The Prevalence of Gender Communication in Social Media

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Abstract: The primary purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between online self-disclosure and perceived appeal and define characteristics that individuals find appealing and unappealing in online self-disclosure. The findings from this study reveal significant differences in gender communication that distinctly affect the perceptions of online social media profiles. Using Deborah Tannen's Genderlect theory, these gender differences are explained.

INTRODUCTION

Social networking sites (SNS) have redefined society's ways of communicating. They have provided various avenues of self-presentation and self-disclosure within the World Wide Web. It is an online community to meet new people, reconnect and stay connected with friends and family. The rapid popularity of computer-mediated communication (CMC) versus face-to-face communication has inspired numerous studies to dissect and define this new-age phenomenon. As people connect, reconnect, and stay connected with individuals, CMC has vastly influenced assumptions that are made about individuals based on the amount of self-disclosure online. Although CMC has changed the way humans interact, the way genders interact has stayed constant. Now more than ever, gender communication may define the ways individuals present themselves online as well as draw conclusions about others. In this qualitative study at a private faith-based university in the Midwest, 69 undergraduate students were surveyed on their perceptions of two mock social media profiles closely resembling Facebook. The results presented findings heavily based on gender roles and differences in gender communication. Using Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory, the researchers dissected these results stemming from how respondents chose to communicate their perceptions of each profile as well as the conclusions about gender that respondents assumed from each profile.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

SNS are changing the way individuals communicate in an online environment. These platforms offer a place for individuals to create profiles and connect with others online. Sites, like Facebook, have a mission to allow users to upload photos, share links and videos, and learn

about people they meet and stay connected to the ones they know (Facebook, 2012). With lack of face to face interaction, interactions via CMC require more self-disclosure and self-presentation.

With the growing popularity of SNS and the use of online social media platforms for daily use, face-to-face interactions are decreasing. Individuals have a wide variety of internet outlets to display information about them and connect with others. Each site requires the disclosure of personal information training individuals to be comfortable with sharing personal information. Self-disclosure is a natural occurrence in face-to-face interaction, but with the lack of shared physical context online, self-disclosure is greater in CMC interactions (Gibbs, Ellison, Lai, 2010).

It is important to study the effects of self-disclosure and self-presentation in online profiles because CMC interactions are more common than face-to-face interactions, individuals feel more inclined to disclose more information in CMC interactions, and because individuals have more control over how they present themselves to the online community. The following will look at how self-disclosure and self-presentation in CMC interactions differ from face-to-face communication as their significance to the study in looking at their effect on perceived appeal of an individual.

Self-Disclosure

According to Palmieri and associates (2012), self-disclosure is defined by "any message or interaction between individuals that communicates information about oneself to others." This process is natural in face-to-face communication through conversations; however in online settings individuals have more control over the amount of self-disclosure they give. However, in face-to-face communication individuals are well aware of who they are disclosing information to whereas in CMC individuals can be anonymous and often times deceiving.

According to Jiang and associates (2010), individuals on Facebook disclose 25% of standard information that is highly revealing, such as political views, sexual orientation, religious affiliations etc. Self-disclosure varies from site to site, but most individuals follow the social norms of the site and other users (Jiang, Bazarova, & Hancock 2010). While some are cautious about what information they reveal online, the majority of "people make more intimate self-disclosures in CMC than face-to-face interactions" (Jiang, et. al., 2010), revealing personal information up front early in interactions.

Along with using online networks for connecting with new friends, it has also become increasingly popular to use for dating. More than 10 million Americans participate in online dating and are registered with at least one dating website (Gibbs, et. al., 2010). A social networking environment, dating websites are available 24/7 with the opportunity for individuals to screen multiple profiles in search of a potential partner. In traditional dating situations individuals seek out more information about potential partners from third parties such as family and friends. The online dating environment forces individuals to directly ask questions and disclose much information about them because there are no third parties to seek information from. Gibbs (2010) states "online dating participants have a different set of concerns driving them to [obtain information]…as well as a unique set of tools at their disposal."

Self-disclosure can be measured in two characteristics: breadth and depth. The breadth of self-disclosure is the amount of information and amount of topics; the depth is intimacy of self-disclosure (Palmier, 2012). The purpose of self-disclosure in CMC is to share initial information that will motivate others to want or not want to enter into a friendship. Individuals post personal information such as birthday, school groups, e-mail address, and sometimes phone numbers in order to entice others to want to engage contact (Palmier, 2012). Self-disclosure generally invites

reciprocation between two parties but also increases liking and understanding (Jiang, et. al., 2010). The lack of physical presence contributes greatly to self-disclosure. Studies have shown that the increase of self-disclosure online has resulted in more intimate and successful relationships (Gibbs, et. al., 2010). Disclosing information is an act of trust but also inferring that reciprocation of self-disclosure: information for information.

While self-disclosure can be a positive interaction between two parties, it can also be negative. With the lack of non-verbal cues in CMC, impressions can be distorted. While the sender of the information can be selective about the disclosure, without the non-verbal cues to either affirm or contradict the information, impressions can become stereotyped and exaggerated (Jiang, et. al., 2010). Because these impressions become over interpreted, CMC partners should also over interpret the meaning of self-disclosure. As Jiang (et. al., 2010) stated, "interpretation of *what* the message means takes the form of an implicit explanation concerning *why* person X would be sending this message." One cannot take online self-disclosure at face-value.

