The Online Presentation of Self: Re-examining Goffman's Presentation of Self Across Contemporary CMC Contexts

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This dissertation titled
The Online Presentation of Self: Re-examining Goffman's Presentation of Self Across
Contemporary CMC Contexts

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ABSTRACT

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The Online Presentation of Self: Re-examining Goffman's Presentation of Self Across Contemporary CMC Contexts

Director of Dissertation: Laura W. Black

The focus of this dissertation is the examination of Goffman’s presentation of self as it takes place in contemporary online contexts. Past research has thoroughly examined Goffman’s notion of self-presentation or impression management. Indeed, the field of communication, as well as other scholarly fields, holds Goffman’s work as a major theoretical framework that continues to guide modern scholarly inquiry. For example, scholars have used his theoretical framework to help explain self-presentation as it unfolds in computer-mediated communication (CMC) contexts. That said, this research has typically used older forms of CMC that are no longer widely used.

In order to examine online impression management, this dissertation reviews prior scholarly work, beyond Goffman, to lay the groundwork for focused study of online self-presentation. Scholars from psychology have developed a series of impression management strategies that can be used to engage in impression management. In particular, when engaging in impression management people can enact different levels of five strategies: self-promotion, ingratiatory, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. Using a measure of these impression management strategies, this study assessed how frequently people engage in these strategies in both face-to-face and CMC interactions. In addition, the current study provides a justification for using a series of independent variables that past research has identified as influencing communication in
online contexts: perceived importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity, and social presence. These variables have not, collectively, been used to study online impression management.

Using an online survey, this study recruited participants from three online contexts to complete measures that tap into the dependent and independent variables. A total of 195 people participated in data collection. Results indicate that face-to-face impression management strategies differ from those used in CMC contexts. In addition, online impression management does vary based on CMC context. Regression analysis indicates that perceived importance, anonymity and expectation of future interaction each served as significant predictors of online impression management strategies and can account for substantial variance in many of the strategies. Future studies should use these variables when examining online impression management and/or CMC.

Approved: _____________________________________________________________

Laura W. Black
Assistant Professor of Communication Studies
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my grandparents: Marie and Alfred Meyer; Miriam and Harry Kuznekoff. Their families immigrated to this country seeking opportunity and all of them worked tirelessly to provide a better life for their children and, in turn, their grandchildren. Today, two generations later, all of their grandchildren are college graduates and I am eternally thankful for everything they have given me.
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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Without a doubt, the everyday, social lives of billions of people around the world have become intertwined and perhaps somewhat dependent on modern communication technology. These communication technologies take a variety of forms and can include something as simple as a mobile phone or something as complex as a virtual world. Regardless of the channel of mediated communication, the fact that new communication technology, or computer-mediated communication (CMC), has become so pervasive and popular in usage, across the globe, indicates that we are seeing a change in the way that people interact with others. Certainly, we still have face-to-face (FtF) communication and this remains the cornerstone of human communication; however, interactions facilitated and perhaps enhanced by CMC remain an interesting area to study, especially given the rapid pace with which new communication technology is developed and adopted.

The focus of the current study is to examine how people engage in the online presentation of self using new communication technology. We already know that the presentation of self (Goffman, 1959) plays an important role in our everyday, FtF interactions. We also know that this presentation or performance of self occurs in CMC contexts and that communicators can use advantages available to them, by the medium, to selectively present themselves (Walther, 1996; 2006). Furthermore, scholars from a variety of disciplines have examined how people form online identities and engage in self-presentation online (see Turkle, 1995); however, much of this research occurred during the 1990’s. Such research has focused on communication technologies of the time, which were primarily text-based in nature. Modern day communication technologies like Facebook, YouTube, online multiplayer video games, and virtual environments still
maintain much of the communicative abilities of their text-based forerunners; however, these modern CMC contexts also present new challenges to the presentation of self and these challenges have yet to be thoroughly examined. Thus, this dissertation will examine self-presentation or identity management in contemporary CMC contexts and focus on the roles that the theoretical concepts of identifiability/anonymity, importance, expectation of future interaction, and social presence play in influencing online self-presentation. Furthermore, this dissertation will also examine differences in impression management strategies between online and FtF self-presentation, as well as examine the ways in which impression management varies in different CMC contexts.

This chapter will serve as an introduction by previewing the discussion of prior literature contributing to our scholarly understanding of the presentation of self. Next, this chapter will examine how influential new communication technology has become in our daily lives by providing examples of how people use these new communication channels. Finally, to help illustrate how the online performances of self can differ from the FtF presentation of self, I will provide three examples from my own life, with each example pertaining to a different CMC context. These examples will help to illustrate how technology has facilitated my performance of self, in different CMC contexts, and the ways in which these performances differ from each other. The three CMC contexts I will discuss include: the massive multiplayer online (MMO) game Battlestar Galactica Online (BSGO), the online virtual environments of the Halo video game series, and the social networking site Facebook. Not only are each of these CMC contexts fairly popular,
but they also help to explain how an individual may use different impression management, or self-presentation, strategies in each environment.

The Presentation of Self

One area of study that can help us more fully understand the impact of our digital existence is the study of the presentation of self, accomplished through new communication technology. One scholar who can help in this understanding is Erving Goffman (1959). Goffman posits that “the general notion that we make a presentation of ourselves to others is hardly novel; what ought to be stressed...is that the very structure of the self can be seen in terms of how we arrange for such performances” (1959, p. 252). Goffman’s work has had a profound impact on our scholarly understanding of the concept of the self and the interactions taking place in the communication process. In particular, the notion that we perform a version of ourselves to an audience is an important consideration to take into account in any study of identity or self-presentation. Furthermore, the role that communication plays in this process has been an area of interest to the communication discipline. The second chapter of this dissertation will review how the discipline has examined self-presentation. In particular, communication scholars have examined online self-presentation in a variety of contexts, including personal homepages, social networking sites (SNS), and online dating.

Certainly, a variety of scholars, from a range of fields, have continued to apply Goffman’s (1959) work to issues such as identity construction. Of relevance to the current study is the way in which CMC has affected how we engage in self-presentation online. Put another way, how does Goffman’s work inform our understanding of the
performance of self via CMC? Although not a direct answer to this question, Miller (1995) provides an interesting connection between Goffman and electronic communication (EC), a precursor to CMC. Specifically, Miller highlights the notion of the electronic self. In a sense, the electronic self is similar to the self communicated in the physical world. The key difference is that the electronic self is situated entirely in the virtual worlds of cyberspace and lives on, even when we are not actively online. Welser, Smith, Fisher, and Gleave (2008) note, “many social interactions now take place in contexts where people leave traces of their identity, their actions, and their social relations” (p. 116). These digital traces continue to exist in the digital world, well after users have logged off. In a way, the electronic self is an extension of the self we perform in everyday life, yet exists in a way not previously available, due to limited communication technology. Miller posits that, with advances in EC, we might see the emergence of this electronic self. According to Miller (1995):

sociality and interaction are necessary for us to know who we are and what we can say about ourselves to others, and much more depth and richness in EC is needed before ‘electronic selves’ can emerge. Contrariwise, much of the depth and richness that we can think of adding would be to make EC more like face-to-face interaction, which might suggest that electronic selves could be developed in a different social context (continuing the extension of the social world from the hamlet to the city to the global village) but that many of the basic issues, moves and processes that go on would be the same as they always were. (p. 7)
This is indeed an interesting notion, especially given the significant advances in communication technology in the roughly 15+ years since Miller wrote this and how some of Miller’s ideas have come to fruition. Miller suggests that added richness and depth to EC might allow for an extension of the self to this new, digital context, yet the basic processes, issues, and motives present in the performance of self in the physical world would still be at play in the digital world. Given this, it would appear that a true electronic self would likely not be able to emerge until CMC contexts are able to communicate greater depth and richness by, perhaps, making them more similar to FtF interactions. The interesting part of Miller’s comment is that, in modern day CMC, we likely have reached the depth and richness needed for the electronic self to emerge.

Due to the technology available in 1995, Miller primarily discussed personal webpages and how these can function as a vehicle for the performance of the self in EC. Miller states that “the selves presented in Web pages have not seemed to me to be qualitatively different from selves presented in other ways, and their styles of presentation can easily be likened to non-electronic presentation of self” (1995, p. 7). While I agree that virtual presentations of self can most certainly be likened to the real-world presentation of self, I argue that we have reached a point in our technological development in which the electronic self can be qualitatively different from our non-electronic presentation of self or our FtF presentation of self.

Scholars have already addressed this notion and examined issues such as identity and how it has been impacted by the Internet (Turkle, 1995), how people use the Internet for communication and leisure activities (Waskul, 2003), and the relationship between
one’s virtual and real-world or non-virtual identity (Waggoner, 2009). However, much of this research focuses on outdated communication technology and fails to take into account modern CMC channels such as Facebook. Given this, prior research represents a steppingstone from which we can study modern forms of CMC, specifically how the electronic self is similar to and different from our non-virtual self. It is these similarities and differences, and how they facilitate the electronic presentation of self, that will be the focus of this dissertation. Before proceeding with a more in-depth discussion of Goffman’s (1959, 1963) work, it is first necessary to address some of the differences between Miller’s (1995) notion of the electronic self and how this has been enacted through modern communication technology.

**Depth and Richness in Modern CMC**

Miller (1995) argues that more depth and richness in EC needs to be present before the electronic self can emerge. At the time, Miller was likely right. By the mid 90’s the Internet had begun to penetrate households across the country and people were beginning to adopt the new communication technology that was electronic mail (e-mail). In 1990, less than 1% of the population of the United States had access to the Internet. By 1995, this figure was slightly less than 10% and by 1999 this figure had grown to nearly 37% (World Bank, 2011). In the mid 1990’s, personal webpages were something that an elite few were able to construct, given the need for certain technical knowledge in order to actually build a webpage. We had yet to see true video streaming and real-time video conferencing was not yet widely available. Most computers of the time only had a few hundred megabytes of memory and a modern cellphone has more processing power,
storage, and connectivity than computers of that time period. Given these limitations, Miller was right; however, we have clearly experienced a great deal of technological innovation since 1995 and according to some sources (Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2011a; World Bank, 2011) today nearly 80% of American adults use the Internet.

I posit that today, CMC does have the depth and richness Miller (1995) identified as being necessary for the electronic self to emerge. Coupled with this electronic self is the notion of online self-presentation. We already know that the presentation of self is important in FtF interactions and the following chapter of this dissertation will examine how scholars have examined the online presentation of self. Beyond online self-presentation, communication scholars have also presented the notion that through advantages present in the CMC channel, users may selectively present or perform certain aspects of themselves to portray an idealized version of him or herself (Walther, 1996). Additional scholars have continued this train of thought by examining how people present themselves in cyberspace. Such research has laid the groundwork for our understanding of the presentation of self in CMC contexts. However, prior to this it is necessary to first explain some of the terminology I will be using in the remainder of this dissertation, in particular the binary terms real-world and virtual.

Real-World vs. Virtual

Beyond the added richness that modern CMC affords users, the salience of online identities and experiences is also of relevance to this study. This is perhaps best exemplified by the terms real-world and virtual, which are often conceptualized as binary terms, in contrast to each other. Waggoner (2009) posits the following question regarding
this binary, “are virtual identities necessarily any less ‘real’ than non-virtual identities to the users who create and maintain them” (p. 158)? This question is certainly interesting and worth examining. Waggoner, who interviewed users of online games, states that all of his participants noted that their virtual identities were “deeply intertwined with their real-world identities and interests” (2009, p. 158). Waggoner goes on to discuss the terminological problem of using the terms “real-world” and “virtual” as binary terms (see Waggoner, 2009 for this discussion). Along with other scholars, Waggoner proposes the use of the term non-virtual be used in place of the real-world/virtual binary. According to Waggoner (2009):

the term ‘non-virtual’ is more accurate and sets up a more appropriate contrast to ‘virtual.’ This substitution would create a continuum that focuses on the technological and physical differences between virtual and non-virtual identities and experiences rather than on the authenticity or ‘realness’ of those experiences. (p. 161)

While I agree with Waggoner (2009) that gamers or users can have very salient and real experiences in virtual environments, I will not exclusively use the term non-virtual as I feel this simply privileges virtual over non-virtual, and only changes which term could be viewed as most important. That being said, to accommodate other interpretations of the phrase real-world, I will attempt to use alternate language in this dissertation.
Web 1.0, 2.0, and 3.0

Outside of the personal computer revolution of the 1980’s, the introduction and evolution of the Internet and the web could arguably be one of the most important revolutions of the modern age. Although a full history of the evolution of the web is beyond the scope of this dissertation, we can identify and explain the differences between the two main stages of this evolution, as well as offer some predictions of what may happen in the third stage. These evolutionary phases are typically given the moniker Web 1.0 and Web 2.0.

The first phase of this evolution was Web 1.0. Put simply, Web 1.0 focused on content providers and the ability to quickly and easily publish content and send this content to readers. In this version of the web, a few content providers were able to create and send content to a massive audience. Arguably, this stage of the web is similar to the print industry, in which a few newspapers in a major city could reach thousands or even millions of readers. Given this structure, users were not able to fully construct an online identity (see Miller, 1995). Web 1.0 laid the groundwork for additional richness to be added into the online experience. The next evolution of the web would build on this foundation by dialing up the richness and creating the social web that we use today.

According to Cormode and Krishnamurthy (2008) “the essential difference between Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 is that content creators were few in Web 1.0 with the vast majority of users simply acting as consumers of content, while any participant can be a content creator in Web 2.0” (p. 2). This is certainly a major evolution, in regards to content creation. For example, look at YouTube and the ability for anyone with a
computer and Internet connection to create and share content viewable by millions of users. This radical shift in content creation and generation is the hallmark of Web 2.0, making the use of the Internet a social experience. Furthermore, Web 2.0 allowed for the social web to exist. This is the phase of the web in which SNS first became available and widely used. Web 2.0 allows users to create content across a variety of different CMC contexts. Although fragmented, as a user may have a different identity or login for each CMC context, Web 2.0 clearly shifted content generation to the user instead of a select few.

Perhaps the next stage of the web evolution, Web 3.0, will be the connecting of these fragmented identities together. Currently, many users have a variety of different online logins, perhaps one for each CMC context they are actively engaged in. Arguably, users may even portray themselves differently in each online context. Web 3.0 may usher in the connection of different CMC contexts and tying this with one’s FtF identity. That being said, it may be the case that Web 3.0 enables users to construct a stable, singular online identity. At this point, the possibilities of Web 3.0 are merely speculation; however, we may already be in the beginning stages of the move from Web 2.0 to Web 3.0.

Presentation of Self in CMC: Past Research

Zhao (2005) notes that much of the research examining the self in cyberspace has “followed mainly the Goffmanian tradition by focusing on the presentation of self to others in the online environment” (p. 388). Zhao also identifies several scholars who have authored works that address this presentation of self to others online and it is worth
taking a look at some of these authors. One author who has written about the online presentation of self is Turkle (1995).

When discussing identity and the presentation of self, Turkle (1995) uses interviews with users of Multi-User Dungeons (MUDs) as a way to explain and examine the self in online environments. MUDS are typically role-playing games taking place in virtual environments that are described to the user through text. The MUDs Turkle discusses are entirely based on plain text, meaning no graphical representation of the environment, or other users, is used. Thus, all interactions in these MUDs take place through simple text.

Turkle (1995) identifies several themes or tensions that emerged from the interviews and these include the boundaries between playing in a virtual game and real life, interpersonal intimacy via CMC, and even anonymity. These are certainly themes or tensions still present in modern CMC; however, I would argue that these themes are different today than they were 20 or 30 years ago. For example, the presentation of self in a MUD is fundamentally different than presentation of self in an MMORPG like World of Warcraft. The presentation of self via a personal website in the 1990’s is fundamentally different from the presentation of self in a social networking site like Facebook. It is these differences that are important for communication scholars to look at for a variety of reasons, including their massive popularity and the differences afforded to users of these CMC channels.

Zhao (2005) states “the proliferation of self in cyberspace has been explained largely in terms of the detachment of the self from the body in telecopresent interaction:
as others cannot see who we really are” (p. 388). Zhao does have a good point here, specifically that cyberspace allows individuals the freedom of being anonymous or at least visually anonymous to other users. The notion of the detachment of the self from the body, through cyberspace, has implications for how people determine if their self-presentations are interpreted by others as we want them to be. This detachment would be important in situations in which an individual is portraying a radically different self than their FtF self. However, an important question to ask is how are we, through modern CMC, reattaching the digital self to our physical self, with both intended and unintended consequences?

Waskul (2003) also notes this tension, including the similarities and differences between our online and everyday personhood. As Waskul (2003) explains:

An online self is, at one level, no different from selfhood in any other context; a self on the Internet is something that is symbolic, communicated, presented, and negotiated. On the other hand, as Marshall McLuhan might insist, alterations in the means by which people will communicate will subtly, yet powerfully, transform the boundaries and nature of social interaction and selfhood. (pp. 24-35)

It is in this transformation or altering of the boundaries and nature of our interactions and our very identities, facilitated by CMC, that the current study is focusing. This becomes a rather salient point given the massive popularity of modern or new communication technologies.
Popularity of New Communication Technologies

Without question, the advancements made in communication technology over the past thirty years have had an impact on the ways in which we interact with other people. We have moved far beyond personal webpages, which certainly do exist but have become far more interactive than in the 1990’s. Today, we can comment on our friends’ Facebook page, follow a celebrity via Twitter, use FaceTime to place a video call, make a Skype phone call, and even interact with other people in virtual worlds like World of Warcraft or SecondLife. Furthermore, we can watch YouTube videos and post our thoughts on them; we can rate products on Amazon and provide feedback that others may use to inform their purchasing behaviors. People can quickly and easily start a blog or comment on another person’s blog posts. We can enter into discussions with other people from topics ranging from politics to cat litter. In essence, these advancements have taken what we do via FtF interactions and created a new, virtual space through which we can perform these same actions, although differently than in FtF, and with a potentially larger audience. Through CMC we have nearly removed the barrier of geographic distance from the communication process. One communication technology that takes FtF interaction, but transplants it to a virtual space, is social networking sites.

Social Networking Sites

Perhaps the newest communication technology, adopted by a massive audience, is social network sites (SNS). These websites are online services that provide a system for users to “(1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and
traverse their list of connections and those made by others” (boyd & Ellison, 2008, p. 211). SNS like Facebook or MySpace have become very popular over the past decade and today millions of unique users visit these sites to communicate with others on a daily basis.

Beyond the popularity of such sites, SNS allow users near instant contact with their social network, regardless of geographic location. Furthermore, SNS allow individuals the ability to organize for collective action, whatever that action might be. For instance, in response to riots in London in the summer of 2011, David Cameron, the British Prime Minister, proposed that access to SNS might be cutoff in particular situations. According to Gross (2011), Cameron stated that authorities were going “to look at whether it would be right to stop people communicating via these websites and services when we know they are plotting violence, disorder and criminality” (p. 2). In the United States, the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit (BART) “cut off cellphone signals at ‘select’ stations in response to a planned protest” (Hill, 2011, p. 1). In other countries, SNS and other social media have been used to protest dictators and spread free speech. Clearly, SNS is a powerful communication tool, not just for organizing for collective action, but for interpersonal and organizational ties as well. Perhaps one of the best examples of a successful SNS is Facebook.

The social networking site Facebook has over 750 million active users and half of those users login to Facebook everyday (Facebook, 2011a). Using Facebook, virtually anyone can keep in contact with her/his friends, regardless of geographic location. Furthermore, users can not only post updates about what is going on in their lives, but
also comment on the posts or updates of others, regardless of how trivial that information might be. Users also have the ability of uploading digital photos and videos, and identify which of their friends are present in that content. This linkage between user generated content and other users is a key contribution that Facebook adds to the richness of CMC.

Beyond the richness that Facebook allows, the sheer popularity of this CMC context is an important consideration. With over 750 million active users, Facebook essentially connects nearly 10% of the roughly 7 billion people that make up the world’s population. This ability to connect to such a large number of people is something that has never been accomplished before; in part because social networking sites have only recently, since the mid 2000’s, become popular and available to anyone with a computer. Other SNSs have also shown substantial popularity. One of the newer SNS is Google+, which according to some predictions had reached nearly 20 million users in roughly the first 3 weeks it was available (Arthur, 2011).

*Video Chat*

Another communication technology that has added to the depth and richness of mediated communication is real-time video conferencing. One such technology is called FaceTime, which is a built in feature of the iPhone 4, iPad 2, and the most recent iPod Touch (Apple Inc., 2011). FaceTime allows anyone with these devices, or a Mac computer running the software, to place video calls to another user. When actually in a FaceTime call, each user can see the other person and speak with them. FaceTime is essentially a phone call, but allows both users to see the other person, thus adding back in
some of the nonverbal cues removed when we move from FtF conversations to telephone conversations.

Although limited in its popularity, as of 2011, the additional context cues that FaceTime introduces back into the communication process is something that has not been accomplished by older forms of CMC. In essence, FaceTime has brought back some of the nonverbal cues left out by telephone, email, and instant messaging. While FaceTime is clearly still similar to a regular telephone call, it is nonetheless fundamentally different from older CMC. Given these similarities and differences, new communication technology like FaceTime have the potential to affect the way we communicate with others via CMC.

Beyond FaceTime, video chat has also been a recent addition to two popular SNSs Facebook and Google+. In 2011, Facebook announced, in partnership with Skype, that it would be adding the ability for users to easily video chat with their friends from within Facebook, without the need for additional software. This new feature even allows Facebook users to leave video messages for their friends (Facebook, 2011b). Google+ has taken this a step further through a feature called hangouts. Hangouts not only allow users to video chat with another Google+ user, but also allows up to 10 users to simultaneously engage in a video chat and interact with each other in the same hangout (Google, 2011a).

*Online Virtual Environments*

A third advancement in communication technology is the advent of virtual worlds. In essence, virtual worlds are three-dimensional spaces, of varying proportions that exist only in digital form. In general, virtual worlds such as WoW or BSGO allow
users to interact with other people within their respective virtual environments. Many of these virtual worlds allow for real time communication using text-based messaging or real time voice. In addition, a key characteristic of these virtual environments is the ability to use an avatar (a virtual, three-dimensional representation of one’s physical self) to interact with other people. These avatars are generally customizable and function as a conduit through which people can interact with others, all within this virtual environment.

WoW in particular is a very popular massive multiplayer online role playing game or MMORPG. By 2010, WoW reported having over 12 million subscribers and as Peckham (2010) notes, this is equivalent to the combined populations of Greece, Cuba, and Portugal. Indeed, other virtual environments are also rather popular. Take SecondLife (SL) for instance. SL is an online virtual environment in which users can create their own virtual space to populate with virtual objects as they see fit. SL is complete with its own functioning economy and allows users to interact with others through a customizable avatar, editable by each individual user. In Q4 2010, SL had roughly 795,000 average monthly repeat logins. In this same financial quarter, Second Life users spent 105 million hours in the environment and the world size of Second Life was 2.08 thousand km$^2$ (Linden, 2011).

**Online Gaming**

Similar to virtual worlds, online gaming typically allows players or users from around the world to interact with each other in virtual spaces. Such games can be running off of the user’s personal computer or a video game console like the Xbox 360 or PlayStation 3. Many of the console games available include multiplayer content that
allows users to play against each other in small virtual environments. For example, the video game Halo 3 has several multiplayer maps in which gamers can play with or against several other people. Video games in general are rather popular, with 97% of young people (ages 12 to 17) in the United States reporting that they play video games (Associated Press, 2008). By itself, Halo 3 sold an estimated $170 million within 24 hours of being release (Reuters, 2007) and within 18 months one billion multiplayer matches had been played online (Bungie, 2009).

Beyond the popularity of video games, the communication ability of newer games is something worth noting. Modern multiplayer video games allow players to communicate with each other, in real time, using their voice. This is very different from previous generations of multiplayer games (i.e., MUDs), which only allowed for text-based interactions. Furthermore, the ability to easily interact with others in a three dimensional space is also something that has advanced over time. Thus, video games of today are far more advanced than online games of the 1990’s and have added back in the nonverbal cues associated with communicating by voice.

Mobile Devices

In addition to particular CMC contexts, the communication devices we use to access various communication channels have also developed at a rapid pace. In particular, mobile phones or cell phones have become rather commonplace in modern society. In the United States alone, 95% of 18-34 year olds have a cell phone and of all adults in America, 85% own a cell phone (Zickuhr, 2011). Smart phones in particular, a category of mobile phones that have only recently hit the mainstream, demonstrate how
the features of a mobile device impact how people communicate. Take the iPhone for instance, which allows users to not only access the Internet in a full featured web browser, but also has the capability of running applications, or apps, that bestow additional features. For example, the Facebook app allows iPhone users to not only access their Facebook profile, but also allows users to fully interact with their Facebook friends. Indeed, 250 million Facebook users access their account by using their mobile device and Facebook claims that “people that use Facebook on their mobile devices are twice as active on Facebook than non-mobile users” (Facebook, 2011a, p. 1).

In modern day society, people are reachable nearly anyplace and anytime. For better or worse, we can more easily stay in touch with loved ones and friends, or even conduct business from home or while commuting to or from work. Most modern phones allow users to send and receive picture messages and some phones, such as the iPhone 4, even allow users to place and receive video calls. Again, these features are very different from the technology available in the 1990’s and it stands to reason that these advanced features of modern CMC may also affect the way we communicate with others. These advancements also have implications for online self-presentation. Just as these advancements add more richness to CMC contexts, they also add in more options for self-presentation. For example, instead of creating a personal home page we can create a social networking profile. Instead of interacting with other people through a MUD, a text-based CMC context, we can interact through a virtual world in which we have complete control over the way our avatar looks and can even talk with the other person using real time voice. With modern CMC we can communicate with a greater number of people,
more frequently than ever before. In addition, advancements in communication technology give users more options and freedom to engage in online self-presentation and it is understanding this change to the presentation of self that this dissertation is centered around.

Implications of the Online Self

Another consideration, beyond the popularity of new CMC technologies, is the implications and practical impact of this online self-presentation on individuals and society. We could argue that, for many people, the interactions and communication occurring online has a direct impact on their FtF interactions. One example of this direct impact is cyberbullying, which has received substantial media coverage in the past several years. Cyberbullying could be defined as “when teens use the Internet, cell phones, or other devices to send or post text or images intended to hurt or embarrass another person” (National Crime Prevention Council, 2011). Although a broader definition of cyberbullying would include anyone who engages in this behavior, not just teens, cyberbullying has had some profound effects. For example, Tyler Clementi, a Rutgers University student, committed suicide after his roommate allegedly broadcast video of a sexual encounter Clementi was having with another male (Golgowski, 2011).

Beyond the psychological and potential physical harm from online interactions, our online self-presentation can have impacts in regards to privacy. Take Facebook, which allows for targeted ads based on the content of a users profile. One case study of this practice, identified by Facebook, is a photography company that targeted ads towards women based on relationship status. “Facebook Ads provided CM Photographic the
ability to target their exact demographic—24-30 year old women whose relationship status on Facebook indicated that they were engaged” (Facebook, 2011c).

In addition to targeted ads, what one says or posts online may have implications in regards to employment. Bennett (2011) reported on a study of employers and how they use SNS in the hiring process. According to that report, over 90% of employers used SNS to screen potential employees and nearly 70% rejected a potential employee based on something posted on an SNS. It appears as though over 75% of employers check Facebook, 53% check Twitter, and 48% check LinkedIn. Almost half of employers, 47%, checked SNS to screen applicants almost immediately after receiving the application.

Beyond the examples cited above, our online self-presentation, or identity management, is certainly important and can have FtF implications. In many contexts in which we are readily identifiable, what we say and do online can have implications in the physical world. In addition, these same online interactions have implications for our online relationships and interactions with others.

Review

These are only a few examples of a multitude of communication technologies that have had a substantial impact on the way we interact with others. Furthermore, and of importance to the current study, is the additional richness and depth added to CMC by these new technologies. These new CMC contexts add in exactly what Miller (1995) identified as being necessary for the digital self to emerge. Given the added depth and richness of CMC and the notion of being able to present an idealized version of ourselves online (Walther, 1996), it appears that the prerequisites for the emergence of the digital
self have been in place for quite some time. Of further interest is the connection between our digital self-presentation, mediated through technology, and our FtF self-presentation, as well as the research opportunities in this area.

Because these new communication channels essentially take traditional forms of communication and pipe them through technology, communication researchers are presented with a substantial opportunity. This opportunity is the ability to study questions about communication and human interaction that have been important questions for the discipline, and examine them in more detail and at a faster pace. While certainly there are differences between FtF and mediated communication, both function as ways of exchanging meaning with others. Of relevance to the current study are the ways in which people are interacting differently than in the past and this is primarily due to advancements in communication technology. These differences have shifted the way in which people communicate with others and the question of how have people changed the way in which they communicate with others, due to CMC, is an important question not only to communication scholars, but to those who use CMC to interact. Furthermore, we are beginning to see instances in which CMC and FtF communication begin to overlap and mutually inform each other. For example, it has become relatively common for someone to read another person’s Facebook posting and, when they see them in the physical world, talk with them about that posting. Another common example of this is people holding FtF conversations with people but sending text messages on their mobile phone. In this instance they are engaging in both FtF and mediated communication, something simply not possible twenty or thirty years ago. Understanding the ways in
which FtF and mediated communication overlap each other are vital if we, as a discipline, are to understand how people communicate and interact in the modern day world.

In summary, we already know that people engage in the presentation of self in FtF interactions. Furthermore, scholars have examined how the same processes of self-presentation that occur in FtF are present in CMC contexts. That being said, this research has almost exclusively examined these performances within the CMC contexts of the 1990’s and this presents several limitations. First, few people in the United States had access to the Internet during this decade. Second, CMC technologies of the time were based entirely on text-based interactions, something modern day CMC still has but has been moving to more visual and vocal elements. Third and finally, CMC of the 1990’s lacked richness and while today’s communication technology has not exactly caught up with the richness in FtF interactions, modern CMC contexts are far richer than those available in the 1990’s. While past research illuminates the presentation of self in CMC contexts, we must not forget that the findings of these studies our bounded by the limitations of the CMC contexts used by the scholars and these contexts are limiting. Given this, it would make sense to re-examine and perhaps reimagine the presentation of self in modern day CMC contexts.

Today, the electronic or digital self has become an engrained part of existing in our modern society. However, we have not examined the ways in which we manage online presentations of self in modern day CMC contexts or how these online self-presentations relate to our FtF presentation of self. As communication scholars, we should examine the processes that go into the development of the electronic self, the
presentation of self in modern CMC contexts, and how these processes are similar to and different from the FtF interactions we have with others. Thus, it is important for scholars to examine this electronic self, using Goffman’s (1959, 1963) work as the theoretical underpinnings of a systematic investigation into the online presentation of self. This is the area in which this dissertation will contribute.

Examples From CMC Contexts

To aid in understanding how someone may engage in online self-presentation, using modern forms of CMC, and how these self-presentations may differ based on the context, I will elaborate on three CMC contexts and how my presentation of self in these contexts can vary from my presentation of self in my FtF interactions. I will also explain why I, intentionally, try to keep these aspects of my digital self separate and isolated, as well as my reasons for doing so. In order to respect the privacy of those individuals I interact with in these CMC contexts, I will use aliases in place of their usernames, as well as use aliases for the groups I interact with or am a part of. In addition, I avoid disclosing my usernames for these contexts, except for Facebook, which uses my real-world identity and this is easy enough to identify from this dissertation.

Battlestar Galactica Online

Battlestar Galactica Online is a massive multiplayer online game (MMO) by BigPoint, a German gaming portal that develops and publishes browser-based games (Bigpoint, 2011a). BSGO is based on the reimagined and award winning television series Battlestar Galactica (Moore & Eick, 2004). In BSGO, players interact with each other by piloting various different spaceships throughout virtual deep space (see Figure 1). Players
can belong to one of two factions: the Colonials or the Cylons. From within their faction, players take part in special missions, daily assignments, and other activities both with and against other players. Players can communicate with each other through a text-based messaging system. However, many players use a program called TeamSpeak (TeamSpeak Systems, 2011) to communicate with other players using their voice. By June, 2011, BSGO had nearly 3.5 million registered users (Bigpoint, 2011b) and unofficially has 6.7 million registered users by November, 2011.

Figure 1. Screen capture from BSGO.

I have been an active BSGO player since January, 2011. While in the game I am only identifiable by my username, which is a self-assigned alias. I do not use my legal name as my username and the only identifying information, which is only available to the
game developers, is the email address I used to sign up for the game. Given this, my real-world or FtF identity is hidden from others in the game and any identifying information shared with others is a conscious decision on my part.

Several months after I started playing BSGO, I began to play the game online with other people on a regular basis. During the first few months I typically kept to myself and did not interact with other players that much. I might occasionally respond to or post a question in the chat window but, for the most part, I avoided interacting with others. However, I reached a point in the game at which I realized that, to continue to succeed in the game, I would need to work with other people. Eventually, I started playing with a person called Bentley on a regular basis. When I started playing with Bentley we added each other to our friends list. In BSGO, when a user is added to someone’s friends list that user’s online status (online or offline) is available to their friend and if either friend is online, the other is able to tell where in the game he or she is.

For roughly 3 weeks, Bentley and I would routinely form a squad when we were both online. When in a squad, users essentially play the game together as teammates and share in their successes. After playing this way for several weeks, Bentley lost the ability to communicate through the in-game text chat. Through some ingenuity on his part, Bentley managed to give me instructions for downloading and configuring a program that allows me to talk with other people, while still in the game. By downloading this software, called TeamSpeak 3 (TeamSpeak Systems, 2011), I was introduced to a group of people Bentley had been playing and communicating with. At this point I started to play the game with these other people and ultimately was invited to join their guild or
wing, called Clubs and Diamonds. A wing could be viewed as a larger group of people than a squad, who agree to a similar way of playing BSGO. 

The important thing to keep in mind here is that I do not know the non-virtual identity of the people I play with in Clubs and Diamonds and they do not know my name. Despite this, we are all able to function as a team and accomplish tasks that we would not be able to do as individuals. Beyond playing the game together, I have witnessed members of the wing providing social support for other members. For example, one member called ZeusBringer was discussing how he had lost his job nearly two years ago, but might be called back to work in the near future. He seemed excited by this prospect and other members offered positive support and encouragement. This all occurred, despite the fact that we do not know each other’s real name, only each other’s username.

In another example, Tiberius who is a 21-year-old member of Clubs and Diamonds, seemed a little depressed because he had not had a girlfriend in five years and this was starting to become frustrating for him. Other members who were online that night tried to console him and offer support, which appeared to help lift his spirits. Several days later, one of the members asked Tiberius how he was doing and expressed genuine concern for Tiberius’s well being. As luck would have it, Tiberius had begun to date a woman and was in very good spirits.

In the months I have been playing as a member of Clubs and Diamonds, I have seen and been part of the group spending hours online together, interacting in a virtual environment. Despite the fact that we do not know each other, I have come to consider some of the members of Clubs and Diamonds as, at the very least acquaintances and
perhaps even friends. When I sign on at night I am generally glad to see that other members of the wing are on and look forward to talking with them while playing the game.

I have also seen what appears to be genuine caring for the different members of the wing. For example, I was in a small squad with Beaufighter whose wife was recovering from minor oral surgery. Upon logging on to TeamSpeak 3 (TeamSpeak Systems, 2011), Mandrake, another member of the wing, immediately asked Beaufighter how everything had gone with his wife’s surgery. Mandrake seemed genuinely concerned and even relieved that everything had gone smoothly and Beaufighter’s wife was recovering. Surprisingly, I have even experienced members of the wing glad to see me back after not seeing me on the game for several weeks. I find this surprising because of my other experiences in multiplayer gaming, which are very different from my experiences in BSGO. In my past experiences I have typically found other gamers to be rude and rather abrasive. I was surprised when the gamers in Clubs and Diamonds were actually supportive and cared, at some level, about the well being of others.

