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FoMO and The Image of The Self: From College Campuses to Madison Avenue

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FoMO and The Image of The Self

From College Campuses to Madison Avenue

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Abstract

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FoMO and The Image of The Self: From College Campuses to Madison Avenue

FoMO (Fear of Missing Out) is a modern social expression used in reference to an individual emotional experience generally associated with social media. This anthropological dissertation aims to explore the emotional expression of FoMO in relation to society and the self. The study begins with an analysis of academic literatures on emotions, the self, and cultures such as social media. Social media culture enables the self to be created and maintained in accordance to the societies interpretation of the ideal self. This ideal self perpetuates emotional reactions such as FoMO. Based on guided interviews with advertisers, this thesis examines the ways in which social media allows the corporate world to market and brand objects in a seeming human self. Further, interviews at Union College with social media users as well as "Instagrammers" help to examine the real life understanding and application of FoMO. The additional examination of Instagrammers displays the ways that individual selves are created and promoted to others. Social media users perceive FoMO to originate from the pressures of appearing and maintaining a self that is the perceived ideal. This study ultimately contributes to the understanding of FoMO as an emotional experience, generated by society and the self.

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Contents

Introduction

> Literally every single weekend I have a very bad case of FOMO. I always want to be doing the best thing and so it's hard to just stay in and not do anything … So it's hard for me to justify staying in and doing nothing when there's something I could be doing. But it does happen if I have to stay in to study or work on an assignment and I know people are going out, I still get FOMO even if I'm currently actively doing something because I'll wonder: *What if what they're doing is better than what I'm doing?!*
>
> Morgan

FoMO is a phrase used to describe an emotional state in reaction to a social experience. It has become part of modern language and is referenced frequently in pop culture as well as academic literatures.

> Popular and scholarly definitions speak of FOMO as an emotional experience, prompted by exposure to social media and characterized by certain behaviors. Online sources similarly speak of an often uncomfortable emotional response arising from exposure to social media.
>
> Reagle, 2015

Social Media has enhanced the experience of FoMO through making more prominent the knowledge of social experiences. Therefore, social media is a platform that has lead to consequences of emotion and social/cultural desires.

> If I can't go do something… that definitely gives me anxiety or I'm like 'ughh I wish I could go'…I do think FOMO can be aggravated with social media because the opportunities you didn't get to be a part of are *a lot* more obvious when posted on Facebook or Snap Chat.
>
> James

What is FoMO

FoMO is an emotional experience felt by individuals who fear missing both self and socially affirming occurrences. It is not a unique emotional experience, but it is unique in societal discussion and technology. As society changes, the

significance of envy (the key emotion in FoMO) transfigures. FoMO is a new term for an emotional experience with historical practice, envy.

The circumstances in which one experiences this emotional state have become associated with social media. Social media serves as a platform for individuals to gain secondhand experiences of what they were not part of in person. Through medias such as Snap Chat, Facebook, and Instagram, the experiences that individuals are shown quick glances as to what they are missing, but still allowing them to imagine the contextual situations surrounding the image. There is a lack of context with social media but also a great exposure to the highlights of an individual's life. The other side of the experience of FoMO is that this exposure social media provides, leads individuals to strive to appear through social media posts as though they are not missing out. The need to disassociate with the emotional state of FoMO derives from the socially perceived negativity associated with emotionality. There exists the fear of missing out as well as the fear of being perceived as missing out. Individuals strive to create a mediated version of the ideal self that expresses socially desirable traits, often prompting a cycle of FoMO for other individuals as well.

The need for ideal self-portrayal on media prompts individuals to follow social rules for fear of unaccepted representation of the self. FoMO is used by individuals to self-market and self-brand an ideal 'self'. There exists a seeming falsehood of the creation of a mediated self as what one portrays as their own is socially sanctioned. Companies harness the understandings of identity and FoMO of

the ideal self in their strategic marketing of products, quite similar to marketing of the self.