With the increasing popularity of SNS, CMC is now becoming a default manner of interacting. Therefore, there are higher proportions of self-disclosure in CMC versus face-to-face interactions (Palmieri, 2012). Of course with self-disclosure comes one's self-presentation to others.

Self-Presentation

When disclosing personal information online an individual is creating an impression for others, most commonly called self-presentation. While an individual is conscious of his/her self-presentation during face-to-face communication, according to Sun and Wu (2012), " SNS users have more control over their self-presentational behaviors…as they have the opportunity to think about what aspects of their personalities should be presented or which photos convey their best

images." Individuals are driven to create a positive self-presentation of them to attract future friends or potential romantic partners.

Individuals online have a need to stand out and be appealing while also blending into the crowd (Ellison, Heno, & Gibbs, 2006). When individuals expect to meet a potential friend or partner for the first time in person, they will sometimes alter their self-presentation to match the desired values of that said potential partner. Like in a face-to-face interaction where individuals will conduct "self-enhancement" to appear more desirable, individuals conduct "self-enhancement" through the self-disclosure on their profile and their overall online "self-presentation" (Ellison, et. al, 2006).

As Toma and Hancock (2010) stated, self-presentation can be described as a two-way process: motivation and construction. The motivation process refers to how motivated a person is to control their self-disclosure to people. The construction process is exactly what impression a presenter wants others to see and how to go about creating that impression (Toma & Hancock 2010). This can lead to "selective" self-presentation, which increases the control an individual has on their self-disclosure. However, individuals should be cautious of misrepresentation occurring with "selective" self-presentation (Gibbs, et. al., 2010). Misrepresentation can also lead to stereotyping which could result in a negative image of an individual.

Ellison and associates (2006) claim there are three dimensions to one's self: "the *actual self* (attributes an individual possesses), the *ideal self* (attributes an individual would ideally possess), and the *ought self* (attributes an individual ought to possess)." While individuals focus on creating the image of the "ideal self," studies have shown that CMC interactions "allow individuals to better express aspects of their true selves…that they wanted to express [in face-to-face interactions] but felt unable to" (Ellison, et al. 2006). Individuals are also more inclined to

share more negative aspects of them; anonymity in online interactions is a key factor to presenting one's "true" self.

Self-presentation "takes into account the target audience and the context of the social interaction" (Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008). An individual determines how to present themselves based on the person they are communicating with and the context in order to "market" themselves in the most desirable way for the situation. There is always the decision of how to present one's self in the profile; in a face-to-face interaction, an individual can witness certain attributes without them being said (i.e. punctual, organized), whereas online it takes more thought of an individual on how to present their attributes. Self-presentation is crucial in the beginning stages of a relationship because that is when the information seeking starts and leads to self-disclosure.

Conclusion

Self-disclosure and self-presentation in CMC interactions differ greatly from face-to-face interactions. Lack of physical context and anonymity attribute to the need to disclose more information as well as creating an ideal self. Control over one's image and amount of information disclosed is much greater in CMC. The drive to stand out as an individual but also blend in to the crowd effects the presentation of self and information as well as other's perceived appeal of that individual. This study will look at that perception of an outsider and how the self-disclosure and presentation affects that appeal.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The reviewed body of literature is clear that online profiles have become increasingly popular. CMC has become a more default way of communicating rather than face-to-face interaction. It requires more self-disclosure and self-presentation than face-to-face communication. However, research to date has failed to explore how this self-disclosure and self-presentation affects an individuals' appeal to others online. In reference to perceived online appeal, there are no straightforward and clear guidelines as to what is appropriate and what is inappropriate to share online. In order to address this issue, the researchers have composed the following research questions to guide their study:

RQ1: Does one's self-disclosure online impact their perceived appeal?

RQ2: What characteristics do individuals find appealing/ unappealing in online self-disclosure?

METHODOLOGY

Conducting research such as this requires the use of a qualitative analysis. This can be justified by the subjective nature of the participants' responses to the survey questions. The researchers felt the need to understand the open responses versus provide answers for them in order to get the most honest and complete responses. The researchers valued the broadness of a qualitative study for this type of research versus a closed-response survey, where participants would be forced to choose one option rather than draw their own conclusions on each profile and report their perceptions.

Participants

Initially, the researchers decided to survey 100 participants. In reviewing the survey responses, the researchers identified that the data was becoming saturated with similar themes.

Therefore, the researchers decided to stop distributing the surveys at 69. The 69 participants in this study consisted of students who attended a private, faith-based university located in an urban setting in the Midwest of the United States for the Fall semester, 2012. Participants were 18 years of age and older, a mix of 41 females and 28 males. The participants were to only specify that they were 18 years of age and older. Using convenience sampling, the researchers aimed to sample different classes and areas of campus in order to reach the most diverse sample possible. The researchers hoped to target students from various different ethnicities, cultures, ages, religions, and backgrounds in order to draw broader, further-reaching conclusions.

Procedures

In this qualitative study, the researchers asked permission of various professors at the specific university mentioned above to allot 15 minutes of their class time for the researchers to conduct their survey. The researchers also passed the surveys out to individuals who were not in class. For example, students in the common areas such as the campus coffee place or the campus library were asked to participate in the survey as well, granted that they were at least 18 years of age. The data was collected over a three-week period during regular class hours (8:00 AM - 5:00 PM weekdays).