*Myself in BSGO*

Although I am fully aware that I am rather anonymous in BSGO, while in the game I behave similarly to how I behave in FtF interactions. I typically am respectful to my teammates, listen to what they have to say, and offer help when I can. I feel comfortable enough to ask them questions and typically expect a polite response back, which is often the case. Occasionally, I do curse while communicating with them, but this is not outside the norm of the wing and is typically not directed towards other Clubs and
Diamonds members. Although I definitely know that I am anonymous, I present my
digital self in a way that is similar to most of the FtF encounters in my everyday life. One
reason I do this is because I know I will interact with many of these people in the future.
Given this, it does not make sense to treat them poorly and to give them reason to not
want to interact with me in the future. I also believe that the norms of BSGO, and any
CMC context for that matter, play a part in explaining why I behave and communicate
the way I do. Despite my presentation of self in BSGO being relatively close to this
presentation in FtF interactions, I do not link these two identities and choose to remain
anonymous.

I chose to not connect these identities for several reasons, but primarily because I
am rather comfortable having my real-world identity separate from my electronic self on
BSGO. I certainly do not believe that connecting my BSGO identity with my Facebook
account would be detrimental. That being said, I generally feel it is better to be cautious
and keep the two separate. This is in part a hold over from my experiences in another
online virtual environment, separate from BSGO. This other virtual environment is
multiplayer matches of the Halo video game series and my self-presentation in this
communication context is radically different from other CMC channels and my FtF
presentation of self.

Halo

The Halo video game series spans five games for the Xbox and Xbox 360 video
game consoles and these games include, in order of release, Halo: Combat Evolved, Halo
2, Halo 3, Halo 3: ODST, and Halo: Reach. In addition, the series also has two
announced games Halo: Combat Evolved Anniversary and Halo 4, scheduled to be released in 2011 and 2012 respectively. The anniversary edition of Halo: Combat Evolved marks the tenth anniversary of the series introduction on the Xbox video game console. All of the games are published by Microsoft and developed by either Bungie Studios or 343 Industries. Aside from the unreleased games, I own and have played all five Halo games.

As of June 2011, I have played in 6,103 multiplayer matches of the video game Halo 2, 3,802 multiplayer matches of the video game Halo 3, and 1,102 matches of the video game Halo: Reach. Combined, this is over 11,000 multiplayer games played, over the course of roughly seven years. If we assume the typical game lasts about 10 minutes, than I have spent the equivalent of over 76 entire days playing in multiplayer matches of Halo video games. While in multiplayer matches, which is facilitated by a subscription service called Xbox LIVE (XBL), I am able to talk, in real time, with other players through a simple headset. This allows players to communicate with each other simply by talking.

As a Halo player, I am identified by my gamertag on XBL, which also happens to be the same as my username in BSGO. A gamertag is a self-selected alias that one creates when setting up his or her XBL account. While playing in any multiplayer game on XBL the gamertag is typically the only designation or name associated with that person’s digital character. So, for example, when I play in multiplayer matches of most video games, people typically refer to each other by their gamertags, just as they would refer to someone by their first name in FtF interactions.
Since 2004, when online multiplayer gaming for the Halo series was first introduced, I have developed a unique self-presentation that I perform through my XBL account. This presentation of self is very different from the presentation of self I perform in my everyday, face-to-face interactions, and even different from my presentation of self in BSGO. In the Halo gaming environment (see Figure 2) I am loud, yell at other people for little reason, and often am rather abrasive. Aside from one of my close friends, his gamertag is Ralph52, who regularly plays with me, it would appear that most of the people who I play with or against prefer not to play in a game with me again. I come to this conclusion based on the reputation or “rep,” which is part of my profile on XBL (see Figure 3). One’s rep is based on feedback anonymously provided by other XBL gamers. These other gamers can designate if they preferred playing with me or want to avoid me in the future. In addition, they can also provide additional details, by selecting it from a list, that further explains why they prefer me or want to avoid me.
Although I do not know how many people have submitted reputation feedback, it does appear that 9 out of 10 people who played against me want to avoid playing with me in the future (see Figure 3). This appears to primarily be because of my behavior in the game, with 31% reporting that I was unsporting, 25% said I quit the game early, and 6% said I was aggressive. In regards to how I communicate with people, 12% said I engaged in trash talking, and 7% said that I they wanted to avoid me either because of my language or because I was disruptive. Truth be told, I would say this is a fairly accurate portrayal of my presentation of self while playing games on XBL. To further illustrate this point, I will provide an example of my behavior in the game and how this would lead people to want to avoid me in the future.
During a multiplayer match of Halo 3, I was on a team of four people. One of my teammates dropped out of the game before it fully loaded, bringing our team down to three. The other gamers on my team were one of my close friends, Ralph52, and another XBL gamer, Pete, who I had not played against. This particular match involved two teams (red and blue) with four people on each team. The match took place on a multiplayer map titled Avalanche, which is a large symmetrical map shaped like a U. On either end of the U are the bases and starting points for the red and blue teams respectively. At the bottom of the U is a cliff that, if one jumps off of, will result in that player’s death. The map is large enough that players can drive vehicles from one base to the other, and this is typically helpful since driving substantially cuts down on the amount of time it would take to walk from one base to the other.
This particular game was set up as capture the flag. In this game type, the red and blue teams each have a colored flag at their base and the goal of the game is to capture the other team’s flag and return it to your own base. The first team to capture the other flag three times, or more times than the other team in the time allowed, wins. As previously mentioned, my team had three players, including myself, out of a possible four. The other team had a full four players, putting us at a numerical disadvantage. When the game started, I immediately made my way to one of the vehicles that appears on our side of the map. Pete, the gamer neither Ralph 52 or myself had played against, started to yell that he wanted this vehicle. I disregarded this comment, got into it anyway, and started to make my way from our starting point to the middle of the map. Pete started to get more verbally hostile and I responded in kind. He then got in another vehicle, which has a heavy machine gun on it, and started to shoot me with that weapon. After a brief argument with Pete, I ended up being killed by the other team, since Pete had weakened me by firing on me.

The game proceeded for roughly another 8 minutes, with neither team managing to capture the other’s flag. Throughout this time Pete and I continued to argue and insult each other. Whenever one of us died the other would comment on how bad of a player the other was. With roughly 2 minutes left, both teams scoreless, our team managed to sneak over to the other team’s base and grabbed their flag. After we exited their base, the three of us got into a drivable vehicle, similar to a Jeep or Hummer, and proceeded to drive away. I was driving the vehicle, Pete was holding the flag in the passenger seat, and Ralph52 was in the gunner position providing cover for our getaway. We managed to
drive away from the other team’s base as they were respawning, leaving them unable to stop us. The other team was left with no vehicles and essentially no possible way of catching up with us. With roughly 1-minute left we were over halfway back to our base and, without question, we were going to win the game.

As we completed the left turn to round the U-shaped part of the map, I made an abrupt right turn and headed straight towards the cliff. It seemed to take Pete several seconds to realize that I was intending to drive all three of us off the cliff. As we approached the edge of the cliff, driving at full speed, Pete yelled “what are you doing” and tried to get out of the vehicle, he was too late. As we drove over the cliff, I could see Pete get out of the passenger side; however, his momentum carried him over the edge and the three of us, along with the flag, plummeted to our deaths. As we watched our bodies fall into the ocean below, I said “that’s what you fucking get for being an ass.” We watched as the remaining 30 seconds ticked by and what was a certain victory turned into a tied game. I openly laughed while the game ended.

Pete seemed stunned, he simply said, in a quiet voice, “I can’t believe you did that”, and repeated this several times. Ralph52 was silent and didn’t respond until after we had fully left the game and only the two of us could speak. After leaving the game, I apologized to Ralph52, but said that I wanted to teach Pete a lesson and felt that throwing the game would do just that. Ralph52 didn’t seem too upset by this and told me later that he was a bit surprised, but thought it was funny.
Myself in Halo

In other multiplayer matches of the Halo series, I routinely act in a rather obnoxious way. I often yell at people who don’t perform well, even people on my own team. I often quote movies and even sing small passages of songs, for no pressing reason. On occasion, I betray my teammates when they aren’t doing well in the game or if they are simply annoying me. In general, I disregard typical standards of behavior and act rather childish in many of the games of Halo that I play in. The question is, why does an educated adult act in such a way?

I attribute my behavior, and essentially my self-presentation in multiplayer matches of Halo, to three main factors. The first is that the norms of the game, developed and communicated by the gamers, establishes an environment in which this type of behavior is somewhat acceptable. Although cursing and using abusive language against other XBL gamers is against the terms of service, it doesn’t seem like people are actually punished for their poor behavior. This leads into the second factor, the lack of consequences. Essentially, gamers have little need to behave in these games. I likely won’t see many of these gamers again, despite the amount that I play the games, and all of the gamers are essentially anonymous. Given this, what reason do I have to behave in this virtual environment? My answer to this is that I really don’t have a need or a want to behave, especially since other people also behave in this way. Finally, the lack of connection to my real-world, FtF identity and self is the third reason why I don’t behave. The only people who have access to my real-world identity are those Microsoft
employees that work in the XBL division and despite my consistently poor behavior, I have yet to face any ramifications for my actions.

It also does not appear that the way I behave in Halo is much different from how others behave in the game. Past research has demonstrated that many video games are violent in nature (Carnagey, Anderson, & Bushman, 2007; Cicchirillo & Chory-Assad, 2005; Smith, Lachlan, & Tabmorini, 2003) and that game play of some video games may be linked with aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Ballard & West, 1996; Cooper & Mackie, 1986; Eastin, 2006). It would seem that my behavior in Halo is, at least, fairly consistent with how others gamers interact with individuals in the game.

One interesting feature of XBL is the ability to connect one’s XBL account with his or her Facebook account. This would allow users to directly and explicitly connect their real-world identity with their XBL gamertag. This connection is completely optional, on the part of the gamer, and apparently makes them readily identifiable by their name and XBL gamertag. Given my past behavior on XBL, I have not and will not connect these two online identities. In this case, I am far happier to keep these self-presentations as separate as possible for a number of reasons. Perhaps the most salient reason to me is that I don’t want my XBL self-presentation linked to my real-world identity. I would be fearful of someone I insulted on XBL somehow getting a hold of my name and using Facebook as a means of revenge. Another possibility is if someone recorded what I said and did on XBL, uploaded that to Facebook, and tagged me in that video. Although this is a hypothetical, it is entirely possible and would certainly have potential negative implications for me. Given this potential, I am rather glad to be able to
remain anonymous in this online context and refuse to link my gamertag with any identifiable information.

**Facebook**

The last CMC context I use as an example in this chapter is the social networking site Facebook. I primarily use Facebook as a way of keeping in touch with friends and family, but also for professional reasons. Facebook is inherently tied to my real-world identity, especially since Facebook requires users to use their legal names when signing up for accounts (see Figure 4). Through Facebook I post status updates, upload pictures, and comment on the status updates of friends, family, and colleagues.

*Figure 4.* Screen capture from Facebook.
Because Facebook is so interconnected with my real-world identity, I do try to present a realistic version of myself. Although I at times upload pictures I find to be funny, I avoid uploading content that might be considered offensive or profane. Occasionally I may make a political comment; however, this is typically in line with my FtF presentation of self. In general, I log into Facebook several times each day and at the very least read the status updates of my friends.

Myself on Facebook

The presentation of self I perform on Facebook is rather close to my real-world presentation of self and is radically different from my self-presentation on XBL. On Facebook, I am typically polite and allow my sense of humor to come out through my status updates and other content that I upload. I keep in touch with colleagues from other colleges and universities, as well as my immediate and extended family. I do not upload offensive material, as the repercussions of this could be professionally detrimental. I attempt to control much of what I present to the outside world via my Facebook page.

The primary reason why my self-presentation on Facebook is so closely related to my presentation of self in FtF interactions is because of how explicitly Facebook is connected to my real-world identity. For example, if I post offensive material, I feel that this will effect my real-world interactions with those who have seen my posting. If I complain about a graduate class in my department, it is very likely that my posting could be read by that instructor, especially if we are friends on Facebook. This inherent connection is something I am rather cognizant of and try to keep in mind whenever I post.
material to Facebook. That being said, I still use Facebook primarily as a way of keeping in touch with friends and family, which differs from how I might keep in touch with people on a professional basis. In order to accomplish this, I use another SNS, called LinkedIn, to portray my professional identity. On LinkedIn, I only share professionally related materials and leave out much of the information that I have disclosed on Facebook. In general, LinkedIn could be viewed as my online CV, but in the form of a social networking site; while Facebook spans the gap between my professional relationships and my interpersonal ones. I keep these interactions separate and interact with people on Facebook more than LinkedIn.

In essence, I view my interactions on Facebook as having real-world consequences, unlike my interactions on XBL. These consequences are something that I keep in mind and appear to have a direct impact on the way I present myself via Facebook. I would even argue that this is similar to Goffman’s (1959) notion of presenting an idealized version of oneself to others. Regardless, I am fully aware that the way I enact my presentation of self varies across different CMC contexts. I posit that some of the characteristics of each channel function to dictate how closely I maintain my online presentation of self to my FtF presentation. Given my examples, it would seem that those channels in which I am readily identifiable, and have a high likelihood of future contact, dictate that I will present myself in a fashion similar to my FtF interactions. In addition, those channels in which I am conscious of potential consequences, that are severe, also dictate that I present a performance of self, similar to my FtF self-presentation. However, those channels in which I do not perceive the
consequences to be damaging or in which I am anonymous, may allow me to present a version of myself that is far different from my FtF interactions.

Conclusion

In general, I find the different self-presentations, based on the specific CMC context in which they occur to be rather interesting. Regardless of the channel, I am still the same person. However, by changing the virtual environment in which I am interacting, I am able to perform radically different versions of myself and coming to terms with the overlap that exists between these multiple selves is something facing a large number of people. By further understanding the performance of self in modern day CMC, we can come to a better understanding of how people manage identity in the digital age.

Past research examining the presentation of self and digital identity has been helpful; however, such research has several limitations that directly impacts the implications of the findings that these studies have on modern day CMC usage. First, prior research has primarily been based on communication technology from the 1990’s, some of which is no longer used. Modern day CMC is vastly different from that available in the 1990’s, similar to how the telephone is vastly different from the telegraph. Second, much of this prior research has used interviews or digital ethnography as way of collecting data. While certainly appropriate ways of investigating the online presentation of self, these methods limit the generalizability of the studies they were used in and the results of the respective analyses are also bracketed by the CMC context in which they were conducted.
Given the limitations of past research, the advancements made in communication technology since the 1990’s, and the massive popularity of this technology, it is time to reimagine our understanding of the performance of self through CMC. Goffman’s (1959; 1963) work has already established the presentation self as an important theoretical framework for understanding how aspects of one’s identity are communicated to others. Scholars from a variety of disciplines (see Zhao, 2005) have used Goffman’s work to understand how people enact these same FtF performances of self in cyberspace. Now, the time has come to reimagine this by again using Goffman’s concept of the presentation self to act as the theoretical lens, but using contemporary CMC contexts as the setting to examine how this presentation occurs in the modern day world, with contemporary communication technology.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

This chapter has three main goals and ultimately provides the theoretical rationale for examining the presentation of self in modern day CMC. The first goal of this chapter is to examine Goffman’s (1959; 1963) work on the presentation of self. We already know Goffman’s work has served as the theoretical framework for a variety of studies, and continues to provide valuable contributions to our scholarly understanding of self-presentation. The second goal is to examine and evaluate scholarship that either applies Goffman or uses his work as the theoretical foundation for research, particularly research that does so in CMC contexts. This evaluation includes both the main contributions of this scholarship but also the limitations. Finally, this chapter will identify issues relevant to the study of modern day CMC interactions, in the context of the presentation of self, as well as offer guiding questions and hypotheses for examining self-presentation in modern day CMC.

Goffman and the Presentation of Self

In his work, Erving Goffman (1959) uses the metaphor of an actor performing a role in a play to explain how individuals communicate or express messages to an audience. Goffman notes, “the very structure of the self can be seen in terms of how we arrange for such performances” (1959, p. 252). In other words, individuals are actively engaged in performing a role, the self, and this performance is put on for the outside world, the audience, which interprets the meaning associated with this performance. Correctly or incorrectly, the audience attempts to interpret the messages the performer
generates, through their performance, and come to an understanding of who the performer is.

In the context of CMC, individuals give a performance through their interactions with other people. For example, one’s Facebook page is essentially a performance of self. This page functions to communicate messages about the user to others and to portray a certain image of the person. This self-performance could be given to one’s friends or perhaps anyone with an Internet connection. Beyond Facebook, any CMC context in which a person interacts with another human being is an opportunity for the presentation of self.

**Idealized Performance**

According to Goffman (1959), the performer has a certain level of control over his or her performance. For example, the performer may intentionally portray an idealized version of themselves, in order for the audience to react favorably to them. The actor or performer may accomplish this by highlighting certain aspects of their performance to help support this image. In general, “when the individual presents himself before others, his performances will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole” (Goffman, 1959, p. 35). Through careful manipulation of verbal and nonverbal cues, the actor can exert a degree of control over the messages they communicate and, in turn, portray an idealized version of him or herself.

Goffman’s (1959) notion of an actor portraying an idealized version of him or herself is certainly present in CMC contexts. On social networking sites users may only
disclose that information which supports a positive portrayal of the user. On the same
token, the users would likely hide the content that would negatively impact this idealized
portrayal. For example, if someone were on the job market they may decide to only post
information that portrays them in a certain way (e.g., professional, courteous,
responsible), while hiding tagged photos of them in compromising situations.

Goffman (1959) argues that the performer uses signs or symbols to communicate
meaning to the audience and this is accomplished through two different types of sign
activities. The first is expressions the actor “gives” and the second is signs or expressions
the actor “gives off.” The expressions the actor gives are typically verbal messages or the
use of symbols that have an agreed upon meaning. We could view these as the intentional
messages the actor wishes to portray in performing his or her role. The expressions the
actor gives off are all of the different actions that the audience treats as characteristics of
the performance or, as Goffman (1959) puts it, symptomatic. Perhaps the best example of
signs given off is all of the nonverbal behaviors that occur in the communication process.
Goffman notes that audiences typically view these signs given off as conveying the
actor’s true intention. Put another way, what the actor said seemed to contradict how they
said it. That being said, Goffman specifically states, “the individual does of course
intentionally convey misinformation by means of both of these types of communication”
(1959, p. 2). Thus, we can view the signs the actor gives and the signs given off as ways
in which an actor communicates with his or her audience and this occurs through the use
of signs and symbols in a performance.
The Front and Backstage

These performances, metaphorically, take place in an area called the front. This area could be considered, as Goffman defines it, “the expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance” (1959, p. 22). This front is made up of two main parts: the setting and the personal front. The setting is made up of all the background elements that help the audience to understand the context of the performance, while the personal front is the characteristics of the performer. For example, age, sex, and physical appearance are all characteristics of the personal front and many of these characteristics are unchanging (Goffman, 1959). The audience makes use of the setting and personal front to make sense of the actors performance.

Although much of the activity of the performance is portrayed in the front, Goffman posits that another area, the backstage, exists. This backstage is the area that is typically unseen by the audience, it is an area in which the performer “can relax; he can drop his front, forgo speaking his lines, and step out of character” (Goffman, 1959, p. 112). This area is typically off limits to the audience, as such it exists as an area in which the performer can be him or herself, without the audience observing.

In the context of CMC, we can certainly see aspects of front and backstage being present. For example, the postings a user makes to Facebook would be self-presentations occurring in the front. These are the messages that are viewable by a wide audience and intentionally communicated by the performer. However, the private messages the user sends and receives with friends, or the content they choose to label as private, would
likely exist in the backstage area. These backstage communications are all the messages that the user wants to remain hidden, not viewable by the audience.

Although the metaphor of front stage and back stage is helpful in explaining self-presentation, it is worth noting that this is still just a metaphor. In particular to CMC, the lines between front stage and back stage are not as clearly delineated as they would be in an actual play. Goffman’s use of front stage and back stage is used as a very contextualized metaphor and we would be wise to keep this in mind when applying this metaphor to contexts outside of a play. Given this, we can still use the overall metaphor of an actor presenting a performance to an audience, but should be cautious to avoid interpreting this too literally.

**Audience(s)**

Aside from the performance portrayed by the actor, it is important to understand that, at times, the actor may portray a character or performance for a particular audience. In addition, these different performances may contradict each other and, in this case, it would be in the actor’s best interest to keep the different performances and respective audiences separate. That being said, at times audiences may witness performances that were not meant for them and when this occurs the audience’s perceptions of the actor and their performances may come into jeopardy. As Goffman (1959) notes “when individuals witness a show that was not meant for them, they may, then, become disillusioned about this show as well as about the show that was meant for them” (p. 136).

Connected with this notion of different performances for different audiences, are the problems that occur when audiences encounter each other or when these audiences
mix together. As Goffman (1959) notes, “when audience segregation fails and an outsider happens upon a performance that was not meant for him, difficult problems in impression management arise” (p. 139). In such a situation, both the intended audience and unintended audience members may have their impressions of the actor changed based on this situation. The audiences might temporarily have access to the backstage and witness the actor attempt to construct a performance that is appropriate for the audiences. Another option is for the actor to attempt to incorporate the unintended audience members and make it appear as though they were welcome to be in this performance from the start.

In the prior example of the job candidate, we can see how different audiences would come into play in CMC interactions. When the candidate posts to his or her Facebook account, they may intend their message for a certain audience, their friends perhaps, but this content could be viewable by anyone, perhaps potential employers. The job candidate is then left in a rather awkward situation, one in which a message meant for one audience is shared with an audience that it was not intended for. In fact, more recent social networking sites have modified their structure in order to prevent this crossover. Google+ has integrated the notion of circles, or groups of people, into their social network. According to Google (2011b), circles “helps you organize everyone according to your real-life social connections—say, ‘family,’ ‘work friends,’ ‘music buddies,’ and ‘alumni’. Then, you can share relevant content with the right people” (p. 1). This organization would, theoretically, completely separate the front and backstage, making any crossover or performance to an unintended audience very unlikely.
Three Types of Roles

Goffman identifies three types of roles regarding a performance: the performer, the audience, and the outsiders who neither perform nor serve as audience members. The performers are those actors portraying a role and are aware of the impression they are portraying. The audience knows they are watching a performance and foster impressions of the actor by interpreting the signs given and signs given off by the actor. Finally, the outsiders are typically not aware the actor is engaged in a performance or the reality created in this performance (Goffman, 1959).

The three roles identified by Goffman (1959) certainly do apply in CMC contexts as well. As previously mentioned, we still have a performer and audience in CMC interactions. We also have the outsider, which we could conceptualize as anyone with an Internet connection or anyone who can view content created by the performer. For example, anyone with an Internet connection can use a search engine to find information about another person. Another example of this is Facebook, which has drastically changed its privacy settings since the social network’s initial founding. McKeon (2010), a developer at IBM Research’s Center for Social Software, created a visualization that compares the default Facebook privacy settings over time. The visualization shows what content was viewable and by who, by using the default Facebook privacy settings at that time. In 2005, one would need to be a member of Facebook in order to search for other people on the site. By 2009 this had changed, and anyone on the Internet could search Facebook to see if someone had an account. In fact, by April, 2010 nearly every piece of content a user uploaded to Facebook, except for contact information and birthdate, was
viewable by anyone on the Internet (McKeon, 2010). Given these changes to Facebook, anyone on the Internet could be considered an outsider, or perhaps even an audience member, and this begins to blur the line between different audiences.

Impression Management

The majority of Goffman’s (1959) book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, is devoted to explaining the different attributes that construct the performance of self. However, in the later part of this book, Goffman brings together these attributes by formally introducing impression management. We could define impression management as the techniques used by performers to express the attributes of the performance of self (Goffman, 1959). Other scholars have defined impression management as “the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them” (Leary & Kowalski, 1990, p. 34). Goffman (1959) identifies three practices for engaging in impression management:

- defensive measures used by performers to save their own show;
- the protective measures used by audience and outsiders to assist the performers in saving the performers’ show; and, finally, the measures the performers must take in order to make it possible for the audience and outsiders to employ protective measures on the performers’ behalf. (p. 212)

Through these three practices, Goffman posits that an actor can work towards influencing how other people perceive them, by attempting to control the information communicated through a performance. This forms the basis of impression management and self-presentation. Perhaps the only difference between the two is that self-presentation
specifically refers to the control of information concerning the self, while impression management could be used more broadly to pertain to a person, idea, or event (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000). However, as Leary and Kowalski (1990) note, “most writers have used the terms impression management and self-presentation interchangeably” (p. 34) and this dissertation takes this same approach towards both terms.

Strategic Sharing of Information and Stigma

Beyond The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (Goffman, 1959), Goffman’s 1963 work on stigma is also important scholarship to consider given that works contributions towards a more thorough understanding of how stigma impacts self-presentation. In particular, his explanation of techniques of information control provides clarification for why individuals may keep some information secret from other people. Stigma is essentially an attribute of a person that, based on societal categorization or personal judgment, is viewed as being discrediting. In effect, this discrediting causes a person to be “reduced in our minds from a whole and usual person to a tainted, discounted one” (Goffman, 1963, p. 3). The stigmatized individual’s social identity is affected by this discrediting and this stigma may be something readily apparent, something physical, or perhaps something psychological. The key here is that the cause of the stigma, for that individual, may not be readily apparent and could be something they self disclose to others.

Of interest to this dissertation is the strategic sharing or not sharing of information that may discredit an individual. Specifically, how individuals manage this discrediting information, across different CMC contexts, and whether they choose to share this
information in one context as opposed to another. Understanding this information management is important in furthering our scholarly understanding of communication occurring in CMC contexts. In addition to sharing or not sharing discrediting information, the potential for the sharing or passing of stigmatizing information from one context to another, as well as the potential damage this may cause the individual’s social identity, is another area worth looking at. Goffman provides an example of a widely used strategy to manage this potentially damaging information. In this strategy, “the discreditable person is to handle his risks by dividing the world into a large group to whom he tells nothing, and a small group to whom he tells all and upon whose help he then relies” (Goffman, 1963, p. 95).

This same example, telling a small group everything and hiding that information from a larger group, applies to CMC interactions as well. For instance, a user of an anonymous chat room may self-disclose information that might be potentially damaging (i.e., discrediting) to them; however, that same person would likely not share this information on Facebook or something in which their identity is more clearly visible. That being said, the potential sharing of the stigmatizing information from one context to another, which is possible in both FtF and CMC contexts, is something of interest given the impact this may have on the individual. For example, an individual may intentionally keep their online identities for two different contexts entirely separate, for fear that knowledge of his or her involvement in one context may discredit them in the other. However, some individuals may not engage in this level of control and allow for information from each context to mix. Given this potential, the control or lack of control
of information management between different contexts is something to consider when examining self-presentation in CMC contexts.

Summary

Using the metaphor of an actor performing a role to an audience, Goffman (1959) lays out the argument for understanding how individuals engage in self-presentation and impression management (the two terms can be used interchangeably). Actors know that they are communicating meaning through the signs and symbols they use in their performance and may portray an idealized version of him or herself. Through their performance, the actor gives and gives off signs that are interpreted by the audience members to generate meaning. These performances typically take place on the front stage, or the area in which the audience witnesses these performances; however, the actor also occupies the backstage region, which is where the actor can be him or herself and step out of character. Performers may manage multiple performances with each respective performance meant for a specific audience. At times the different audiences may merge or overlap and this may cause problems for the performer who is engaged in impression management. By understanding the different roles we perform, the different audiences we perform in front of, and the different signs we give and give off, we can understand how individuals engage in self-presentation.

In addition to self-presentation, Goffman’s 1963 work on stigma informs our understanding of how an individual may be viewed as being discredited in the view of others or society in general. Of particular importance, in regards to stigma, is how individuals exert control or lack of control over potentially discrediting information by
connecting or not connecting separate performances of self across different contexts. Examining which contexts or performances an individual shares with others, which are kept private, and when this sharing may occur, will help us to understand the modern day presentation of self in contemporary CMC contexts.

Goffman’s (1959; 1963) work has served as the theoretical foundation for informing our understanding of self-presentation in FtF interactions. Goffman also notes that, in his work, he has “suggested that any social establishment may be studied profitably from the point of view of impression management” (p. 238). Many of the concepts Goffman addresses are also present in CMC contexts as well. The examples provided in this section demonstrate that Facebook provides much of the same avenues for the performance of self as FtF does. Just as in the metaphor of a play, Facebook users perform aspects of the self and many of the same situations explained by Goffman are readily apparent in CMC contexts.

A variety of scholars have used Goffman’s (1959; 1963) writings to further explain the ways in which individuals perform aspects of self in everyday life. In addition, scholars have also applied Goffman’s work to communication occurring via CMC and this goes well beyond the examples provided in this section. Thus, the following section of this dissertation will focus on this scholarship. By examining the contributions and limitations of scholarship applying Goffman to CMC, we can better understand how the findings of these studies can inform our understanding of the presentation of self via CMC using modern day communication technology. However, before reviewing this work, it is important to first discuss the concepts of self and
identity. Goffman refers to both of these concepts and this dissertation would do well to explain how the scholarly community has continued to research and explain theses concepts.

The Self and Identity

One theoretical area that has formed the basis of research in a variety of fields, including sociology and communication, is the notion of self and identity. Stets and Burke (2003) state the following in a book chapter explaining self and identity:

The self influences society through the actions of individuals, thereby creating groups, organization, networks, and institutions. Reciprocally, society influences the self through its shared language and meanings that enable a person to take the role of the other, engage in social interaction, and reflect on oneself as an object. (p. 128)

In the context of the current study, understanding the link between the self and larger groups the individual is involved with, is important in continuing to understand how people interact with others in online contexts. In particular, the notion that society or groups allow individuals to take on different roles is one area worth noting. To expand on this more, the following paragraphs will elaborate on past research that has examined this area in more depth by focusing on a theory that has served as the theoretical foundation for a variety of scholars.

Social Identity Theory

Developed by Tajfel and Turner (1979; 1986), Social Identity Theory (SIT) provides the theoretical basis for understanding how individuals view themselves as
members of a group and how this perception can influence behavior. The theory posits that an individual’s self-image is derived from the different social categories or groups that the individual perceives him or herself as belonging to. Put another way, social identity is “those aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging” (Tajfel & Turner, 1986, p. 16). In essence, each person’s self-image is, at least in part, impacted by the various different social categories that person belongs to and as Scott (2007) notes “these social categories help to define the individual and others based on membership in certain group (ingroups) and nonmembership in others (outgroups)” (p. 125). Perhaps Hogg (2003) summarizes the theory best, when he explains that SIT:

Rests on a fundamental distinction between the collective self (social identity), which is associated with group membership, group processes, and intergroup behavior, and the individual self (personal identity), which is associated with close personal relationships and idiosyncratic attributes of self. (p. 463)

Within SIT, we see that two forms of self, or identity, are at play. As Hogg (2003) notes, the collective self, or social identity, is primarily centered on an individual’s connection, membership, and interaction with social groups. The individual self, or personal identity, is not focused on group interactions, but is instead related to specific relationships an individual has with other individuals. Other scholars have expanded on this by explaining how one’s self-concept is developed. Ashforth and Mael (1989) posit “the self-concept is comprised of a personal identity encompassing idiosyncratic characteristics (e.g., bodily attributes, abilities, psychological traits, interests) and a social
identity encompassing salient group classifications” (p. 21). The important consideration here is that an individual’s self-concept, and in turn social identity, are not only based on individual characteristics, but also based on membership or nonmembership to social categories or groups. This connection between personal identity and social identity indicates that these two concepts are not entirely independent entities and instead are intimately connected to one another. Thus, it is important to view the individual as existing in and interacting with others in both group and interpersonal areas. Hogg and Terry (2001) even argue “for many people their professional and/or organizational identity may be more pervasive and important than ascribed identities based on gender, age, ethnicity, race, or nationality” (p. 2).

Building from the concept of a social identity, Tajfel and Turner (1986) identify three theoretical principles that help to explain social identity:

1. Individuals strive to achieve or to maintain positive social identity. 2. Positive social identity is based to a large extent on favorable comparisons that can be made between the in-group and some relevant out-groups: the in-group must be perceived as positively differentiated or distinct from the relevant out-groups. 3. When social identity is unsatisfactory, individuals will strive either to leave their existing group and join some more positively distinct group and/or to make their existing group more positively distinct. (p. 16)

The three principles offered by Tajfel and Turner help to provide support for the notion that individuals tend to view themselves based on group membership and these various different memberships affect one’s social identity. Furthermore, individuals also want to
have a positive social identity and social identity is, in part, based on comparisons between the groups one belongs to and relevant out-groups.

In the context of CMC, social identity still plays an important role. The chief difference between how social identity functions in FtF interactions and in CMC interactions is the lack of nonverbal or visual cues that one would normally experience or pick up on in FtF interactions. For example, in many CMC contexts users experience some degree of anonymity. Being anonymous in these CMC contexts can function to mask group memberships, which are a key part in explaining social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986).

SIDE Model

Other scholars have brought SIT a bit further by basing their theoretical model on SIT, but introducing additional concepts. For example, the social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE) (see Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998; Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 2002) takes many of the basic assumptions and theoretical contributions of SIT and introduces the notion of anonymity in influencing behaviors. The SIDE model can be used to help explain communication occurring via some form of mediated communication. Related to the channel used to communicate, SIDE posits “characteristics of a communication medium interact with characteristics of the social context and with the particular social definition of self to produce media effects” (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998, p. 690). In this way, the SIDE model tells us that the characteristics that make up the medium through which we communicate interact with
other characteristics, related to the social context and notion of self, to influence behavior and communication.

In addition, the SIDE model also takes into account the concept of visual anonymity and how this can influence media effects. Levine (2000) echoes this sentiment by positing that when CMC users are visually anonymous they may engage in something called deindividuation, which is when CMC users may become less self-regulated and more likely to perform acts that may be considered anti-social. Levine’s assertion that visual anonymity can lead to users becoming less self-regulated could be used to explain various different phenomena occurring within CMC environments (i.e., flaming and trolling).

Walther (1997) notes that when individuating cues, or social context cues, are missing people will tend to judge others based on perceived group similarity or difference. For example, in many FtF interactions various different cues about the other person are readily apparent. Furthermore, we can easily read nonverbal signals the other person gives off. However, that same exchange via a mediated channel will tend to filter out those subtle context cues, leaving the other communicator with less information to assess the other person with. This cues filtered out approach (Walther & Parks, 2002) helps to explain why the remaining information, not filtered out by the mediated channel, can take on great importance in forming impressions of other CMC users.

Other SIDE scholars elaborate on the importance of social cues not filtered out by the channel. Spears, Lea, Corneliussen, Postmes, and Ter Haar (2002) argue that some of the most important social context cues still manage to leak through. These cues can
include important information pertaining to power differentials and social status. However, because of the missing information we tend to judge others based on the social or group identity we assign to them based on these cues. In essence, we “perceive the self and others not as individuals with a range of idiosyncratic characteristics and ways of behaving, but as representatives of social groups or wider social categories that are made salient during interaction” (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998, p. 7). E. Lee (2004) offers that this process of viewing others not as individuals but as representative of social groups or categories is the notion of deindividuation and ultimately this can lead CMC users to depersonalize other users.

In essence, SIDE predicts that a lack of identifying information can lead to a degree of anonymity, which can allow for the depersonalization or deindividuation of other people. This depersonalization is based on group memberships, such that ingroup members are viewed more favorable, while outgroup members may no longer be treated as individuals and instead viewed in terms of group membership. SIDE is primarily situated in the context of CMC, in which other people can be visually anonymous and their identities not known to others. Furthermore, certain mediated channels tend to strip away (e.g., cues filtered out) social context cues or nonverbal cues that in FtF settings carry important information about the individual. Although many social cues are stripped away by the CMC medium, some cues do make it through and take on great importance in impression formation of the other person. Coupled with users being visually anonymous, the lack of context cues means that users tend to judge others based on perceived group membership and this can lead to deindividuation or depersonalization, in
which a person is not treated as an individual and is instead treated in regards to perceived group membership.

**SIT and Communication**

Many of the concepts identified in SIT are inherently communicative. Scott (2007) notes that through communication we accomplish many of the main features of SIT. Specifically, through communication we “express our belongingness (or lack thereof) to various collectives, assess the reputation and image of those collectives, that various identities are made known to us, and the social costs and rewards of maintaining various identities are revealed” (Scott, 2007, p. 124). Furthermore, some of the theoretical models building off of SIT also are inherently communicative. For example, the SIDE model functions because social context cues communicate information about one person to another and that person in turn makes judgments based on that information.