Central Question

Through examining several aspects of FoMO such as, emotions, the self, and social marketing, I explore the way in which both the self becomes a product of FoMO, and FoMO is a product of society. I began by considering the way in which emotions are discussed in a culturally dependent way. In the modern notion of culture, there are many within our own Western society. The way emotionality is expressed may be dependent on a multitude of factors such as space. Specifically, socially mediated space provides a new and interesting platform for which emotionality is being explored.

The expression and understanding of emotions are largely dependent on culture. The ways in which individuals learn to interpret what emotions are appropriate, as well as expression of emotion, is learned through social dictation. FoMO is a prime example of this as it relies heavily on the social expectations and acceptance of the core emotion of envy. Further, as society progresses and technology advances, new emotions and conditions may arise which cues as to why FoMO is generally discussed in reference to social media. As social media is developed, language is created to match the culture. In reaction to culture and emotions, individuals structure the self as to be perceived in positive light to the social norms.

The 'self' is a complex individual creation that has become largely dependent on society and others. Even before social media, the formation of the self has been influenced by ones ability to obtain information of a global community. Mediums such as newspapers, television, radio and now social media have enabled individuals to form networks of communities composed of individuals in smaller networks of families, towns, cities, and countries. Individuals are able to see and be directly impacted by the influences of a larger society. Therefore cultivation of the self is greatly impacted by the public stare. Consequently, there exists a question of how the self is created within the pressures of society and emotions.

Reacting to social expectations leads individuals to brand themselves in particular ways and to market their identity to others in a socially mediated world. I examine two aspects of self-branding and marketing through interviewing social media users and individuals in the occupational field of advertising. I aim to understand if the way in which companies brand and market is similar to individuals strategies of personal self branding and marketing. Through these interviews, I inquire about two general topics of the self and FoMO. Subsequently, I interviewed individuals with themed Instagrams such as food or fitness accounts. If individuals really do construct a self, then the way in which themed Instagrams are created must be similar in their strategic creation. The project focuses on individuals' creation and marketing of the mediated self in face of societal pressures and emotional reactions.

Methods

I begin understanding the social phenomenon of FoMO through two projects. After conforming a literature review in which I examine numerous academic works and apply these works to my own anthropological understandings, I interviewed Union College students. Through these interviews, I aim to understand several aspects of FoMO: how and when FoMO is experienced and discussed by college students, how social media interacts with society and the emotions of FoMO, how they believe advertising impacts and is impacted by FoMO, and how the self is created and discussed in the midst of it all. The interviews are conducted by myself as well as a class of Introductory Anthropology students whom were instructed to conduct guided interviews for the purpose of this thesis. There were a total of 41 interviews with 40 Union College students. The interviewees were individuals who used social media often. After presenting the goals of the research to the students, each student was given an interview guide to follow in conducting their interviews as to ensue each covered particular areas of interest.

The second project aims to understand the ways that professionals harness FoMO in advertisements and brand creation. I conducted each of these interviews with an interview guide. The interview guide was modified as I learned more about advertising as well as dependent upon the field that the professional worked. Several of these interviews were conducted in person with professionals at BARKER advertising agency, Red Fusion advertising, and AMC Networks. Phone interviewing was used with professionals from YouTube, and Hearts & Science advertising. Through these interviews, I inquired on the ways that the advertiser views the

client, the way that they portray their product, the method of appeal and the way that the image or brand is created. With these two projects I argue that FoMO is socially constructed and a large part of the way that individuals sculpt their identities - both virtually and in person. It is social media that enhances our ability to create and maintain the self in relation to the Western ideal. FoMO and the Western ideal are intertwined, as we fear being the outcast of the ideal and social media has enhanced both sides of this medium.

Lastly, I interviewed individuals who used social media to create profiles that were not about their own identity. This included makeup, food, and fitness accounts. I conducted each interview using interview guides either over the phone or in person. I inquired on the ways that these media users intentionally create an alternate persona and their intended image for the viewer. Each of these individuals is a Union College student and none are considered to be social media famous.

Overview

These two projects serve to understand FoMO as a social experience. I begin this through my literature review in which I draw on scholarly articles to create a base understanding of the overlaying aspects of this emotional experience. The literature review details the existing anthropological work on emotions, FoMO, and the self that serve to outline the proceeding research.

