 18 to 25 years old, 20 respondents were 26 to 35 years old and 9 were

over the age of 35. One hundred and thirty of the respondents were students, 45 were employed, 7 were unemployed and 1 was retired.

MEASUREMENTS

The survey asked 20 questions, including demographic questions (age, gender, employment status). It included 4 main measures: selective photo posting, self-esteem, impression management and time. In addition to these measures, there were two questions asking whether a respondent was taking the survey for extra credit for a class (See Appendix A for survey questions).

Selective Photo Posting

As defined earlier, selective photo posting consists of intentionally posting or untagging a photo of one's self based on the photo's characteristics. Fifteen likert questions were asked to determine whether a person engages in selective photo posting on a 5-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questions used to assess whether or not someone engages in selective photo posting can be seen in Appendix B (See Appendix A for full survey). These fifteen questions were combined together to make one photo posting scale (Cronbach's Alpha = .794). The scale's mean was 38.99 and standard deviation was 7.70.

Impression Management

Impression management was measured using Lennox & Wolfe's Revised Self-Monitoring Scale (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). This scale consists of two scales focused

on the two key elements of self-monitoring: the "ability to modify self-presentation" and "sensitivity to the expressive behavior of others" (Lennox, 1984, p. 200). In a previous study, Lennox & Wolfe's scale reported a Cronbach's Alpha of .86 (Lennox & Wolfe, 1984). As stated in the literature review, those who are high in self-monitoring are more likely to use impression management techniques (Turnley & Bolino, 2001, p. 251). Therefore, a self-monitoring scale was used to assess impression management. This measure consisted of a set of 12 likert scale questions that range on a seven-point scale from very strongly disagree to very strongly agree, which can be seen in Appendix D (See Appendix A for full survey). This scale was proven to be reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha of .915, a mean of 57.90 and a standard deviation of 10.99.

Self Esteem

Self esteem was measured by using Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale (1965), one of the most widely used scales measuring global self-esteem (Richardson et al., 2009, p. 98). Rosenberg details self esteem as an element of the self-concept and defines it as "a positive or negative orientation toward oneself; an overall evaluation of one's worth or value" (Rosenberg, 1989). Rosenberg defines the self-concept as the "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings with reference to himself as an object" (Rosenberg, 1989). It is thought that self esteem represents a measure of an individual's self competence and self liking (Richardson et al., 2009, p. 98). Other studies have defined global self esteem as "the extent to which one prizes, values, approves or likes oneself" or "the overall affective evaluation of one's worth, value or importance" (Richardson et al., 2009, p. 98). The Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale provides a one-dimensional assessment of global self esteem (Richardson et al., 2009, p. 100). While

there are several variations of the scale, this study used the most commonly used version, which contains ten questions. The scale contains five questions that have a positive orientation and five questions with a negative orientation. The scale has ten likert questions that lie on a 4-point scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree, which can be seen Appendix C (See Appendix A for full survey). This scale was proven to be reliable with a Cronbach's Alpha of .899, a mean of 32.81 and a standard deviation of 5.06.

Time

Time was measured by two questions in the survey. The first question asked, "How many times a day do you log onto Facebook?" and the second question asked, "How long have you had a Facebook account?". Response frequency and percentages can be seen in Appendix E (See Appendix A for complete survey). The mean for the first question was 2.73 while the standard deviation was .772, and the mean for the second question was 3.72 while the standard deviation was .561.

RESULTS

Research Question 1

The first research question was a broad question to see if selective photo posting does in fact occur on Facebook among the population sampled. The study asked a set of 15 questions that formed a Selective Photo Posting Scale. It is clear that the behaviors of selectively untagging and posting photos of oneself on Facebook are occurring.

- Sixty-nine percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed to the statement "I will not post an unattractive photo on Facebook".

- Eighty percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed to the statement "I want to look my best in photos that are on my Facebook profile".

- Seventy percent of respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed to the statement "I do not care how I look in photos that are on my Facebook page".

- Fifty-seven percent of respondent strongly agreed or agreed to the statement "I untag photos of myself due to privacy reasons".

- Sixty-six percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed with the statement "I untag photos of myself to prevent employers/school from seeing them.

- Roughly seventy percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed to the statement "I untag photos of myself to prevent physically unappealing photos from being seen by others".