Beyond the role that communication plays in sharing information about group membership, little research exists that explores communication in SIT further. In an issue of *Communication Theory*, Hogg and Reid (2006) state, “this communication dimension is hardly explored at all by social identity researchers” (p. 14), this occurs despite the central role that communication plays in conveying aspects of social identity. Some communication scholars have started examining this communication dimension more fully. For example, Hargie, Dickson, Mallett, and Stringer (2008) looked at the communicative aspects of SIT as they play out between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. That being said, as a discipline we still are missing considerable research that explores the communication dimensions of SIT as noted by Hogg and Reid.
Summary

The concepts of identity and the self are not only paramount to understanding the presentation of self, but also key concepts in discussing how individuals may engage in acts of self-presentation. The self is essentially a shared meaning between an individual and other people that individual interacts with. Individuals constantly reflect back on their experiences and actions and this process allows the self to develop. In general, people “are able to regard and evaluate themselves, to take account of themselves and plan accordingly to bring about future states, to be self-aware or achieve consciousness with respect to their own existence” (Stets & Burke, 2003). This explanation of the self touches on this aspect from the point of view of the individual. However, the self also has a social component to it. As Stets and Burke explain “the self is, thus, both individual and social in character. It works to control meanings to sustain itself, but many of those meanings, including the meanings of the self, are shared and form the basis of interaction with others” (2003, p. 130). Given this explanation, the self is not only our own reflective contemplation of our existence, but also the shared meaning viewed from the position of the other, external to the individual.

Coupled with the notion of the self is identity, which we can understand as the imbedded self in a particular context or social setting. Put another way, identity could be explained as “the overall self is organized into multiple parts (identities), each of which is tied to aspects of the social structure” (Stets & Burke, 2003, p. 132). In this explanation, we can view the self as the overall concept and identity as the self situated in a specific social context. Stets and Burke (2003) offer the following:
Thus, self as father is an identity, as is self as colleague, self as friend, and self as any of the other myriad of possibilities corresponding to the various roles one may play. The identities are the meanings one has as a group member, as a role holder, or as a person. What it means to be a father, a colleague, or a friend forms the content of the identities. (p. 312)

All of the different identities listed here are situated within a particular social context. Furthermore, our interactions with others have to do with the different roles or identities we have in each social context. We behave in ways expected or associated with each identity in the particular context that identity is tied to. In other words, “each role identity includes all of the meanings that a person attaches to himself while performing a role. These meanings are, in part, derived from culture and the social structure” (Stets, 2006, p. 89). Given this, in each identity we perform we have an understanding of what we are expected to do or how we are expected to behave in that particular context. However, Stets also notes that individuals also contribute their own understanding or interpretation of what that identity or role identity means to them.

An important consideration when discussing identity is that each of us has multiple identities that we might enact on a regular basis. For example, in an academic setting I may be actively engaged in my identity as a graduate student, an instructor, a colleague, and a friend, perhaps all at the same time. This may be problematic in many circumstances. For example “when an employer must evaluate an employee who is performing poorly and who also happens to be a close friend, the actor is placed in the impossible position of verifying multiple, incompatible identities” (Stets, 2006, p. 103).
In the context of CMC, it is indeed possible for individuals to exercise multiple, incompatible identities in different CMC contexts. That being said, the possibility of leakage between these contexts, resulting in the position of needing to deal with this incompatibility, is certainly something that could happen.

Finally, worth considering is that different CMC contexts allow individuals the ability to exercise different identities in these different channels. Scholars have noted that “social identities provide actors with existential meaning and behavioral guidance, and that these qualities are essential to psychological well-being and organized, functional behavior” (Thoits, 1983, p. 183). The functions provided by social identities likely also exist in CMC interactions. For example, I can perform a particular identity in the context of online multiplayer gaming, while almost simultaneously enacting a different identity through Facebook. This ability to enact different identities could be summarized with the following phrase: the me here is not the same as the me there. Given the roles of the self and identity, or social identity, individuals engaged in interactions with others are constantly juggling multiple social identities, which tied with impression management, help us to understand the ways in which individuals present themselves to others.

Research on Impression Management

One fruitful area of research stemming from Goffman’s (1959) work is scholarship examining impression management (see Leary, 1996; Tedeschi, 1981). Leary (1996) defines impression management as “the process of controlling how one is perceived by other people” (p. 2), while Tedeschi and Riess (1981) define impression management as “any behavior by a person that has the purpose of controlling or
manipulating the attributions and impressions formed of that person by others” (p. 3). Although impression management is certainly not a new concept, Leary notes that the study of self-presentation began with Goffman and spread to other disciplines shortly after his work. Perhaps the greatest contribution other scholars have added to Goffman’s original work is the study of the different tactics people use to engage in self-presentation. Although a full list of the different tactics individuals use in impression management is beyond the scope of this dissertation, Leary explains several of these tactics in more detail. The important consideration is that, by examining tactics or strategies used in self-presentation, we can better understand how people engage in identity management.

**Strategies**

Jones and Pittman (1982) note that, for a time, research in self-presentation was slow to develop due to a lack of theoretical framework from which scholars could conduct research. Specifically, “self-presentational phenomena are ubiquitous in social life, and yet we have no conceptual framework to relate and understand these phenomena” (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 231). Drawing on findings of previous research, Jones and Pittman developed a taxonomy that focused on self-presentation strategies. This taxonomy identified five self-presentational strategies that individuals could use when engaging in impression management. The five strategies include: ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication.

The first strategy, ingratiation, is noted as being “the most ubiquitous of all self-presentational phenomena” (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 235). This strategy is concerned,
first and foremost, with the notion that others like us or hold favorable impressions of us. Put another way, an individual (the actor) implementing the ingratiation strategy would engage in self-presentation that would have others attribute the notion of being likable to the actor.

The second strategy, intimidation, is nearly the opposite of ingratiation. With the intimidation strategy, the actor “tries to convince a target person that he is dangerous….the intimidator typically disdains any real interest in being liked; he wants to be feared, to be believed” (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 238). In essence, while the ingratiation strategy aims for the individual to be liked by others, the intimidation strategy aims for the individual to be considered dangerous or to be feared by others.

The third self-presentational strategy identified by Jones and Pittman (1982) is the strategy of self-promotion. According to these scholars “we speak of the actor as ‘self promoting’ when he seeks the attribution of competence, whether with reference to general ability level (intelligence, athletic ability) or to a specific skill (typing excellence, flute-playing ability)” (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 241). Although self-promotion is related to the first two strategies, the authors note that self-promotion is still a unique strategy. In regards to ingratiation, self-promotion is more concerned with others attributing the concept of competence to us, instead of likeability. Again with intimidation, self-promotion is focused on competence and, as Jones and Pittman note, “we can convince others of our competence without threatening them or striking fear in their hearts” (1982, p. 241).
The fourth strategy, exemplification, is similar to the self-promotion strategy in that in both strategies the person wants other people to respect them; however, differences between the two strategies do exist. According to Jones and Pittman (1982), “whereas the self promoter wants to be seen as competent, masterful, olympian, the exemplifier seeks to project integrity and moral worthiness” (p. 245). Clearly many individuals would want to be viewed as likeable (ingratiation) and competent (self-promotion); however, Jones and Pittman argue that exemplification has strategic qualities that make it distinct from the strategies of ingratiation or self-promotion.

The final strategy, supplication, can occur when an individual is unable to use or lacks the resources needed for the other four strategies. In essence, supplication is “the strategy of advertising one’s dependence to solicit help” (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 247). For example, someone might proclaim that they do not know how to fix a problem they are having with a computer and use this lack of knowledge to ask for help. Jones and Pittman give the gendered example of a woman who is unable to change a tire and employs the supplication strategy to get a man, who apparently can change a tire, to solve the problem for her. These authors explain, “she accomplishes this at the small cost of being considered totally incompetent by her vain and dedicated husband or suitor” (Jones & Pittman, 1982, p. 248). Although this example, provided by Jones and Pittman, is clearly based on gender stereotypes, it does demonstrate how the supplication strategy could be employed.

Cumulatively, the five self-presentation strategies identified by Jones and Pittman (1982) offer a way of studying self-presentation or impression management by offering a
theoretical framework from which to work from. By measuring these strategies, in different contexts, we may be able to more thoroughly understand how people use these strategies to manage their self-presentation. Furthermore, by linking these strategies with past CMC research applying Goffman’s (1959) notion of self-presentation to CMC contexts, we may develop a method for continuing the study of the online presentation of self.

*Communication Research on Impression Management*

In the communication discipline, impression management has productively been used as the theoretical foundation of a number of studies. For example, O’Sullivan (2000) developed an impression management model that examines the strategic use of CMC channels in order to attain certain self-presentational goals. Ultimately, this model helps to explain why people use CMC channels to manage impressions with certain self-presentation goals in mind. In another CMC example, Chen (2010) compared impression management strategies in popular blogs in both Taiwan and the United States. Using the same strategies identified by Jones and Pittman (1982), Chen compared differences in impression management strategies between the blogs in the different countries. In particular, the study found that Taiwan bloggers engaged in more self-promotion strategies than American bloggers did.

Becker and Stamp (2005) studied impression management in chat rooms and note that “most impression management research focuses on face-to-face (FtF) interaction. However, impression management behaviors are not confined to FtF social interaction” (p. 244). Specifically, the authors posit that impression management can, and does, occur
through CMC channels and this influences how people communicate while online. Using grounded theory, Becker and Stamp created a model that explains the connection between impression management motivations, impression management strategies in chat rooms, and goals related to this process. Allen and Caillouet (1994) also studied impression management, but in the context of organizational communication, specifically how impression management strategies were employed by organizations in crisis.

Although impression management may be studied in a variety of contexts, one area that seems well suited to the study of impression management, from a communicative perspective, is impression management in CMC interactions. In addition, past research also demonstrates that the strategies identified by Jones and Pittman (1982) can productively be used to examine identity management in a variety of settings, one of which is CMC. By measuring the different impression management strategies it may be possible to relate these strategies with key variables of interest related to CMC research.

Goffman Applied to CMC

CMC scholarship, that draws on Goffman (1959; 1963), has demonstrated that CMC users engage in self-presentation by using the technologies available to them through online systems. While a full review of the scholarship stemming from Goffman’s work is beyond the scope of the current study, identifying some of this research is worthwhile, as well as the methodology used in such studies. In general, scholarly works prior to the turn of the century typically focused on text-based chat rooms, or other text-based forms of communication, and generally used qualitative or naturalistic inquiry. For example, Halbert (1999) looked at identity presentation in chat rooms, specifically gender
identity, in an unpublished doctoral dissertation using naturalistic inquiry. In a widely cited piece, Turkle (1995) conducted her research using ethnographic methods, observation of others, and interviews with online users. In addition, Markham (1998) used ethnography and interviews in her study of “what it means to go and be online” (p. 18).

This past research (e.g., Markham, 1998; Turkle, 1995), conducted in the years prior to and immediately after the turn of the century, has been important work. These works have formed the basis of much research examining CMC and mediated communication. However, in order to understand modern day usage of CMC, and specifically the performance of self in this more recent technological environment, it is important to examine more recent works dealing in this subject matter. These works have started to focus scholarly attention on contemporary CMC contexts, including social networking sites like Facebook and MySpace, personal home pages, and online virtual environments. The research that has examined these areas brings us closer to understanding self-presentation in modern day CMC.

Social Networking Sites

Research by DiMicco and Millen (2007) examined how individuals use social networking sites to manage the presentation of self. DiMicco and Millen looked at the Facebook profiles of 68 employees within their company’s network. In particular, the authors focused on how the profiles managed self-presentation as a professional or non-professional. The scholars note the “difficulties in simultaneously using a single site for both professional and non-professional use” (DiMicco & Millen, 2007, p. 386). The
researchers found that some of their participants used their Facebook profiles for both professional and non-professional audiences; however, the majority of participants were apparently using Facebook for a non-professional audience. This occurred even though the Facebook profile was linked with the user’s professional network, a feature of Facebook at the time. In essence, this allowed for a presentation of self, directed towards a non-professional audience, but viewable by a professional audience. DiMicco and Millen (2007) also note that “managing multiple profiles is an added burden for users and sophisticated access control mechanisms are difficult to navigate and are often ignored by users” (p. 386).

Although this research is helpful and a step in the right direction, it does not address how users may engage in self-presentation across a variety of contexts or how these contexts may be linked together. Knowing how people present themselves through their Facebook profiles is important, especially if they are in a professional network and presenting to a non-professional audience; however, examining how the presentation of self differs depending on CMC contexts, and in comparison to the FtF presentation of self is the primary goal of this dissertation.

Other scholars have examined the presentation of self as it takes place via SNS. Manago, Graham, Greenfield, and Salimkhan (2008) examined how college students use the social networking site MySpace to explore their identities. In particular, this study was interested in the ways in which interacting with other college students through MySpace might impact the development of students’ personal, social, and gender identities. Through focus group interviews and discourse analysis, the authors found that
college students used MySpace to portray idealized versions of themselves and to engage in identity exploration. In particular, the authors note that the possible selves the user portrays on MySpace might become internalized and this process may impact the actual self if these portrayals are performed for an audience.

Although limited to college students who use MySpace, the Manago, et al. (2008) study does explain how aspects of Goffman’s (1959) presentation of self can be exhibited in CMC contexts. In this case, Manago and colleagues propose that MySpace users can not only portray an idealized version of themselves while online, but this CMC context allows them to try out different aspects of the self and to see if this prototype receives support from their social network. This essentially functions much in the same way that Goffman explains, but has the potential to take place across greater distance, take place in front of a larger audience, and likely occur faster than in FtF interactions.

**Personal Home Pages**

Additional CMC research directly links CMC with Goffman (1959). Papacharissi (2002) examined the online presentation of self by examining personal home pages. The author notes that a personal home page can function as the front, as defined by Goffman, and these home pages can indeed be presentations of self. Using content analysis procedures, Papacharissi examined characteristics of personal home pages from several different online providers, including: Geocities, AOL Hometown, MSN, Earthlink, Angelfire, Tripod, and personal virtual domains. Coders examined personal home pages from these providers and characterized the content of those pages. Ultimately, Papacharissi found that “individuals used a variety of design tools to present themselves,
attract visitors, and solicit feedback through their Web sites” (2002, p. 654). By using the features of personal home pages, individuals are able to engage in self-presentation through CMC, by crafting a virtual front, much as Goffman establishes in FtF interactions. As Papacharissi notes “authors employed Web templates or combined Web publishing elements to set the stage for their virtual performance, and created a virtual front to define the terms of this performance” (2002, p. 654).

Although Papacharissi’s (2002) work is helpful, by directly linking Goffman with the CMC context of personal home pages, this particular study does have some limitations. First and foremost, personal home pages have seemingly been replaced with SNSs like Facebook. Furthermore, with advances in technology over the past decade, personal home pages and SNSs have become far more advanced. Today, it is not uncommon for someone to update a video blog or upload a video to Facebook, something not even technically feasible with computer technology of the late 1990’s. Although the main findings of Papacharissi’s work, that individuals use personal home pages to engage in the presentation of self, still holds, we must be cautious when linking the results of this study with modern day CMC.

We already know that SNS can be powerful tools for individuals, not only to organize but also to communicate information about oneself to others. This ability to share information has evolved from the communication technologies of the 1990’s, yet modern day communication technology is distinctly different from these technological ancestors. Today’s communication technology allows for quicker and broader access to other people and information. We no longer require a wired, physical connection to the
Internet and instead exist in an increasingly wireless world. Further, the richness of modern CMC is also something different than past technologies. Although text-based communication is still widely used, we have the viable option of using video and voice communication, just as easily as text-based means. Given these changes and the evolution of communication technology, examining how people use contemporary CMC to present themselves to the world seems warranted.

*Identity Shift*

Related to this presentation of self in a mediated, public context, is research conducted by Gonzales and Hancock (2008). In their study, the researchers recruited participants to take part in an experimental study. Participants were assigned to either an introverted or extroverted group, and told to portray that personality trait through either a public blog post or private text document. The researchers found that “self-presentations in the online, public condition caused participants to shift their identities to become more consistent with their behavior” (Gonzales & Hancock, 2008, pp. 178-179). In essence, by engaging in self-presentation online, in a publicly viewable manner, participants internalized this presentation and this in turn affected their identity.

This finding, that participants internalized public presentations of self, has particular importance given the variety of CMC contexts in which individuals engage in communication with others. Take Facebook posts for example, which may not entirely be public but are most certainly viewable to others. The way a person portrays him or herself in these posts may be internalized and could perhaps affect the person’s identity. This takes on further importance when we consider contexts in which the user has the freedom
to portray a radically different presentation of self, when compared to their FtF presentation of self.

Perhaps the main contribution of Gonzales and Hancock (2008) is the notion that publicly disclosed or posted information caused people to internalize the personality they portrayed, and integrate that new information into their identity. Given the availability of the public presentation of self, through Facebook, blogs, and even online video games, this internalization is an important consideration and contribution to CMC research. The notion that users can internalize information they portray while online has implications for several CMC contexts, in particular those contexts in which the user is acutely aware of the presentation of self.

**Online Dating**

One particular CMC context, relevant to the online presentation of self, is online dating. Scholars have taken a variety of perspectives in studying the presentation of self in this context and these perspectives range from examining deception and accuracy in online profiles/sites (Hancock & Toma, 2009; Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008) to a more general approach of examining self-presentation in online personals (Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006). One such broad approach is work by Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs (2006), who examined self-presentation in an online dating environment. The authors note that online dating is unique in that the goal of the communication occurring in this CMC context is to eventually have an intimate, face-to-face relationship. Furthermore, because of this situation, the “pressures to highlight one’s positive attributes are experienced in tandem with the need to present one’s true (or authentic) self to others, especially in
significant relationships” (Ellison et al., 2006, p. 417). Due to this pressure, many users of online dating sites seek an agreement between the information they, and others, post online and that person’s offline or real-world identity. Without this agreement the user may not want to pursue a relationship further or very well may believe that they had been deceived by the other user posting false information.

The CMC context of online dating presents an interesting tension for users. On the one hand, users attempt to portray a version of themselves that they feel will be viewed positively in the eyes of potential romantic partners. On the other hand, if their goal is an intimate FtF relationship, the user must also present him or herself in a way that is still realistically tied to their FtF self as well. Given the amount of time and emotional energy that can go into online dating, this tension is of substantial interest to not only online daters, but also those scholars examining the factors that influence the presentation of self in online contexts. In particular, it would appear that the importance of the relationship and the notion of identifiability would likely come into play.

Perhaps the relevant finding from Ellison and colleagues (2006) is the importance that anticipated future interaction and the importance of the relationship played in the presentation of self. As the authors note “the future face-to-face interaction they anticipated meant that individuals had to balance their desire for self-promotion with their need for accurate self-presentation” (Ellison et al., 2006, p. 430). Imagine an imbalance between the two, in which one of the individuals in an online, intimate interpersonal relationship presented themselves in a way that was not an accurate portrayal. For example, if one of the individuals in a relationship claimed to be an 18-year-old female,
but in real life was a 42-year-old male, this imbalance would likely be very damaging to the other person in this online relationship.

Along a similar train of thought, Toma, Hancock, and Ellison (2008) have examined deception in self-presentation in online dating profiles. According to this study, in general, people are rather accurate with their self-presentations online, at least in the dating context. This accurate depiction appears to hold, even if deception is a viable alternative. Toma and colleagues note that this can occur for three reasons. The first is that maintaining a false presentation can cause personal anxiety and is cognitively demanding. The second reason is that “it is possible to portray oneself both positively and accurately by strategically selecting kinds of information one wishes to convey” (Toma et al., 2008, p. 1034). Third and final, is that the individual may be faced with some sort of sanction if they are caught deceiving others. All three of these conditions may serve as reasons for creating an accurate presentation of self in the online dating context.

Another important consideration, in the context of online dating and self-presentation, is anticipated future interaction with the other person(s). Toma et al. (2008) note that anticipated FtF interaction is a key component of understanding deception in self-presentation in online dating profiles. Other scholars have also identified this variable as an important component in understanding online self-presentation. For example, Gibbs, Ellison, and Heino (2006) state “anticipated future interaction may be an important variable for predicting which of these self-disclosure strategies an individual will use at any given time” (p. 157). In the case of that particular study, the authors posit,
“individuals with long-term relational goals involving anticipated FtF interaction will engage in a greater degree of self-disclosure with potential dating partners they meet online than those who do not anticipate forming offline relationships” (Gibbs et al., 2006, p. 157). In the context of the online presentation of self, it may be that anticipated future interaction with others, either online or FtF, may impact the way an individual presents him or herself online. Given this, the effect of anticipated future interactions is something worth considering, especially in relation to the presentation of self online.

Critique of Past Research

Although past research applying Goffman (1959) to CMC contexts has been helpful and has advanced the communication discipline, it is important to evaluate the relevance of this research to modern day communication technologies. Perhaps the two main factors that weigh most heavily against this past research are the CMC contexts or technology used and the method used to examine these contexts. Much of the past research conducted in this area has looked at a small number of people through qualitative methods, which limits the generalizability of these findings. In addition, some of this research has focused on a particular CMC channel and many of these channels are rather outdated. With this notion in mind, it is important to consider that technology is changing very rapidly and the way we use new technology changes the way we communicate. For example, personal homepages are relatively uncommon now, yet SNS profiles have become very common. Studies focusing on older CMC contexts can still offer important insights, but are limited by the changing features of new communication technology. This prior research can serve as the foundation for studies that aim to
examine communication occurring in contemporary CMC contexts or with newer communication technology. In this sense, prior studies serve as the basis for more recent scholarship that examines how CMC has evolved and changed with advancements in communication technology. As Shirky (2010) explains when discussing reductions in TV viewing, “believing that the past stability of this behavior meant it would be a stable behavior in the future as well turned out to be a mistake” (p. 12). While this should not be taken as a universal maxim, Shirky’s notion that past behavior may not predict stable future behavior, in the context of changing communication technology, should be interpreted as a warning.

In the context of CMC research, we should not, on face value alone, assume that behaviors observed in past communication technologies will be stable predictors of future behaviors in, yet to be invented, future communication technologies. While we still may apply theories and findings from existing literature, we should not assume that these past findings are entirely predictive of future behavior. The communication technology available today, and how we use that technology, is different than it was 10-20 years ago. Therefore, if we are to examine the issues of identity and online self-presentation, it is imperative that we begin looking at contemporary CMC contexts instead of relying on past research and simply assuming that they still hold true. Furthermore, advances made in communication technology will require scholars to alter their focus by accounting for additional variables that were not present in older technology. For example, modern day CMC has reintegrated the vocal element back into the communication channel, something that was relatively absent from CMC for decades. Given this, it is important to
study modern day CMC contexts and to explicitly identify the variables or factors that these new contexts bring into play.

Beyond focusing research on modern day CMC contexts, the methods used to study CMC is also something worth noting. Kim and Weaver (2002) conducted a thematic meta-analysis of published communication research articles that appeared in academic journals from 1996 through 2000. This meta-analysis examined published communication research that examined communication taking place via the Internet. One of the units of analysis in this meta-analysis was the research method used in the original study. Kim and Weaver (2002) classified the method used as either quantitative or non-quantitative. According to this analysis, “non-quantitative research methods were more frequently used than quantitative methods in internet-related studies. There were 149 quantitative articles (26.7%) and 409 non-quantitative articles (72.9%)” (Kim & Weaver, 2002, pp. 527-529). An important consideration to make, in relation to the findings of the Kim and Weaver article, is the goal of each research method and the contribution findings from each method can make. Both types of approaches to doing research are equally valid, but they accomplish different things.

Qualitative work is best for exploring and describing communication in depth by “observing and interacting with people in their natural environment to discover rich explanations and unique instances” (Allen, Titsworth, & Hunt, 2009, p. 4). As Kim and Weaver (2002) note, much Internet related research of the prior century has focused on just such an approach. While helpful, overuse of one particular method can hinder the discipline’s ability to build a broad and strong body of knowledge on a particular
communication area. In the case of this dissertation, focusing on the interrelation of different variables, and how these variables impact the presentation of self, is a way of continuing to add to our scholarly understanding of the presentation of self and identity management online.

Review

Thus far, this chapter has examined Goffman’s (1959) presentation of self and explained how this process unfolds. Furthermore, this chapter has explained how these same processes of self-presentation can occur in modern day CMC contexts and identified five strategies used in this process. Beyond this explanation of Goffman, prior research applying Goffman’s theoretical contributions to CMC has also been examined. Much of this research has been rather helpful; however, this research either examines outdated CMC technology or has examined a specific communication channel in great depth. In addition, the majority of communication research about the Internet, published in the late 1990’s, was qualitative in nature and thus looked at CMC from predominantly one methodological perspective. In order to advance the study of the presentation of self in modern day CMC, the remaining portion of this chapter will identify several key theoretical concepts that likely influence the presentation of self in CMC contexts.

Contemporary Issues Relevant to the Study of the Presentation of Self

As previously discussed, Goffman’s (1959) presentation of self has been used as the theoretical framework for a variety of studies situated in CMC. Based on past research applying Goffman to CMC, we can identify several key areas that likely influence the presentation of self in modern day CMC. Shaped by the social norms of the
virtual environment, the concepts of multiple online identities, the importance or salience of the interaction, the notion of identifiability, and finally the concept of social presence, all likely play a part in influencing self-presentation in mediated contexts. The following sections of this chapter will address each concept in more detail, as well as explaining how each likely affects the online presentation of self.

**Multiple Identities**

One new area that likely plays a part in the presentation of self in CMC is the notion of individuals possessing multiple online identities. This notion of multiple identities is consistent with Goffman’s (1959) notion of an actor playing a particular role for a particular audience and this certainly takes place in FtF interactions. In the case of CMC, an individual may perform multiple, and different, presentations of self across different CMC channels or contexts. For example, on Facebook or LinkedIn an individual may portray an idealized, professional aspect of his or her identity. This same individual may, in a CMC channel like Halo: Reach, perform a presentation of self radically different than their self-presentation on Facebook. Goffman notes that people have multiple identities/performances that they are managing, with the possibility of intentional and unintentional sharing of information between these identities, with both positive and negative implications. In modern day CMC, this is likely an important area to consider and something past scholarship has discussed.

Gergen (2000) discusses how, in modern times, increases in the amount and type of relationships we encounter in daily life lead to a process called social saturation and this in turn changes how we understand the self. This social saturation is essentially a
departure from communicating with those who are physically proximal to the individual, as was the case in the 19th and early 20th centuries, and movement towards interaction with an ever increasing and diverse number of people. Due to advances in communication technology over the past several decades, “the number and variety of relationships in which we are engaged, potential frequency of contact, expressed intensity of relationship, and endurance through time all are steadily increasing. As this increase becomes extreme we reach a state of social saturation” (Gergen, 2000, p. 61). This social saturation is characteristic of everyday life in modern society and this saturation is fundamentally changing the way we interact with others and view the self. This change has primarily been facilitated by advancements in communication technology, which essentially allow people to interact more often and at a faster pace. These developments have created a world in which we can engage in significantly more relationships and this social saturation has impacted our views and experiences of self and others.

Stemming from this social saturation, Gergen (2000) posits that the effects of social saturation “may signal a populating of the self, the acquisition of multiple and disparate potentials for being” (p. 69). This populating of the self is the way in which an individual may have different identities that exist in concert with and in opposition to each other. As Gergen notes:

Increasingly we emerge as the possessors of many voices. Each self contains a multiplicity of others, singing different melodies, different verses, and with different rhythms. Nor do these many voices necessarily harmonize. At times they join together, at times they fail to listen one to another, and at times they create a
jarring discord. But what are the consequences of the multiply populated self? (p. 83)

This is indeed a worthwhile question to posit, especially when we consider the substantial changes in communication technology in the decades that followed Gergen’s piece. Take for instances the statement that “many organizations are now installing electronic-mail systems, which enable employees to carry out their business with each other by computer terminals rather than traditional, face-to-face means” (Gergen, 2000, p. 64). By 2011, email is not something now being installed, instead email is a fixture of modern day life. Email is something that can be accessed using a mobile device and not restricted to computer terminals.

The core of Gergen’s (2000) assertion is still applicable, but has taken on a different shape based on the technology developed since 2000, as well as how we have integrated such technology into our lives. Gergen talks about electronic mail, before email became the accepted term, but today we have texting, Facebook, online virtual environments, and other communication technologies that Gergen could not have predicted. Thus, the core of his assertion remains, but should be reframed based on our current CMC contexts. This reframing shifts the focus to how people manage these multiple identities through impression management strategies. Specifically, it would be interesting to examine how these impression management strategies are used differently from one’s FtF self-presentation compared to the online self-presentation.

RQ1: Are there differences in impression management strategies between FtF self-presentation and online self-presentation and if so what are these differences?
Importance and Expectation of Future Interaction

Another important characteristic to consider is the level of importance or salience a user places on interactions occurring online. In the context of the current study, the importance or salience of interactions with others in CMC contexts may be an important variable to consider. We already know from Ellison et al. (2006) that, in the context of an online dating site, anticipated FtF interactions and the intimacy of the relationship impacted the presentation of self in this context. Given this finding, it would make sense that one’s online self-presentation would likely vary depending on the importance the user places on the interactions in particular CMC contexts. For example, a user may view interactions occurring via Facebook as being important, especially given how identifiable one is on Facebook. However, that same user may view interactions with other people in Halo: Reach as rather unimportant and this view is likely to impact self-presentation.

In addition, the past interactions a user has with others in online contexts may also contribute to the perceived importance of interactions in specific online contexts. For example, if a user enters into an online discussion board in which he/she has zero history, that user may not view interactions on that discussion board as being important. That being said, if the user does have a history of interacting with others in this online space, they may very well view these interactions as important. Given this, past interactions as well as anticipated future interactions likely shape how users perceive the interactions they have with others in online contexts.

Beyond the findings of Ellison et al. (2006), other scholars have written concerning the nature of a relationship and how that affects the interactions between the
individuals in that relationship. Social construction theorists Berger and Luckmann (1966) give the following example of how the importance one places on the other interactant helps people make sense of their interactions:

I see the newspaper vendor on the street corner as regularly as I see my wife. But he is less important to me and I am not on intimate terms with him. He may remain relatively anonymous to me. The degree of interest and the degree of intimacy may combine to increase or decrease anonymity of experience. (p. 33)

Although far removed from the realm of CMC, Berger and Luckmann (1966) note that the relationship, or lack thereof, with another person in an interaction has an impact on how important that interaction is. This relationship is analogous to the relationship between interpersonal and impersonal communication. Scholars in interpersonal communication often conceptualize this relationship on a continuum with the impersonal communication on the low end and interpersonal communication on the high end (DeVito, 2009; Lane, 2010). In this continuum, the impersonal end represents “simple conversation between people who, we’d say, really don’t know each other—the server and the customer, for example” (DeVito, 2009, p. 5). On this low end we find people or relationships in which we may not have spent much time or people we really do not know that well. On the interpersonal end of the continuum we find those people or relationships that we know very well or have intimate contact with, including romantic partners, siblings, and close friends. Typically we have spent a great deal of time with these people and the relationships are very important to us.
This same structure, applied to low and high levels of importance, is likely true of communication occurring within mediated channels. Those CMC interactions with low importance might include online message boards that the user may occasionally post to, or online sites like Chat Roulette, in which the user has no expectation of future interaction. The opposite of low importance is high importance, and this typically involves environments in which the user has devoted their time or energies on a continual basis. For example, people may find interactions to be important if they occur in an online space that they either spend a great deal of time updating, such as their Facebook page, or in CMC contexts in which the interactions with others are deemed as being important to the individual, an online dating profile for instance.

The important point here is that the degree of importance or salience the user places on the communicative interaction they are participating in can, and does, vary by CMC context. Some interactions and relationships, such as those on an online dating site, may be particularly important for the user. However, other interactions, such as those on an anonymous message board site, may hold little importance for the user. As Ellison et al. (2006) note, the importance of the relationship and the expectation of future interaction played a role in influencing the presentation of self in an online dating site.

Thus far we know that importance does seem to matter in many interactions, both in FtF and online encounters. However, we do not have substantial research that predicts specifically how importance, or perhaps the level of importance, influences impression management strategies. Based on some of the prior literature (Berger and Luckmann, 1966; Ellison et al., 2006), and my own experiences in various online contexts, I do
believe that the level of importance will impact how users engage in impression management; however, the question is what will this effect be? My general view is that users will likely engage in more impression management in those contexts or situations in which they perceive the interactions as being important. This is perhaps similar to the notion of the impersonal-interpersonal continuum described by DeVito (2009) and Lane (2010). In this case, important interactions would be analogous to interpersonal communication while unimportant interactions would be impersonal communication.

In general, I doubt that users will engage in impression management strategies that would not benefit them or would adversely affect them in important interactions. This notion is perhaps explained by Walther’s (1996; 2006) hyperpersonal model. According to the hyperpersonal model, users in CMC contexts will use the advantages of that context (e.g., asynchronous communication) to carefully manage their impression management. In the case of importance, I would argue that users certainly would engage in the communicative behaviors proposed in the hyperpersonal model, but would likely be more inclined to do so in important interactions. What makes more sense to me is that users will likely engage in socially beneficial impression management, essentially the behaviors noted by Walther (1996; 2006), in important interactions and might be inclined to engage in a greater breadth of impression management in unimportant interactions.

SIT likely tells us that important interactions are ones in which individuals are striving to achieve positive social identity and this would seem to make sense. I would argue that in unimportant interactions users may not place a great deal of emphasis on developing a positive social identity since, to put it simply, the interactions in that context
are relatively unimportant. For example, I consider my interactions on Facebook to be important to me and carefully monitor how I portray myself, in order to maintain a positive social identity. However, I do not view my interactions with others in Halo to be important and typically engage in impression management that is not only broader than what I portray in Facebook, but also different from that Facebook self-presentation. I would attribute this to not only the context in which I am communicating with others, but the level of importance I assign to those interactions. Furthermore, I do not feel the need to develop positive social identity in Halo. Goffman (1959) would likely tell us that I am portraying two different roles to two different audiences and I would tend to agree with him. However, the interesting question here is how do I separate those audiences or what makes those audiences so different? The obvious answer is that the context in which the communication is taking place helps to separate the audiences, but this answer is incomplete. However, the other part of this answer is that the level of perceived importance I feel towards those interactions helps me to differentiate those audiences and impacts my self-presentation.

As I note previously, the scholarly community is lacking substantial research that can be used to offer specific predictions as to how perceived importance and/or the context impacts impression management. Goffman (1959) tells us that an actor can portray a different role for different audiences and other research seems to suggest that importance matters. In line with this train of thought, I argue that we likely will see a difference in impression management based on importance or context and examining this difference is worthwhile. However, given the lack of prior literature that specifics exactly
what this relationship will be it seems prudent to avoid posing specific hypotheses when we lack literature to support those assertions. Given this, the best option seems to be to offer a non-directional hypothesis, one that does not propose a specific difference since we do not have substantial research that allows us to do that. That being said, we should expect some sort of difference in impression management and coming to a more thorough understanding of what causes this difference will help us understand impression management more thoroughly.

H1: There will be differences in the use of CMC impression management strategies based on the CMC context and perceived importance of the interaction.

In addition to the level of importance of the interaction, Ellison et al. (2006) have an important point about the expectation of future interaction. It would make sense that if one expects to interact with someone else in the future, be it online or FtF, that individual may employ certain self-presentation strategies. However, if the expectation of future interaction is lower, the individual might employ different identity management strategies. Several scholarly articles (Ellison et al., 2006; Gibbs et al., 2006; Toma et al., 2008) clearly identify expectation of future interaction as an important variable to study. Toma and colleagues note that anticipated FtF interaction was a key variable in examining deception in online dating profiles. Going one step further, Gibbs et al., (2006) stated “anticipated future interaction may be an important variable for predicting which of these self-disclosure strategies an individual will use at any given time” (p. 157). Given this past research, anticipated future interaction appears to impact online self-presentation.
I can envision circumstances in which perceived expectation of future interaction could function to increase or decrease certain impression management strategies. For example, in Halo I have a lack of expectation of future interaction and, at least for me, this causes me to engage in impression management vastly different from my FtF self-presentation. However, in BSGO I do have an expectation of future interaction and this serves to suppress some of the more negative ways I can present myself to others. One possible prediction of these differences in impression management certainly could be tied to the context those interactions are taking place in. However, another possible explanation is that the level of expectation of future interaction is responsible for influencing my use of impression management. Past research supports the notion that expectation of future interaction likely affects impression management (Ellison et al., 2006; Gibbs et al., 2006; Toma et al., 2008). In particular, Gibbs et al., (2006) link expectation of future interaction with self-disclosure strategies, which could function as a part of impression management.