The survey distributed consisted of two mock social media profiles with no gender specified on each profile (See Appendix 1 and 2). The profile was chosen to closely resemble one found on Facebook. The researchers used a template generator called "Fakebook". Facebook was chosen because it is one of the most recognized and trafficked SNSs in the world. It has become a prime vehicle for communication, especially among college-age individuals. The site features a homepage and profile which allow individuals to disclose and view a great deal of information, especially personal disclosure (Facebook, 2010).

Profile 1 was designed to display significantly more self-disclosure. All other characteristics displayed on each profile were similar. The participants were asked to examine each profile and answer questions based on their perceptions of the online individual. Participants and their responses were kept anonymous. In addition to basic demographic information, participants were also asked questions about what they did or did not like about each profile; the same questions were administered for both profiles. The questions asked about appealing/unappealing characteristics of each profile as well as positive/negative characteristics of each profile. These similar questions were asked in order to ensure consistent responses from each participant (See Appendix 3).

The researchers independently identified recurring themes throughout each survey for each profile and then together consolidated their themes to report on. After the surveys were collected, each of the three researchers took one-third of them to evaluate. They coded data into categorical themes. Once each researcher developed their own themes, all three researchers discussed which themes were most prevalent. After identifying the criteria for each theme in the open responses of the surveys, they numbered each survey and developed a coding sheet (See Appendix 4). Using the coding sheet, each researcher took a different third of the surveys and analyzed the responses based on the criteria discussed. This was to ensure inter-coder reliability.

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

This study examines what undergraduate college students find appealing regarding self-disclosure on SNS. Researchers discovered throughout the 69 surveys a clear distinction between how males and females responded as well as what they viewed as appealing/unappealing characteristics on each of the provided profiles. While both genders use social media, it is shown that women far exceed men in the time they spend on it (Hoffman, 2008). Thompson &

Lougheed (2012) stated similar data and reinforces the influence of Facebook on undergraduates. Their findings suggest that because students become so involved with Facebook, their emotions are significantly impacted by the postings and interactions they encounter on the SNS. These findings were similar to this study's results in regards to what participants found appealing/unappealing about each mock social media profile.

Genderlect Theory

"Due to the differing communication styles between people from dissimilar cultural backgrounds; conversations are open to experience more misunderstandings than between those from similar backgrounds" (Griffin, 2012). Results in this study can be best justified by Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory. Tannen developed the theory through her research on the conversational styles of men and women. The theory views communication between men and women through a humanistic and scientific approach (Tannen, 1990). The core of Tannen's theory is the idea that women focus on inclusion and support others while men exchange information as the main focus of their interactions (Edward & Hamilton, 2004). Tannen (2010) argues that both masculine and feminine conversational styles are equally valid; her use of the term genderlect reflects this idea. Describing them as masculine and feminine styles presents them as two distinct cultural dialects rather than as inferior or superior ways of speaking.

Profile 1

In Profile 1 the researchers identified commonly stated appealing/positive characteristics as: family/friend-oriented, interactive with others on their profile, displaying a positive attitude, and sharing similar interests with the participant. Unappealing/negative characteristics commonly stated in surveys for Profile 1 include: laziness, posting meaningless/irrelevant posts, postings are too frequent, displaying too much self-disclosure, and the individual seeming overly enthusiastic/annoying.

While coding the results, researchers identified these categories based on individual responses that correlated with one another. The family/friend oriented characteristic was derived from all responses that mentioned the profile owner spending time with family/friends. Interactive with others meant responding to others' posts on the profile's wall. Displaying a positive attitude enveloped all responses that mentioned the profile owner being positive or excited. Sharing similar interests was used as an umbrella idea to embrace all responses that mentioned the profile owner shared similar interests with the respondents. The researchers also identified common negative characteristics identified by participants.

The laziness category was derived from specific responses pointing out the profile owner did not like doing dishes or cleaning his/her house. Posting meaningless/irrelevant statements included respondents' comments that mentioned that the individual shared no useful information or that the individual posted too much about their daily activities. Posting too frequent was focused on comments that specifically mentioned that the updates were too constant. The category of too much self-disclosure enveloped all responses that explained that the individual shares too much information about his/herself and emotions. The overly enthusiastic/annoying category encompassed responses that complained about too many exclamation points and also complaints that the profile owner was specifically annoying or overly enthusiastic.

These perceptions are exemplified in many particular responses. For example, a male stated, "Positive outlook," when asked what seemed appealing about this profile. The same individual stated, "lazy," when asked what seemed unappealing. A female stated, "upbeat and positive, friendly, excitable," when referring to positive characteristics displayed by Profile 1. The same female stated, "Obnoxiously excited about every single post,"

Results for Profile 1 showed 113 positive comments, consisting of 43 stated from males and 70 from females (See Figure 1). An example from a female participant was, "she appears to really care about her friends and family." An example from a male participant was, "This person is always positive and excited to do what she is doing." The most appealing attribute reported by males was the display of a positive attitude. The most reported positive characteristic reported by females was family/friend oriented.