- Fifty-six percent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed to the statement "I untag photos of myself when I do not like the people in the photos with me".

- Fifty-three percent of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement "If I post a photo, it must show off my body's best attributes".

- Sixty-seven percent of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement "If I post a photo, it must include me and another person – significant other, friend, etc.".

- Fifty-nine percent of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement "If I post a photo, it must be inline with who I am as a person".

- Seventy-nine percent of respondents strongly disagreed or disagreed with the statement "If I post a photo, it must be appropriate for my job/teachers/family/etc".

Research Question 2

To analyze the second research question, a correlation test was run to test the relationship between the Impression Management Scale and the Selective Photo Posting scale. Impression management and selective photo posting were not significantly correlated, $r = -.114$, $p > .05$. Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Research Question 3

To analyze the third research question, a correlation test was run to test the relationship between Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale and the Selective Photo Posting Scale. Self esteem and selective photo posting were not significantly correlated, $r = -.011$, $p > .05$. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

Research Question 4

To see whether the amount of time on Facebook (daily usage and years spent with an account) is related to selective photo posting, 2 correlations were run. For "How many times a day do you log onto Facebook?", r = .066, $p > .05$. For "How long have you had a Facebook account?", r = .034, $p > .05$. Time and selective photo posting were not significantly correlated. Hypothesis 4 was not supported.

DISCUSSION AND LIMITATIONS

Research Question 1 provided key insights into the behaviors of Selective Photo Posting. Results showed that females from the sample did partake in the behavior of selective photo posting. When asked how they respond to the statement "I will not post an unattractive photo on Facebook", nearly 29 percent of respondents said they strongly agreed and roughly 40 percent of respondents said they agreed. This means that looking one's best in a photo seems to be a significant reason why females selectively photo post on Facebook. Similarly, when asked how they respond to the statement "I want to look my best in photos that are on my Facebook profile," 33 percent of respondents strongly agreed and 47 percent of respondents agreed. While this question is not as specific as the former, it again shows that image is a very important factor in choosing whether one's photo should remain on Facebook. When asked if they agreed with the statement "I do not care how I look in photos that are on my Facebook page," 48 percent of respondents disagreed and 22 percent strongly disagreed. This statement again gives insight into how females value image via management of their photos on Facebook.

Further questioning provided answers into why respondents might untag a photo of oneself on Facebook. Untagging occurs when an individual removes a picture that her friend posted of her on Facebook. Fifty-six percent of respondents said they untag photos due to privacy reasons, 66 percent do so to prevent employers or school authorities from seeing their photos and 43 percent do so to prevent family or significant others from seeing the photos. These responses show that respondents consciously think about what others may think of their photos. Seventy percent of respondents reported that they untag photos of themselves to prevent physically unappealing photos from being

seen by others. Untagging a photo because one does not like the other people in the photo with her or because the photo is not inline with her personal character were less popular reasons for untagging a photo. Untagging a photo to "prevent physically unappealing photos from being seen by others" provided to be the most important consideration of the choices provided when respondents decided whether to keep a photo of herself on Facebook.

A set of questions also focused on what was important to respondents when they posted a photo of themselves on Facebook. More respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statements "If I post a photo, I must look happy in it", "If I post a photo, it must show off my body's best attributes", and "If I post a photo, it must include me and another person" than agreed with these statements. Forty-four percent of respondents agreed and 15 percent strongly agreed with the statement "If I post a photo, it must be in line with who I am as a person". This statement means that these respondents do not want to be seen as fake or inauthentic by their Facebook friends. Thirty-three percent of respondents reported strongly agreeing with the statement "If I post a photo, it must be appropriate for my job/teachers/family/etc. to see", while 46 percent of respondents reported agreeing.

Results for research Question 2 on how image management is related to selective photo posting proved not to be significant. It was predicted that females who are high self-monitors would be more likely to engage in selective photo posting. While Lennox & Wolfe's Revised Self-Monitoring Scale proved to be reliable and previous studies have shown that high self-monitors are more likely to engage in image management techniques than low self-monitors, it may be that selective photo posting is not a good predictor of image management. Previous studies of image management have

used Lennox & Wolfe's Revised Self-Monitoring Scale to study image management in face-to-face settings while only a few studies have used it to relate to online image management. This is due to the infancy of the Internet. Lennox & Wolfe's Revised Self-Monitoring Scale was created in 1984 with face-to-face interaction in mind at a time when social media was non-existent. Therefore, the scale's questions may not be suitable for assessing online image management behavior. For example, two of the questions refer to reading other people's thoughts and emotions by looking them in the eyes. Clearly, looking someone in the eyes to assess their thoughts is not feasible with social media. Further research could be done to revise the scale to more appropriately assess online behavior.