Thus far, it appears that expectation of future interaction is an important theoretical construct to consider. Prior literature has noted the importance of this concept, but I think it may play a larger role than past research has provided support for. For example, SIT tells us that the groups we belong to and how we view our membership in those groups impact our sense of identity, and I would tend to agree with this view. However, I also think my expectation of future interaction with those groups plays a role in influencing my self-presentation within that group and perhaps elsewhere. This view is
still consistent with prior theory, but highlights expectation of future interaction as something that we should give more attention to.

Along those lines, understanding how high or low expectation of future interaction impacts impression management is an important step in studying online impression management. However, it could be that some impression management strategies increase with greater expectation of future interaction or even increase in response to decreases in expectation of future interaction. With these possible relationships in mind, which I think are likely to occur, offering a directed hypothesis might actually hide important changes in impression management or cause us to reject the hypothesis because we do not see the expected prediction. Thus, a safer approach seems to be to offer a non-directional hypothesis that identifies the important components while still allowing us to examine the different relationships that occur between impression management strategies, different contexts, and different levels of expectation of future interaction.

H2: There will be differences in the use of CMC impression management strategies based on the CMC context and perceived expectation of future interaction.

Beyond looking at the importance or salience of the interaction and anticipated future interaction as unrelated concepts, it would be worth examining if these two theoretical concepts interact to influence identity management strategies and what this interaction might look like. It could be that importance and expectation of future interaction somehow interact together to influence particular impression management
strategies. Establishing and understanding this potential interaction effect would be beneficial in furthering our understanding of the relationship between these variables and impression management. If these variables did interact together, then we would know that both expectation of future interaction and importance are needed to influence impression management strategies. That being said, we might also find that importance and/or expectation of future interaction might have main effects. In this case, either or both variable might have an influence, independent of the other, on impression management. If this were the case, we might be able to identify which variable has an influence on impression management strategies. Establishing the potential interaction effect or main effect for importance and expectation of future interaction is an important step in understanding the relationship between these variables and impression management strategies.

Related to this notion of importance or salience is how identifiable a user is in particular CMC contexts. Again, Ellison et al. (2006) note that in the online dating context user’s online identities were somewhat connected with their real-world identity. This was primarily because the goal of the online interactions was to, hopefully, form a romantic and intimate relationship with someone online and transfer this to the real-world. Given this, it is imperative that online daters accurately portray their real-world identity and perform an online presentation of self that is representative of their real-world presentation of self. Failing to accurately synchronize these presentations of self may end up negatively impacting that person’s relationship with others. Perhaps the key component of this argument is the notion of identifiability.
Identifiability

Identifiability is essentially the notion that what one says or does can be directly attributed to that person. The notion of identifiability is important to helping us understand communication via CMC since, unlike typically FtF settings, users of CMC may be somewhat anonymous to each other. This lack of identity can have an impact on not only communication occurring in online settings but in FtF situations as well. Williams, Harkins, and Latané (1981) examined the impact of identifiability on social loafing in small groups. They found that when subjects’ contributions were always identifiable, they would employ high levels of effort; however, when subjects were not identifiable more social loafing occurred. The authors note, “it may be that identifiability either exists or does not exist for a given individual at any given time, or people may experience varying degrees of identifiability, feeling somewhat identifiable, very identifiable, and so on” (Williams et al., 1981, p. 310). Although not taking place in a mediated context, this article points out the notion of identifiability influencing behavior and that this is not a simple binary variable (i.e., one is identifiable or not identifiable). Furthermore, by manipulating the level of identifiability the researchers were able to generate and observe the impact of this manipulation on actual behavior. This same effect may also be present in CMC contexts.

In much CMC research, identifiability has been linked with the term anonymity. In simplified terms, anonymity refers to how anonymous or how much identifying information is allowed by the mediated channel. For example, a text-based message board lacks the ability to convey nonverbal messages (i.e., vocalics) as we would
normally expect in FtF communication. Something as simple as the gender of the sender
or receiver is not as readily apparent as it would be in FtF interactions. This leads the
users to be somewhat visually anonymous, although some information about the other
person’s identity may bleed through (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1999).

The connection between identifiability/anonymity and CMC becomes even more
complicated as we expand this research into the effects of low levels of identifiability.
Reicher and Levine (1994) posit that lowered identifiability “leads to a loss of individual
identity” (p. 512) and that this state is called deindividuation. Postmes and Spears (2002)
report that “identifiability leads to strategic behavior viz-a-viz a powerful (out)group,
whereas anonymity and isolation set the individual free from these social restraints” (p.
1075). Scholars Postmes, Spears, and Lea (1999) have conducted substantial research on
the theoretical construct of deindividuation and how this influences individuals in online
settings. Called the social identity model of deindividuation effects (SIDE), the model
posits that the lack of identifying cues in online interactions allows for a degree of
anonymity and this can lead to depersonalization of others. The lack of identifiable
information allows individuals to ignore social pressures or influence and predicts that
people are more likely to treat individuals based on perceived group membership instead
of being treated as individuals (see Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998; Postmes, Spears, &
Lea, 2002). Essentially, these authors argue that the lack of identifying information
provided in the CMC channel has an influence on how people view others, and the SIDE
model predicts that this influences behavior. Past research has already demonstrated that
the degree to which one is identifiable (i.e., identifiability) has an effect on behavior and how individuals communicate with others via mediated channels.

Although scholarly work has generally viewed anonymity as being a factor that seemingly allows for poor behavior online, others argue that being anonymous online has several advantages. One such person is Chris “moot” Poole, who created the imageboard website 4chan (http://www.4chan.org), which allows anonymous postings by users. Because the site does not use people’s names, and instead labels everyone as anonymous, the site functions to mask people’s real-world identities, thus rendering them anonymous. At the 2011 South by Southwest Music Conference and Festival (SXSW) Poole reportedly stated “I think anonymity is authenticity, it allows you to share in a completely unvarnished, unfiltered, raw way and I think that’s something that’s extremely valuable” (Smith, 2011, p. 1). In addition, Poole also noted that “the cost of failure is really high when you’re contributing as yourself” (Halliday, 2011, p. 1).

Poole has an important point here, especially when we examine his statement that the cost of failure is high when your identity is connected with your posting. While anonymity certainly can allow people to act out inappropriately, being anonymous also has advantages. In particular, being anonymous allows users to experiment with their online environment and perhaps to try things they normally would not if they were identifiable. This notion of a low cost of failure has real-world implication as well, especially when we consider activists who may be suppressed or silenced by governmental bodies.
Beyond Poole, online activists have also noted how important anonymity is, especially anonymity online. One such person is a Chinese blogger whose legal name is Zhao Jing, but due to his criticism of the Chinese government has adopted the name Michael Anti, and used this name as his professional identity on sites such as Facebook (Tran, 2011). According to Tran, Facebook requires users to use their legal names when creating an account and users cannot use aliases to identify their Facebook page. In the case of Michael Anti, having an online alias, or at the very least maintaining a degree of anonymity could be rather important, especially if one is exercising free speech in a political environment that does not support this. In these cases, it could be argued that requiring users to use their real names online “can endanger human rights activists and others if their identities become known” (Tran, 2011, p. 2). Given this, anonymity has its privileges and would likely allow users to openly communicate with others. Regardless of one’s stance on anonymity online, scholars and users of CMC have identified anonymity or identifiability as an important variable when considering online interactions.

In the context of this dissertation, identifiability functions as the link between one’s real-world identity and one’s online, virtual identity and this may also be related to importance or salience. We already know that being identifiable or anonymous online has an impact on behavior (Postmes et al., 1998; Postmes et al., 2002; Williams et al., 1981). Given this, we can view identifiability as existing on a continuum, with the low end of identity indicating that someone is nearly completely anonymous and no connection between their online activities and their real-world identity is made. An example of this
would be 4Chan, which allows anonymous postings by users but does record the IP address of the user. Because the site does not use people’s names, and instead labels everyone as anonymous, the site functions to mask people’s real-world identities, thus rendering them anonymous. Any connection between one’s anonymous postings and their real-world identity would require the release of IP addresses, which may or may not actually allow for someone to find the actual user.

The other end of the identity spectrum, the polar opposite of being anonymous, would be the state of being readily identifiable. Unlike anonymity, being identifiable means one’s real-world identity is explicitly connected to one’s online identity. This is essentially how identifiable we would be if we spoke in public or amongst friends. For example, in a graduate seminar everyone is easily identifiable. If one person speaks, everyone else knows not only who spoke but also knows their name and likely additional information about them. In the context of CMC, we do see channels or environments within CMC in which users intentionally or unintentionally link their real-world identity with their virtual identity. One CMC channel that directly connects one’s real-world identity with their virtual identity is something like Facebook or Google+. In both cases, a person is linking their online or virtual identity with their real-world identity. While someone could certainly create a fake online persona (or an online alias) most people would likely use either Facebook or Google+ to intentionally create and reinforce this link between their real-world identity and digital presence.

Prior research has already identified anonymity/identifiability as being an important theoretical concept and one that influences communication and interaction
occurring in online contexts (Postmes & Spears, 2002; Williams et al., 1981). However, some of these theoretical perspectives seem to be at odds with each other. For example, the SIDE model (Postmes et al., 1998; Postmes et al., 2002) posits that anonymity can lead to deindividuation and ultimately allow CMC users to disregard social standards of behavior and act out on impulse. That being said, figureheads in some online contexts argue that being anonymous can be beneficial. In particular, Chris “moot” Poole, the founder of 4chan, argues that being anonymous allows users the freedom to be creative in an unvarnished way. In this perspective, anonymity might be a positive trait and perhaps allow for a different aspect of impression management than proposed by the SIDE model.

For example, I could envision users of online social support sites to have more freedom in their self-presentation if their physical identities were not associated with their online interactions. This would be particularly salient to users of social support sites that focus on sensitive issues. For instances, I would argue that anonymity could promote positive impression management in an online discussion site that focuses on sexually transmitted diseases or perhaps an online social support group for domestic violence. In these circumstances anonymity could allow people to engage in positive impression management and allow them freedom to share more about themselves, in the unvarnished way described by Poole (Halliday, 2011). Although these examples illustrate how anonymity could be a helpful trait (in regards to impression management), we do see evidence that provides support for the opposite to be the case (Postmes et al., 1998; Postmes et al., 2002). For example, anonymity in Halo allows me to engage in negative aspects of impression management that are far different from my FtF impression
management. Given these examples, it seems that anonymity/identifiability could have a rather complex relationship with and affect on impression management strategies.

I think that past research has clearly noted anonymity as being an important theoretical concept; however, I also think that anonymity can function to both enhance and perhaps inhibit different aspects of impression management. For example, being anonymous online might allow me to engage in more honest self-disclosure and impression management, or perhaps engage in portraying an idealized presentation of self (Walther, 1996; 2006). That being said, anonymity might also allow me to engage in radically different forms of impression management or use certain impression management strategies more so than others. Along this train of thought, my theoretical view of anonymity is not that it simply leads to bad behavior (e.g., flaming or trolling). Instead, I view anonymity as enabling users to engage in different forms of impression management, which could have positive or negative social ramifications. Given the important role that identifiability/anonymity play in influencing communicative behavior and the possibility for this theoretical concept to have different effects depending on the circumstances, the following hypothesis is offered:

H3: There will be differences in the use of CMC impression management strategies based on the CMC context and perceived anonymity.

Presence and Social Presence

Besides the concepts of importance and anonymity, the theoretical construct of presence, specifically social presence, can also help us explain online communication behavior. Presence is defined by K. Lee (2004) as “a psychological state in which virtual
objects are experienced as actual objects in either sensory or nonsensory ways” (p. 27). In this sense, users experience virtual objects as real objects and the same may extend to virtual representations of people. Another definition of presence, developed by the International Society for Presence Research (2000), states:

Presence (a shortened version of the term “telepresence”) is a psychological state or subjective perception in which even though part or all of an individual’s current experience is generated by and/or filtered through human-made technology, part or all of the individual’s perception fails to accurately acknowledge the role of the technology in the experience. Except in the most extreme cases, the individual can indicate correctly that s/he is using the technology, but at *some level* and to *some degree*, her/his perceptions overlook that knowledge and objects, events, entities, and environments are perceived as if the technology was not involved in the experience. (p. 1)

For example, in online virtual environments users typically use avatars, or virtual representations of themselves, to not only move around and interact with the virtual environment, but also to communicate with other users, through their respective avatars. Presence can be understood as existing on a continuum and past research has conceptualized presence as such. On the low end of the spectrum is low presence, in which a user does not or only mildly feels the state of virtual objects being actual objects. This could include CMC settings in which communication only occurs via text interactions. The lack of virtual objects and additional channels of communication (i.e., nonverbal or social context cues) would likely inhibit any substantial sense of presence.
from occurring and this lack of additional channels helps to distinguish current CMC use from that of the 1990’s.

On the other end of the spectrum is a high level of presence. High levels of presence would likely occur in full virtual reality interactions, which have yet to be introduced on any wide scale. That being said, online virtual environments like Second Life, World of Warcraft, or even multiplayer video games like Halo: Reach likely induce a sense of presence in at least some users. Other CMC channels, including video conferencing, would also likely have high levels of presence. This notion of presence is important, given users may experience virtual objects as real objects and no longer perceive technology as being a critical part in communication.

In the context of this dissertation, presence, as conceptualized by past research, is focused on the sense of being in a virtual environment. As Rice and Associates (1984) note, presence and telepresence are the same concept, presence is simply a shortened term. Perse (2009) explains the difference between presence and social presence as follows, “telepresence is the sense of ‘being there.’ Social presence is the sense of ‘being together with another’” (p. 365). It is this distinction, between presence and social presence, that is of importance to this dissertation and a discussion of this continues below.

Rice and Associates (1984) explore the notion of social presence and the varying levels of presence that may be present in various CMC contexts. The distinction between presence and social presence is that presence or telepresence is focused on being in the virtual environment, while social presence is focused on being in that environment with
another. One consideration of social presence is that “media that are high in social presence convey more communication cues to the participants. For example, face-to-face communication and television are generally rated as high in social presence because they convey both verbal and nonverbal information” (Perse, 2009, p. 365). Rice and Associates (1984) explain this notion further:

Chief among the reasons given for the differentiation among media in social presence are the stimulus-conveying restrictions of some media compared with others. The most salient restrictions are those related to the conveyance of the nonverbal aspects of communication. For example, the telephone cannot convey the proxemics (physical distance and placement) and kinesic (gestures and facial expressions) dimensions of a personal conversation. (p. 58)

The authors go on to note that different communication channels will have different levels of social presence. For example, a face-to-face conversation will have more presence than a business letter (Rice & Associates, 1984). A more modern example would be an email compared to a video chat or perhaps communication occurring within an online virtual environment (e.g., World of Warcraft, Second Life).

Past research has noted the importance of presence in CMC (see K. Lee, 2004) and this is particularly important given substantial advances in communication technology over the past several decades. In the context of the current study, the level of social presence perceived or felt by the user may play a part in online self-presentation. For example, someone experiencing high levels of social presence in an online role playing game, may feel free to present a version of him or herself that is radically
different from his or her FtF presentation of self. Although not examining social presence in the manner noted above, past research has determined that people who feel competent in their real-world presentation of self will likely feel competent in their online presentation of self, and actually engage in this behavior in SNS (Krämer & Winter, 2008). Thus, the opposite may be the case, someone who experiences high levels of social presence may perform a presentation of self very similar to their FtF self.

Besides the potential connection between presence and the presentation of self, identifiability, importance of interaction, and expectation of future interaction might also come into play when we consider the role of presence in the online presentation of self. Little research exists that explores the potential connections between these theoretical concepts and impression management strategies. Without the theoretical foundation, it is wise to approach this connection cautiously and without theoretical blinders. Thus, the following research questions are offered to further understand this proposed connection.

RQ2: Are CMC impression management strategies predicted by importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity, or social presence?
RQ2a: What are the unique effects of these variables in predicting CMC impression management strategies?
RQ2b: What are the interaction effects of these variables in predicting CMC impression management strategies?

Social Norms of CMC Contexts

Within any social system or group of people, norms or standards of behavior emerge and influence behavior. Although agreement on a universal definition of norms is
hard to come by (see Gibbs, 1965), one definition that seems to encompass most interpretations of this concept is offered by Hechter and Opp (2001). According to these scholars, norms are a “cultural phenomena that prescribe and proscribe behavior in specific circumstances” (Hechter & Opp, 2001, p. xi). This is perhaps one of the more parsimonious definitions of norms identified by scholars. Other definitions explain social norms as “social attitudes of approval and disapproval, specifying what ought to be done and what ought not to be done” (Sunstein, 1996, p. 914) or “statements about what is allowed, what ought or ought not to be done” (Opp, 2001, p. 235). Some scholars even specify that social norms “are rules and standards that are understood by members of a group, and that guide and/or constrain social behavior without the force of laws” (Cialdini & Trost, 1998, p. 152). Labovitz and Hagedorn (1973) bring the definition of norms a step further by adding the notion of reward and punishment. Specifically, Labovitz and Hagedorn’s (1973) definition of social norms states, “people receive physical or psychological rewards and punishments for their behavior, which encourages or discourages them to conduct themselves in a similar way in the future” (p. 284).

In all of the definitions of norms or social norms we see some overlap, specifically the notion of statements that guide behavior. Simply put, norms are standards of behaviors for a particular group of people situated in either FtF or CMC interactions. In the case of this dissertation, norms or social norms can be understood using Opp’s (2001) definition, “statements about what is allowed, what ought or ought not to be done” (p. 235). Without a doubt, the norms or unwritten rules of a particular online environment have an impact on behaviors and communication occurring via CMC. For example, in
some online games the norm is to help other people in need, while in others, such as in more competitive games, the norm is every person for him or herself. While certainly not everyone abides by these norms, norms do exist with the majority of the user base adhering to them and these norms can vary from one CMC context to the next, just as the norms of one culture vary from that of another culture.

Goffman (1959) has already noted the role that norms play in self-presentation. For example, Goffman notes that “when the individual presents himself before others, his performances will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole” (1959, p. 35). In this sense, the actor will typically act within the norms of the society from which his presentation is taking place. The same is likely true of self-presentation occurring in CMC contexts; however, in place of the norms of the society are the norms of the online virtual space in which the actor is communicating with others. Given the connection of norms with self-presentation, it is important to recognize the norms specific to CMC contexts and to take these into account when examining online self-presentation.

In an attempt to understand the connection between online and offline social norms, Yee, Bailenson, Urbanek, Chang, and Merget (2007) conducted an observational study in the virtual environment of Second Life. Specifically, the researchers collected data related to the nonverbal behaviors of users’ avatars in SL and these observations included gender, interpersonal distance, and eye gaze. Yee and colleagues found that “our social interactions in online virtual environments, such as Second Life, are governed by the same social norms as social interactions in the physical world” (2007, p. 119). Put
another way, the online norms observed by Yee et al. (2007) were similar to those experienced by people through FtF interactions. Although limited to the CMC context (SL) used in their study the findings of Yee et al. are important, namely that the social norms of our FtF interactions can come into play in virtual interactions.

In the context of the current study, we can posit that people’s behavior in online contexts is governed by social norms and that these norms can, at times, conform to the social norms found in other interactions. That being said, we certainly do see online environments in which the social norms of that environment are very different from those found in FtF interactions and even other CMC contexts. For example, in many multiplayer video games it is rather typical for gamers to flame at other players, even though this is not typical behavior on Facebook or in FtF settings. With this example in mind, the interesting issue becomes what happens when behavior or information from one online context is somehow shared in another context?

Given the potential for sharing information from one context to another, keeping in mind that norms likely vary by context, examining the potential for damage to one’s self-presentation is one area that this study should focus on. For example, it may very well be that what is appropriate in one online context is entirely inappropriate in another online context or even in FtF interactions. However, it certainly could be possible for the actions of a user in one online context to intentionally or unintentionally be shared in another, separate online context. The degree of potential for this information sharing to occur may influence how users interact with others in that context. Put another way, the potential damage an individual faces in one online context, because of interactions that
person has with others in a separate online context, may act to constrain impression management strategies that individual uses. This in turn affects the presentation of self, such that one context constrains behavior in another context. Given this, it would seem likely that the degree to which this sharing of information would be damaging to the user and the perceived likelihood of this happening, may play a part in influencing impression management strategies. Examining the potential for this is something this study should focus on and the following research question is offered:

RQ3: How does perceived damage from information shared from one context to another and the perceived likelihood of this sharing occurring relate to CMC impression management strategies?

Summary

This chapter had three main goals: examine Goffman’s (1959; 1963) work on the presentation of self, examine and evaluate scholarship applying Goffman to CMC contexts, and to offer hypotheses and research questions that help guide research to further understand the presentation of self in modern day CMC contexts. We already know that people use CMC to present themselves online and this can occur in a variety of contexts (i.e., personal homepages, social networking sites). However, much of this research has been focused on one specific CMC context or channel, has primarily used qualitative methods, and has been situated in older communication technologies, which may not accurately reflect interactions taking place using modern day communication technology. Thus, a broader approach, one that examines the differences in self-presentation online compared to FtF and differences in self-presentation across multiple
CMC contexts, using modern day communication technologies, would help the scholarly community to come to a more robust understanding of the presentation of self in modern day CMC. This broader approach could use quantitative methods to examine how individuals engage in the presentation of self in online contexts and compare this online presentation of self with their presentation of self via FtF. In addition, using different statistical procedures, it may be possible to determine if certain variables (i.e., importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity) can be used to predict the presentation of self online. The following chapter of this dissertation will layout a method for studying online self-presentation, primarily through quantitative methods, across CMC contexts.
CHAPTER 3: METHOD

Introduction

In the context of this dissertation, examining online self-presentation in contemporary CMC contexts, a variety of research methods could be employed to study this topic. However, given the nature of the hypotheses and research questions posed in the previous chapter, quantitative methods are the most appropriate way of addressing the topic of online self-presentation. Specifically, an online survey, that measures impression management strategies and other variables of interest in different CMC contexts, is ideally suited to addressing the questions posed in this dissertation. Crano and Brewer (2002) note that the goal of survey research is to create or provide an accurate estimate of a population value from a sample of people from within the population. Allen, Titsworth, and Hunt (2009) also discuss the advantages of using surveys to collect data. In particular “surveys…typically assess variables in more natural settings and provide more breadth and possibly greater generalizability than experiments” (Allen et al., 2009, p. 12).

With these advantages in mind, this chapter will explain the overall method used to collect data for this study. First, this chapter will identify and explain the five CMC contexts from which participants will be recruited to complete an online survey. Along with each description, this chapter will explain how data was collected from each context. Next, this chapter will explain the development and makeup of the online survey by identifying and explaining the different scales that makeup the survey instrument. After explaining the survey instrument, this chapter will provide information about the
participants who took part in this study. The chapter will conclude with an overview of the data analysis used and a summary of the major concepts covered in this chapter.

Procedures

This study has recruited participants from five, unique CMC contexts. While each context relies on CMC for individuals or users to interact, each context provides users a different experience when communicating with other people. This variation should allow for the comparison of impression management strategies across contexts. In addition, this comparison will also examine how different variables of interest, identified in the prior chapter and also in this chapter, may influence impression management strategies. Adjacent to the explanation of each CMC context is a brief explanation of how participants were recruited from that context. A more thorough explanation of the way in which data was collected is provided after the discussion of the CMC contexts. However, it is important to note that while all of the CMC contexts had a unique survey, all of the surveys asked nearly identical questions. The only main difference in questions is the noun used in each question. Between the different contexts, noun usage changed to accurately ask questions based on that particular context. This was done to ensure that questions asked in reference to each context actually reference that context in the question.

Facebook

The first CMC context used in this study is Facebook. As previously noted, Facebook is a particularly popular SNS, with millions of active users. In general, users of Facebook are readily identifiable, since one typically uses their legal name and this is
how users are identified on the site. Given the nature of social networks, we can anticipate that users of Facebook will have a high expectation of future interaction with others on the site. This is especially the case since many of the people one interacts with on Facebook are ‘friends’ of the user or at the very least in their social network. We might also predict that interactions with other people on Facebook would be of moderate to high importance to the user, given that the other users are generally within the one’s social network. Finally, we can also posit that interactions on Facebook would likely be of moderate to high social presence. Again, we can attribute this to the inherent social nature of SNSs.

By far, the best way to recruit active users of Facebook is to use Facebook itself to recruit participants. In order to accomplish this, I posted a URL to the survey designed for Facebook to my Facebook page, as a status update, along with a brief description of the study. I also included a message asking people from my social network to complete the survey. Other Facebook users also reposted this recruitment message to their Facebook status or wall, which functioned similar to a snowball sampling method and hypothetically had the potential to reach a wide audience. The status message with the Facebook survey information was reposted several times, in order to recruit more participants from this CMC context.

BSGO

Besides Facebook, the MMO Battlestar Galactica Online also serves as a particular area of interest. As previously mentioned, BSGO is an online game in which users can interact with others in a virtual environment set in deep space. Within BSGO,
we can expect that users are not readily identifiable, since users are identified with self-assigned alias and not their legal name. We might also expect that users have a moderate to high expectation of future interaction and a moderate to high level of importance placed on interactions with others in BSGO. Finally, BSGO users may report moderate to high levels of social presence.

Within the game users can interact with each other using a text-based messaging system. That being said, this system blocks users from sending URLs or links to webpages. Thus, in order to recruit participants from BSGO, I used standard features of TeamSpeak 3 (TeamSpeak Systems, 2011), or simple TS for short, to announce the study and recruit participants. I used several strategies to recruit participants from BSGO. First, I posted a message to a private message board system hosted by one of the more active BSGO players. Next, I made verbal announcements on several different TS channels in order to recruit participants. Coupled with the verbal announcements, I also posted the link to the online survey in the text chat window of the TS channel I frequent. Finally, using the text chat feature I posted the survey URL and brief description to a text chat window that anyone logged into that particular server can see. I also asked other TS users, who are also BSGO players, to pass along the URL to the survey to people they may encounter.

*Online Social Support Websites*

The next CMC context this study recruited participants from were social support websites. Social support websites are generally online communities where groups of people can discuss issues important to them. Often, social support websites focus on
medical conditions or diseases and offer users a way to talk with others about the issues they are facing. For example, Wright (2002) examined the advantages and disadvantages presented to users in an online cancer support community. In particular, Wright notes that these social support groups can provide health benefits to the users.

Depending on the particular site, users may have varying degrees of anonymity. Some sites may ask the user to use their legal name, while other sites might allow for a pseudonym to be used. In general, social support sites are typically areas where individuals can go to discuss issues relevant to them and receive the support they need. Given this level of support, we would expect the different interactions on social support sites to be of moderate to high importance and a reasonable expectation of future interaction with other users.

To recruit users of social support websites, I posted a message to my Facebook profile asking for users of these social support websites to fill out a brief survey. After several follow up posts on Facebook, participant recruitment branched out to include specific social support websites. In particular, the social support website fatsecret.com was used to recruit participants for this study. According to the FatSecret website, “FatSecret is a **new** online diet, nutrition and weight loss community that harnesses the collective contributions of our members to generate practical and motivating information so that you can make better decisions to achieve your goals” (FatSecret, 2012, p. 1). Other communication scholars have already examined FatSecret, specifically by analyzing journal entries and discussion forum comments (Black, Bute, & Russell, 2010). In order to recruit participants from FatSecret, a FatSecret user volunteered to post a link
to the survey and short explanation of the study to a message board within FatSecret. This, coupled with asking people on Facebook, who use social support websites, should allow for recruitment of participants who actively use online social support sites to complete an online survey.

**Reddit**

Reddit.com is a news aggregate site that allows users to submit content for the reddit community to read. For example, a user can submit a link to online content that the user feels is interesting or submit a text-based post that the user has written out. According to the reddit website “reddit is a source for what's new and popular on the web. Users like you provide all of the content and decide, through voting, what's good and what's junk” (reddit, 2011, p. 1). Based on this voting, content will either appear higher or lower on the page. In addition to voting, users can also post comments about the content they are voting on or respond to text-based posts. Reddit users are identified by a self-assigned alias, which could render them relatively anonymous. At the very least, the self-assigned alias can allow users to post using an alias instead of their legal name. Reddit users may report varying levels of expectation of future interaction. Some users may routinely interact with other users, while others may have no expectation of future interaction. In regards to perceived importance, reddit users will likely also report varying level of perceived importance. Finally, users will likely also report mixed levels of social presence. In order to recruit participants from reddit, I created a post to the scholar subreddit which contained a brief message about the study and a URL to the online
survey. In addition, I also posted the same message and link to the AskScience and Assistance subreddit.

*Multiplayer First-Person Shooter Games*

As previously mentioned, the FPS games are a rather popular genre of video games that allows individuals from around the world to play with or against each other in a virtual environment. Typically, gamers are paired up with up with roughly a dozen other players through some sort of matchmaking system, which automatically selects players and matches them together. Often, these games last 10-15 minutes, with multiplayer games of Halo typically last roughly 12 minutes. After playing, gamers can quickly and easily load into a new game, which usually does not have the same players from the last one.

While playing multiplayer matches of FPS games, gamers typically have a low expectation of future interaction. This is due to the matchmaking system, which usually does not pair up the same exact players in subsequent games. Given the short nature of these games, gamers likely will not view these interactions as being important to them. In addition, gamers likely will view multiplayer FPS games as being rather low in social presence, in part due to the typical interactions taking place in these games. Finally, while in multiplayer games, the gamers are only identified by their self-assigned alias or in the case of Halo: Reach their Xbox LIVE gamertag. Users of Xbox LIVE do have the option of linking their gamertag with SNS like Facebook. Thus, some users may perceive themselves to be rather anonymous while others may be more identifiable.
In order to recruit participants who play multiplayer games of FPS games, two approaches were used. The first approach recruited participants by posting a description of the study and a URL to the online survey to the discussion board of gaming websites. Ledbetter and Kuznekoff (2011) followed a similar procedure when recruiting participants who actively communicate with friends via Xbox LIVE. The second approach recruited participants from a research pool in the School of Communication Studies at Ohio University. The research pool is made up of students enrolled in several 100 and 200 level classes. Students in these classes are required to participate in communication research in order to earn a small percentage of course credit. All students in classes that use the participant pool completed a short questionnaire that determined their eligibility for this, and other, studies. Those students who answered that they interact with other people in online multiplayer FPS games were assigned to the study for this dissertation. Using the participation system, participants were contacted and encouraged to complete the online survey. Students also had the option of completing an alternate assignment for course credit, instead of completing the survey.

Summary

Although all of the CMC contexts mentioned above will draw from the same survey questions, each context will technically have a different survey. The only difference between the surveys is noun usage in the directions and questions. For example, the URL placed on Facebook will direct participants to the version of the online survey in which Facebook is used in the directions and questions. The link posted to BSGO will direct participants to a nearly identical online survey, but one in which BSGO
is used in the directions and questions. Thus, participants are asked the same questions, but the directions and noun usage in each question is specifically tailored to that particular CMC context. This should also help to prevent a participant from one context accidentally filling out the online survey to a different context. In addition, this allows each survey question to make conceptual sense to participants, since the survey questions specifically reference the CMC context that each participant was recruited from.

Measures

Aside from standard demographic questions (i.e., age, ethnicity, sex), several previously developed scales will be used to tap into appropriate theoretical concepts. For clarity, these scales are listed with the theoretical concept they are most appropriate for. The main scale used in this study is the impression management scale developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999). Participants will answer questions to this scale twice, once in reference to their FtF interactions and the second time in reference to one of the CMC contexts previously mentioned.

In addition to the impression management scale, participants will also complete the Social Presence scale (Short, Williams, & Christie, 1976), a measure of perceived anonymity (Whelan & Meade, 2009), a measure of perceived expectation of future interaction (Walther, 1994), and finally several other scales developed for this dissertation. The additional scales include measures of perceived importance, a measure of the potential for information from one CMC context to be shared with another CMC context, and finally a measure of the potential damage this sharing of information may have for the individual. The following subsections of this chapter will explain each scale
in more detail, by providing example items from each measure and prior alpha reliability values when appropriate.

Two rounds of pilot testing were conducted in order to establish and, at times, verify reliability of scale items. Two scales were not included in this pilot testing due to their extensive prior use or prior research providing extensive background on the reliability and validity of the scale. The first round of pilot testing included responses from 32 people while the second, follow-up round of testing included 15. Prior research has noted that, for initial scale development, researchers need not recruit a large number of people. In fact, research suggests “that 30 representative participants from the population of interest is a reasonable minimum recommendation for a pilot study where the purpose is preliminary survey or scale development” (Johanson & Brooks, 2010, p. 399). In the case of the pilot tests for this dissertation, participants were recruited from Facebook to answer questions about their Facebook use. Thus, both rounds of pilot testing recruited participants from the population of interest.

Impression Management Scale

Bolino and Turnley (1999) developed a measure of impression management behaviors in organizations and based this measure on a taxonomy proposed by Jones and Pittman (1982). Bolino and Turnley developed this measure in an attempt to overcome shortcomings with other impression management scales and research methods. To accomplish this, the scholars used Jones and Pittman’s taxonomy of impression management behaviors, which includes self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. As Bolino and Turnley (1999) explain:
“self-promotion, whereby individuals point out their abilities or accomplishments in order to be seen as competent by observers; ingratiation, whereby individuals do favors or use flattery to elicit an attribution of likability from observers; exemplification, whereby people self-sacrifice or go above and beyond the call of duty in order to gain the attribution of dedication from observers; intimidation, where people signal their power or potential to punish in order to be seen as dangerous by observers; and supplication, where individuals advertise their weaknesses or shortcomings in order to elicit an attribution of being needy from observers.” (p. 190)

The impression management scale is made up of 22 items, broken down into five subscales, each one representing a different strategy identified by Jones and Pittman. Each item is measured on a five-point scale. Participants respond to each item by indicating how often they behave in the way noted on that item. The anchors for this scale include the following: (1) never behave this way, (2) very rarely behave this way, (3) occasionally behave this way, (4) sometimes behave this way, and (5) often behave this way (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). Thus, higher scores indicate that participant engages in that strategy more frequently and lower scores indicate that the participant does not use that strategy regularly.

Subscales

As previously noted, the 22-item impression management scale consists of five subscales that tap into the five impression management strategies identified by prior research. These strategies or subscales include self-promotion, ingratiation,
exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. Items on the self-promotion subscale ask the participants to indicate how often they ‘talk proudly about your experience or education’ or ‘make people aware of your accomplishments.’ Example items from the ingratiation scale include the following: ‘compliment your colleagues so they will see you as likeable’ and ‘take praise your colleagues for their accomplishments so they will consider you a nice person.’ In terms of exemplification, items include asking the participant how frequently they ‘try to appear busy, even at times when things are slower’ and ‘arrive at work early to look dedicated.’ Items in the intimidation subscale include ‘deal forcefully with colleagues when they hamper your ability to get your job done.’ Finally, in the supplication subscale participants are asked to indicate how often they ‘try to gain assistance or sympathy from people by appearing needy in some areas.’

*Scale validity and reliability*

Bolino and Turnley (1999) conducted a series of five studies to assess the reliability and validity of their instrument. The first study developed scale items, while the second study assessed the validity of this initial item pool and conducted item reduction. The third study offered a revised scale and conducted an exploratory factor analysis (EFA). The fourth study administered the scale and conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) and the final study assessed convergent and discriminant validity.