Chapter Two explores the ways in which advertisers market through social media, a human experience of a non-human object. I examine the ways in which advertisers create their reliability to the consumer through harnessing human traits.

Ultimately products and companies create human-like personalities out of inanimate life.

Similarly, Chapter Three takes the same concepts but rather explores the ways individuals create and maintain their own identities. Drawing on interviews with individuals at Union College I explore their perception of social media rules and self-representation. The Chapter is largely focused on the experience of creation and maintenance of the self in the eye of the public.

Instagrammers have become a large phenomenon on social media as they create identities for public viewing. Based on interviews with several Instagrammers, Chapter Four briefly outlines how their identities are created. The construction and maintenance of their identities, similar to advertisers on social media, exemplifies how media affords strategic manipulation of identity.

The final chapter details interviews with individuals on their experience with FoMO. These interviews ask about how FoMO is felt, experienced, discussed, and created. The anthropological literature review on emotionality and FoMO is therefore given real world application through these interviews with Union College students.

Literature Review

The study of the discourse of FoMO begins with understanding the way in which it applies and builds on previous anthropological studies. This literature review analyzes two main components of FoMO. First, the ways in which emotions, specifically applicable to FoMO, are anthropologically discussed in and around western culture. Additionally, I structure an examination of society and space, focusing on the ways in which the self interacts with environment.

Anthropology of Emotions

Emotions are culturally defined and socially sanctioned. The discussion of emotion is thus simultaneously the discussion of society, as what is culturally meaningful varies.

Anthropologists such as Catherine Lutz (1998) have long studied emotions through several overlapping perspectives. These perspectives explore emotion as a social construct. Emotionality is first discussed as relative to society. Examples include Allan Horwitz (2002) and Joseph Reagle (2015) who reason that the jointly fabricated understanding of emotion derives from the foundational presumptions of reality. Therefore individuals' experiences of emotions are greatly affected by their social context. This leads to the second perspective that examines the importance of language in interpreting emotions. Anthropologists and linguists such as Catherine Lutz (1988), George Lakoff, and Zoltán Kövecses (1987), argue that the social

acceptance of emotional embodiment requires that the language parallel culturally valued characteristics. More specifically, Lakoff and Kövecses (1987), maintain that American emotion language is used to translate verbally a cultural standard in emotionality. The experience of emotions is greatly influenced by the linguistic discussion of emotionality within that culture. I draw on these methods as I argue that the foundational realities of American culture are embedded in language, which enables the social affirmation of FoMO.

The creation of FoMO as a cultural phenomenon in Western society can be understood through the concept of social construction of emotion. Is FoMO a relatively new concept or is it an emotional state that has historical existence but has been translated into a modern meaning?   Joseph Reagle (2015) believes it is the latter. The fear of missing out can be traced to different forms of social anxiety, which existed long before the Internet or social media (Reagle, 2015). Reagle (2015) states,

> The more things change, the more they stay the same: humans are social and envious creatures. What the FOMO discourse permits us to see is a conflation between a fear of missing out and being left out. In the contemporary eye, to want what we see and to be seen have fused. Lone envy and social exclusion are both facilitated by ubiquitous screens.

It is both socially constructed and perpetuated by emotional language as FoMO is a historically relevant emotion that has sustained and yet been reconfigured to shifting social attitudes towards emotion.

The Western concept of emotion is often counter posed to thought; the former is bodily, the latter transcendent. In this tradition, the emotions are debased and thought is elevated (Lutz, 1988). Thought is rational because it is conscious.

Emotion is unconscious, irrational, and even dangerous (Lutz, 1988).

The way that emotion is presumed to exist, contradicts the Western cultural perception of reality. This disconnect has caused negativity in the conversation of emotion due to the cultural embodiment of thought, placing emotion in binary opposition due to assumed physiological processes. Lutz (1988) suggests that the meanings of thought and emotion must be equally opposing. This means that thought and its resulting discipline/rationality are opposite to emotion and its meaning of chaos/irrationality. Emotion becomes defined in opposition to thought and its associating qualities. Following this logic, emotion becomes perceived as unconscious and impulsively irrational all at once. In simple terms, emotion and thought can be understood as opposite pairs such as, light/dark or, hot/cold. Using this structure, the origins of Western perceptions of emotions form, thought/emotion, discipline/lawlessness, rationality/irrationality, controlled/uncontrolled. The acceptance of emotionality came through creation of means to associate with the culturally approved ideologies.