Results for Research Question 3 on how self-esteem is related to selective photo posting were also not significant. It was predicted that females with low self esteem, as rated on Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale, would be more likely to engage in selective photo posting. While Rosenberg's scale and the scale created to rate selective photo posting behavior were both reliable, results did not show that females with low self esteem are more likely to engage in selective photo posting. In fact, it may actually be that people with high self esteem are more likely to engage in selective photo posting in efforts to maintain their image. It may be that those with low self esteem are less likely to ever take photos of themselves or take photos with friends, therefore making them less likely to be tagged by a friend in a photo. Selective photo posting is not likely to happen when one refuses to ever be in photos. Similarly it may be that those with low self esteem do not post any pictures of themselves on Facebook. Their profile pictures may not even be pictures of themselves – they may be of their children, a pet, etc.

A significant limitation to this study is the low number of respondents who scored low in self esteem on Rosenberg's Self Esteem Scale. Only .06 percent of respondents scored low on self esteem, which presents a significant problem for analysis. It may be that people with low self esteem are less likely to have a Facebook account. Without a significant number of respondents rating low in self esteem, this research question could not be accurately explored. While Rosenberg's Self Esteem scale is proven to be reliable, personal questions asked in this scale may be affected by problems of social desirability. It may be difficult for a person to admit that they feel they are useless or like a failure. While these feelings may exist, it may be that respondents are embarrassed to admit that they are dissatisfied with themselves. Similarly, most of Rosenberg's statements are extremely strong, definitive statements. It may difficult for a respondent to agree to such strong statements as "All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure" and "I certainly feel useless at times". While the respondent may experience these feelings, such strong, definitive statements may seem overwhelming.

The final research question looked for a relationship between time and the behaviors of selective photo posting, but no significant correlations were found. It was hypothesized on the basis of the Cultivation Theory that the longer a respondent has had a Facebook account, the more likely she would be to engage in selective photo posting. A second hypothesis suggested that the more time a respondent spends on Facebook, the more likely she would be to engage in selective photo posting. However, the results did not support these hypotheses.

A significant limitation existed when measuring time due to the small percent of respondents who only had a Facebook account for less than six months. Only one percent of respondents reported having a Facebook for less that six months, while

two percent reported having an account for six to twelve months, 21 percent reported having an account between one year to three years and 76 percent of respondents have had an account for over three years. It is difficult to obtain respondents that are new to Facebook, because the social media site is now so pervasive. Because the sample consisted mainly of college students, these students have been engaging with social media since high school. Newer Facebook users tend to be older in age, but this age group was not well represented in the sample. Because there was a low number of respondents who accounted for new Facebook users, the Cultivation Theory cannot be accurately applied.

The same problem exists for the second question dealing with time. Forty-five percent of respondents reported logging onto Facebook one to five times per day while 35 percent reported logging on six to ten time per day. Only .5 percent of respondents said they never log on and 19 percent said they log onto Facebook eleven or more time per day. In order to more accurately apply the Cultivation Theory to this research question, a larger number of respondents who rarely (hardly ever and never) log onto Facebook and extremely often (more than eleven times per day) are needed.

Sampling is another major limitation of this study. Respondents were sought using a snowball method of sampling on Facebook. Therefore, much of the respondents knew the researcher or were friends of friends. Because of this method, it is likely that many of the responses came from University of Texas at Austin graduate students and former University of Wisconsin-Madison students. Because the researcher has strong connections in Texas and Wisconsin, it is likely that most responses came from these two geographic areas. For those responses obtained by offering two undergraduate classes extra credit, all responses came from students. Because there was

such a heavy sampling of students, particularly from the Advertising Department at the University of Texas at Austin, it may be that responses were more similar than would be if the survey were distributed to other university departments or geographic areas. Because of these limitations, this study is not very generalizable.