Bolino and Turnley (1999) assessed their proposed scale by examining the validity and reliability of the five-factor scale. Validity could be explained as follows, “a measure is valid if the scores provided information about the underlying construct or theoretical variable that it is intended to measure” (Warner, 2008, p. 827). Reliability
could be conceptualized as a measure demonstrating consistent results (Warner, 2008). Through the five-part study, Bolino and Turnley were able to provide support for both the validity and reliability of the 22-item scale. The researchers conducted an EFA in study 2 and found “preliminary empirical support for the theoretical structure proposed by Jones and Pittman” (Bolino & Turnley, 1999, p. 195). The authors also assessed construct validity, which is the notion that the hypothesized theoretical concept does exist (Crano & Brewer, 2002). Bolino and Turnley conducted a series of CFAs and found that the proposed model does fit the data. Furthermore, Bolino and Turnley also state “the analysis revealed that the path loadings for all items were significant at the \( p < .01 \) level, thus supporting the construct validity of the scales” (1999, p. 198). The results from the five-part study tend to indicate that the researchers were able to find support for both construct and convergent validity.

In addition to providing support for construct and convergent validity, Bolino and Turnley (1999) also established support for discriminant validity by examining alternate models of the impression management. These alternate models hypothesized different factors, ranging from a one-factor model, to 2 four-factor models. According to Bolino and Turnley (1999), “in every instance, chi-square tests indicated that the five-factor solution fit the data significantly better than any alternative solution” (p. 198). Connected with discriminant validity, the researchers conduct a study that ascertained the convergent validity, or the connection between the measure under study and other measures of the same theoretical concept. To accomplish this, Bolino and Turnley distributed the impression management scale along with measures of careerism, self-monitoring,
perceived organizational support, conscientiousness, and organizational citizenship behavior. The researchers then ran a correlation to determine the relationship between the final impression management scale and these related concepts. The correlations revealed that only three of the fifteen correlations were significant (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). This finding indicates that the impression management scale measures a different theoretical concept than other, related scales, and provides “further evidence of the discriminant validity of the new impression management measure” (Bolino & Turnley, 1999, p. 203).

In terms of reliability, Bolino and Turnley (1999) report Cronbach’s coefficient alpha values based on the convention that a measure may be considered reliable if the coefficient alpha value is .70 or higher (Stacks & Hocking, 1999). Based on this convention, Bolino and Turnley (1999) report the following:

The coefficient alphas for the impression management scales were as follows:

- self-promotion (alpha = .78), ingratiation (alpha = .83), exemplification (alpha = .75), intimidation (alpha = .86), and supplication (alpha = .88). The alphas for all of the scales, then, exceed Nunnally’s .70 criterion, suggesting that the scales are reliable. (p. 200)

Given the findings of Bolino and Turnley’s (1999) work, the 22-item, five-factor impression management scale can be considered both a valid and reliable indicator of impression management strategies.

After the original Bolino and Turnley (1999) scale was developed, Kacmar, Harris, and Nagy (2007) conducted a follow-up study that functions as a validity check of the original scale. This validity check involved three different samples used to confirm
the proposed structure of the impression management scale. Kacmar et al., (2007) report the following:

Results from our analyses provide additional empirical evidence that the Bolino and Turnley (1999) IM scale has many strong psychometric properties. For instance, the factor structure held across all three samples used in this study. Additionally, the scale demonstrated convergent and discriminant validity in both the original article and in our tests. (p. 28)

In addition, Kacmar et al., (2007) report alpha values for all three samples on each dimension. As Kacmar and colleagues note, the subscales all demonstrated acceptable reliability estimates across all three samples. The alpha values reported “include self promotion (α = .88, .86, and .92), ingratiation (α = .91, .85, and .91), exemplification (α = .81, .79, and .76), intimidation (α = .87, .89, and .84), and supplication (α = .93, .93, and .93)” (Kacmar et al., 2007, p. 21). Given the findings of both Bolino and Turnley (1999) as well as Kacmar et al. (2007), past research using the impression management scale has provided evidence that the scale can be considered a valid and reliable indicator of impression management strategies.

Use in current study

Participants in this study will be asked to complete the impression management scale (see Appendix A) twice. The first time the participant fills out this scale, they will be instructed to think about how often they engage in the behaviors noted in the scale items when they interact with someone in face-to-face interactions. The second time they fill out this scale, they will be asked to think about how often they engage in the
behaviors noted in each item when interacting with someone in a CMC context. The online survey will be formatted to include a transition page that separates each iteration (i.e., different context) of the scale and this page will include instructions alerting participants to this change and directing them to think of the appropriate CMC context.

*Social Presence*

As previously noted, social presence is essentially the notion of being able to interact with another person via CMC. Social presence exists on a continuum, with high and low levels of social presence. For example, FtF or television would be considered to have high levels of social presence (Perse, 2009). Short et al. (1976) developed the Social Presence scale as “a way to compare various forms of face-to-face, video, and audio communication” (Perse, 2009, p. 365). Perse also notes, “their measure…clearly assesses people’s perceptions of various communication channels” (2009, p. 366). Given this, social presence has been used to examine new media or new CMC channels (see Perse, 2009).

The Social Presence scale developed by Short et al. (1976) is made up of four items measured on a 5-point semantic differential scale. The items ask participants to indicate, using the 5-point scale, how *impersonal-personal, insensitive-sensitive, unsociable-sociable,* and *cold-warm* they perceive communication occurring on a specified communication channel to be. Other scholars, specifically, Perse and Courtright (1993), used a five-item scale by adding the pairing inactive-active to the scale. The addition of the *inactive-active* item may have been done to adapt the scale for more recent advances in CMC. Studies using the four-item scale have typically reported alpha
values in the neighborhood of .70 to .80 (see Perse, 2009). Perse and Courtright (1993) administered the five-item scale for 12 different communication channels and report alpha values ranging from .72 to .86, with an average alpha of .80.

Perse (2009) reports that “as a general measure, the Social Presence Scale appears to measuring [sic] what it is designed to measure. There is strong evidence of concurrent validity” (p. 366). Perse also notes that having participants rate media based on the four items “seems to produce expected and somewhat consistent results concerning overall social presence rating” (2009, p. 367). It also appears as though the addition of the fifth item to the scale does not have a negative influence on reliability. Short et al., (1976) also provide evidence of criterion-related validity by comparing results from the Social Presence scale with other Likert type statements. The researcher found that responses to the Social Presence scale were “significantly related” (Perse, 2009, p. 367) to the related Likert items. Perse also reports on studies that provide evidence of construct validity for the Social Presence scale.

*Use in current study*

In the context of this study, the five-item Social Presence scale (see Appendix B) will be used, as the fifth item, inactive-active, may help to tap into contemporary CMC contexts. Participants will be asked to fill out the Social Presence scale twice, first in regards to their FtF interactions and second in reference to the CMC context he or she was recruited from. Higher scores indicate a greater degree of social presence, while lower scores indicate a relatively low level of social presence. This setup should allow
the researcher to calculate an overall social presence score for each communication channel and allow for comparisons between these channels.

Perceived Anonymity

One of the variables of interest in this study is the role that identifiability or anonymity play in impacting self-presentation. One way of measuring this concept is by determining if users perceive themselves to be anonymous and to what degree do they experience anonymity. For example, on Facebook users are typically aware that they are readily identifiable, since Facebook uses their legal name as their user name. However, 4Chan or Chatroulette are relatively anonymous and users will likely feel that they are not readily identifiable in either CMC channel.

In order to measure perceived anonymity (see Appendix C), participants will be asked a series of questions developed by Whelan and Thompson (2008) and refined by Whelan and Meade (2009). Whelan and Meade identify this scale as anonymity perceptions and used the measure to examine perceptions of anonymity in the context of web-based surveys. Although not explicitly developed for measuring perceptions of anonymity in CMC contexts, the anonymity perceptions measure does seem to accurately measure participant perceptions of anonymity in a particular context. Given this, it is possible to slightly modify the items in this measure to still focus on anonymity, but to shift contexts from web-based surveys to other CMC contexts.

The anonymity perceptions measure, or perceived anonymity as this dissertation will refer to it, is made up of six, Likert-type items anchored on a five-point scale with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree. With these anchor points in
mind, higher values indicate greater levels of perceived anonymity. Items from this measure ask participants to respond to statements such as ‘it would be impossible to trace my responses back to me’ or ‘my responses will blend in with the responses of other people’.

In the case of the current study, items from this measure were slightly modified to situate the questions within a specific CMC context. For example, for the BSGO context, one of the modified questions states ‘my posts/comments will blend in with the posts/comments of other Battlestar Galactica Online users’. In this sense, the question is still focusing on the same concept; specifically that one’s posts or comments will blend in with the larger group of users, but situating the question within a specific CMC context. A similar change in question text occurs for the other contexts as well. This allows for this measure to still examine the same concept, but across different CMC contexts.

Past research has demonstrated acceptable reliabilities for this measure, with Whelan and Meade (2009) reporting alpha reliability of .78. Initial pilot testing of this measure, modified for use in this study as noted above, also demonstrate acceptable reliability levels. As part of pilot testing of the different measures for this dissertation, this modified measure demonstrated reliability of $\alpha = .79$.

**Perceived Importance**

As previously noted, one of the theoretical elements that this dissertation argues plays a part in impression management strategies is perceived importance. In order to tap into this concept, four questions were developed for use in the online survey (see Appendix D). As noted previously, the online survey consists of the same set of
questions, but each is slightly modified (i.e., noun usage) to appropriately target the appropriate CMC context. Items in this measure, using Facebook as the CMC example context, include ‘in general, my interactions with other people on Facebook are important to me,’ ‘Facebook interactions are very important to me in my daily life’ and ‘communicating with other people on Facebook is important to me.’ One item ‘I do not view my interactions with others on Facebook as being important’ was reverse coded to ensure that answers to this question are consistent with the other questions in the measure. The four items that makeup the measure of perceived importance appear to directly ask participants about how important they view interactions with others in a specific CMC context. Items in this measure were included in pilot testing and initial reliability estimates for this measure demonstrate acceptable reliability of $\alpha = .79$, when the reverse coded item is removed. Higher values for these questions represent a greater amount of perceived importance.

Because the items in this scale were created, and thus far solely used, for this study, it is necessary to not only establish reliability but also validity. One could argue that the measure of importance does demonstrate face validity. In particular, each question is concise in nature and directly asks the participant if they feel their interactions with other people, in a particular context, are important to them. Furthermore, the three items that makeup this scale demonstrated strong, statistically significant correlations with each other (see Table 1).
Table 1

*Correlations between items on perceived importance scale (n = 149)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.787*</td>
<td>0.795*</td>
<td>0.724*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.716*</td>
<td>0.693*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.733*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * indicates $p < .05$

Beyond simple correlations, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was conducted to examine the factor structure of the four items that makeup perceived importance. EFA could be defined as a statistical procedure that “uses statistics to identify an underlying structure among the various items that form a scale” (Allen et al., 2009, p. 179). The use of EFA is common when prior theory or research does not exist to help determine how the items on a scale contribute to the overall scale or measure. In the case of this dissertation, conducting an EFA for perceived importance can help determine if the items on this scale measure a unidimensional construct or if multiple factors could be present.

In conducting the EFA, principle axis factoring using varimax rotation was used in order to identify how many factors were present within the importance items and which items loaded onto what factors. For each EFA, KMO and Bartlett’s test of sphericity were calculated. For KMO, values of 0.6 or higher are considered acceptable
while a statistically significant result on Bartlett’s test is also desirable (Allen et al., 2009). The eigenvalues for this EFA were examined and values that exceeded 1.0 were considered acceptable. Finally, when looking at the factor loadings, this study used the rule of thumb that factor loadings with values of 0.60 or greater on primary factors and 0.40 or lower on secondary factors would be acceptable.

When conducting the EFA for perceived importance, this study found that the four items making up perceived importance all loaded onto a single factor. The KMO measure (.845) met the study requirements, as did Bartlett’s test \[
\chi^2 = 433.437 \ (6), \ p < .05
\]. This suggests that the data met the basic assumptions necessary for factor analysis and that the one factor solution fit the data. This single factor had an eigenvalue of 3.225, which is greater than 1.0, and explained 74.29% of the variance. Given the findings of this EFA, all items for perceived importance were retained. As previously reported, this scale produced acceptable reliability (\(\alpha = 0.79\)). Table 2 provides the factor loadings for each item.
Table 2

*Factor Loadings for Perceived Importance Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Importance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. In general, my interactions with other people on Facebook are important to me.</td>
<td>0.910</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I do not view my interactions with other on Facebook as being important. [Recoded]</td>
<td>0.872</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Facebook interactions are very important to me in my daily life</td>
<td>0.845</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Communicating with other people on Facebook is important to me.</td>
<td>0.818</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eigenvalue</td>
<td>3.225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of Variance</td>
<td>74.292</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronbach's Alpha</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Expectation of Future Interaction*

Another variable of interest, identified in the prior chapter, is expectation of future interaction. The argument thus far proposes that if a user of an online service expects future interaction with other users, they may use impression management strategies differently than someone who does not expect this future interaction. Along this train of thought, Walther (1994) created a measure that assesses “participants’ perceived anticipation of future interaction with other group members, as a continuous variable” (p.
The measure was originally used to assess the expectation of future interaction in FtF and CMC groups. Walther notes that the scale initially had two factors, one measuring expectancy of future interaction and the other measuring recognition of the other person; however, analysis indicated that a unidimensional model seemed to work best. Given this, Walther collapsed the two factors into one and reports alpha reliability of .78.

The expectation of future interaction measure (see Appendix E) is made up of nine Likert-type items anchored on a five-point scale that asks participants how likely or unlikely they expected future interaction with another person. In the case of this measure, 1 indicated that it was very unlikely they would expect future interaction while 5 indicated it was very likely that they would interact with someone in that context again. Example items, pulled from the Facebook version of the survey, include ‘to what extent do you anticipate future interaction with other Facebook users in the near future,’ ‘to what extent do you expect to interact with other Facebook users again whether you want to or not’ and ‘to what extent do you want to interact with other Facebook users again’.

Items that tapped into the recognition aspect, which was collapsed with expectation of future interaction into a single dimension, include ‘how likely are you to recognize someone from Facebook if you bumped into him/her somewhere’ and ‘if you met someone from Facebook somewhere else, how likely would that person be to recognize you.’

In addition to those items developed by Walther (1994), a single item from Ramirex (2007) was included with the expectation of future interaction items. The item
from Ramirex asks ‘to what extent do you anticipate interacting with your partner again in the future.’ In the case of the current study, this item was rephrased as the following, again pulling from the Facebook version of the online survey to serve as the example: ‘to what extent do you anticipate interacting with someone from Facebook again in the future.’ Pilot testing of the 10 items making the measure of expectation of future interaction indicate an acceptable reliability level of $\alpha = .79$, which is consistent with past research (Walther, 1994).

**Information Sharing**

As noted in Goffman’s (1959) work, the potential for information to bleed from one performance or audience to another is one thing an actor should be cognizant of. In the context of the modern day presentation of self, the question becomes how likely is it that information can be shared from one context with another? In order to answer this, three questions were developed and pilot tested for use in this dissertation (see Appendix F). The three items ask how likely it is that information from one online context might be made available to people in another, separate context. Items in this measure include: ‘I think that it is likely that my behavior on Facebook will be known to people outside of Facebook’, ‘I think that it is likely that what I say and do on Facebook will be available to people outside of Facebook’, and lastly ‘I do not believe that what I say and do on Facebook will be known to people outside of Facebook’. The last item was reverse coded in order to ensure consistency.

The three items that make up this scale are measured on a five-point scale, with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree. High scores on these items
indicate a greater likelihood that information may be shared from one context to another. As previously noted, the noun usage in these questions varies by CMC context in order to compare this construct across different contexts. Pilot testing of the items in this measure demonstrated acceptable reliability levels of $\alpha = .87$.

As with perceived importance, items for information sharing were created specifically for this dissertation. Thus, no prior research exists to establish validity of this scale. First, correlations between items on this scale were calculated. The results from this analysis indicate that the three items that makeup information sharing are strongly correlated with each other (see Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.809*</td>
<td>0.665*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.694*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * indicates $p < .05$

When conducting the EFA for information sharing, this study found that the three items making up this scale all loaded onto a single factor. The KMO measure (.723) met
the study requirements, as did Bartlett’s test [$\chi^2 = 260.196 (3), p < .05$]. This suggests that the data met the basic assumptions necessary for factor analysis and that the one factor solution fit the data. This single factor had an eigenvalue of 2.447, which is greater than 1.0, and explained 72.97% of the variance. Although one item had a factor loading lower than 0.6, no other factor was present and given the findings of this EFA all items for information sharing items were retained. As previously reported, this scale produced acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.87$). Table 4 provides the factor loadings for each item.

Table 4

*Factor Loadings for Information Sharing Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Sharing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2. I think that it is likely that my behavior on Facebook will be known to people outside of Facebook.</td>
<td>0.674</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I think that it is likely that what I say and do on Facebook will be available to people outside of Facebook.</td>
<td>0.698</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I do not believe it is likely that what I say and do on Facebook will be known to people outside of Facebook. [recoded]</td>
<td>0.513</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalue 2.447

% of Variance 72.967

Chronbach's Alpha 0.87
Damage From Information Sharing

Coupled with the possibility of information being shared from one context to another is the potential damage this sharing might have. In order to measure this concept, nine Likert-type items were developed for use in this dissertation (see Appendix G). The nine items are all anchored on a five-point scale with 1 meaning strongly disagree and 5 meaning strongly agree. Higher scores indicate a greater possibility of damage from information shared from one CMC context to another.

Items from this measure include: ‘my reputation would be damaged if people I work with knew about my behavior on Facebook,’ ‘I would be embarrassed if something I posted on Facebook were made available to the general public,’ and ‘my reputation would be damaged if my employer or potential employer found out about the way I behave on Facebook’. The nine items included in this measure were also included in the pilot test of the survey and demonstrated acceptable alpha reliability levels of $\alpha = .78$.

As with perceived importance and information sharing, items measuring perceived damage were created for use in this dissertation. As with the other two scales, correlations were calculated to measure relationships between the nine items making up this scale. In general, all nearly all items on perceived damage demonstrated moderate to strong correlations with other items (see Table 5).
Table 5

Correlations Between Items on Perceived Damage Scale (n = 148)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.549*</td>
<td>0.582*</td>
<td>0.549*</td>
<td>0.390*</td>
<td>0.413*</td>
<td>0.364*</td>
<td>0.168*</td>
<td>0.612*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.716*</td>
<td>0.820*</td>
<td>0.602*</td>
<td>0.642*</td>
<td>0.615*</td>
<td>0.265*</td>
<td>0.570*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.751*</td>
<td>0.614*</td>
<td>0.632*</td>
<td>0.566*</td>
<td>0.259*</td>
<td>0.566*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.565*</td>
<td>0.583*</td>
<td>0.565*</td>
<td>0.219*</td>
<td>0.650*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.814*</td>
<td>0.799*</td>
<td>0.505*</td>
<td>0.590*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.831*</td>
<td>0.512*</td>
<td>0.566*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.502*</td>
<td>0.572*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.355*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * indicates $p < .05$

When conducting the EFA for perceived damage, this study found that the eight of items making up this scale loaded onto a single factor, although a second factor was present. The KMO measure (.891) met the study requirements, as did Bartlett’s test [$\chi^2 = 991.054$ (36), $p < .05$]. This suggests that the data met the basic assumptions necessary for factor analysis and that the solution fit the data. This main factor had an eigenvalue of 5.516, which is greater than 1.0, and explained 61.29% of the variance. The second factor had an eigenvalue of 1.208 and explained 13.42% of the variance; however, no items
sufficiently loaded onto this second factor. One item did have a factor loading lower than 0.6 and this item was removed from the analysis. A follow-up EFA was conducted to assess the scale with eight items. Again, the KMO measure (.882) met requirements and so did Bartlett’s test $[\chi^2 = 936.557 (28), p < .05]$. The findings from these tests indicate that the data met the basic assumptions necessary and that the single factor solution fit the date. The single factor had an eigenvalue of 5.296 and explained 66.20% of the variance. Using the eight items to makeup the overall measure of perceived damage produced acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.92$). Table 6 provides the factor loadings for each item.
Table 6

Factor Loadings for Perceived Damage Scale

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Item</th>
<th>Damage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. The way I behave on Facebook is not acceptable in other settings or contexts.</td>
<td>0.611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. My reputation would be damaged if people I work with knew about my behavior on Facebook</td>
<td>0.832</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. My reputation would be damaged if people who I am not friends with on Facebook found out about the way I behave on Facebook</td>
<td>0.810</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. My reputation would be damaged if my family found out about my behavior on Facebook</td>
<td>0.824</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I would be embarrassed if content I posted ton Facebook was available to people I did not intend it for.</td>
<td>0.808</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I would be embarrassed if something I posted on Facebook was shared outside my circle of friends.</td>
<td>0.830</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I would be embarrassed if something I posted on Facebook were made available to the general public.</td>
<td>0.796</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. My reputation would be damaged if my employer or potential employer found out about the way I behave on Facebook.</td>
<td>0.741</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Eigenvalue 5.296

% of Variance 66.199

Chronbach's Alpha 0.92
Miscellaneous Questions and Demographic Section

Besides the scales identified in this section, the online surveys also contained several questions not tied to a specific scale, as well as standard demographic questions (see Appendix H). The miscellaneous questions generally asked participants if they had linked their accounts (i.e., Facebook, reddit) with either other online services or with their legal name. In total, ten questions not tied to a specific scale were included in this section. Of these questions, five were yes or no type questions while the remaining questions were Likert-type items on a five-point scale. The demographic section, which was made up of four questions, asked participants their age, ethnicity, sex, and highest level of education they had completed.

Reliability Estimates

After data had been collected, Chronbach’s coefficient alpha estimates were calculated for each scale and or subscale. Typically, an alpha coefficient value of .75 or better is considered to be acceptable in terms of internal consistency (Crano & Brewer, 2002). In the case of the current study, nearly all scales or subscales demonstrated acceptable reliability. For the impression management scale, two sets of reliability estimates were calculated. The first set of alpha coefficients were for the impression management strategies focusing on FtF interactions. Alpha reliabilities for these subscales are as follows: self-promotion .82, ingratiation .83, exemplification .73, intimidation .89, and supplication .84. Chronbach’s coefficient alpha was also calculated for the impression management strategies focused on interactions in CMC contexts. Alpha reliabilities for the CMC subscales are as follows: self-promotion .86, ingratiation
.88, exemplification .91, intimidation .94, and supplication .90. Taken as two separate sets of subscales and collectively, the two forms of the impression management strategies demonstrate acceptable, if not excellent, reliability.

The coefficient alpha was also calculated for the social presence scale. In the current study, the alpha reliability for this scale was found to be .72. Although lower than the .75 mark (Crano & Brewer, 2002), the reliability found for this scale appears to be in line with past reliability coefficients that used this scale, which ranged from .72 to .86 (Perse, 2009). In addition, Perse notes that “social presence should be a fairly stable perception about communication channels” (2009, p. 366).

The remaining scales used in the survey instrument also demonstrated acceptable coefficient alpha values. The scale measuring perceived importance had an alpha value of .92. Questions dealing with the potential for sharing information from one context to another had a reported alpha value of .89, while expectation of future interaction was .94, and damage from information shared from one context to another was .92, with the eight item scale. Finally, perceived anonymity had a coefficient alpha value of .78. Given these findings, it would appear that all scales report acceptable coefficient alpha values.

Participants

Considering that this study is focused on the online presentation of self, any adult (18 years of age or older) who engages in online self-presentation was a potential participant of this study. College students certainly do fall within this group; however, expanding the study beyond traditional college students would better represent the population of interest. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2011b),
which surveyed adults in the United States, nearly 80% of all adult males and females and 95% of adults between the ages of 18-29 use the Internet. Nearly 90% of adults ages 30-49 and 74% of adults aged 50-64 use the Internet. In regards to race/ethnicity, 79% of White, Non-Hispanic adults use the Internet, while 67% of Black, Non-Hispanic adults and 78% of Hispanic adults use the Internet. This demographic data suggests that Internet use is not isolated to a specific age group or race/ethnicity, although some differences do exist. In the context of this study, any adult Internet user who engages in online self-presentation through CMC is a potential participant of this study.

A total of 195 people participated in this study by filling out one of the five surveys from a particular CMC context. Out of all the participants, 69 (42.3%) were female, 94 (57.7%) were male, and 32 did not answer this question or any of the demographic questions. The remaining participant demographic information focuses on those who did complete the demographic questions. The mean age of the participants was 27.5 years old with participants ranging in age from 18 to 61. In terms of ethnicity, the vast majority of participants reported that they were White or Caucasian (93.3%), followed by African American (3.7%), Other (1.2%), Hispanic (0.6%), Asian (0.6%), and Pacific Islander (0.6%). In regards to the highest level of education participants had completed, the majority (41.1%) have completed some college, followed by those with a masters degree (18.4%), those with a high school degree or GED (16%), a 4-year college degree (13.5%), a doctoral degree (7.4%), a professional degree (2.5%), and finally a 2-year college degree (1.2%). The following sections will provide participant demographic information based on the CMC context they were recruited from.
Facebook

Out of the total number of participants \((N = 195)\), a total of 62 people participated in the survey asking about their use of Facebook. In this group the average age was 35.38 and the majority (68.8%) were female while the remaining participants were male (31.3%). By far, the majority of the participants reported their race as being Caucasian (93.8%), followed by African American (4.2%), and Pacific Islander (2.1%). The participants who responded to the Facebook survey also appear to be highly education, with many reporting having completed a masters degree (33.3%), a 4-year college degree (27.1%), a doctoral degree (20.8%), some college (12.5%), a professional degree (4.2%), and a high school or GED degree (2.1%).

Online Social Support

A total of 32 people responded to the online social support survey. Of the participants of this survey, the majority were female (68%) while the remaining participants were male (32%). The average age of participants in this survey was 34.32 years old. Again, the majority of participants were White or Caucasian (96%) while the remaining participants reported their race as being other (4%). Similar to the Facebook participants, those filling out the online social support survey also report their highest level of education completed. Most participants using online social support have a masters degree (40%), followed by some college (20%), 4-year college (16%), doctoral degree (8%), professional degree (8%), 2-year college (4%), and high school or GED (4%).
First Person Shooter (FPS) Games

Out of the total number of participants ($N = 195$), 77 participated in the survey focusing on FPS games. For this group the average age was 19.16 years old, with the majority being male (77.3%) and the remaining participants being female (22.7%). Because participants for this survey were recruited from a participant pool that recruits college students, the majority (72%) reported completing some college while the remaining participants (28%) indicated that they had a high school degree or a GED. Again, the majority of participants were Caucasian (90.7%), followed by African American (5.3%), Hispanic (1.3%), Asian (1.3%), or other (1.3%).

Battlestar Galactica Online (BSGO)

Unfortunately, only 9 people completed the survey tapping into communication occurring in the BSGO virtual environment. The average age of this group was 38.71 years of age and all participants ($n = 9$) were both male and Caucasian. Over a quarter of participants had completed a 4-year college degree (28.6%), followed by a high school degree or GED (28.6%), a masters degree (14.3%), 2-year college degree (14.3%), and some college (14.3%). Unfortunately, too few participants completed the BSGO survey and because of this the BSGO group will not be included in the statistical analysis. In order to recruit BSGO players to participate in this study, a post was made to a message board website devoted to BSGO. In addition, both verbal and textual announcements were made in two different TS3 servers used by BSGO players. Despite these repeated announcements, only 9 people actually filled out the survey.
Similar to the problem with the BSGO survey, the reddit survey also had a low number of responses \((n = 15)\). For those who did participate in the reddit survey, the average age was 27.38 and all participants indicated that they were Caucasian. Most reddit participants were male (75%), while the remaining participants were female (25%). The majority of reddit participants had completed a masters degree (37.5%), followed by those with a 4-year college degree (37.5%), some college (12.5%), and having a high school or GED degree (12.5%). Unfortunately, not enough people completed the reddit survey and using the few responses that were recorded seemed unjustified. In terms of recruitment for the reddit survey, several posts were made to different subreddits or subthreads, including AskScience, Assistance, and Scholar. In addition, another reddit user, who is more active in the site, made additional postings that asked people who use to reddit to participate in this study. Despite numerous attempts to solicit participation in this survey, only 15 people filled out the survey.

**Combining Groups**

Given that two of the five groups from which participants were recruited had very low response rates, the question arises as to if or how these participants should be included in the analysis. One possible approach would be combining the reddit and BSGO participants with the online social support group. In some ways that choice might make sense if we consider all three of these groups as types of online communities. That said, it appears as though these three groups are each heterogeneous and combining the three groups would introduce within group variance to the analysis. In order to test this,
an ANOVA was run to determine if statistically significant differences existed between these three groups in the variables used in this study. If significant differences were found, this would indicate that the groups are dissimilar from each other and combining them into a singular group would be unadvisable. The ANOVA testing did indeed find statistically significant differences between the three groups on CMC ingratiation, $F(2, 38) = 7.749, p < .05$, CMC exemplification, $F(2, 38) = 6.682, p < .05$, CMC supplication, $F(2, 38) = 3.262, p < .05$, perceived importance, $F(2, 38) = 4.556, p < .05$, and expectation of future interaction, $F(2, 38) = 4.083, p < .05$. Given these differences it appears that reddit, BSGO, and online social support are heterogeneous groups and based on lack of size, and that they could not be meaningfully combined, responses to both reddit and BSGO will not be included in the statistical analysis.

Data Analysis

After all survey data had been collected, and the resulting data file had been formatted correctly, initial descriptive statistics and frequencies were conducted using SPSS. This initial analysis focused on the participants and the results of this analysis appear in the above sections. Following the analysis of participant demographic data, reliabilities were run for each scale. Each reliability value, for the respective scale, is reported in the prior section explaining the survey instrument used for this study. After this initial reporting, several statistical tests were used in order to analyze data collected by the survey instrument. The following section provides an explanation of the different statistical tests run and the reason for using each test.
Statistical Tests by Hypothesis and Research Question

In order to answer the hypotheses and research questions posed, several statistical tests will need to be performed to determine if statistically significant differences, or statistically significant relationships, exist between different theoretical concepts and communication contexts. These statistical tests go beyond standard frequencies and demographic breakdown. This section of the chapter restates each hypothesis and research question, and provides a description of how data were analyzed in order to address that hypothesis or question. In addition, within each description of the statistical tests, this dissertation includes the basic assumptions of each test and how results should be interpreted.

Research Question 1

The first research question asks: are their differences in impression management strategies between FtF self-presentation and online self-presentation and if so what are these differences? In order to answer this question, two separate sets of statistical tests were performed. The first test involved running a paired-samples t test to compare the FtF and CMC score for each impression management strategy. This approach would determine if a statistically significant difference between each pair of FtF and CMC impression management strategies were present and what the magnitude of this difference was. The second statistical test for this research question was using an ANOVA to compare mean scores in CMC impression management strategies between the three CMC contexts. Through using an ANOVA, it was possible to determine which
CMC contexts demonstrated a statistically significant difference in each CMC impression management strategy when compared to the other two contexts.

In order to answer this research question, paired-samples \( t \) tests were conducted. Put simply, a \( t \) test allows a researcher to determine if a statistically significant difference in mean score exists between two groups. Although several different types of \( t \) tests are available, the \( t \) test most appropriate for the current study is a paired-samples \( t \) test. The paired-samples \( t \) test is “used when you want to compare two values for the same person” (Allen et al., 2009, p. 36). This is perhaps most often used when comparing pretest and posttest means for the same person.

In the case of the current study, the paired-samples \( t \) test is best suited for comparing the scores between each participants’ FtF impression management strategies and CMC impression management strategies. Using the paired-samples \( t \) test, for each impression management strategy, helped to determine if a statistically significant difference existed between FtF impression management and CMC impression management, within each CMC context. Allen et al. (2009) explain that a paired-samples \( t \) test “matches to [sic] scores for each person and then determines, overall, whether there is a significant difference between the two scores” (p. 36). In the case of this dissertation, this comparison helped to establish if individuals use impression management strategies differently depending on if they are engaged in FtF interactions or via CMC.

A \( t \) test assumes that scores on the outcome variable are approximately normally distributed and that scores across groups have equal variance. As Warner (2008) notes “ideally, the variance in the \( Y \) scores should be equal or homogeneous across the two
populations that correspond to the samples that are compared in the study” (p. 185).

Finally, a *t* test assumes that the dependent variable is either interval or ratio in nature, and not nominal data. Warner notes that some versions of the *t* test are relatively robust to violations of some of the assumptions, unless the sample sizes used were very small.

If a statistically significant difference is found while running a *t* test, the next step is determining the practical significance of this difference. This practical significance is essentially the effect size and two statistical tests can be performed to help the researcher in understanding this effect size. The first measure of effect size is Pearson’s *r*, which provides the correlation coefficient between two variables. The second measure of effect size in a *t* test is Cohen’s *d*. As Allen et al. (2009) note “rather than telling us about a relationship between two variables, Cohen’s *d* tells us how many standard deviations apart the two groups are” (pp. 23-24). Given this, Cohen’s *d* will be used as a measure of effect size for the paired-samples *t* tests. Warner (2008) provides the following metric for assessing how effect size using Cohen’s *d*: ≤ .20 is a small effect size, .20-.79 is a medium effect size, and > .80 is a large effect size.

Besides the paired-samples *t* tests, ANOVA was also used to help answer this research question. ANOVA is the primary statistical test used when comparing the mean of three or more groups and essentially extends the usefulness of a *t* test by allowing researchers to compare the means of more than two groups. An ANOVA is also helpful in answering the first research question. As Allen et al. (2009) explain, an ANOVA “extends the *t* test by comparing more than two means; that is, you can use any number of means so long as they are all part of the same variable” (p. 52). In the case of ANOVA,
the independent variable (IV) is a categorical variable that serves to designate group assignment or membership. The dependent variable (DV) in the ANOVA is the variable in question or the mean score the researchers is comparing between the groups. “The objective of using the test is to determine whether there are significant differences in the DV among the groups of the IV” (Allen et al., 2009, p. 52).

An ANOVA provides researchers with a single omnibus test or an F-test. “The $F$ test in a one-way ANOVA provides a single omnibus test of the hypothesis that the means of all $k$ populations are equal, in place of many $t$ tests for all possible pairs of groups” (Warner, 2008, p. 216). The F-test essentially tells a researcher if the difference between each group’s mean score on the DV is statistically significant; however, this does not tell the researcher which groups are statistically significant from each other. In order to conduct this comparison, if a researcher finds a statistically significant F-test, he or she would then conduct a post hoc or protected test. “If the researcher wants to make all possible comparisons among groups…it is possible to use test procedures that limit the risk of Type I error by using ‘protected’ tests” (Warner, 2008, p. 239). This protected or post hoc comparison essentially compares the mean scores of all possible pairs of groups. In particular, the Tukey HSD is widely used as the post hoc test of choice for ANOVA. “The Tukey HSD has become popular because it is moderately conservative and easy to apply; it can be used to perform all possible pairwise comparisons of means” (Warner, 2008, p. 240). In practical terms, the Tukey HSD allows the researcher to determine which group’s scores are statistically different from other group’s scores.
Other post hoc tests can, and should, be used if certain conditions are met; however, in many cases the Tukey HSD is the test of choice (see Warner, 2008).

Allen, Titsworth, and Hunt (2009) identity three primary assumptions of ANOVA, each of which must be met in order to appropriately use this statistical test. The first assumption is that of independence, which “is simply the condition where participants’ scores are influenced only by the treatment involved in the manipulation of variables and any individual differences that participants had before the experiment began” (Allen et al., 2009, p. 59). The second assumption is that of normality. Simply put, this assumption dictates that the scores of the DV for each group are normally distributed. The third and final assumption is homogeneity of variance, which states that the variance within each group is approximately equal. Homogeneity of variance is typically assessed using Levene’s test, which tests “the null assumption that the population variances are equal” (Warner, 2008, p. 161). In this case, a nonsignificant Levene’s test is desirable since this indicates that the variances are equal.