In *Bipolar Expeditions*, Emily Martin explains that Western culture values discipline and the ability to be self-aware. These ideals derive partially from the industrial period when individuals were required to have these qualities to keep up with growing consumer demands (Martin, 2009, p. 38). These characteristics are associated with the process of thought and presumed to contrast impulsivity irrationality. Workers were required to display qualities of control, obtain composure and predictability during times of presumably immense commercial

pressures (Martin, 2009). The cultural perception of emotions in modern American culture still reflects ideals from over a century ago.

Westerners make emotion tangible by creating a psychobiological understanding of emotions (Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987). When emotions are experienced or expressed beyond the cultural expectation, Westerners begin to discuss emotion as a deviation from the norm and something that can be fixed with medicine and therapy (Reagle, 2015). Americans treat what is not tangible to create an object that is controlled. Labeling specific emotions creates an objectivity that is socially valid.

Upon examining this Western phenomenon, I draw on the work of Lakoff and Kövecses (1987) who reference the "common cultural model" (p. 196) used in the English language. In relation to emotions, the model locates emotions in the body as physiological experiences that are commonly assumed. For example, the way that the American language discusses anger is often through metaphorical language, so Lakoff and Kövecses (1987) ask how do individuals understand sayings such as, someone is "hot headed", to mean they are easily angered? (p. 197) They conclude that for these expressions to be commonly understood, there must be a "coherent conceptual organization underlying all these expressions" (Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987, p. 196) One of the physiological effect of anger is "increased body heat" (Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987, p. 196). By applying the common cultural model of anger, it is apparent that the physiological effect of body heat stands for the emotion of anger in the metaphor "hot headed". These physiological processes are quantifiable, observable and therefore controllable (Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987). "The

physiological effect of an emotion stands for the emotion" in linguistic techniques (Lakoff & Kövecses, 1987, p. 196). This framing of emotion through rationalization enables acceptance of emotionality in accordance to Western standards. By viewing emotion as physiological phenomena, their assumed irrationality and uncontrollability is lessened.

Assumptions about emotions are suggestive of societal expectation of behaviors, which are often gender specific. Lutz and White (2001) refer to this as the "cultural display rules" (p. 410) that refer to the norms associated with an emotion and dictate who should feel and express what emotion. The association of emotionality in Western culture is believed to be a female characteristic (Lutz, 1988). Lutz (1988) says, "Americans believe that women are both more intrinsically emotional and more emotionally expressive than men" (p. 73). The assumed natural or biological properties of emotion, which are intrinsic to the female population, dictates that females are socially able to display a wider variety of emotions. As previously discussed, Western cultural belief of emotion is of irrationality, therefore, automatically females are labeled as such by associative property (Lutz, 1988, p. 74). Further, this presumed gendered emotional experiences alter what is considered to be medically appropriate. Simply put, males who show their emotions are much more likely to be labeled with a mental condition than females (Lutz, 1988).

Language plays a large role in the way that emotions are perceived and experienced. Lutz (1988) explains, "Emotion retains value as a way of talking about the intensely meaningful as that is culturally defined, socially enacted and

16

personally articulated" (p. 5). In Western culture we generate emotional language to create a cultural accordance to our values. The reconfiguration of emotion language as something that can be controlled parallels social behavioral expectations.

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The medicalization of psychological phenomenon is a good example of how emotions are linked to the body and thereby controlled. According to Allan Horwitz (2002), because the brain is a physical object, the illness of the brain becomes separated from the social and is associated with the physical. The use of culturally constructed diagnoses such as those found in the DSM were created and perpetuated by physicians whose occupational authentication was reliant on treating "real" diseases (Horwitz, 2002, p. 210). The connotation of medical treatment in accordance to Western standards is that of physical treatment and healing. Horwitz (2002) explains, diagnostic categories "are lenses that reflect the assumed objective reality of these conditions" (p. 5). Thus, unconventional emotional expressions become socially validated. People use diagnostic categories that are provided by the culture as a means to rationalize and recognize extremes in emotions (Horwitz, 2002). The conceptual version of emotion cannot in this sense be healed. Only when ailment categories are created does the role of a physician become justified as the need for diagnosis and treatment becomes relevant. Alteration of emotional language as physiological enhances this perception of extreme culturally defiant emotions as a controllable disease.