Profile 1 generated 91 negative comments made-up of 37 males and 54 female comments (See Figure 2). A negative comment from a female stated, "Possibly annoying because she updates so much and is extra peppy." A male participant stated, "Too much talking about themselves and food." The most reported negative characteristic by males was that the individual seemed lazy. The most reported negative characteristic by females was also that the individual seemed lazy. Overall, males and females paralleled each other in perceptions of negative characteristics for Profile 1.

Figure 1
Profile #1: Positive
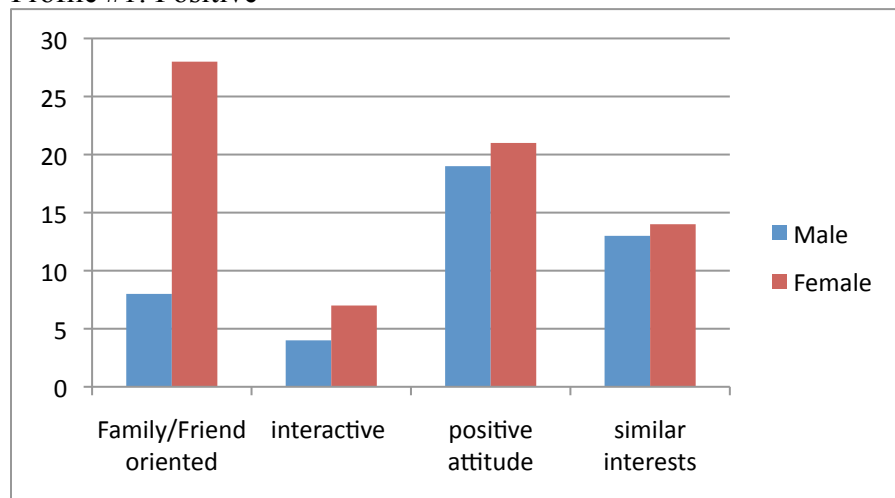
Figure 2
Profile #1: Negative
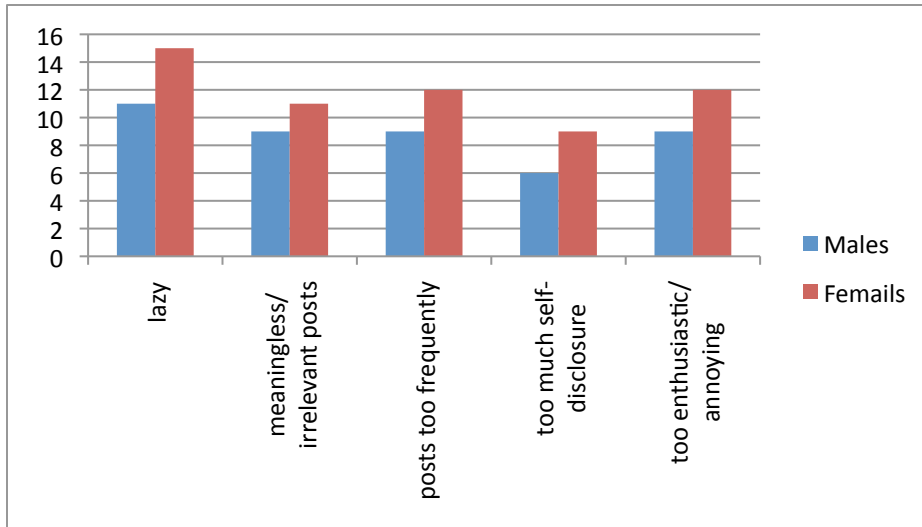
Profile 2

For Profile 2, the researchers identified the appealing/positive characteristics as: lack of display of personal information, sharing similar interests with the participant, the profile seeming simple, and the profiled individual perceived as busy/hardworking. Common unappealing/negative characteristics stated by participants for Profile 2 included: lack of interaction, lack of self-disclosure, and the individual seeming boring (See Appendix 4).

These characteristics were derived from clusters of similar responses from participants that regarded the same basic idea. The lack of information displayed was formed by responses that mentioned things such as refraining from posting intimate details regarding their statuses. Sharing similar interests was used as an umbrella idea to embrace all comments that shared similar interests with the respondents (i.e. sharing the same birthday, attending the same university, enjoying the same food, etc.). The simple characteristic category included comments where participants described Profile 2 as one that was lacking complexity. The busy/hardworking category enveloped responses where participants mentioned the individual

having commitments outside of school or seeming to be busy with other things. Negative responses were also taken into consideration when analyzing the data.

The lack of interaction was formulated by comments which involved mentioning of Profile 2 "blowing people off" or not responding to friends' comments. Lack of self-disclosure consisted of comments that the profile did not share enough information for the respondent to draw any conclusions. The individual seeming boring was a very particular response that was counted on its own because it surfaced so frequently throughout the surveys.

Results for Profile 2 revealed 53 positive comments comprised of 17 from males and 36 from females (See Figure 4). A male participant stated, "they are very outgoing and have a lot going on it seems." A female stated, "They enjoy spending time with their family, as seen in the second post." The most reported positive attribute from males was that the individual seemed simple. The most reported positive comment from females was the lack of personal information.

Negative results for Profile 2 presented 112 comments containing 47 from males and 65 from females (See Figure 5). A female participant stated, "They seem very boring, like they don't have any friends or fun in life." A male participant stated, "they seem depressed, very boring." The most reported negative characteristic reported by males was that the individual was boring. The most reported negative characteristic reported by females was also that the individual seemed boring. Overall, both genders paralleled each other in this response.