The three assumptions of ANOVA are certainly important; however, they do have some flexibility. For example, Warner (2008) notes that the primary assumption for ANOVA is that the populations sampled follow a normal curve and have roughly equal variance (Allen et al., 2009). However, “in practice you get quite acceptable results even when your populations are moderately far from normal and have moderately different variances” (Warner, 2008, pp. 328-329). Given this, even with violations of normality and variance, ANOVA can still yield useful results and is a relatively robust to violations of normality.
Perhaps the most commonly used statistic to measure effect size in ANOVA is eta squared ($\eta^2$). Warner (2008) states, “an eta squared is interpreted as the proportion of variance in scores on the Y outcome variable that is predictable from group membership” (p. 235). Eta squared is useful in providing a meaningful effect size for understanding the variance in the DV accounted for by the IV. Generally, eta squared values of .01 are considered low, .06 are medium, and .13 is large (Warner, 2008).

Hypotheses 1-3

All three hypotheses predicted that there would be differences in the use of CMC impression management strategies based on CMC context and another independent variable. These independent variables include perceived importance (hypothesis 1), expectation of future interaction (hypothesis 2), and perceived anonymity (hypothesis 3). For each hypothesis, a series of MANOVAs was run, one MANOVA for each impression management strategy. In the MANOVAs, CMC context and the variable of interest (i.e., perceived importance, expectation of future interaction, or perceived anonymity) were the independent variables, while CMC impression management strategy was the dependent variable. For the dependent variables, a median split was used to create two groups from the categorical variable. This median split was done in order to create two groups for each independent variable. For example, using the median split technique on the independent variable importance allowed for the creation of two groups: high importance and low importance. Using the MANOVA and these groups, it was possible to determine if the level of importance impacts impression management strategies. While examining
how importance effects impression management strategies is helpful, determining if the
level of importance plays a role adds more explanatory power to the analysis.

In addition to using paired-samples $t$ tests and ANOVA to aid in statistical
analysis, one of the main statistical tests used in this dissertation was multivariate
analysis of variance (MANOVA). Similar to how ANOVA extends the usefulness of a $t$
test, MANOVA extends the usefulness of ANOVA by including more than one
dependent variable. Allen et al. (2009) state, “the MANOVA is part of a broader family
of statistics known as multivariate statistics, which generally means that effects of
independent variables are being explored on the linear combination of more than one
dependent variable” (pp. 107-108). In order to effectively use MANOVA, three
assumptions should be met. The first is that no causal structure exists among the
variables. The second assumption is that there is the expectation of interrelationships
between the dependent variables. The third and last assumption of MANOVA is that of
equal covariance among the dependent variables and this is called homoscedasticity
(Allen et al., 2009). In order to test this last assumption, Box’s $M$ was calculated to
determine if the assumption of homoscedasticity had been violated. A non-significant
Box’s $M$ would indicate that this assumption has not been violated. Box’s $M$ is very
sensitive to violations of normality and scholars typically suggest setting a significance
level of $p < .001$ instead of the traditional $p < .05$ (Allen et al., 2009; Warner2008).

When running a MANOVA, one should pay particular attention to the test
statistic generated for the test. Similar to the omnibus $F$ test, several test statistics are
generated by the MANOVA and the researcher selects which test statistic to use. These
test statistics tell the research if there are differences between the means of the groups in regards to the dependent variable. Wilk’s $\lambda$ is perhaps the most commonly used multivariate test statistics and often used when the MANOVA did not violate homogeneity of variance/covariance. That said, in cases in which Box’s M is statistically significant Pillai’s Trace was used.

After examining the multivariate statistics, the next step was to examine the tests of between-subjects effects. This table displays the omnibus $F$ test for all of the tests run. From here, the researcher looks for significant $F$ tests to determine if the independent variables had main or interaction effects on the dependent variable. Following a statistically significant finding, the researcher will typically examine the pairwise comparisons table to look for statistically significant differences between grouping variables. Significant results here indicate that not only do the groups differ, but which groups differ from each other.

**Research Questions 2 & 3**

The second research question asked do any of the following predict CMC impression management strategies: importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity, or social presence? Coupled with RQ2, are two follow-up questions, RQ2a and RQ2b. The first follow-up question asked: what, if any, are the unique effects of these variables in predicting CMC impression management strategies? The second follow-up question asked: what, if any, are the interaction effects of these variables in predicting CMC impression management strategies? In addition, RQ3 asked: how does perceived damage from information shared from one context to another and the perceived
likelihood of this sharing occurring relate to CMC impression management strategies? In order to answer these questions several regressions will be run to examine the relationship between impression management strategies and the predictor variables. In the case of RQ2 the predictor variables are: importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity, and social presence. For RQ3 the predictors are: perceived damage and information sharing. In order to answer both research questions, multiple regression was used.

Perhaps one of the more useful statistical tests used in this dissertation, and one that helps to extend the predictive ability of correlation, is regression. Allen et al. (2009) state “regression, a natural extension of the correlation, allows you to explore the relationship between a dependent, or criterion, variable, and one or more independent variables” (p. 155). In addition, regression also allows a researcher to estimate the amount of variance in the dependent variable that can be accounted for by the independent variable(s). Warner (2008) provides more explanation of what multiple regression is capable of doing. In particular, we can assess how well scores in the dependent variable can be predicted using the independent variable(s) and combinations of the independent variables. We can also calculate how much variance is uniquely predicted by each independent variable, when controlling for other predictor variables.

Regression has many of the same assumptions as those for running a correlation (see Warner, 2008). For one, the outcome variable should be quantitative and approximately normally distributed. Second, the relationship between all variable pairs should be linear in nature. Third, variance should be relatively homogeneous. Finally,
“there should be no interactions between variables, such that the slope that predicts $Y$ from $X_1$ differs across groups that are formed based on scores on $X_2$” (Warner, 2008, p. 432). In terms of effect size for

One of the important steps that occurred prior to running the statistical tests mentioned in the preceding paragraphs, is assessing the normality of the variables used in the statistical tests. Many of the procedures identified for use in this dissertation assume that data is normally distributed. Given this assumption, it is important to explain how data will be assessed for normality. One way of assessing normality is by creating a histogram with a normal curve and visually assessing if the data fits a normal distribution. In addition to this interocular assessment, computing skewness and kurtosis statistics is also a standard approach to assessing normality. Allen et al. (2009) offer the following guideline for assessing skewness, “the skewness statistic should be less than 2 or less than twice the standard error of skewness” (p. 21). This same rule of thumb applies to kurtosis as well, although using the standard error of kurtosis.

Although this rule of thumb is helpful, Miles and Shevlin (2001) provide a more nuanced explanation of how to assess deviations from normality using skewness and kurtosis. According to these scholars, using twice the standard error of skewness and twice the standard error of kurtosis tells the researcher “whether the skew and kurtosis differ significantly from what might reasonably be expected in a normally distributed population” (Miles & Shevlin, 2001, p. 74). Although this is helpful, “we are really interested in knowing whether the distribution is sufficiently skewed that it matters” (Miles & Shevlin, 2001, p. 74). In order to do this, Miles and Shevlin refer back to the
rule of thumb also identified by Allen et al. (2009). Specifically, a distribution would be sufficiently skewed enough that it mattered if the skewness and or kurtosis statistic was 2.0 or greater. More specifically, Miles and Shevlin (2001) provide the following:

> We cautiously suggest that if your skewness statistics is less than 1.0, there should be little problem. If the skewness is greater than 1.0, but less than 2.0, you should be aware that it might be having an effect on your parameter estimates, but that it is probably OK. (p. 74)

Given the suggestions of Miles and Shevlin, we should be concerned about skewness and kurtosis if either statistic approaches 2.0.

One other consideration with regression is the way or order in which predictors are entered into the regression model. Scholars note that, regardless of entry method, the general aim of building a regression model is “to find a parsimonious model. A parsimonious model is one that explains the most variance in the dependent variable containing the fewest number of independent variables” (Miles & Shevlin, 2001, p. 38). When using regression the researcher has several different ways of entering predictor variables into the regression model, including: forced entry, hierarchical, and stepwise. In forced entry the researcher “requires the computer to enter all the variables in the equation at the same time, regardless of importance. This produces a multiple $R$ that uses the values of all variables to predict the dependent variable” (Allen et al., 2009, p. 165). In hierarchical, the researcher essentially tells the computer which independent variable should be entered into the regression model and in what order. This approach, often called blocking, is based on past research or theory that dictates which predictors account
for more variance in the dependent variable. In the absence of prior literature, which would tell researchers what order to enter predictor variables, stepwise entry seems a more appropriate approach. Stepwise entry is essentially a combination of two other entry types: forward and backward. In stepwise entry the computer automatically adds variables if they are significant and removes variables if they are nonsignificant. Miles and Shevlin (2001) note, “the main difference between these models and the hierarchical models discussed above is that computer packages use statistical criteria to determine the usefulness of a particular variable, rather than psychological theory” (p. 38). In the case of the current study, theory and past research have not provided a specific order in which the predictor variables should be entered into the regression model. With the absence of a clear theoretical rationale for hierarchical or forced entry, stepwise entry seems the most appropriate choice at this point in time. In addition, the automatic addition or subtraction of independent variables should provide a more parsimonious regression model that can provide a baseline or foundational model for future theorizing.

In terms of effect size, regression expands on the tools available in correlation. In order to calculate the effect size for a correlation one simply needs to calculate $R^2$. Much like eta squared, “$R^2$ is essentially equivalent to $\eta^2$, except that $R^2$ assumes a linear relationship between $Y$ and $X$” (Warner, 2008, p. 255). Since $R^2$ is roughly equivalent to $\eta^2$, the same labels for effect size can be used: .01 low, .06 medium, and .13 large. In essence, $R^2$ tells a researcher how much variance in the dependent variable can be accounted for by a predictor variable. Generally, adjusted $R^2$ is used in reporting effect size since it “attempts to make an estimate of the value of $R^2$ in the population (rather
than the sample)” (Miles & Shelvin, 2001, p. 32). Given this, adjusted $R^2$ is a more conservative estimate of effect size.

Summary

This chapter has provided an explanation of how data will be collected and analyzed to help answer the hypotheses and research questions posed by this dissertation. Through an online survey, this study should be able to collect data regarding how people use impression management strategies in different contexts. In addition, data regarding social norms of different online contexts will be collected through semi-structured interviews with users of these contexts. By using standard statistical procedures coupled with interview data, this dissertation should be able to determine how people use impression management strategies differently in different online contexts and compare these online contexts with people’s FtF self-presentation.
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Introduction

The main goal of this dissertation was to compare impression management strategies between FtF and CMC contexts. If differences were found, this dissertation offered predictions or asked questions about the nature of these differences. Ultimately, the results of this study will help us to understand how impression management functions in CMC contexts, if certain variables can be used to predict the use of CMC impression management strategies, and how FtF impression management differs from CMC impression management. In order to accomplish these goals, several research questions and hypotheses were identified in chapter 2. In this chapter each research question or hypothesis will be restated, followed by the results of the statistical tests conducted for each research question or hypothesis. Unless otherwise noted within each section, the assumptions of each statistical test have been met.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked if there are differences in impression management strategies between FtF and online self-presentations and if so what are these differences? This question can be approached two ways, the first strictly looks at differences between FtF and CMC self-presentation within each CMC context. The second approach looks at these differences across all of the CMC contexts in FtF and CMC encounters.

In order to provide an answer to this question, paired-samples $t$ test were conducted to compare scores on each impression management strategy (i.e., self-
promotion, ingratiation) for both the FtF and CMC versions of these questions (see Table 7). In the Facebook group, there was a statistically significant difference in self-promotion scores for FtF ($M = 2.88$, $SD = .82$) and CMC ($M = 2.43$, $SD = .86$); $t(48) = 4.45$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.64$. Within this group, Facebook users used more self-promotion impression management strategies in FtF settings than in CMC. A significant difference for the ingratiation impression management strategy was also found. Within the Facebook group, a statistically significant difference was found for ingratiation scores for FtF ($M = 3.76$, $SD = .87$) and CMC ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .94$); $t(48) = 6.70$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.96$. Within this group, Facebook users used more the ingratiation strategy in FtF settings than in CMC. For the third strategy, exemplification, a statistically significant difference was found between FtF ($M = 2.82$, $SD = .96$) and CMC ($M = 1.64$, $SD = .84$); $t(48) = 9.97$, $p < .05$, $d = 1.42$. In this case, Facebook users engage in exemplification strategies more so in FtF interactions than in CMC. In regards to intimidation, a statistically significant difference was found between FtF ($M = 1.82$, $SD = .82$) and CMC ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .65$); $t(47) = 5.94$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.86$. In this case, Facebook users use intimidation more in their FtF encounters than in CMC. No statistically significant difference was found between FtF and CMC impression management scores for the supplication strategy.
Similar to the Facebook group, several statistically significant differences in impression management strategies between FtF and CMC interactions were found in the FPS group (see Table 8). In the first strategy, self-promotion, a statistically significant difference was found between FtF ($M = 3.40, SD = .79$) and CMC ($M = 2.45, SD = 1.14$); $t(74) = 6.85, p < .05, d = 0.79$. In this case, FPS users engaged in more self-promotion in their FtF interactions than in CMC. For the second strategy, ingratiation, a statistically significant difference was found between FtF ($M = 3.88, SD = .69$) and CMC ($M = 2.13, SD = 1.02$); $t(74) = 13.15, p < .05, d = 1.52$. The data indicates that FPS users engage in more ingratiation strategies in FtF interactions than in CMC. In the third strategy,

<table>
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Note. * indicates $p < .05$
exemplification, a statistically significant difference was found between FtF ($M = 3.16$, $SD = .80$) and CMC ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .82$); $t(74) = 13.84$, $p < .05$, $d = 1.58$. This difference indicates that FPS users engage in more exemplification in their FtF interactions than in CMC. No statistically significant difference in usage of intimidation strategies, between FtF and CMC interactions, in the FPS group was found. Finally, a statistically significant difference was found in supplication scores between FtF ($M = 2.07$, $SD = .65$) and CMC ($M = 1.71$, $SD = .79$); $t(74) = 4.25$, $p < .05$, $d = 0.49$. Similar to the trend found in the other strategies, FPS users engage in more supplication in their FtF interactions than in CMC.

Table 8

*Paired-Samples t Test Results for FPS Group*

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<tr>
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</table>

Note. * indicate $p < .05$
In the last group, online social support, three statistically significant differences in the use of impression management strategies between FtF and CMC were found (see Table 9). A statistically significant difference in self-promotion scores was found between FtF ($M = 3.09, SD = .63$) and CMC ($M = 2.52, SD = 1.08$); $t(25) = 3.07, p < .05, d = 0.60$. Data indicates that online social support users engaged in more self-promotion in FtF settings than in CMC. No statistically significant difference in ingratiation scores, between FtF and CMC, was found in the online social support group. For the third strategy, exemplification, a statistically significant difference was found between FtF ($M = 3.46, SD = .65$) and CMC ($M = 2.26, SD = 1.13$); $t(25) = 7.15, p < .05, d = 1.40$. For the social support group, users used more exemplification strategies in FtF than in CMC encounters. In the intimidation strategy a statistically significant difference was found between FtF ($M = 2.06, SD = .98$) and CMC ($M = 1.63, SD = 1.07$); $t(25) = 2.80, p < .05, d = .55$. This difference indicates that users of online social support sites use intimidation more in their FtF interactions than in CMC. No statistically significant difference was found for the supplication impression management strategy.
Table 9

Paired-Samples t Test Results for Social Support Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Social Support</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>FtF</td>
<td>CMC</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-promotion</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>0.57</td>
<td>3.07*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.91</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplification</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>7.15*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.63</td>
<td>0.43</td>
<td>2.80*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.98</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplication</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. * indicate \( p < .05 \)

The second approach to answer this research questions compares differences in impression management strategies across all the groups in FtF and CMC encounters respectively. A one-way ANOVA was used to compare FtF impression management strategies between the three groups. There were statistically significant differences in FtF self-promotion scores between the three groups \( F(2, 157) = 6.96, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.08 \).

Tukey post-hoc comparisons (see Table 10) of the three groups indicate that the Facebook group \( (M = 2.89, SD = .81) \) used self-promotion more, in FtF settings, than FPS users \( (M = 3.39, SD = .80) \). The ANOVA did not provide a statistically significant difference in ingratiation scores for the three groups. However, the ANOVA did demonstrate a statistically significant difference in FtF exemplification scores between
the three groups $F(2, 157) = 4.33, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$. Post-hoc comparisons using Tukey indicate that the Facebook group ($M = 2.85, SD = .95$) used exemplification less than the social support group ($M = 3.38, SD = .69$). A statistically significant difference was found in FtF intimidation scores between the three groups $F(2, 152) = 9.08, p < .05, \eta^2 = 0.11$. Tukey post-hoc comparisons indicate that the Facebook group ($M = 1.88, SD = .85$) used the intimidation strategy less than the FPS group ($M = 2.51, SD = .81$). In the last impression management strategy, supplication, the ANOVA demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the three groups $F(2, 152) = 3.79, p < .05, \eta^2 = .05$. Post-hoc comparisons, using Tukey, demonstrate that the Facebook group ($M = 1.75, SD = .58$) used supplication less than the FPS group ($M = 2.07, SD = .65$).
Table 10

*FtF Impression Management Means Comparison by Group*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>FPS</th>
<th>Social Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-promotion*</td>
<td>M 2.89&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>3.39&lt;sub&gt;a&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>3.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.81</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>0.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 56</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>M 3.64</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>3.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.84</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>0.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 56</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplification*</td>
<td>M 2.86&lt;sub&gt;b&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>3.38&lt;sub&gt;b&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.95</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 56</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation*</td>
<td>M 1.88&lt;sub&gt;c&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>2.51&lt;sub&gt;c&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.85</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 53</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplication*</td>
<td>M 1.75&lt;sub&gt;d&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>2.07&lt;sub&gt;d&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>2.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SD 0.58</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n 53</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Common subscripts indicate a statistically significant difference between groups

*p < .05*

In addition to the statistically significant differences between the groups in different FtF impression management scores, differences were also found amongst the groups in CMC impression management scores. A statistically significant difference was found amongst the CMC ingratiation scores between the three groups $F(2, 149) = 22.83,$
$p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.24$. Tukey post-hoc comparisons (see Table 11) indicate that the FPS group ($M = 2.13$, $SD = 1.02$) differed from the Facebook group ($M = 3.06$, $SD = .94$) and online social support group ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.01$). The FPS group used ingratiating strategies significantly less than the other two groups and social support used ingratiating strategies significantly more than FPS users.

For the exemplification strategy, a statistically significant difference was found amongst the three groups CMC scores for this strategy $F(2, 147) = 5.75$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.07$. Post-hoc testing using Tukey indicates that the social support group ($M = 2.26$, $SD = 1.13$) differs significantly from the Facebook ($M = 1.64$, $SD = .84$) and FPS groups ($M = 1.60$, $SD = .82$). It appears as though the social support group uses higher levels of exemplification in CMC interactions than Facebook users or FPS users.

A statistically significant difference in intimidation strategy, in CMC interactions, was found amongst the three groups $F(2, 146) = 25.06$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = 0.26$. Tukey post-hoc tests indicate that FPS users ($M = 2.58$, $SD = 1.15$) differed significantly from the Facebook ($M = 1.33$, $SD = .65$) and online social support ($M = 1.63$, $SD = 1.07$) groups. Results indicate that FPS users use more intimidation strategies in their CMC interactions than Facebook or online social support users. Two separate ANOVAs were conducted for self-promotion and supplication in CMC interactions; however, no statistically significant difference between the three groups, in either strategy, was found.
Table 11

**CMC Impression Management Means Comparison by Group**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Facebook</th>
<th>FPS</th>
<th>Social Support</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-promotion</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>0.86</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.52</td>
<td>1.08</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ingratiation*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.06&lt;sub&gt;ab&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.13&lt;sub&gt;ab&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>75</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.45&lt;sub&gt;b&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>1.01</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exemplification*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.64&lt;sub&gt;c&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.60&lt;sub&gt;d&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.26&lt;sub&gt;cd&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation*</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.33&lt;sub&gt;e&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.58&lt;sub&gt;ef&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.63&lt;sub&gt;f&lt;/sub&gt;</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supplication</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.60</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1.97</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Common subscripts indicates a statistically significant difference between groups

*<sup>p</sup> < .05

In addition to the statistical tests comparing FtF and CMC impression management, as well as these strategies in each CMC context, another way of comparing differences between these strategies and the contexts is through a visual comparison. A scatterplot for each impression management strategy was created to aid in this analysis.
(see Appendix I). Each scatterplot illustrates the relationship between the FtF and CMC score on a specific impression management strategy, as well as the CMC context. For example, the first graph in Appendix I demonstrates the relationship between participant scores on FtF exemplification and CMC exemplification, as well as color-coding the intercept of these points by CMC context.

These graphs allow us to visualize the relationship between the use of each impression management strategy in FtF or CMC interactions. For self-promotion it appears as though most participants engaged in comparable levels of self-promotion in FtF and CMC encounters. However, some FPS participants engaged in greater self-promotion in FtF interactions than in CMC. A similar trend was also present for ingratiation. In ingratiation FPS users tended to use this strategy substantially more in FtF situations than in CMC, while social support and Facebook users tended to use ingratiation at comparable levels when we compared FtF to CMC.

When examining exemplification it appears as though Facebook, FPS, and social support users tended to use exemplification more in FtF interactions than CMC. However, for intimidation we begin to see a somewhat different trend emerging. In the intimidation strategy we do see some FPS users engaging in more intimidation in CMC encounters than FtF. That being said, it appears as though most Facebook and social support users either engaged in comparable levels of intimidation when we compared FtF to CMC intimidation scores. Lastly, for supplication the scatterplot indicates that this impression management strategy is used rather infrequently in both FtF and CMC encounters. Nearly all participants scores are isolated into the lower left quadrant of the
graph, indicating that participant score for both FtF and CMC supplication is typically below the midpoint of the scale.

Although not part of the first research question, a post hoc comparison that examined the use of impression management strategies based on participant sex was conducted. Independent samples $t$ tests were run to compare the mean score on the FtF and CMC impression management strategies by participant sex. Out of the ten strategies (five each for FtF and CMC), four statistically significant differences were found. Specifically, this study found a statistically significant difference between males ($M = 2.40, SD = .83$) and females ($M = 1.97, SD = .93$) on FtF intimidation, $t(146) = -2.95, p < .05, d = -0.49$. In addition, males ($M = 2.38, SD = 1.08$) and females ($M = 3.02, SD = 1.10$) differed on CMC ingratiation, $t(146) = 3.56, p < .05, d = 0.59$. The third statistically significant difference between males ($M = 2.25, SD = 1.19$) and females ($M = 1.73, SD = 1.05$) was on CMC intimidation, $t(146) = -2.79, p < .05, d = -0.46$. Lastly, males ($M = 1.60, SD = 0.74$) and females ($M = 1.89, SD = 0.84$) differed in terms of CMC supplication, $t(146) = 2.23, p < .05, d = 0.37$. All told, males and females only differed in one FtF strategy but did seem to differ in three CMC strategies.

Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis posits that there will be differences in the use of CMC impression management strategies based on the CMC context and perceived importance of the interaction. A MANOVA was conducted to examine the effect of level of importance (high or low), CMC context (Facebook, FPS, or Social Support), and the interaction of these independent variables on CMC impression management strategies.
(i.e., self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication). The CMC score for each strategy were entered as the dependent variable, while level of importance and CMC context were entered as fixed factors. For the MANOVA, Box’s M was calculated to test homogeneity of variance/covariance. It should be noted that Box’s M is very sensitive and the general recommendation is to use an alpha level of .001 instead of .05, especially with a large sample size (Warner, 2008). Thus, for the MANOVAs used in this study, the significance level for Box’s M will be alpha < .001 and unless this assumption is violated, Box’s M will not be reported.

In the MANOVA for hypothesis 1, Box’s M was $p < .001$. Although this indicates a violation of homogeneity of variance/covariance, both MANOVA and ANOVA are relatively robust to violations of homogeneity of variance. That said, Pillai’s Trace was used as the test statistic for this MANOVA. Given this, the MANOVA for importance found a statistically significant difference between the level of importance and the CMC impression management strategies, $F(5, 139) = 3.501, p < .05$, Pillai’s Trace $= 0.112$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.112$. In addition, the MANOVA found a statistically significant difference between level of importance and CMC context, $F(10, 280) = 6.946, p < .05$, Pillai’s Trace $= 0.398$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.199$. No statistically significant difference in the interaction of level of importance and CMC context was found (see Table 12).
Table 12

Multivariate Tests for Importance, CMC Context, and Strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pillai's Trace</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Partial η2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td>0.112</td>
<td>*3.501</td>
<td>5, 139</td>
<td>0.112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Context</td>
<td>0.398</td>
<td>*6.946</td>
<td>10, 280</td>
<td>0.199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Importance X Context</td>
<td>0.022</td>
<td>0.317</td>
<td>10, 280</td>
<td>0.011</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05

Following the multivariate test, univariate testing was conducted in order to determine the effect of level of importance on each CMC impression management strategy, as well as the effect of CMC context on each strategy. In addition, post hoc testing (i.e., pairwise comparisons and Tukey HSD) was also conducted, when appropriate, in order to determine statistically significant differences between the CMC contexts or levels of importance.

Self-promotion

For self-promotion, a statistically significant difference in the level of importance and the use of self-promotion was found, $F(1, 148) = 9.549, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.063$. This finding demonstrates that users who perceived that CMC interactions were important used more self-promotion ($M = 2.77$) than users who perceived those interactions as unimportant ($M = 2.10$). No statistically significant difference in the use of
self-promotion was found based on CMC context. In addition, no interaction effect between the level of importance and CMC context was found. Given this, it appears that the level of importance has a main effect on self-promotion and accounts for 6% of the variance in that impression management strategy.

**Ingratiation**

A statistically significant difference in the use of CMC ingratiation based on level of importance was found, $F(1, 148) = 13.464, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.086$. Further testing demonstrated that, for ingratiation, users engaged in more ingratiation in important interactions ($M = 3.24$) than in unimportant interactions ($M = 2.49$) and this difference was statistically significant. Based on this result, it appears that nearly 9% of variance in the use of ingratiation can be accounted for based on the level of importance.

For ingratiation, a statistically significant difference in the use of ingratiation based on CMC context was also found, $F(2, 143) = 6.325, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.081$. Tukey post-hoc testing indicates that the use of ingratiation in FPS ($M = 2.41$) was significantly different than both Facebook ($M = 2.92$) and social support ($M = 3.26$); however, the use of ingratiation in Facebook and social support were not found to be significantly different from each other. Given this, 8% of the variance in ingratiation can be accounted for by CMC context.

**Exemplification**

For exemplification, this study found a statistically significant difference in the use of exemplification based on level of importance, $F(1, 148) = 10.293, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.067$. Pairwise comparisons indicate that users engaged in greater use of
exemplification in important interactions ($M = 2.13$) than in unimportant interactions ($M = 1.54$). No statistically significant difference between the use of exemplification, based on CMC context, was found. Overall, nearly 7% of variance in exemplification can be accounted for based on level of importance.

**Intimidation**

For hypothesis 1, no statistically significant difference in the use of intimidation was found based on the level of importance; however, a statistically significant difference in the use of intimidation based on CMC context was found, $F(2, 143) = 24.789, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.257$. Tukey post-hoc testing indicates that intimidation is used more in FPS ($M = 2.77$) than social support ($M = 1.60$) or Facebook ($M = 1.23$). In addition, FPS was significantly different from the other two groups, while no statistically significant difference in the use of intimidation was found between Facebook and social support. Results indicate that nearly 26% of the variance in the use of intimidation can be accounted for by CMC context.

**Supplication**

Lastly, a statistically significant difference in the use of supplication based on level of importance was found, $F(1, 148) = 7.662, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.051$. Pairwise comparisons provide evidence that supplication is used more in important interactions ($M = 2.01$) than unimportant interactions ($M = 1.56$), and this difference was statistically significant. No statistically significant difference in the use of supplication based on CMC context was found. In general, 5% of the variance in supplication can be accounted for based on the level of importance.
Summary

Overall, this study found that the level of importance had several main effects on the impression management strategies. With the exception of intimidation, results of this study provide evidence to support the conclusion that self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, and supplication are used more in important interactions than in unimportant interactions. In terms of CMC context, results indicate that this independent variable affected only two impression management strategies: ingratiation and intimidation. In both cases, FPS was found to be significantly different than Facebook or social support, while Facebook and social support were not significantly different from each other. Roughly 8% of the variance in ingratiation can be accounted for based on CMC context, while nearly 26% of variance in the use of intimidation can be accounted for based on CMC context (see Table 13).
Table 13

*Univariate Tests for Importance, CMC Context, and Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Partial η²</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Importance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-promotion</td>
<td>*9.549</td>
<td>1, 148</td>
<td>0.063</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>*13.464</td>
<td>1, 148</td>
<td>0.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplification</td>
<td>*10.293</td>
<td>1, 148</td>
<td>0.067</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
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<td>1, 148</td>
<td>0.019</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplication</td>
<td>*7.662</td>
<td>1, 148</td>
<td>0.051</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMC Context</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-promotion</td>
<td>1.763</td>
<td>2, 148</td>
<td>0.024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ingratiation</td>
<td>*6.325</td>
<td>2, 148</td>
<td>0.081</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exemplification</td>
<td>2.941</td>
<td>2, 148</td>
<td>0.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Intimidation</td>
<td>*24.789</td>
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<td>0.257</td>
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<tr>
<td>Supplication</td>
<td>2.643</td>
<td>2, 148</td>
<td>0.036</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* *p < .05

Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis predicts that there will be differences in the use of CMC impression management strategies based on the CMC context and perceived expectation of future interaction. To test this prediction, a MANOVA was run to examine the effect
of expectation of future interaction and CMC context on each impression management strategy. The multivariate test indicates that there were differences between the level of expectation of future interaction and impression management strategies, \( F(5, 139) = 2.395, p < .05 \), Wilk’s \( \lambda = 0.921 \), partial \( \eta^2 = 0.079 \). In addition, there were differences in impression management strategies between the different CMC contexts, \( F(10, 278) = 6.489, p < .05 \), Wilk’s \( \lambda = 0.657 \), partial \( \eta^2 = 0.189 \) (see table 14).

Table 14

*Multivariate Tests for Future Interaction, CMC Context, and Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Wilk's Lambda</th>
<th>( F )</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Partial ( \eta^2 )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expectation</td>
<td>0.921</td>
<td><em>2.395</em></td>
<td>5, 139</td>
<td>0.079</td>
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<td>0.189</td>
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<td>Expectation X Context</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>0.719</td>
<td>10, 278</td>
<td>0.025</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

* \( p < .05 \)

Following the multivariate test, univariate testing was conducted in order to determine the effect of level of expectation of future interaction on each CMC impression management strategy, as well as the effect of CMC context on each strategy.
**Self-promotion**

For self-promotion a statistically significant difference in the use of self-promotion, based on the level of expectation of future interaction was found, $F(1, 148) = 7.476, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.050$. Results indicate that higher expectation of future interaction effected greater use of self-promotion ($M = 2.74$) than in situations in which users had a low expectation of future interaction ($M = 2.02$). No statistically significant difference in the use of self-promotion based on CMC context was found. Expectation of future interaction accounts for 5% of the variance in self-promotion.

**Ingratiation**

Similar to self-promotion, a statistically significant difference in the use of ingratiation based on the level of expectation of future interaction was found, $F(1, 148) = 5.441, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.037$. Results from this study provide evidence that higher expectation of future interaction effected greater use of ingratiation ($M = 3.15$) compared to lower expectation of future interaction ($M = 2.56$). In addition to this finding, results also indicate a statistically significant difference in ingratiation based on CMC context, $F(2, 148) = 10.607, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.129$. Tukey HSD indicates that FPS ($M = 2.281$) was significantly different from both Facebook ($M = 2.883$) and social support ($M = 3.386$). In addition, social support was different from FPS, but not different from Facebook. Results indicate that expectation of future interaction accounts for nearly 4% of the variance in ingratiation, while CMC context accounts for nearly 13% of variance.
Exemplification

Results indicate that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of exemplification based on the level of expectation of future interaction, $F(1, 148) = 10.104, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.066$. It appears as though greater expectation of future interaction effected increased use of exemplification ($M = 2.09$) more so than in low expectation of future interaction ($M = 1.39$). In addition, it appears that the use of exemplification is different based on CMC context, $F(2, 148) = 4.126, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.055$. Post hoc testing indicates that social support ($M = 2.164$) was significantly different from Facebook ($M = 1.386$) and FPS ($M = 1.676$); however, FPS and Facebook were not different from each other. Results indicate that expectation of future interaction accounts for 7% of the variance in exemplification, while CMC context accounts for 6% of variance.

Intimidation

No statistically significant difference in intimidation was found based on the level of expectation of future interaction. That said, a statistically significant difference in intimidation, based on CMC context, was found, $F(2, 148) = 14.436, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.168$. FPS ($M = 2.669$) was different from Facebook ($M = 1.239$) and social support ($M = 1.607$), but social support and Facebook were not different from each other. This finding indicates that nearly 17% of the variance in the use of intimidation can be accounted for by CMC context.
Supplication

This study found a statistically significant difference in the use of supplication based on the level of expectation of future interaction, $F(1, 148) = 4.621, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.031$. It appears that level of expectation effected supplication such that high levels of expectation of future interaction effected greater use of supplication ($M = 1.976$) than low expectation of future interaction ($M = 1.544$). No statistically significant difference in the use of supplication based on CMC context was found. Results indicate that roughly 3% of the variance in supplication can be accounted for in the level of expectation of future interaction.

Summary

Hypotheses two posited that there will be differences in the use of CMC impression management strategies based on the CMC context and perceived expectation of future interaction. Findings from this study do seem to support this hypothesis. Specifically, expectation of future interaction had a main effect on self-promotion, ingratiatiation, exemplification, and supplication. CMC context had a main effect on ingratiatiation, exemplification, and intimidation. Results did not find support for an interaction effect being present between the independent variables (see Table 15).
Table 15

*Univariate Tests for Future Interaction, CMC Context, and Strategies*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>F</th>
<th>df</th>
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<td>0.037</td>
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<td>1, 148</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Self-promotion</td>
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<td>Ingratiation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Exemplification</td>
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* $p < .05$

Hypothesis 3

The third hypothesis predicted that there would be differences in the use of CMC impression management strategies based on the CMC context and perceived anonymity.
A MANOVA was run to examine the effect of anonymity and CMC context on each impression management strategy. The multivariate test indicates that there were differences between the level of anonymity and impression management strategies, $F(5, 139) = 3.93, p < .05$, Pillai’s Trace = 0.57, partial $\eta^2 = 0.13$. In addition, there were differences in impression management strategies between the different CMC contexts, $F(10, 280) = 11.22, p < .05$, Pillai’s Trace = 0.57, partial $\eta^2 = 0.29$ (see table 16).

Table 16

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</table>

* $p < .05$

Following the multivariate test, univariate testing was conducted in order to determine the effect of level of anonymity on each CMC impression management strategy, as well as the effect of CMC context on each strategy.
Self-promotion

No statistically significant differences in self-promotion, based on the level of anonymity were found. In addition, no statistically significant difference in this impression management strategy, based on CMC context was found.

Ingratiation

For ingratiation, a statistically significant difference in this strategy, based on level of anonymity, was found, $F(1, 148) = 9.268, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.061$. Results indicate that ingratiation is used to more in anonymous interactions ($M = 3.16$) than interactions in which one is identifiable ($M = 2.63$). In addition, a statistically significant difference in ingratiation based on CMC context was found, $F(2, 148) = 26.954, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.274$. For ingratiation, it appears as though FPS ($M = 2.089$) was significantly different from both Facebook ($M = 3.127$) and social support ($M = 3.472$), but no difference between Facebook and social support was found. The level of anonymity appears to account for 6% of the variance in ingratiation, while CMC context accounts for 27% of variance.

Exemplification

Results indicate that a statistically significant difference in the use of exemplification, based on the level of anonymity, is present, $F(1, 148) = 4.896, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.033$. Exemplification is used more in anonymous interactions ($M = 2.006$) than identifiable ones ($M = 1.655$). In addition, a statistically significant difference in exemplification based on CMC context was found, $F(2, 148) = 6.815, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.087$. Post hoc testing indicates that, social support ($M = 2.286$) was significantly
different from Facebook ($M = 1.649$) and FPS ($M = 1.557$), but Facebook and FPS were not significantly different from each other. Results indicate that the level of anonymity accounts for roughly 3% of the variance in exemplification, while CMC context accounts for nearly 9% of variance.