Conclusion

It is believed that the behaviors of untagging and selective photo posting are occurring on social media networks. These behaviors may be females' efforts to manage their images in a society that judges them based on physical attractiveness. If these behaviors are happening on social media sites, social network users may be creating a more aesthetically pleasing world than actually exists. These behaviors may be due to efforts in gaining popularity from friends, making oneself look more dateable, or looking better than one's social media friends. Social comparison takes place where social media network users judge themselves in comparison to their friends' physically appealing photos. Through the bandwagon effect, others begin representing themselves on these social media networks by untagging, or deleting photos that do not represent them in a physically appealing way, and selective posting, or only adding pictures to your profile that are physically appealing. Users begin creating a self-identity based on who they want to be rather than who they actually are.

While not supported in this particular study, it still may be possible that overtime, as people are spending more and more time on social media network sites, through cultivation, woman begin to perceive the world as being prettier than it is in reality. It then may become harder for females to meet what they perceive to be the image of ideal beauty – perfect photos that may be digitally enhanced to omit unappealing

physical attributes such as weight, height, acne, etc. – offline. Beauty obtained through image management on social media sites is not equivalent to real world beauty, but this may become increasingly difficult for females to understand. We must continue to examine the extent to which social networking may contribute to unrealistic standards of beauty and the potential ill effects these standards may pose.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

SURVEY

1. Do you have a Facebook account? YES/NO

2. How many times a day do you log onto Facebook?

    a. Never
    b. One to five times per day
    c. Six to ten times per day
    d. Eleven or more times per day

3. How long have you had a Facebook account?

    a. Less than 6 months
    b. Between 6 months and 12 months
    c. Between 1 years and 3 years
    d. Over 3 years

4. Do you post photos of yourself on Facebook? YES/NO

5. Are your Facebook photos set as private so that only your Facebook friends can see them? YES/NO

6. Are your Facebook photos set as private so that no one (not even your Facebook friends) can see them? YES/NO

7. Have you ever untagged a photo of yourself on Facebook? YES/NO

8. Please answer the following statement:

Strongly Agree   2   3   4   Strongly Disagree

I will not post an unattractive photo on Facebook.

9. Please answer the following statement:

Strongly Agree   2   3   4   Strongly Disagree

I want to look my best in photos that are on my Facebook profile.

10. Please answer the following statement:

Strongly Agree   2   3   4   Strongly Disagree

I do not care how I look in photos that are on my Facebook page.

11. Please answer the following statements regarding untagging Facebook photos of yourself:

Strongly Agree   2   3   4   Strongly Disagree

I untag photos of myself due to privacy reasons.

I untag photos of myself to prevent employers/school from seeing them.

I untag photos of myself to prevent family or significant others from seeing them.

I untag photos of myself to prevent physically unappealing photos from being seen by others.

I untag photos of myself when I do not like the people in the photos with me.

I untag photos of myself if they are not inline with my personal character.

12. Please answer the following statements regarding posting photos of yourself on Facebook:

Strongly Agree   2   3   4   Strongly Disagree

If I post a photo, I must look happy in it

If I post a photo, it must show off my body's best attributes.

If I post a photo, it must include me and another person – significant other, friend, etc.

If I post a photo, it must be inline with who I am as a person.

If I post a photo, it must be appropriate for my job/teachers/family/etc. to see.

If I post a photo, I must look my best in it.

13. Please answer the following statements:

Strongly Agree   2   3   4   Strongly Disagree

I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others.

I feel that I have a number of good qualities.

All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure.

I am able to do things as well as most other people.

I feel I do not have much to be proud of.

I take a positive attitude toward myself.

On the whole, I am satisfied with myself

I wish I could have more respect for myself.

I certainly feel useless at times.

At times I think I am no good at all.

14. For each statement, indicate your general perception of your abilities:

Very Strongly Agree 2   3   4   5   6   Very Strongly Disagree

In social situations, I have the ability to alter my behavior if I feel that something else is called for.

I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give to them.

When I feel that the image I am portraying isn't working, I can readily change it to something that does.

I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.

I have found that I can adjust my behavior to meet the requirements of any situation in which I find myself.

Once I know what a situation calls for, it's easy for me to regulate my actions accordingly.

I am often able to read people's true emotions correctly (through their eyes).

In conversations, I am sensitive to even the slightest change in the facial expression of the person with whom I am conversing.