Figure 3
Profile #2: Positive
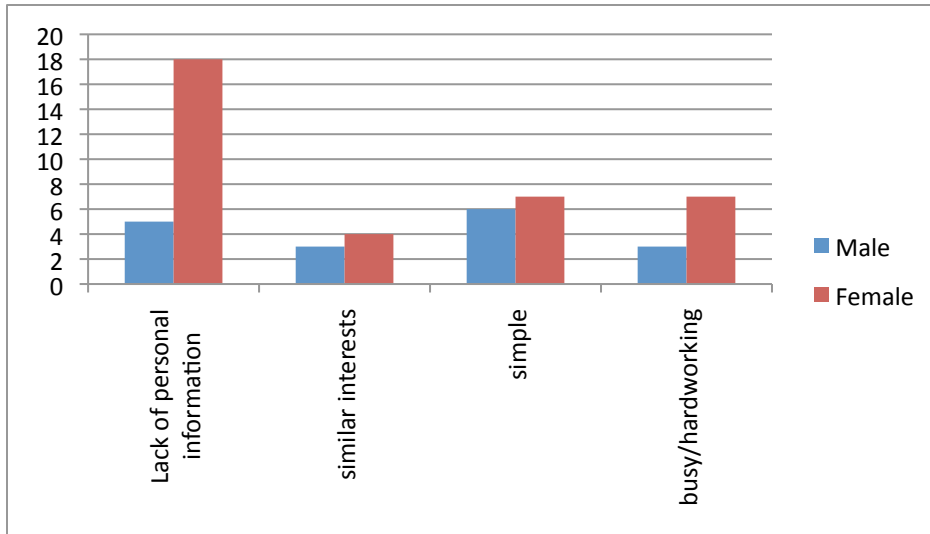
Figure 4
Profile #2: Negative
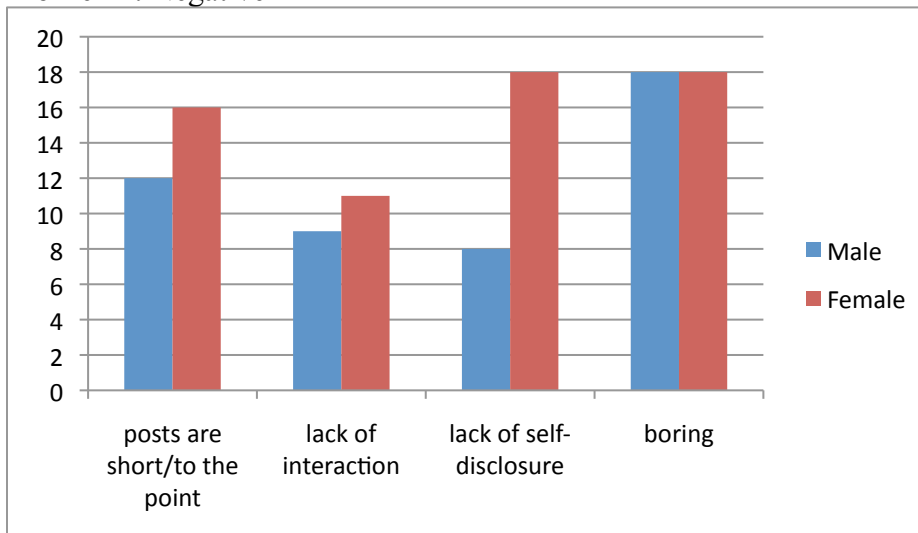
Positive/Negative Attributes

Tannen (1990) proposed genders interpret messages along different dimensions and their different interpretations make cross-cultural communication difficult. Research done by Clipson, Wilson, and DuFrene (2012) explain social networking via texting, Facebook, Twitter, and similar media as an enormously popular activity with students. They acknowledge that it often leads to communication challenges along gender lines. Their research supports the idea that men

and women have divergent expectations for social networking and use it differently. Tufecki (2008) claims that in most Western cultures, social media sites are dominated by females using the sites to engage in activities that involve keeping up with friends and family.

Females found the most positive characteristic on Profile 1 to be that the profile displayed strong ties to family and friends. One female participant stated, "They love their family and friends…" This response is a portrait of Tannen's claim regarding females desire to create connection. On the other hand, males found family/friend orientated to be a less appealing attribute. Tannen (1990) explains this by the "worlds" each gender lives in. Males construct their world by protecting their image, keeping their independence, and insuring their status. Therefore, males would not value the openness that Profile 1 and found it more appealing that the individual seemed to display a positive attitude.

Gender roles and gender identity are a very significant part of daily life and constitute themselves within social interaction (Goffman, 1976). This reasoning explains why males and females found positive/negative or appealing/unappealing different characteristics of each profile. Goffman (1976) explains that male and female opinions are heavily reliant on and defined by the cultural norms they are exposed to and are reinforced in daily social interaction. Within this particular culture, many of the participants had similar views on positive/negative characteristics of each profile. This may be created and reinforced by their outside world and their perceived gender roles displayed in each profile.

Ways of Responding

Wood (2009) explains that gender is heavily dependent on cultural values and practices. In addition, men and women communicate according to the culture's definition of masculinity and femininity. Maltz and Borker (1982) state, according to Tannen's theory, the communication

between men and women is, in essence, cross-cultural. Tannen (2010) identifies that each gender uses its own distinctive language codes to draw different inferences from the same message. Tannen continues to explain the misunderstandings between women and men are due to the differences in the ways they are approaching and interpreting the same messages.