**Intimidation**

Results from this study did not find a statistically significant difference in intimidation based on the level of anonymity; however, this study did find a statistically significant difference in the use of intimidation based on CMC context, $F(2, 148) = 23.553, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.248$. Post hoc tests indicate that FPS ($M = 2.537$) was significantly different from Facebook ($M = 1.307$) and social support ($M = 1.645$), but social support and Facebook were not different from each other. Results indicate that nearly 25% of the variance in intimidation can be accounted for by CMC context.

**Supplication**

Results indicate a statistically significant difference in the use of supplication based on the level of anonymity, $F(1, 148) = 14.607, p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.093$. It appears as though supplication is used more in anonymous interactions ($M = 2.012$) than identifiable interactions ($M = 1.495$). No statistically significant difference in the use of supplication, based on CMC context, was found. Results indicate that the level of anonymity can explain 9% of the variance in supplication.

**Summary**

Hypotheses three posited that there will be differences in the use of CMC impression management strategies based on the CMC context and anonymity. Findings
from this study provide some support for this hypothesis. Anonymity had a main effect on ingratiation, exemplification, and supplication. It appears as though each of these impression management strategies increases based on the level of anonymity. In addition, CMC context had a main effect on ingratiation, exemplification, and intimidation. In general, FPS was found to be different from the other two contexts in ingratiation and intimidation. However, social support was significantly different from the other two contexts in terms of exemplification (see Table 17).
Table 17

*Univariate Tests for Anonymity, CMC Context, and Strategies*

<p>| | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th></th>
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<td></td>
<td>$F$</td>
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<td>0.033</td>
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<td>Exemplification</td>
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<td>2, 148</td>
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<td>Intimidation</td>
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</table>

* $p < .05$

Research Question 2, 2a, and 2b

The second research question asks if CMC impression management strategies can be predicted by importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity, or social
presence? In addition, the follow-up research questions, RQ2a and RQ2b, seek to understand the unique effects of and interaction effect of these variables on impression management strategies. In order to help answer this question, and the follow-up questions, multiple regression was used to determine if importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity, or social presence could predict impression management strategies. To accomplish this, separate regressions were performed for each impression management strategy. Using stepwise regression, predictor variables were added to the regression model by the computer only if they were statistically significant predictors of the dependent variables (i.e., impression management strategy). In addition, interaction terms for each pair of predictor variables were calculated and entered into the regression model, again using stepwise entry.

**Self-promotion**

The first regression sought to determine whether CMC self-promotion could be predicted by importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity, social presence, or an interaction of the predictors. The regression analysis indicated that 5% of the variance in CMC self-promotion could be predicted by the level of importance, \( F = 8.04 \) (1, 146), \( p < .05 \), adjusted \( R^2 = .05 \). After the computer entered importance into the regression model, the score for anonymity was added in and resulted in a significant change adding an additional 3% of variance accounted for, \( \Delta F = 6.96 \) (1, 145), \( p < .05 \). Overall, the regression model accounted for 8% of the variance in CMC self-promotion with the two predictor variables, \( F = 7.66 \) (2, 145), \( p < .05 \), adjusted \( R^2 = .08 \). Analysis of regression coefficients indicated that importance (\( \beta = 0.22, t = 2.79, p < .05 \)) and anonymity (\( \beta = \)
0.21, \( t = 2.64, p < .05 \) both predicted significant variance in CMC self-promotion. This finding indicates that the more important the interaction and an increased feeling of anonymity will predict greater use of self-promotion in CMC interactions.

**Ingratiation**

The next regression sought to determine the influence of several predictor variables on CMC ingratiation. The analysis indicated that 36% of the variance in CMC ingratiation could be predicted by the level of importance, \( F = 85.30 \) (1, 146), \( p < .05 \), adjusted \( R^2 = .36 \). The next predictor entered into the regression model was the interaction effect of expectation of future interaction and anonymity. This additional predictor resulted in a statistically significant change that accounted for an additional 4% of variance accounted for, \( \Delta F = 8.70 \) (1, 145), \( p < .05 \). Overall, the model accounted for 40% of the variance in CMC ingratiation, \( F = 49.25 \) (2, 145), \( p < .05 \), adjusted \( R^2 = .40 \). Follow-up analysis indicated that importance (\( \beta = 0.48, \ t = 5.84, p < .05 \)) has a main effect on ingratiation, while the interaction effect of expectation of future interaction and anonymity effects ingratiation (\( \beta = 0.24, \ t = 2.95, p < .05 \)). The effect of importance on ingratiation indicates that increased importance predicts greater use of ingratiation in CMC interactions. In addition, the interaction of greater expectation of future interaction and higher levels of anonymity also predict increased use of ingratiation.

**Exemplification**

Similar to the procedures used for the previous impression management strategies, a regression was performed to determine if predictor variables could account for variance in the impression management strategy of exemplification. The regression
model determined that nearly 14% of the variance in CMC exemplification can be predicted by the level of importance, $F = 23.91 \ (1, \ 146), \ p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .14$. After this first predictor, the computer added anonymity to the model, which resulted in a significant change that accounted for an additional 4% of variance accounted for, $\Delta F = 6.46 \ (1, \ 145), \ p < .05$. Overall, the regression model accounted for nearly 17% of the variance in CMC exemplification using two of the predictor variables, $F = 15.63 \ (2, \ 145), \ p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .17$. The regression model indicated that importance ($\beta = 0.37, t = 4.88, p < .05$) and anonymity ($\beta = 0.19, t = 2.54, p < .05$) each have a main effect on exemplification. Specifically, as interactions increase in importance and the level of anonymity increases, so will the use of exemplification in CMC interactions.

**Intimidation**

Following the regression model for exemplification, a multiple regression was run to determine which predictor variables could account for variance in CMC intimidation. The first predictor entered into the model was anonymity, which accounted for 9% of the variance in CMC intimidation, $F = 16.27 \ (1, \ 146), \ p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .09$. Following anonymity, expectation of future interaction was entered into the regression and resulted in a significant change adding an additional 6% of variance accounted for, $\Delta F = 11.08 \ (1, \ 145), \ p < .05$. The final model accounted for 15% of the variance in the use of intimidation in CMC interactions using two predictors, $F = 14.24 \ (2, \ 145), \ p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .15$. Follow-up analysis indicated that anonymity ($\beta = 0.28, t = 3.65, p < .05$) and expectation of future interaction ($\beta = -0.26, t = -3.33, p < .05$) each have a main effect on intimidation. Greater degrees of anonymity predict increased use of
intimidation, while decreases in expectation of future interaction indicate increased use of intimidation.

**Supplication**

The last impression management strategy is supplication. The regression model indicated that nearly 11% of the variance in supplication can be predicted by anonymity, $F = 18.21 \ (1, \ 146), \ p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .11$. Following this step, the level of importance was entered into the model and accounted for a significant change adding an additional 7% of variance accounted for, $\Delta F = 12.09 \ (1, \ 145), \ p < .05$. The model generated for this last regression was able to account for 17% of the variance in CMC supplication using two predictors, $F = 15.84 \ (2, \ 145), \ p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .17$. Additional analysis indicated that anonymity ($\beta = 0.32, \ t = 4.30, \ p < .05$) and importance ($\beta = 0.26, \ t = 3.48, \ p < .05$) each had main effects that predicted the use of supplication. Put another way, higher levels of anonymity and perceived importance predicted greater use of supplication in CMC interactions.

**Summary**

Through five separate regression analyses (see Table 18), data indicates that several variables do predict use of impression management strategies in CMC interactions. In particular, perceived importance and the degree of anonymity emerged as key predictor variables in accounting for variance in many of the impression management strategies. In addition, expectation of future interaction as well as the interaction effect of anonymity and expectation of future interaction also can be used as predictors. All told, results from this study seem to indicate that several of the variables identified in this
study (i.e., importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity, or social presence) can be used as predictors for CMC impression management strategies. In addition, many of these predictors have main effects on these strategies, while evidence for only one interaction effect was found.
Table 18

*Summary of Regression Analysis for RQ2*

<table>
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<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
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<td>12.09*</td>
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</table>

*p < .05
Research Question 3

The last research question asks, how does perceived damage from information shared from one context to another and the perceived likelihood of this sharing occurring relate to CMC impression management strategies? In order to answer this question, a separate regression was run for each impression management strategy. For each regression, perceived damage and information sharing were the predictor variables and each impression management strategy was the dependent variable. Using stepwise entry, the above variables were entered into the regression model.

Self-promotion

Stemming from RQ3, the first regression sought to examine whether CMC self-promotion could be predicted by perceived information sharing or perceived damage from this sharing. The regression analysis indicated that perceived damage accounts for nearly 12% of the variance in CMC self-promotion, $F = 21.22 \ (1, \ 146), \ p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .12$. Following perceived damage, information sharing was added to the model and resulted in a significant change adding an additional 3% of variance accounted for, $\Delta F = 6.10 \ (1, \ 145), \ p < .05$. The final regression model indicates that 15% of the variance in self-promotion can be predicted by the two predictor variables, $F = 14.03 \ (2, \ 145), \ p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .15$. Analysis of regression coefficients indicated that perceived damage ($\beta = 0.41, \ t = 5.16, \ p < .05$) and information sharing ($\beta = 0.19, \ t = 2.47, \ p < .05$) both predicted statistically significant variance in CMC self-promotion. This finding indicates that increases in perceived damage and information sharing predict greater use of self-promotion.
**Ingratiation**

The next regression examined CMC ingratiation and if use of this impression management strategy could be predicted by perceived information sharing or perceived damage from this sharing. The first predictor used in the analysis was information sharing, which accounted for nearly 13% of the variance in CMC ingratiation, $F = 23.37$ (1, 146), $p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .13$. The second step of the regression added perceived damage, which resulted in a significant change adding an additional 3% of variance accounted for, $\Delta F = 6.07$ (1, 145), $p < .05$. The full regression model indicates that 16% of the variance in ingratiation can be predicted by the two predictor variables, $F = 16.34$ (2, 145), $p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .16$. Further analysis indicated that information sharing ($\beta = 0.42$, $t = 5.38$, $p < .05$) and perceived damage ($\beta = 0.19$, $t = 2.46$, $p < .05$) both predicted statistically significant variance in CMC ingratiation. This finding indicates that increases in perceived damage and information sharing predict greater use of ingratiation.

**Exemplification**

The regression model for exemplification found that perceived damage accounted for nearly 5% of the variance in CMC exemplification, $F = 8.71$ (1, 146), $p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .05$. After accounting for perceived damage, information sharing was added to the model and this resulted in significant change adding an additional 8% of variance accounted for, $\Delta F = 14.11$ (1, 145), $p < .05$. Overall, the model accounted for 13% of the variance in CMC exemplification score, $F = 11.80$ (2, 145), $p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .13$. Follow-up analysis indicates that perceived damage ($\beta = 0.31$, $t = 3.93$, $p < .05$) and information sharing ($\beta = 0.30$, $t = 3.76$, $p < .05$) each had significant main effects on
exemplification. Results from this regression indicate that as perceived damage and information sharing increase, this predicts an increase in the use of exemplification in CMC interactions.

*Intimidation*

The first predictor entered into the analysis for CMC intimidation was perceived damage, which accounted for nearly 21% of the variance in the dependent variable, In the regression for intimidation, $F = 39.92$ (1, 146), $p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .21$. The next step added information sharing to the model, which resulted in a significant change adding an additional 5% of variance accounted for, $\Delta F = 9.78$ (1, 145), $p < .05$. The two predictor model accounted for 25% of the variance in CMC intimidation score, $F = 26.05$ (2, 145), $p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .25$. Follow-up analysis indicates that perceived damage ($\beta = 0.41$, $t = 5.51$, $p < .05$) has a statistically significant effect on intimidation, as does information sharing ($\beta = -0.23$, $t = -3.13$, $p < .05$). Results indicate that as perceived damage increases so does use of intimidation; however, as the possibility of information being shared from one context to another decreases, the use of intimidation increases.

*Supplication*

The last regression focused on supplication and found that perceived damage accounted for nearly 11% of the variance in CMC supplication score, $F = 18.31$ (1, 146), $p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .11$. The second step of the regression added information sharing to the model which resulted in a significant change adding an additional 3% of variance accounted for, $\Delta F = 5.36$ (1, 145), $p < .05$. The overall model accounted for nearly 13% of the variance in supplication, $F = 12.11$ (2, 145), $p < .05$, adjusted $R^2 = .13$. Continued
analysis indicated that perceived damage ($\beta = 0.38, t = 4.79, p < .05$) and information sharing ($\beta = 0.18, t = 2.32, p < .05$) each had main effects on supplication. As perceived damage and information sharing increased, so did the use of CMC supplication.

**Summary**

In general, results from the regression analysis seem to indicate that perceived damage and information sharing do serve as predictors of the impression management strategies (see Table 19). Both have statistically significant main effects that can account for additional variance. Given this, the two-predictor model that was produced for each impression management strategy seems to account for more variance than any single predictor by itself.
Table 19

*Summary of Regression Analysis for RQ3*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
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<th>Model 2</th>
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*p < .05
Summary of Results

Results from this study tend to support the hypotheses. In general, increases in the level of importance, expectation of future interaction, and anonymity seemed to effect increased use of some of the impression management strategies. Although this was not universal across all strategies, it did seem to be a noticeable trend. In addition, CMC context did seem to play a role in influencing the use of different impression management strategies. Although no interaction was found in the test for the hypotheses, the main effect seems to indicate that expectation of future interaction, importance, and anonymity do influence impression management strategies. In addition, the results from the regression analysis provide support for this claim as well. In particular, the regression analysis indicates that the predictor variables typically provide a main effect on impression management strategies and the two main effects can account for significant variance in the dependent variable. The following chapter will discuss these findings in more detail, as well as return to prior research and how the current findings can be interpreted.
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

Introduction

One engaging area of research for communication scholars, and scholars from other fields, is the presentation of self and impression management. In particular, Goffman’s (1959; 1963) notion that individuals perform a role in front of an audience has developed into a theoretical framework for a variety of studies. Indeed, for any scholar looking to study impression management, Goffman’s work is typically the starting point. Furthermore, his work has also allowed us to study these same communicative processes as they play out via CMC.

Stemming from Goffman’s (1959; 1963) work, scholars have developed a taxonomy of impression management strategies. These strategies are essentially the behaviors or actions a person uses to manage impressions in other people. Bolino and Turnley (1999) categorized a variety of impression management behaviors into five main strategies. These five strategies include: self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. As Bolino and Turnley (1999) explain:

“self-promotion, whereby individuals point out their abilities or accomplishments in order to be seen as competent by observers; ingratiation, whereby individuals do favors or use flattery to elicit an attribution of likability from observers; exemplification, whereby people self-sacrifice or go above and beyond the call of duty in order to gain the attribution of dedication from observers; intimidation, where people signal their power or potential to punish in order to be seen as dangerous by observers; and supplication, where individuals advertise their

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weaknesses or shortcomings in order to elicit an attribution of being needy from observers.” (p. 190)

Although these strategies were originally developed in psychology, the strategies are also grounded in communication. The only way impression management functions as theorized, are by altering or managing impressions that others have of individuals and this is accomplished through communication.

Past research has already established a link between impression management and how this takes places in CMC (Becker & Stamp, 2006; Chen, 2010; O’Sullivan, 2000). In addition, other scholars have identified variables of interest that influence and perhaps predict communicative behaviors via CMC. In particular, the current study has identified the following as important variables to consider when examining online impression management: importance, expectation of future interaction, and anonymity. For example, Ellison et al. (2006) note the role that expectation of future interaction plays in influencing self-presentation in online dating sites. In this setting, the expectation of future interaction tempers self-presentation such that users tend to portray themselves similar to their FtF presentation of self. Other scholars have also identified expectation of future interaction as an important variable in studying CMC (Gibbs et al., 2006; Toma et al., 2008). In addition, the importance of a relationship, or at least the interaction with another person online, also appears to influence communication. Theorists Burger and Luckmann (1966) explain this further, although far removed from the context of CMC.

Aside from importance and expectation of future interaction, another variable of interest is identifiability or perceived anonymity. Past research has found that anonymity
impacts social loafing in groups (Williams et al., 1981) and this variable has also been used in developing the SIDE model (see Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998; Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 2002). Beyond the scholarly community identifying anonymity as important, CMC users have also noted the importance of anonymity and identifiability in CMC interactions. Both Chris “moot” Poole, the founder of 4chan, and Mark Zuckerberg, the creator of Facebook, have noted the importance of anonymity or identifiability in CMC interactions. Although Poole and Zuckerberg take opposite points of view, this perhaps highlights how important this variable is in impacting CMC interactions.

In addition, social presence and online social norms also appear to play a role in influencing behavior in CMC interactions. Social presence has been identified (Rice & Associates, 1984) as influencing communication in CMC encounters, while social norms seem to serve to prescribe particular behavior in certain circumstances (Hechter & Opp, 2001). However, in CMC encounters it is relatively easy for a user of one CMC channel to effortlessly switch to another channel. In addition, this user may unintentionally continue playing a role or share information based in one context and portray that to the wrong audience (i.e., in a different CMC context). Thus, understanding the impact of this information sharing, and the perceived damage this may cause, is another area worth considering.

Thus far, several studies have been conducted that look at the variables noted above; however, this past research often studies these variables in isolation. In order to gain a better understanding of importance, expectation of future interaction, anonymity, social presence, information sharing, and damage from information sharing, this study
sought to examine how each contributes to influencing impression management strategies in CMC contexts as well as to test if these variables interact together. Several hypotheses and research questions were offered, based on past research. In order to provide evidence to support these hypotheses, and to answer the research questions, several statistical tests were conducted on data recorded from an online survey. In particular, paired-samples $t$-tests, ANOVA, MANOVA, and multiple regression were conducted to help answer the questions proposed by this dissertation.

Summary of Findings

In general, the results of this study help to inform our understanding of impression management in contemporary CMC contexts. However, the most interesting or meaningful results can be organized into five main findings. The first finding centers on differences in the usage of the impression management strategies between FtF and CMC contexts. Indeed, results from this study indicate that participants used impression management differently between FtF and CMC interactions. Building from the first finding, the second finding focuses on differences in the use of the impression management strategies between the three CMC contexts. Based on data from this dissertation, it appears that the participants in the three contexts engage in impression management differently in each context. The third, and perhaps most significant finding, deals with the role of perceived importance in online communication. Specifically, this study found that perceived importance not only affects impression management, but can also be used as a predictor for these strategies. Coupled with importance, the fourth main finding is tied to expectation of future interaction. Prior scholarship has noted that this is
an important variable and findings from this study support, and extend, this prior scholarship. The last main finding from this study involved information sharing and perceived damage from this sharing. Results indicate that both of these theoretical concepts can be used to predict the use of impression management strategies in online contexts.

**Differences Between FtF and CMC**

One of the main findings of this study was that impression management strategies were used differently between FtF and CMC interactions, and that the use of these strategies does differ between the three CMC contexts used in this study. In particular, the general trend seemed to be that FtF encounters had greater, or more frequent, usage of the impression management strategies than CMC encounters. However, the interesting aspect of this difference is in which impression management strategies the differences occurred in and the magnitude of this difference. In particular, the use of exemplification is nearly double in FtF settings than in CMC settings, and this finding applied to Facebook, FPS, and social support. Bolino and Turnley (1999) explain that exemplification is when individuals self-sacrifice, or put another way, go above and beyond what is expected of them in order to appear dedicated. In the case of the current study, it appears that, in each CMC context, users engaged in exemplification significantly less than in FtF situations. This difference was greatest in the FPS context, although all three contexts provided evidence of this trend.

One potential explanation of this difference in exemplification is the role it plays in conveying a certain impression. As previously noted, exemplification tends to instill a
sense of self-sacrifice or going above and beyond the call of duty. It could be users simply do not find this strategy as useful in CMC encounters as in FtF. For example, it could be that appearing self-sacrificing in CMC interactions is not as desirable as in FtF interactions. Another potential explanation is that the norms of the online context are different from that of the user’s typical FtF interactions, thus changing one’s use of impression management strategies to fit the norms of the context would seem appropriate. For example, in the first chapter of this dissertation I explained how the way I interact with others, in three different online contexts, differs between those contexts and, at times, my FtF self-presentation. In this case, I alter my self-presentation (i.e., impression management) to fit the norms of the online context and the goals of that context.

Perhaps the explanation that makes the most sense is simply that the amount of time individuals spend engaging in impression management in FtF encounters is greater than that of CMC interactions. It would make sense that we would use the impression management strategies more in FtF interactions if that is where we spend the majority of our time. Although this study did not ask questions that could be used to compare overall time spent, on say a daily or weekly basis, engaging in impression management in FtF or CMC interactions, this does seem to be a plausible explanation. If we look at Goffman’s (1959) work, we could posit that an actor who spends more time in a particular role will have more opportunity to develop and manage the audience’s impressions of that role; however, that same actor who spends less time portraying a different role will have less opportunity to develop and manage audience impressions of that role.
My view of this finding is that users may engage in impression management to a greater degree in FtF encounters because individuals may have a greater stake in the outcomes of interactions in those encounters. For example, the outcomes of many FtF interactions have a greater direct effect on me personally than most of my CMC encounters. This is likely due to FtF behaviors being inherently tied to one’s identity and the same is not always true of online interactions. In this sense, flaming behaviors in FtF interactions are inherently tied to one’s FtF identity and this can be personally, and perhaps professionally, damaging to one’s reputation; however, online this connection might be absent and the individual is not likely to suffer the same consequences for his/her actions. This certainly is not true for everyone; however, in my view this likely could be the case for many people. Another way of explaining this is by thinking about the repercussions for engaging in poor impression management. It would make sense that the consequences for poorly engaging in impression management in FtF encounters is significantly greater than the consequences for poorly managing impression management in any CMC context. Given this, it is reasonable to assume that users will spend more time carefully crafting and managing their self-presentation in FtF encounters than in CMC, likely because the consequences for doing this poorly might be greater in FtF than in CMC.

I also argue that Goffman’s (1963) notion of stigma likely also plays a part. If I poorly negotiate my impression management strategies in FtF settings I may somehow discredit myself, which could have a significant, negative impact on my identity. While the same can certainly be true of CMC interactions, for many people FtF interactions are
perhaps more salient and have a greater effect on the individual’s identity and self-concept than CMC encounters. In CMC contexts, the notion of stigma or negative impact on one’s identity likely could be tied to how identifiable or anonymous an individual is online. For example, if an individual engages in discrediting behavior on Facebook, that behavior may discredit the individual in FtF interactions. Put another way, if an individual engages in discrediting behavior in FtF interactions and that behavior is made known to a wide audience via CMC channels, that same aspect of stigma will be at play. In my theoretical view, this would tend to make sense and help to explain some of the findings discussed thus far.

In addition, other theoretical concepts, particularly social identity theory (SIT) would also tend to support this. SIT posits that individuals want to have positive social identity and will do a variety of activities, including leaving groups, in order to maintain or achieve positive social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). I argue that positive social identity can exist in both FtF and CMC encounters; however, the FtF positive social identity likely may be more important to the individual than social identity online. Now this very well may be a over generalization, but I would argue that one’s FtF social identity, the one individuals deal with everyday in their physical lives, may likely take precedence over online aspects of identity. This does not preclude a connection between the FtF social identity and an online social identity, but in my view one may take priority over the other and the findings of this study indicate that users, regardless of CMC context, engaged in greater impression management in FtF encounters than in CMC.
Another interesting result of this study related to the use of ingratiation by the FPS group. Simply put, ingratiation is when individuals do favors to elicit the notion of likability from others (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). For ingratiation, FPS users engaged in this impression management strategy significantly less in the CMC context of FPS games than in FtF encounters. Moreover, there was a seemingly large difference between how FPS users used ingratiation, which was almost twice as much in FtF interactions than in CMC. According to the data collected from the current study, the mean difference in ingratiation, between FtF and CMC, was even greater than the difference in exemplification.

Taken as a whole, the findings from this portion of the study indicate that impression management strategies are certainly used in CMC situations; however, they are typically used slightly less frequently than in FtF encounters and in some cases used substantially less. This trend could indicate that, in CMC settings, users are not likely to go out of their way or self-sacrifice in order to appear dedicated to other users or to do favors in order to appear likeable by others. This could simply occur due to a lack of connection with other users or, in all likelihood, characteristics of the CMC context. For example, it could be that online social norms differ from that of FtF interactions and users are simply adapting to these differences by using impression management strategies differently. This is somewhat contradictory to Yee et al. (2007), who found online norms in Second Life are similar to those in FtF interactions. That being said, Yee’s study looked exclusively at nonverbal behaviors of user’s avatars and not impression management. If we look at this finding in the context of Goffman’s (1959) work, it could
be that the user (i.e., actor) is portraying two different roles, one in an FtF setting and one in a CMC context. These two roles are different from each other and the differences in the use of impression management strategies are what this finding is providing empirical evidence of.

Another explanation is that users may not perceive these interactions as being important and thus do not spend as much time actively engaging with other users as they would in important interactions. In the context of FPS, which can be a fairly competitive environment with virtual violence, it would make sense that users would not engage in prosocial behaviors like ingratiation. Examining the differences in the use of the impression management strategies between the three contexts should help to further explain these differences.

**Differences Among CMC Contexts**

This study found some significant differences in CMC impression management among the three contexts. In ingratiation, FPS was significantly different from both Facebook and social support. Data indicate that FPS users used ingratiation significantly less than both Facebook and social support users, while Facebook and social support did not appear to be statistically different from each other. Overall, users of social support sites used ingratiation significantly more than FPS users and, although this was not a statistically significant difference, social support users *may* use ingratiation more than Facebook users. In fact, results indicate that CMC context accounts for nearly 24% of the variance in the use of ingratiation.
When examining the results from this study, ingratiation was not the only strategy in which statistically significant differences were found. For exemplification a similar trend was found, although the context that was significantly different from the other two was social support. In this case, social support users engaged in exemplification more frequently than Facebook or FPS. Neither Facebook nor FPS were significantly different from each other. Lastly, for intimidation, the FPS group used intimidation significantly more frequently than social support or Facebook users. For intimidation, CMC context accounted for nearly 26% of the variance in the use of intimidation.

Findings from this study seem to indicate that the characteristics of the CMC context can account for significant differences in the use of the impression management strategies. For example, FPS users engaged in intimidation more frequently than the other two groups, while social support users engaged in exemplification more frequently than the other two groups. It appears as though characteristics of the CMC context influence the use of impression management strategies within each context. This would certainly make sense, as previously noted the social norms of some CMC contexts might be to help other people in need, like in social support groups, while in other contexts, such as in FPS games, the norm is every person for him or herself. It would make sense that FPS users would use intimidation more frequently, since use of this strategy might actually be a strategic advantage. For example, in a heated game it might be worthwhile to use the real-time verbal channel to intimidate an opponent in the hopes of affecting his/her gameplay. Given the virtual setting of FPS games, in which users are actively trying to kill other players, the use of intimidation just seems to fit the activities occurring within
that virtual environment. Past research has already established that many video games are violent in nature (Carnagey et al., 2007; Cicchirillo & Chory-Assad, 2005; Smith et al., 2003) and that game play of some video games may have a link with aggressive behavior (Anderson & Bushman, 2001; Ballard & West, 1996; Cooper & Mackie, 1986; Eastin, 2006). Given these past findings, it makes sense that these behaviors would likely also include increased use of the intimidation impression management strategy.

Although it might make sense for users to engage in more intimidation in FPS games, it would not make sense for someone engaging in social support to actively intimidate other users, which likely would achieve the opposite of social support. Black et al. (2010) explain that social support can include the following “expressions of encouragement or validation, advice or feedback about behaviors, sharing of information, and offers of tangible assistance” (p. 354). All of these communicative behaviors are in staunch contrast to intimidation. Thus, in the context of social support, we would not expect users to engage in intimidation.

In the context of social support, appearing self-sacrificing or willing to go above and beyond the call of duty (i.e., ingratiating) may be a more appropriate fit with the goals of that particular context (see Black et al., 2010). This would help to explain why the strategies seemed to differ in how frequently users engaged in the use of that strategy in each context. In the case of the current study, it would appear that characteristics of the CMC context do account for variance in the use of impression management strategies within that context and some of this variance can be rather significant (i.e., 26% of variance in the use of intimidation). When examined in more detail, it appears that the
differences we see in impression management strategy, between the three study groups, does appear to fit with the goals and/or typical norms of each context.

This finding, that the impression management strategies are used differently depending on the context, is analogous to Goffman’s (1959) notion of an actor portraying a role for an audience or audiences. For example, the role an actor plays for a particular audience one night may be different from the role the actor plays for a different audience later that night. The same appears to occur in online contexts as well. In FPS games a user portrays a particular role that is different from their role in FtF interactions. Someone who engages in online social support likely manages that role differently than someone managing a role in an FPS games, even though both roles take place online. In general, the three contexts used in this study tended to differ in terms of how frequently each impression management strategy was used. This is essentially an actor portraying a role for a particular audience. In this case, users portray a role, through impression management, for a particular audience (i.e., CMC context) and these roles differ based on the audience/context. As Goffman notes, the actor typically portrays a role that upholds the standards of etiquette held by that audience and this same portrayal seems to occur in online contexts as well.

This notion of the CMC context influencing the impression management strategies is also supported by data from the MANOVA tests. In particular, CMC context had a main effect on several of the impression management strategies, even when we take into account the importance of the interaction, expectation of future interaction, and anonymity. The trend seemed to be that CMC context had a main effect on ingratiation,
exemplification, and intimidation, although no main effect for exemplification was found on the univariate tests that included importance. Coupled with the previously mentioned findings of this study, that impression management strategies differ by CMC context, this study provides evidence to support the conclusion that CMC context influences the degree to which several of the impression management strategies are used, especially: ingratiation, exemplification, and intimidation. Just as an actor modifies their portrayal of a role to suit an audience, users of online contexts shape their impression management strategies to fit that context.

Another view of the finding regarding differences among the CMC contexts relates to SIT. Tajfel and Turner (1986) identify several principles that describe aspects of social identity. The three principles Tajfel and Turner discuss are: individuals want positive social identity, positive social identity is based on favorable comparisons to others, and if this social identity is negative the individual will take actions to improve their social identity (e.g., discontinue group membership). These principles may help to explain why individuals differ in how they enact identity management in these different contexts. Take FPS for example, one way for me to enhance my positive social identity could be by beating other people or consistently winning games. One way to accomplish this is by engaging in greater intimidation or self-promotion. In my experience playing FPS games, I have found that people will often boast of how good they are in the game, but when beaten they have little to say. Conversely, when players beat another team or player(s), they routinely rub in the fact that they won and may even claim to be the superior player. This seems to connect with some of the principles of SIT. In particular,
SIT posits that individuals want positive social identity and that positive social identity is based on comparisons with other people/groups. View from this perspective, players boasting about how good they are function to help generate a positive social identity for those players.

Another example that helps to explain the differences among the CMC contexts comes from the social support group. The ultimate goal of a social support site is to allow members of that online community to seek and give support to each other on potentially a variety of issues. Looking at this from an SIT perspective, individuals of these online communities likely want a positive social identity within the group and this is best accomplished by engaging in impression management strategies that encourage social support. Specifically, the impression management strategies of exemplification and ingratiation are the two strategies that fit best for generating a positive social identity within the context of online social support. Results from this study demonstrate that the social support group had higher levels of both strategies than both the Facebook and FPS groups.

Going back to my example of the FPS group, we can begin to understand the difference between the three groups in intimidation. Greater use of intimidation in FPS can make sense, both in a practical and a theoretical sense. Not only might more intimidation lead to a strategic advantage (i.e., practical), but greater use of intimidation may help to increase my positive social identity (i.e., theoretical). By boasting about my skill level as a player and how much better than the competition I am, I may increase my positive social identity, at least in the CMC context of FPS. This might also function to
promote a specific way in which I choose to portrays myself, essentially Goffman's (1959) notion of an actor portraying an idealized version of him or herself.

The SIDE Model also informs my theoretical perspective on this finding. As noted previously, when users are visually anonymous they may treat others not as individuals but as members of a group. In addition, this process of deindividuation allows individuals to treat others in stereotypical ways and disregard typical standards of behavior. In my experience, this tends to be the case in many FPS games, which are typically visually anonymous and missing many of the context cues of FtF interactions. The predictions of the SIDE model would seem to support the finding of greater use of intimidation in FPS interactions, which are typically anonymous in nature.

Overall, my perspective of the finding that impression management strategies are used differently in each context can be viewed in both practical and theoretical ways. In the practical realm, some impression management strategies fit the needs/goals of certain CMC contexts better than others. For example, intimidation fits FPS better than social support, while ingratiation and exemplification fit social support better than FPS. In the theoretical realm, differences in impression management likely are connected with the individual’s need for positive social identity within that context. In some ways, intimidation might be used to help generate this positive social identity within the context of FPS, but in other contexts this same impression management strategy likely generates a negative social identity. Given this perspective, users of online contexts appear to use impression management strategies that fit the context and help to generate a positive social identity within that particular context.
Perceived Importance

In addition to differences in CMC impression management between the three contexts, another interesting finding from this study is the role of perceived importance in influencing impression management strategies. This finding, that importance influences and can predict impression management online is perhaps the most important finding from this study. From the MANOVA tests, we know that importance has a main effect on self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, and supplication. In all of these cases, the impression management strategy was used more often in important interactions than in unimportant interactions. Estimates of effect size indicate that between 5-9% of this variance, in each of the strategies mentioned above, can be accounted for based on the level of importance. This seems to support the finding that the level of importance does have an impact on most of the impression management strategies.

In addition to the findings of the MANOVA examining level of importance, the regression analysis also provided interesting findings that continue to highlight the role that importance plays in influencing impression management. In particular, importance appears to be a key variable that can be used to predict the use of impression management strategies and account for substantial variance in these strategies. Specifically, importance was the first variable entered into the regression model for self-promotion, ingratiation, and exemplification. In addition, importance was also a predictor for supplication. These findings provide substantial evidence that importance is a key predictor in three of the impression management strategies and a secondary predictor of
another strategy. All told, importance seems to predict four out of the five impression management strategies.

Perhaps the most interesting finding from the regression analysis, specifically when we look at perceived importance, is the predictive power of importance for ingratiation. By itself, importance can account for 36% of the variance in ingratiation and this clearly indicates that importance is a key predictor for this impression management strategy. Put another way, increases in perceived importance predict greater use of ingratiation and we can account for additional variance when we include the interaction of expectation of future interaction and anonymity into the equation. Importance also has predictive power in all of the other impression management strategies, except for intimidation. Given this relationship, and especially the connection between importance and ingratiation, we clearly have evidence that points to importance as a key predictor variable for a number of reasons.

Perhaps one way of viewing the significance of importance is in practical terms. If one does not view an online interaction as being important, what incentive does she or he have in maintaining a vested interest in that interaction? What seems to be the most plausible explanation is that when a user views an online interaction as being important, they may be more willing to spend the time, energy, and effort to carefully engage in impression management in that context. However, in unimportant interactions users might not be willing to dedicate their energies towards carefully managing impressions. Given this, the user likely engages in impression management more frequently in important interactions than in online interactions that are unimportant. In particular, users
seem to use the impression management strategy that makes them appear likeable or friendly (i.e., ingratiation) in those situations in which they view the interaction as important. Put another way, in important interactions users tended to use strategies that made them appear likeable. Again this would make sense, why would someone want to appear unlikeable in interactions they deem as being important? Instead, the parsimonious explanation is that users who view their online interactions as being important will engage in impression management strategies that would facilitate their continued interaction in that online context (i.e., appropriate online self-presentation).

Provided with the finding of the key role that importance plays, the question then becomes why is this finding important? Perhaps the noteworthiness of importance is that this variable has rarely been clearly identified, measured, and studied in scholarly work, at the very least as importance has been operationalized in this dissertation. It appears that in past research importance is coupled with expectation of future interaction or importance is viewed as an underlying variable that is not measured. For example, Ellison et al. (2006) noted that anticipated FtF interactions and the intimacy of an online relationship impacted the presentation of self in the online dating context. If we read into this finding more closely, we could argue that importance is present, in anticipated FtF interactions and intimacy, but is not explicitly measured.