My powers of intuition are quite good when it comes to understanding the emotions and motives of others.

I can usually tell when others consider a joke to be in bad taste, even though they may laugh convincingly.

I can usually tell when I've said something inappropriate by reading it in the listener's eyes.

If someone is lying to me, I usually know it at once form that person's manner of expression.

15. What is your gender? Male/Female

16. What is your age?

    a. Less than 18 years old
    b. 16 to 25 years old
    c. 26 to 35 years old
    d. Over 35 years old

17. What is your employment status?

     a. Student
     b. Employed
     c. Retired
     d. Unemployed

18. Are you taking this survey for extra credit? YES/NO

19. What class will you be receiving extra credit for?

20. What is your EID (if you are receiving extra credit)?

Appendix B

SELECTIVE PHOTO POSTING SURVEY QUESTIONS

Strongly Agree   2   3   4   Strongly Disagree

1. I will not post an unattractive photo on Facebook.

2. I want to look my best in photos that are on my Facebook profile.

3. I do not care how I look in photos that are on my Facebook page.

4. I untag photos of myself due to privacy reasons.

5. I untag photos of myself to prevent employers/school from seeing them.

6. I untag photos of myself to prevent family or significant others from seeing them.

7. I untag photos of myself to prevent physically unappealing photos from being seen by others.

8. I untag photos of myself when I do not like the people in the photos with me.

9. I untag photos of myself if they are not inline with my personal character.

10. If I post a photo, I must look happy in it.

11. If I post a photo, it must show off my body's best attributes.

12. If I post a photo, it must include me and another person – significant other, friend, etc.

13. If I post a photo, it must be inline with who I am as a person.

14. If I post a photo, it must be appropriate for my job/teachers/family/etc. to see.

15. If I post a photo, I must look my best in it.

Appendix C

ROSENBERG'S SELF ESTEEM SCALE QUESTIONS

Strongly Agree   2   3   Strongly Disagree

1. I feel that I am a person of worth, at least on an equal plane with others. (Positive orientation).

2. I feel that I have a number of good qualities. (Positive orientation).

3. All in all, I am inclined to feel that I am a failure. (Negative orientation).

4. I am able to do things as well as most other people. (Positive orientation).

5. I feel I do not have much to be proud of. (Negative orientation).

6. I take a positive attitude toward myself. (Positive orientation).

7. On the whole, I am satisfied with myself. (Positive orientation).

8. I wish I could have more respect for myself. (Negative orientation).

9. I certainly feel useless sometimes. (Negative orientation).

10. At time I think I am no good at all. (Negative orientation).

Appendix D

Very Strongly Agree 2   3   4   5   6   Very Strongly Disagree

1. In social situations, I have the ability to alter my behavior if I feel that something else is called for.

2. I have the ability to control the way I come across to people, depending on the impression I wish to give them.

3. When I feel that the image I am portraying isn't working, I can readily change it to something that does.

4. I have trouble changing my behavior to suit different people and different situations.

5. I have found that I can adjust my behavior to meet the requirements of any situation in which I find myself.

6. Once I know what a situation calls for, it's easy for me to regulate my actions accordingly.

7. I am often able to read people's true emotions correctly (through their eyes).

8. In conversations, I am sensitive to even the slightest change in the facial expression of the person with whom I am conversing.

9. My powers of intuition are quite good when it comes to understanding the emotions and motives of others.

10. I can usually tell when others consider a joke to be in bad taste, even though they may laugh convincingly.

35

11. I can usually tell when I've said something inappropriate by reading it in the listener's eyes.

12. If someone is lying to me, I usually know it at once from that person's manner of expression.

Appendix E

SURVEY QUESTIONS DEALING WITH TIME

How long have you had a Facebook account?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Less than 6 months	2	1.1	1.1	1.1
Between 6 months and 12 months	4	2.2	2.2	3.3
Between 1 and 3 years	38	20.8	20.8	24.0
Over 3 years	139	76.0	76.0	100.0
Total	183	100.0	100.0	

How many times a day do you log onto Facebook?

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Never	1	.5	.5	.5
One to five times per day	83	45.4	45.4	45.9
Six to ten times per day	64	35.0	35.0	80.9
Eleven or more times per day	35	19.1	19.1	100.0
Total	183	100.0	100.0	

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