Overall, researchers noticed a distinct difference in responses between males and females. Females tended to respond more comprehensively in their surveys. The majority of responses displayed justification and explanations of their perception of each profile. Female participants even noted the post on the profile where they drew their conclusion from. For example, a female participant stated, "Their statuses do not say much just short sentences, doesn't say a lot about the person". Another female remarked, "They seem like they might be selfish and lazy. They want people to do things for them." She clearly felt the desire to illuminate why she felt to answer such a way.

On the other hand, males tended to write more distinct answers and drew away from explaining their reasoning behind their perceptions of each profile. Although the responses sometimes did not seem shorter in length, more males tended to state their opinion and avoided explanation and justification. For example regarding negative characteristics of Profile 2, a male participant wrote, "not very sociable, downer, negative, not optimistic." Another said, "I guess the constant use of exclamation marks could get annoying" and "says obvious things". This demonstrates just one of the many concise male responses.

Tannen (1990) explains that women and men have 'different words, different worlds'. Male's goals are to protect themselves from manipulation and ensure their status. Their conversational style is based on asymmetry, keeping others apart from themselves. This helps to explain the reasoning behind male respondents' short and concise answers. Female's goals are to

nurture others to minimize differences and to create intimacy. Their conversational style is based

of symmetry, keeping other close to themselves (Tannen, 1990). This helps to explain why

female participants in the study felt the need to defend their responses as well as the why males

could easily highlight various attributes.

Pronouns

Although for each profile a gender was not listed, many respondents assigned a gender to

that profile based on their perception. The use of pronouns was the most important indicator of

this conclusion. For example regarding Profile 1, a female responded, "*She* appears to really care

about her friends and family." Regarding Profile 1, a male participant stated, "*She* doesn't like to

clean." Again, Profile 1 was designed to display significantly more self-disclosure than Profile 2.

This is just one of the many responses that referred to Profile 1 as "*she*." Regarding Profile 2,

however, a female stated, "This seemed more like a boy, very boring. Short and to the point."

Also, a male responded, "*He* seems a little removed." As mentioned above, Profile 2 was

designed to show significantly less self-disclosure on the profile.

On each of the mock profiles was a post about participating in a family dinner. Although,

the content was the same, how it was presented was much different. For example, Profile 1's

post was, "So excited for family dinner! It's the best part of my week and I'm making spaghetti!"

On the contrary, Profile 2 posted, "Dinnertime with the family." Profile 1 had more disclosure or

details; Profile 2 was to the point and more direct. Originally researchers were assuming the

levels of disclosures and presentation would be the main focus of what participants would find

appealing, but instead the assumption of genders for each profiles emerged. "*She* appears to

really care about *her* friends and family" is an example of a female participant using specific

pronouns revealing their assumption of the profile's gender. An example for Profile 2 is from a

male participant, "*He* seems a little removed because of the shortness". Although, many did not use such pronouns, there was a significant amount that did and therefore should be noted. Males and females alike engage in impression management in order to control their public image (Dominick, 1999). In addition, females may display more emotional graphics than males while communicating on the Internet (Witmer & Katzman, 1997). This can be explained by Tannen and the style's view or use of communication

Tannen (1990) describes feminine styles using rapport talk where expressions of feelings and talk about relationships occur. The feminine styles will include more emotional elements in their talk and will encourage others to do the same. For example, they will use emphasized intensifiers such as 'so' and 'such'. Profile 1 has more of these feminine attributes. The posts or status updates contain many emotional elements Tannen identifies as feminine styles. Profile 1 created and maintained connections through interactions with 'friends'. Many of the exchanges or posts were directed at a particular 'friend' with more personal language that would be similar to one of a private conversation. Story telling of the day's happenings were expressed in ways that highlighted Profile 1's support group or community. Junco, Merson, and Salter (2010) found that women spend more time sending texts and spending time on social media sites than men. This conclusion supports the motivation behind the assumptions of Profile 1 being a female by many of the study's participants due to the high level of interactions and posts to the page.

Regarding Profile 2, females recognized the most positive attribute as lack of display of information. This may be explained because many females assumed that Profile 2 was a male.Tannen (1990) explains that males tend to refrain from disclosing more information. Females may have found it more appropriate that Profile 2 did not share as much because they recognized the masculine style of communicating within their online posts. In addition, males

reported that they thought Profile 2 seemd simple as the most positive characteristic. This may be explained because many males also assumed that Profile 2 was a male. Similar to females, many male respondents also recognized the masculine style of communication displayed in this profile.

Tannen (1990) explains that masculine styles use report talk. The style avoids emotion and views such as a sign of weakness, unless they are using in a way that does not expose them to attack. They prefer facts and taking objective positions and will tend to 'tell' others, taking an authoritative or expert stance that puts them above others and discourages interruption. When seeking connection masculine styles will avoid intangibles that may be challenged and prefer 'solid' facts. Profile 2 had more of these masculine attributes. Males spend less time than females on social networking sites (Junco, Merson Salter 2010), therefore it would be an appropriate assumption that Profile 2 was male. The posts or status updates contain more straight to the point expressions that relate to what Tannen identifies as masculine styles. Profile 2 was extensively lacking further interaction besides the initial post, which could be viewed as the opposite of desiring connection. The style of expression was also much more report than rapport.