Theorists Berger and Luckmann (1966) also discuss importance, although importance is also tied with degree of intimacy, similar to Ellison et al. (2006). As previously noted, Berger and Luckmann provide the example of the newspaper vendor that one may see on the street on a regular basis; however, that vendor is of less
importance and is essentially relatively anonymous. In this example, we can see importance functioning as a variable of interest, but importance itself is not explained further. Findings from the current study indicate that importance is rather significant when we examine online interactions and perceived importance does seem to impact and predict online interactions. Thus, in Berger and Luckmann’s example, and in the context of the findings of this dissertation, the key difference between the newspaper vendor and the Berger or Luckmann’s wife is not that one is more anonymous than the other; the key difference between the two people is the level of importance that Berger or Luckmann places on those relationships.

In both examples (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Ellison et al., 2006) we do see that importance is present and noted as somehow playing a role in the interaction. The current study furthers the observations made by earlier scholars by measuring importance and explaining its relationship with impression management. Through MANOVA and regression analysis, this study determined that this latent construct played a significant role in predicting and influencing communicative behavior. Given these findings, the current study provides evidence that perceived importance is a key variable that should be studied further and perhaps integrated into our theoretical understanding of communication occurring via technology.

In a way, the predictive power of importance could relate to Goffman’s (1959) notion of presenting an idealized portrayal of oneself to others. In this case, CMC users may portray an idealized version of him or herself in which they appear likeable and this seems to connect well with prior CMC literature. In particular, the notion of portraying an
idealized version of oneself to others, through CMC, is something Walther (1996; 2006) notes in the hyperpersonal model. In many CMC contexts, a user can use the advantage of asynchronous communication to carefully craft a message to another, a message that portrays themselves in a particular way and one that portrays an idealized version of oneself. This crafting of a message likely takes at least a fair amount, if not a significant amount, of work on the part of the sender/user and thus it would make sense that they engage in this level of impression management in important interactions as opposed to unimportant ones.

Another way of interpreting the finding regarding perceived important, is that users may be more aware of their own communicative behaviors in important interactions. For example, if a user perceived interactions as being important, they may engage in more self-monitoring behavior than in unimportant interactions. That being said, self-monitoring was not something this dissertation included in prior literature or measured, thus this potential explanation is speculative at best. However, coupled with Walther’s (1996; 2006) discussion of hyperpersonal communication, the potential connection between importance and self-monitoring does seem plausible.

Another potential explanation, or connection to prior research, involves the social identity theory (SIT) (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; 1986). Scholars have noted that individuals tend to view themselves based on group membership, which does occur in CMC environments, and these various different memberships affect one’s social identity. In general, individuals also want to have a positive social identity. In practical terms, if users viewed their online group memberships as being important, they likely would strive
for positive social identity. In order to accomplish this positive identity, users would likely use those impression management strategies that, in the user’s mind, would support this positive portrayal of self. This would seemingly influence which impression management strategies are used more frequently and which are used less frequently. In the case of the findings from this dissertation, it would make sense that users would engage in the impression management strategies more frequently in important interactions than unimportant ones, and this was indeed the case.

In my perspective, it makes perfect sense that importance manifested the way it did, although prior to data analysis I could not offer a prediction as to how this relationship would play out. The finding that users engage in more impression management in important interactions than unimportant ones seems to be consistent with past research (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Ellison et al., 2006), although this research did not look exclusively at important. However, what I find most interesting, from a theoretical perspective, is that past research has not included perceived importance. For example, the SIDE model does not include importance as component in that model. However, I would argue that importance might mitigate the impact of deindividuation, even in circumstances when individuals are visually anonymous. At least from my theoretical perspective, importance trumps anonymity and the regression results seem to allude to this.

*Expectation of Future Interaction*

Beyond the key contribution of this study, regarding importance, another interesting finding focused on expectation of future interaction. As noted in prior
research, (Ellison et al., 2006; Gibbs et al., 2006; Toma et al., 2008) expectation of future interaction appears to be a theoretical construct that impacts communication and behavior. Gibbs et al., (2006) expand on this notion further when they state, “anticipated future interaction may be an important variable for predicting which of these self-disclosure strategies an individual will use at any given time” (p. 157). In the context of this study, we could argue that expectation of future interaction may be an important variable for predicting online impression management strategies and findings do seem to support this assertion.

Results from the MANOVA analysis found a main effect for level of expectation of future interaction (i.e., high expectation or low expectation) on impression management strategies. This effect accounted for 5% of the variance in self-promotion, 4% of variance in ingratiation, 7% of variance in exemplification, and 3% of variance for supplication. It appears that when expectation of future interaction is high in CMC interactions, users will make greater use of the impression management strategies (except for intimidation).

Beyond the findings from the MANOVA, the regression analysis also provided interesting results for expectation of future interaction. In particular, expectation of future interaction was a significant predictor for intimidation and perhaps the most interesting aspect of this relationship is that it is a negative one. Perhaps the most parsimonious explanation of this finding is as follows: a greater sense of expectation of future interaction predicts decreased use of intimidation, while a lack of expectation of future interaction predicts increased use of intimidation. In addition, when we look at the
regression model for intimidation we find that anonymity is the first predictor entered into the equation, while expectation of future interaction is the second predictor. By itself, anonymity accounts for 9% of the variance in intimidation, such that greater levels of anonymity predictor greater use of intimidation. When expectation of future interaction is added into the model, we can account for 15% of this variance. This is perhaps one of the more interesting relationships between the predictor variables and the impression management strategies, and when we look at some of the online contexts this relationship would make sense.

For example, in FPS games it would make sense that a lack of expectation of future interaction would facilitate or perhaps promote greater use of intimidation. Put simply, if a person does not expect to interact with someone again in the future, what is stopping him or her from increased use of certain impression management strategies? Coupled with this is the notion of anonymity. If someone is anonymous in an online context and he or she does not expect to interact with others from that context again in the future, there is little incentive to behave in social acceptable ways. Instead, users are free to engage in whichever impression management strategies they wish, free of the consequences of their behavior. In the context of FPS games, increased use of intimidation may even provide the user with a tactical advantage. By engaging in increased use of intimidation, users may actually scare off or simply intimidate opponents, potentially providing the user with a strategic advantage. In this sense, users are free to engage in intimidation, since they are relatively anonymous and in all likelihood will not interact with other users again in the future. In the case of the current
study it appears that this lack of expectation of future interaction opens the doors for increased use of intimidation. Given this, expectation of future interaction and anonymity, at the very least in connection with intimidation, are important predictors in examining CMC impression management.

The finding from the current study, regarding expectation of future interaction and anonymity, seems to coincide with past research, in particular the SIDE model (Postmes, Spears, & Lea, 1998). This model predicts that a lack of identifying information in CMC contexts may lead users to not view others as individuals (i.e., deindividuation) and instead treat them in stereotypical ways based on perceived group membership. Through this process, users begin to act in stereotypical ways, often disregarding typical social standards for behavior and acting out on impulse. The findings from this study regarding anonymity and expectation of future interaction do seem to support some of the conclusions of the SIDE model.

In addition to the SIDE model, SIT also helps us to understand expectation of future interaction. As previously noted, individuals seek to foster positive social identity. In my view of this theoretical perspective, expectation of future interaction and anonymity can function to both promote and inhibit this positive social identity. For example, Chris Poole argues that anonymity allows individuals to be creative and free without the potential for damage to their personality. In this view, we could argue that being anonymous allows individuals to try new ways of engaging in positive social identity, but ways that are not connected to the FtF identities or even other online
identities (e.g., Facebook). Coupled with this, the lack of expectation of future interaction may also contribute to the view Poole espouses.

Shifting this theoretical perspective slightly, we could view expectation of future interaction as being a precursor to someone spending the energy developing a positive social identity in a particular context. For example, if I do not expect to interact with someone again in the future, why should I care about developing a positive social identity in that context? From my perspective I would even argue that when this is coupled with anonymity it makes less sense for individuals to attempt to engage in behaviors that foster a positive social identity, since that positive aspect is: not tied to either their FtF or CMC identity and they are unlikely to interact with the other person(s) again in the future.

What the current study contributes to our understanding of anonymity is that not only is anonymity important to study, as has been done in the past, but we also need to include expectation of future interaction coupled with anonymity and the interaction of these theoretical concepts. The regression analysis points to both of these concepts playing a role in predicting impression management. Specifically, both anonymity and future interaction, together, predict intimidation. Thus, it is not just anonymity that accounts for intimidation but also expectation of future interaction, or the lack thereof.

In my view, the concepts of expectation of future interaction and anonymity, coupled with the findings from this study, both clarify and confuse our theoretical perspective. The findings clarify the relationship between these concepts and impression management, and that is a good thing. For example, the SIDE model posits that anonymity can have strong effects on communication. I agree with this statement and
argue that some of the findings of the current study coincide with the SIDE model. However, the findings from the current study also allude to a potentially complex relationship between these concepts and communicative behavior. I find it interesting that the interaction of these concepts is what predicts intimidation, not either in isolation. This interaction effect is interesting in terms of how we theorize about online communication. Often we do not encounter theories that include both concepts, yet the current study provides support that both, in combination, play a role in influencing impression management. This combination of anonymity and expectation of future interaction points towards a slightly different view of theorizing about online communication. This new view still contains the same theoretical components (anonymity and expectation of future interaction) but instead of viewing them in isolation this view requires us to view them together.

*Information Sharing and Perceived Damage*

Another interesting finding from this study involves the possibility of information being shared from one context to another and the perceived damage this sharing might cause. We already know that social norms are present in online contexts and some of these norms, including nonverbal norms, are directly representative of norms found in the real-world or non-virtual world. For example, Yee et al. (2007) examined avatar social interactions in the virtual environment of Second Life. That study found that Second Life is “governed by the same social norms as social interactions in the physical world” (Yee, 2007, p.119).
A universal definition of social norms is hard to come by; however, Opp (2001) defines social norms as “statements about what is allowed, what ought or ought not to be done” (p. 235). Coupled with Yee’s work (2007) we know that norms are indeed present in online contexts. Furthermore, we know that Goffman (1959) incorporates norms into his explanation of self-presentation, although he does not refer to this concept directly as norms. As Goffman notes “when the individual presents himself before others, his performances will tend to incorporate and exemplify the officially accredited values of the society, more so, in fact, than does his behavior as a whole” (1959, p. 35). In self-presentation, especially when an actor is portraying an idealized version of him or herself, the actor will portray the social norms or the accredited norms of society for which the actor is portraying a part. Put another way, an actor abides by the social norms that the audience uses.

In the cases of CMC, different online contexts likely have different social norms and in order for a user to fit into each context he or she likely needs to modify the way they interact with others based on these context specific norms. In the case of impression management, one question that emerges is: What happens when information from one context is shared with another and could this sharing of information be stigmatizing to the individual? This is analogous to an actor portraying a role meant for one audience to another, the wrong audience, and this portrayal ultimately destroys the actors credibility with the wrong audience (Goffman, 1959).

In the context of CMC, we know that different online sites may have different social norms and with those norms come different expectations as to what is appropriate
or inappropriate ways of interacting with others. We already know, from this study, that the three CMC contexts did differ in the ways in which users engaged in the impression management strategies. Aside from Goffman’s work (1959; 1963), we do not know how this may impact impression management in CMC contexts. Thus, this study sought to examine the ways in which the likelihood of information being shared from one context to another and the perceived damage this sharing may cause impacts impression management.

In the current study, the regression analysis that focused on information sharing and perceived damage indicates that both of these variables can be used as predictors for the different impression management strategies. For self-promotion, information sharing, exemplification, and supplication, both perceived damage and information sharing can be used to predict the use of each strategy. For most of these strategies, except for ingratiation, perceived damage seemed to account for the largest amount of variance in the impression management strategy; however, information sharing did significantly contribute to the overall regression model. Perhaps the most interesting finding, regarding information sharing and perceived damage, focuses on the relationship between these variables and intimidation.

Results from this study indicate that as perceived damage increases so does use of intimidation; however, as the possibility of information being shared from one context to another decreases, the use of intimidation increases. In this regression model, both perceived damage and information sharing significantly contribute to the model, with both accounting for 25% of the variance in intimidation. However, by itself perceived
damage accounts for 21% of the variance in intimidation. Perhaps the most interesting result was the negative relationship between information sharing and intimidation. As previously noted, as the possibility of information being shared from one context to another increases, the use of intimidation messages decreases and this would tend to make sense. For example, if one were to use intimidation strategies in one context and somehow that use of intimidation were shared in another, different context, this may adversely affect that individual. Put another way, if a user’s intimidating behavior in Halo is somehow shared via Facebook, that person’s reputation on Facebook might be damaged. The more likely this sharing is to occur, the less likely the user is to use intimidation strategies.

The relationship between perceived damage, information sharing, and impression management seem to connect well with Goffman’s (1963) notion of stigma. According to Goffman, stigma is essentially an attribute of a person that causes them to be discredited by others. In the case of CMC, this discrediting could be caused by information being shared from one context with another context, one that this information or behavior was not meant to be shared with. However, that information or behavior may be entirely consistent with the host or origin context, but still remain inconsistent with the social norms of the CMC context it was shared with. In the case of intimidation, it would make sense that users would not want their intimidating behaviors to be shared outside of a particular context. If they perceive the possibility of this sharing is likely to occur, the user very well may limit their use of intimidation techniques and this conclusion seems to be supported by the regression analysis.
This sharing of information is also similar to Goffman’s (1959) notion of the front stage and backstage. As Goffman notes, when an actor is in the front stage they are forced to continue to play their role, since they are in full view of the audience. However, when the actor enters the backstage, away from the audience’s view, they can disregard their role and act in a different manner, perhaps one radically different from their role. In the case of information sharing, we could conceptualize this as information from the backstage being shared with the front stage. Coupled with this is the perceived damage this might cause the actor and results from this study seem to support Goffman’s explanation of the way impression management functions in this setting.

Beyond Goffman, SIT might also explain the findings involving information sharing and damage from this sharing. We could assume that damaging information that might be discrediting would also have a negative effect on positive social identity. In that case, individuals would likely try to avoid those circumstances in which information is shared from one context to another and in which that information may be potentially damaging or discrediting. Damaging information likely would negatively impact social identity and SIT predicts that this is an adverse state that individuals will attempt to avoid or prevent. In this perspective, individuals may actively try to avoid sharing damaging information; however, information not perceived to be damaging may be freely shared without major consequences.

Perhaps another way of viewing damaging information is by examining what information individuals choose to omit or not share, in the interests of maintaining a particular online impression. For example, it certainly is possible that some social media
users may actively choose to omit and not share information with others. This might be done for a variety of factors but perhaps the most reasonable explanation is that omitting information is a strategic choice on the part of the individual. Perhaps the individual feels that the best course of action, the one that maintains their current self-presentation and positive social identity, is to either ignore or omit information they are presented with. For example, if a friend or colleague posts something inflammatory on Facebook, the best option might be to simply not comment on that material or ignore it entirely. This saves the individual from having to take a stand on that material (i.e., click the like button or commenting) while also maintaining that individual’s current self-presentation.

Implications

On an everyday basis, billions of people engage in some form of impression management via CMC. This could be something as simple as posting on one’s Facebook wall, engaging in social support through a website, or even playing against other people in a multiplayer video game. Regardless though, understanding how CMC users engage in impression management is an important area of research. This is especially important given the substantial changes in CMC over the past twenty years. As noted in the prior chapters of this dissertation, the technology we use to communicate on an everyday basis has evolved over time and created a fundamentally different CMC environment than when researchers initially began to look at this communicative context. Given these changes, this study offers both practical and theoretical implications.
Implications for Practice

In terms of practical implications, this study offers suggestions for those who use and design CMC systems. As previously noted, results from this dissertation seem to indicate that importance, anonymity, and expectation of future interaction can be used to predict impression management strategies. In addition, information sharing and perceived damage also seem to be variables that should be studied further. In this case, understanding these variables, from the point of view of those who use and build these online environments is an important step.

For those who use these online systems, this study likely supports the first-hand experience amassed by these users. For example, many FPS gamers likely already know that the lack of expectation of future interaction and anonymity afforded by these games influences behavior and communication within these games. The findings from this study support this assertion, but also contribute to it by providing a more precise understanding of the way in which these predictor variables affect online behavior and communication. Although several popular press or Internet articles exist and provide a similar explanation, usually relying on folk psychology, the current study provides empirical evidence to support and further enhance our understanding of communication occurring in online settings.

This study also has practical implications for developers of CMC systems and environments. In particular, the findings from this study could be used to aid developers in ascertaining how anonymity and expectation of future interaction should be implemented in newer online systems in order to avoid or promote certain
communicative behaviors (i.e., intimidation). For example, if a developer wanted to create an online context in which intimidation was kept to a minimum, he or she would do well to design the system to promote sustained interaction among users as well as making participants identifiable, at least to some degree. The results from this study consistently show that the CMC context does impact impression management strategies used in that context, thus developers should keep this in mind when designing new online contexts. In particular, one area that likely contributes to this are the social norms that develop, through communication between users, in these online contexts.

One interesting implication this study offers is in regards to recent developments and movements within the technology industry. Specifically, some companies and organizations are requiring applicants to disclose their Facebook login information as a requirement before being offered a job. The interesting implication here is the notion of information being shared from one context to another. In this case, the information is something that exists in a CMC context, but is being shared in the real or non-virtual world. This practice of requiring Facebook login information has been met with a great deal of criticism in the gaming community and is something that likely will continue to garner substantial media attention. However, this study does provide interesting results that speak to this issue. In particular, the finding that information being shared from one context to another predicts the use of intimidation seems to indicate that this potential for information sharing affects communicative behavior. Currently this dissertation does not offer any answers that speak to the practice of sharing Facebook login information;
however, the current research suggests that such a practice will likely influence online behavior, particularly intimidation strategies.

**Implications for Research**

In terms of theoretical implication, this study provides the starting point for continued theoretical development that explores the role of importance, expectation of future interaction, and anonymity in influencing communication in online contexts. In particular, the results from the regression analysis layout a baseline model for future theory development. As noted in the chapter three of this dissertation, prior research does not identify a specific order in which to enter predictor variables into a regression equation. Given this, the current study provides an initial model for examining the variables identified in this study (i.e., importance, anonymity) and the influence they have on communicative behaviors. Additional study of the predictors identified in this dissertation will help the scholarly community to develop a more robust understanding of the predictive nature of the independent variables used in this study. This could lead scholars to enhance existing theoretical models to better understand and predict communicative behavior in contemporary CMC.

In general, one of the important implications of this study is the role that the predictor variables play in predicting impression management strategies. In particular, perceived importance emerged as a rather strong predictor of impression management, yet this variable, as used in this dissertation, is relatively absent from the scholarly literature. In much of the past research reviewed for this dissertation (Ellison et al., 2006; Toma et al., 2008) importance is alluded to or perhaps recognized, but not measured
specifically. In many cases, particularly Ellison et al., importance appears to be combined with intimacy and related to expectation of future interaction, yet still not studied as a separate entity. Given the findings of the current study, it would appear that importance by itself can account for a significant amount of variance and importance emerged as a key predictor of impression management. For many users of CMC, the finding that importance impacts impression management would make sense.

It makes sense that how important you view interactions with others in online context effects behavior and communication. However, we do not see too many examples of perceived importance being used in scholarly work. It very well may be that importance is a latent variable that is indirectly studied; however, results from the current study seem to indicate that perceived importance plays a major role in influencing and predicting communication via CMC. Given this, future studies should add perceived importance as a clearly identified, and measured, independent variable to more fully understand how this construct effects communication. We already have research that indicates that CMC users do view their interactions online as being important (see Turkle, 1995), yet we have not exhaustively studied this variable quantitatively.

One area that future research should examine is how impression management is accomplished or maintained through simply not commenting or reacting to information presented to user in an online context. I gave the example of a Facebook user not commenting on a friend’s inflammatory post for fear of negatively impacting their self-presentation and likely their positive social identity. However, the way in which we have come to study impression management, particularly using a survey to measure how often
individual engage in these behaviors, leaves out other ways of engaging in impression management. In particular, the ways in which individuals maintain their self-presentation or perhaps even enhance it through ignoring or omitting information is something of interest.

An individual’s choice to omit information is an example of the kind of impression management behavior that future research should investigate. Specifically, researchers should ask ourselves: Are people engaging in impression management strategies not identified in current or widely used surveys? The measure of impression management strategies used in the current study, developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999), has certainly been widely used, yet it is worth asking whether this measure is broad enough to cover a wide spectrum of impression management behaviors. For example, in FtF encounters it is not typically acceptable to ignore another person’s comments or actions, since this would likely violate typical standards of politeness. However, in a CMC context it is entirely possible for the same set of people to ignore each other’s comments or behaviors, without violating standards of politeness and without drawing attention to themselves. In this sense, CMC continues to allow for the traditional use of impression management strategies, yet might facilitate CMC specific strategies, which is something future research should examine. For the purposes of the current study, Bolino and Turnley’s measure of impression management does a sufficient job of examining impression management; however, it is worth considering what this scale misses and how we can better measure and examine impression management strategies, particularly in CMC contexts.
Summary

In summary, what this dissertation does is provide additional evidence for the importance of the independent variables (importance, expectation of future interaction, and anonymity) in predicting impression management strategies in CMC. Impression management is inherently a communicative act and something that we engage in everyday. Furthermore, we also engage in impression management in both FtF and CMC settings, and understanding the differences between how we use impression management in these settings is important. Perhaps the important implication this study has is a more robust understanding how different CMC contexts influence the impression management strategies we choose to use in those contexts, how contexts differ from each other, and most importantly what characteristics of CMC (i.e., anonymity, importance, expectation of future interaction) directly effect impression management.

Limitations and Future Directions

Perhaps the biggest limitation of the current study is the sample, both in size and scope. Originally, the study intended to use five groups (FPS, Facebook, social support, BSGO, and reddit). However, the response rate for BSGO and reddit was not sufficient to warrant inclusion in this study. One option would have been to combine the responses from BSGO, reddit, and social support; however, an initial analysis into this possibility demonstrated that these are heterogeneous groups that do differ significantly from each other. Thus, combining the groups would likely introduce within groups variance and additional error. That said, finding additional groups or somehow extending the study to include more groups would be beneficial. What would be particularly beneficial is
including groups that differ from the already present groups in some of the base level characteristics. For example, and as noted earlier, on Facebook one is readily identifiable and likely views Facebook interactions as being important. Finding a comparison group that differs significantly in these base level characteristics may help to further understand the relationships between the variables used in this study.

Perhaps the biggest suggestion for further researcher is to expand the scope of the study beyond three groups. As noted, this study originally intended to include five groups but failed to recruit enough participants. That said, increasing the boundaries of future studies to include more groups/CMC contexts would be a wise venture. This not only helps to increase sample size, but also allows for perhaps more variation between the groups. In addition, it would make sense that increasing the number of groups would likely help researchers gain a better understanding of how the dependent variables identified in this study function in other CMC contexts. Along this line, including groups from rather different CMC contexts should allow for additional comparisons that may help to understand the predictive nature of certain variables.

Coupled with the limitation of sample size, another limitation and area of future research is sex differences in the use of the impression management strategies. Although this study did not hypothesize that participant sex would impact impression management, a post hoc comparison examined the use of impression management strategies based on participant sex and found some statistically significant differences. In regards to FtF impression management, males and females only differed in the use of intimidation, with males using intimidation more than females. In terms of CMC impression management,
the two sexes differed on ingratiation, intimidation, and supplication. Women tended to use ingratiation and supplication more than men and men used intimidation more than women.

Although not part of the hypotheses or research questions, the sex differences do allude to a potential influence of the sex of the participant on impression management. When looking at the demographics for each impression management strategy, we do see that the demographic breakdown of participants in each strategy differs. That being said, in all likelihood the sex breakdown in each context is likely similar to the demographics of the population using that context. For example, in the context of FPS games, we would expect to find a greater number of males in that population than females and the sample used, for the FPS context, does indeed reflect that. Although this study did find sex differences between the three contexts, it does seem likely that the sex differences could actually be representative of the population using that context. If this is the case, the sex differences found in this study are actually more accurately representing the population using these online services/systems than an even split between men and women. Regardless, this is a potential area that could use additional research.

A third limitation of this study is the scales used to measure some of the key variables. As noted in chapter 3, scales for perceived importance, information sharing, and perceived damage from information sharing were developed for use in this dissertation. Although exploratory factor analysis was used to examine these scales, continued testing and development of these measures will help future researchers. In particular, continuing to establish the validity of these measures, beyond face and
construct validity, would be advisable. Although the three measures seemed to meet the needs of this study, produced acceptable reliabilities, and appear to be somewhat valid, additional work on these measures is justified. Simply put, more valid measures will help scholars to gain a more precise understanding of how the variables noted in this dissertation influence each other. In particular, continuing to develop the measure of perceived importance is perhaps one of the next steps in continuing to study the role that perceived importance plays in influencing communication. This is one path for future research that seems especially warranted, given the findings of this study.

Another limitation from this study could be the way in which variables were operationalized. While the way in which each variable was operationalized for the current study arguably fit the goals of this study, the variables may not fit the need of other studies. Thus, it may be warranted to further refine how the independent variables are explained and viewed in the context of a different study. For example, scholars may want to continue to refine anonymity to more closely examine this construct and perhaps gain a better understanding of how perceived anonymity functions to predict communicative behavior; however, another way of viewing this limitation is as a direction for additional research. Future research should reevaluate the variables identified in this study. Some leaders in the technology field advocate for a nearly completely open social network and perhaps Mark Zuckerberg is the best example of this. While privacy has certainly been a concern, we are beginning to see a trend toward more open CMC environments in which users are readily identifiable by their legal names. In addition, what users do online, even something as simple as reading an article on a website, can be posted on his/her Facebook
feed. Given these changes to preexisting variables, it is important for researchers to reassess the fit of theoretical models or predictor variables when shifts in these variables are present. We may very well be on the cusp of a paradigmatic shift in the notion of identify and privacy in CMC contexts, thus using the findings from models that do not account for these shifts seems unwarranted. It is important for communication scholars to continually reassess existing theoretical frameworks and models and adjust them, when necessary, as the way in which we use new communication technology changes.

One direction for future research is to use hierarchical regression in which the dependent variables are entered in a specific order, rather than the stepwise regression used in this study. Although stepwise regression was warranted given the lack of a theoretical rational for the order in which to enter variables, stepwise regression can often turn into a fishing expedition. Enter predictors into a regression model in a specific order, established by past research and/or a theoretical rationale, may provide a more thorough way of understanding the predictor variables. Given this, the current study could serve as a base theoretical model for which predictor variables account for variance in the dependent variables.

A final limitation of the study is the time the study was conducted. Chapters 1 and 2 of this dissertation note that many of the foundational works in CMC are, to an extent, outdated and feature communication technology no longer in widespread use (i.e., IRC, chat rooms, etc.). Ironically, this dissertation falls under the same limitation as these past studies. Although it is difficult to predict what the next, great communication technology will be we can predict that, in all likelihood, we will see some new technology in the
coming years that will change the way we communicate with others. This happened with
the introduction of the Internet, the mobile phone, and the popularization of SNSs. Given
these developments, the current study is limited by the contexts from which participants
were recruited. Although the findings of this study are generalizable to other contexts,
this should be done with caution. For example, the findings regarding the FPS group
likely could be generalized to FPS games in general. However, generalizing these
findings to MMORPGs or other video game genres is likely not warranted. Thus, not
only is this study limited by the contexts used, but also the technology being studied.

Another suggestion for future research is to have participants answer questions
about two CMC contexts instead of just one. For example, a future study may ask
participants to answer questions about their FtF impression management strategies, their
impression management strategies in a particular CMC context, and then answer
questions about their impression management strategies in a second CMC context. This
should allow future scholars to compare impression management between FtF, CMC
context 1, and CMC context 2. This addition may allow researchers to further develop an
understanding of how individuals alter their impression management strategies based on
the context. While the current study can provide support for the claim that impression
management strategies differ from FtF to CMC contexts, developing this further and
measuring the difference between multiple CMC contexts for each participant may be an
interesting avenue of research.

In addition, this study suggests that scholars continue to examine emerging
concerns with online privacy. For example, privacy concerns regarding social networks
have always been present; however, in the past year these concerns have begun to grow substantially. In addition, it could be argued that individuals use a variety of services and one new trend is the linking or consolidation of these services. Studying the influence of the linking of these services has for individuals may be a fruitful and important area of research. This avenue of research was beyond the scope of the current study, but something that future scholars should take note of.

Conclusion

By far, the biggest conclusion from this study is the role that importance, anonymity, expectation of future interaction, and CMC context play in predicting and shaping communicative behavior in online interactions. While past research notes the importance of these predictors, few, if any, studies have examined them collectively or offered predictions as to how each influence communicative behavior. This study primarily found main effects for the predictor variables, although the regression analysis did find an interaction effect for expectation of future interaction and anonymity. Specifically, importance and anonymity both emerged as having main effects that predicting four out of the five impression management strategies. In addition, perceived importance can be used to predict a substantial amount of variance in some of the impression management strategies, especially ingratiation. Given this finding, it is important for other studies to take perceived importance into account by measuring this theoretical construct.

Although the findings of this study are situated with the three CMC contexts used, the findings do offer a baseline theoretical justification for the importance these predictor
variables play in affecting communication, particularly importance and anonymity. To a lesser extent, expectation of future interaction is also a variable worth including in future research. Although expectation of future interaction only had one main effect in the regression analysis, it did interact with anonymity. Thus, expectation of future interaction should not be discounted just yet.

Beyond establishing the predictive nature of importance, anonymity, and expectation of future interaction, this study examined these variables of interest in contemporary CMC contexts that are actively used by a substantial number of people (i.e., millions). This study helps to continue to refine our understanding of CMC by examining communication as it unfolds and takes place in contemporary communication technology.
REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A: MODIFIED IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT SCALE

Please indicate how often you engage in the behaviors listed below in your face-to-face interactions with other people, using the following scale: (1) never behave this way, (2) very rarely behave this way, (3) occasionally behave this way, (4) sometimes behave this way, and (5) often behave this way.

**Self-promotion**
1. Talk proudly about your experience or education.
2. Make people aware of your talents or qualifications.
3. Let others know that you are valuable.
4. Make people aware of your accomplishments.

**Ingratiation**
5. Compliment other people so they will see you as likeable.
6. Take an interest in other people’s personal lives to show them that you are friendly.
7. Praise other people for their accomplishments so they will consider you a nice person.
8. Do personal favors for other people to show them that you are friendly.

**Exemplification**
9. Stay at work/school/events late so people will know you are hard working.
10. Try to appear busy, even at times when things are slower.
11. Arrive at work/school/events early to look dedicated.
12. Come to the work/school/events at night or on weekends to show that you are dedicated.

**Intimidation**
13. Be intimidating with other people when it will help you get a task done.
14. Let other people know that you can make things difficult for them if they push you too far.
15. Deal forcefully with other people when they hamper your ability to get things done.
16. Deal strongly or aggressively with other people who interfere in your business.
17. Use intimidation to get other people to behave appropriately.

**Supplication**
18. Act like you know less than you do so people will help you out.
19. Try to gain assistance or sympathy from people by appearing needy in some area.
20. Pretend not to understand something to gain someone’s help.
21. Act like you need assistance so people will help you out.
22. Pretend to know less than you do so you can avoid an unpleasant interaction.
APPENDIX B: SOCIAL PRESENCE SCALE

Instructions: Please place an X between the pair of words that most closely represents your feelings when you interact with people on Facebook.

Impersonal ———— Personal
Insensitive ———— Sensitive
Unsociable ———— Sociable
Cold ———— Warm
Inactive ———— Active
Instructions:
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.
1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

1. I feel my posts/comments on Facebook are indistinguishable from the posts/comments of others Facebook users.

2. It would be impossible to trace my posts/comments on Facebook back to me.

3. I feel like part of the larger group of people who make posts/comments on Facebook.

4. I feel that my posts/comments on Facebook are unidentifiable from the posts/comments of other Facebook users.

5. My posts/comments will blend in with the posts/comments of other Facebook users.

6. I feel certain that my posts/comments on Facebook are anonymous.
APPENDIX D: PERCEIVED IMPORTANCE

Please note that an asterisk indicates that the item will be reverse coded.

Instructions:
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.
1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

1. In general, my interactions with other people on Facebook are important to me.

2. Facebook interactions are very important to me in my daily life.

*3. I do not view my interactions with others on Facebook as being important.

4. Communicating with other people on Facebook is important to me.
APPENDIX E: EXPECTATION OF FUTURE INTERACTION

Instructions:
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements.
1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree

1. To what extent do you anticipate future interaction with other Facebook users in the near future?

2. To what extent do you expect to interact with other Facebook users again whether you want to or not?

3. What is the likelihood you could have a chance encounter with other Facebook users somewhere?

4. How likely are you to recognize someone from Facebook if you bumped into him/her somewhere?

5. To what extent do you want to interact with other Facebook users again?

6. If you met someone from Facebook somewhere else, how likely would that person be to recognize you?

7. What is the likelihood you might recognize someone from Facebook at the shopping mall?

8. What is the likelihood you might recognize someone from Facebook at the grocery store?

9. What is the likelihood you might recognize someone from Facebook in the library?

10. To what extent do you anticipate interacting with someone from Facebook again in the future?

11. How long have you used Facebook to communicate with other people?
   Years  _____
   Months  _____
APPENDIX F: INFORMATION SHARING

Please note that an asterisk indicates that the item will be reverse coded.

Instructions:
Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

* 1. I do not believe it is likely that what I say and do on Facebook will be known to people outside of Facebook.

2. I think that it is likely that my behavior on Facebook will be known to people outside of Facebook.

3. I think that it is likely that what I say and do on Facebook will be available to people outside of Facebook.
APPENDIX G: DAMAGE FROM INFORMATION SHARING

Instructions:

Please indicate the degree to which you agree or disagree with the following statements. 1= Strongly Disagree, 2=Disagree, 3=Neutral, 4=Agree, 5= Strongly Agree

1. The way I behave on Facebook is not acceptable in other settings or contexts.

2. My reputation would be damaged if people I work with knew about my behavior on Facebook.

3. My reputation would be damaged if people who I am not friends with on Facebook found out about the way I behave on Facebook.

4. My reputation would be damaged if my family found out about my behavior on Facebook.

5. I would be embarrassed if content I posted on Facebook was available to people I did not intend it for.

6. I would be embarrassed if something I posted on Facebook was shared with people outside my circle of friends.

7. I would be embarrassed if something I posted on Facebook were made available to the general public.

8. I am concerned that what I say and do on Facebook is viewable by people who I do not want to see that content.

9. My reputation would be damaged if my employer or potential employer found out about the way I behave on Facebook.
APPENDIX H: MISCELLANEOUS QUESTIONS AND DEMOGRAPHIC SECTION

Instructions: Please respond to the following questions using the responses below each question.

1. Have you linked your Facebook account with other online services?
2. Have you linked your Facebook account with your legal name?
3. Do you use your legal name to identify yourself in any online services?
4. Have you linked or connected different online services together (e.g., linking your Facebook account with another service)?
   Yes   No
5. In general, how often do you connect or link different online services so that other people can see you use these different services?
   Never   Rarely   Sometimes   Often   Always
6. Information about me is connected to the other things I do online.
   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
7. What I do in one online service is made known in other online services.
   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
8. My real name is connected with what I do on Facebook.
   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
9. I link together my online activities between different online services.
   Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
10. In general, my activities in different online services are linked together.
    Strongly Disagree   Disagree   Neutral   Agree   Strongly Agree
11. What is your current age?
    Years old ___
12. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
   - Less than High School
   - High School/GED
   - Some College
   - 2-year College Degree
   - 4-year College Degree
   - Masters Degree
   - Doctoral Degree
   - Professional Degree (JD, MD)

13. What is your race?
   - White/Caucasian
   - African American
   - Hispanic
   - Asian
   - Native American
   - Pacific Islander
   - Other

14. What is your gender?
   - Female
   - Male
APPENDIX I: IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT SCATTERPLOTS

FtF Self-Promotion vs. CMC Self-Promotion

FtF Ingratiation vs. CMC Ingratiation
FtF Exemplification vs. CMC Exemplification

FtF Intimidation vs. CMC Intimidation
FtF Supplication vs. CMC Supplication