Limitations

The limitations in this study should be considered for future research. The study's limitations are mainly caused from the sample coming from students who attend one particular university. The results may not be generalized on a large scale due to the private faith-based nature of the college. It is possible that the saturation was caused by the sample's similar views and values.

Due to restrictions the chosen sample method presents added weaknesses to the conducted study. The convenience sampling caused an uneven number between participants' genders. Although the results showed heavy saturation within male responses, there were a lower

number of male participants because of the higher percentage of the university's female students. It may be beneficial to collect a much larger sample in order to broaden the conclusions to a larger population outside of the university. Regarding these limitations, the researchers have identified some opportunities for future research.

Future Research

Over the course of analyzing the survey responses it was found that respondents often contradicted themselves in their survey answers. Respondents appeared to refute some of their remarks. The opposing statements in Profile 1 were displaying a positive attitude versus seeming overly enthusiastic or annoying. Participants also contradicted themselves when making comments about feeling as though it was good that Profile 1 was interactive and then later stated that posts were too frequent. Overall, one male and five females contradicted themselves regarding these two responses.

The contradictions were about Profile 2 having a lack of personal information yet the lack of self-disclosure was unappealing. Respondents also perceived Profile 2 as busy and hardworking, yet commented on them seeming boring as well. Although researchers noted these contradictions, the number of contradictions throughout the 69 surveys was not significant enough to include in the results and discussion. The researchers suggest this particular topic for future research.

Conclusion

Facebook provides a venue for young adults to express themselves and interact with each other; however, distinct gender differences were found surrounding Facebook and what the undergraduate students found appealing/unappealing. Deborah Tannen's Genderlect Theory explains why the male and female participants responded the way they did. In addition, the

respondents drew their own conclusions, most likely stemming from their own culture and experiences, shaped by their interpersonal interactions, about which gender each profile was. There was a significant amount of respondents that assumed Profile 1 was a female and Profile 2 was a male. Profile 1 was designed solely to display more self-disclosure, and not to display a gender. Profile 2 was designed solely to display significantly less self-disclosure and also not display a gender. The Genderlect Theory explained the collected results from all aspects of this qualitative study, including particular male and female responses in the surveys as well as their conclusions about Profile 1 and Profile 2. In CMC, it is clear that Genderlect tendencies still rule the way individuals respond to each other as well as the conclusions they make about others online.

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Appendix 1

fakebook

Tweet 0   Like 0

Disclaimer: This tool is for educational purposes. It is NOT affiliated with Facebook or any other social netwo

Profile 1

Birthday September 25 Job student School
a Relationship with Sam Karrington Lives in Saint Paul, Minnesota

[Add Post]

Friends [add]

Anonymous

Profile 1
Who wants to do my laundry!? It's my least favorite thing to do
Besides dishes... and cleaning my house.
10/22/2012 | comment

Profile 1
So excited for family dinner! it's the best part of my week and I'
spaghetti!
10/20/2012 | comment

> **Profile 1** I can try to make it! I have plans earlier th
> will keep in touch!
> 10/14/2012

> **Kristen Jordan** Cute you love your family so much!
> said hi!
> 10/20/2012

Profile 1
I'm so glad I have my best friends! I couldn't have gotten through the day without
them! - with Becky Banks and John Johnson
10/21/2012 | comment

Profile 1
These squirrels are crazy on campus! One nearly tried to steal my lunch! But
they're so cute and cuddly I want one for a pet!
10/19/2012 | comment

> **Sam Hall** I know! i swear they are scavengers!
> 10/19/2012

Profile 1
Off to lunch! Time for some Chipotle burritos and fresh guac! My faaavorite! - with
Jimmy Ericson and Becky Banks

10/18/2012 | comment

Profile 1

Rainy days are the best lazy days! I love vegging on my couch a
care in the world and watching movies on TV!

10/15/2012 | comment

> **Jimmy Ericson** Get off your butt and do homework so we can
> go out later!
>
> 10/15/2012

> **Profile 1** I am trying! I'm good at multitasking so don't worry!
> 10/15/2012

John Johnson

r u coming ova Sunday for the game??????

10/13/2012 | comment

> **Profile 1** I can try to make it! I have plans earlier that day so I
> will keep in touch!
>
> 10/14/2012

Sarah Swanson

It was really great seeing you this weekend! Let's get a drink soon to catch up!

10/13/2012 | comment

Profile 1

The weather is sunny and perfect today! I love walking or biking in this kind of
weather!

10/13/2012 | comment

Profile 1

I can't wait for Halloween this year! what is everyone dressing up as?

10/12/2012 | comment

> **Sarah Swanson** I'm going as the Flintstones with my
> coworkers! what are you dressing up as?
>
> 10/12/2012

Profile 2

The weather forecast says sun and partly cloudy today, high of

10/13/2012 | comment

Profile 2

It's almost Halloween time!

10/12/2012 | comment

Sarah Kilman what are you going as?!

10/12/2012

We are current undergraduate students at _____ in the Communication Theory 1 class. We invite you to complete the following survey to the best of your knowledge as a part of gathering data for our research project. The purpose of our research is to observe the effects of self-disclosure in online profiles. This survey should take approximately 10-12 minutes to complete. Please view the provided profiles and answer the following questions for each given profile. Answers will remain anonymous and confidential. If you have questions about the survey or research you may contact the chair of Human Subjects Review Committee at

_____.

I understand this is voluntary and agree to the terms above (Please initial): _____

1. What is your age and gender?

      Age____;   Male   Female

2. Based on the information provided in profile 1, what do you find appealing about this person?

3. Based on the information provided in profile 1, what do you find unappealing about this person?

4. What are positive characteristics you find in profile 1?

5. What are some negative characteristics you find in profile 1?

Appendix 3

6. Based on the information provided in profile 2, what do you find appealing about this person?

7. Based on the information provided in profile 2, what do you find unappealing about this person?

8. What are positive characteristics you find in profile 2?

9. What are some negative characteristics you find in profile 2?

Thank you for participating in our survey. We appreciate your input!

Profile #1

Survey #	22+	Male	Female	Positive Characteristics/Appeals				Negative Characteristics/Appeals				
				Family/Friend Oriented	Interactive	Positive Attitude	Similar Interests	Lazy	Meaningless/ Irrelevant Posts	Posts too Frequently	Too much Self-Disclosure	Enthus./ Annoy.

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Profile #2

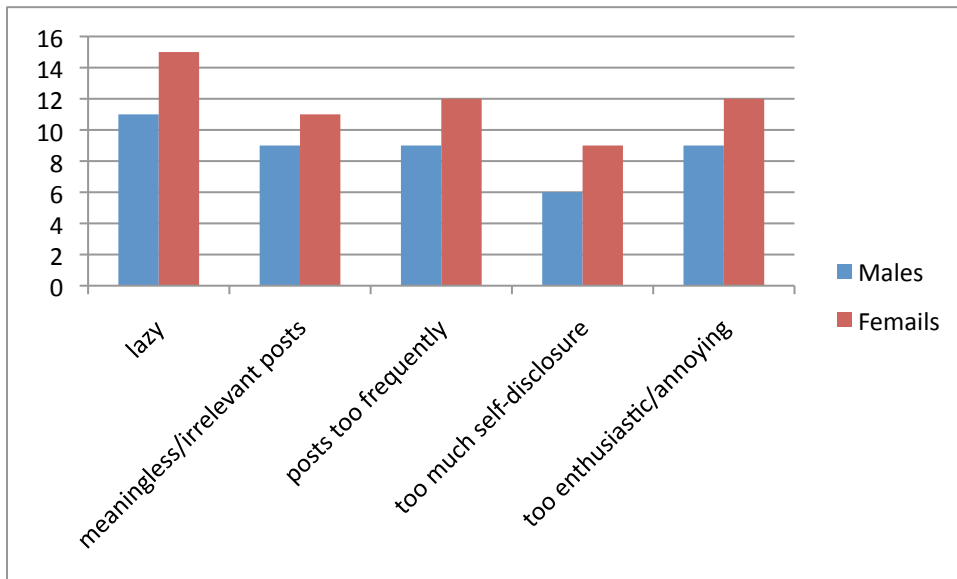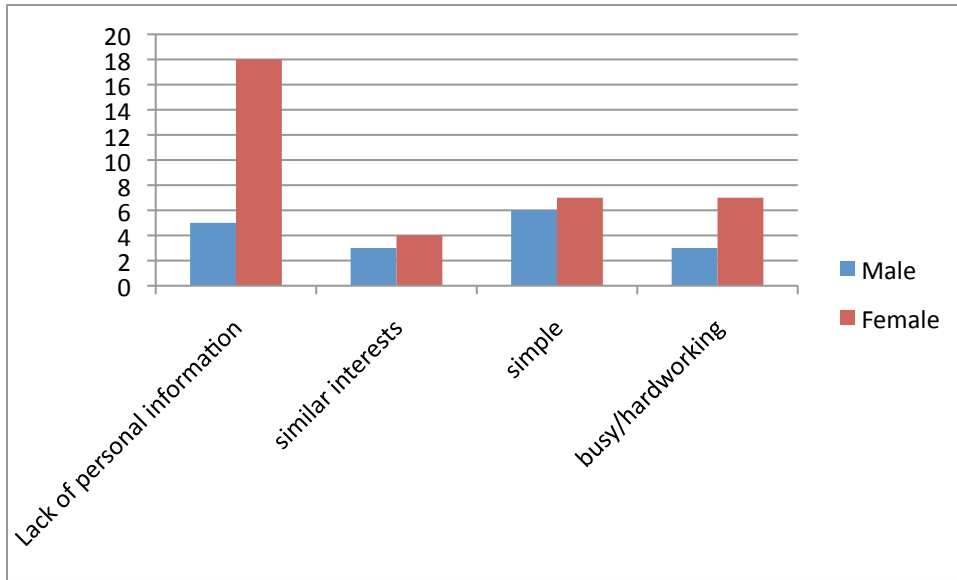| Survey #	22+	Male	Female	Positive Characteristics/Appeals					Negative Characteristics/Appeals		
				Lack of Personal Info.	Similar Interests	Simple	Busy/ Hardworking	Posts are Short/ To the Point	Lack of Interaction	Self-Disclosure	Boring

Appendix 5

Profile #1

Positive

Profile #1

Negative

Appendix 5

Profile #2

Positive

Profile #2

Negative