Through normalizing certain emotions, others are contrasted as abnormal in relation. How then are emotional reactions that differ from societal expectations

explained? Generally, these socially unjustified emotions become justified by diagnosing mental illnesses according to the DSM. Extreme emotional reactions to routine situations that may have been considered unacceptable become accepted due to the DSM explanation of the reaction as psychological/biological. Horwitz (2002) exemplifies two categories of emotions, one which society determines and the other that is justified by diagnosis through the DSM. He introduces "the emotional model of distress" (Horwitz, 2002, p. 219) which explains the distinction between socially acceptable levels of distress and extreme emotions dictated by the DSM. Extreme levels of distress such as DSM diagnosed stress and anxiety are emotions that present themselves during appropriate situations, however they are emotions that are experienced at greater intensity for longer periods of time than the societal norm. However, Horwitz's (2002) term "distress" is used to explain the socially accepted emotion for the same situations. Distress, unlike DSM diagnosed disorders, subsides after the stimulus has diminished (Horwitz, 2002, p. 222). Distress is the emotion that is culturally expected while stress/anxiety is medicalized to normalize an irregularly intense reaction.

Distress potentially illuminates the origin of the social expectation of females to be more emotional than males. As women in Western society are assumed to be more emotional than men, the expression of emotions becomes more acceptable for women (Horwitz, 2002). Further, these gendered stereotypes perpetuate the social positions that cause distress. "Dominance and dependence are social phenomena. Inequity, not femaleness, produces distress" (Horwitz, 2002, p. 177.) This notion is centered on the assumption that males are societally superior and therefore women

as the dependents are faced with greater distress (Horwitz, 2002). The gender distinction in emotionality has been understood through social expectations. Western society posits that gendered expression of emotionality leads women to release stress through emotional reactions.

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Shifting notions of envy—including FoMO—provide a good site for thinking about the cultural model of emotions. Joseph Reagle (2015) traces the origins of FoMO as an emotional state by tracking the history of its counterpart, envy. Reagle argues that FoMO is an old concept renamed and reformed in unity with the ever-changing cultural model of emotions. Reagle's genealogy stretches back to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century (Reagle, 2015, p.5). From the 1890-1930, envy rose along with consumerism.   The cultural transformation to a consumer-based society forged a concomitant desire to achieve success and to live more outwardly extravagant lives. Envy, which had previously been socially damaging, became a social expectation. Reagle (2015) explains, "Emotions are understood and expressed in a culturally-dependent way... and historical studies show how this is shaped by the technology and media of the time" (p. 5). The normalization of envy became apparent in the everyday language of consumerism. The expression "Keeping Up With the Joneses," for example, spoke to the desire for people to have the bigger and better material lives than those around them (Reagle, 2015, p.8).

If FoMO is not something novel, then perhaps it is a lexical term produced by a changing social environment and driven by social media. The rise of social media has only proliferated sources of external comparisons and potential social

anxieties. Western language too has shifted to parallel the creation of a

technological culture. The assumption that FoMO had not existed until recently is

reflected in the shifting language and attitude of envy.

FoMO as a term exists as a means to coincide an emotional state with a social

climate. The common cultural model guides the creation of "FoMO" as a term to

conceptualize and control a state of otherwise unconscious and irrational

emotions. Furthermore, harnessing concepts from Lakoff and Kövecses's (1987)

physiological model of emotions, FoMO is the objectified external force that acts

upon the individual. The rise of the Internet created large amounts of discussion

surrounding FoMO as an illness. Reagle (2015) refers to *The Observer* saying FoMO,

"begins with a pang of envy. Next comes the anxiety, the self-doubt, the gnawing

sense of inadequacy. Finally, those feelings fizzle, leaving you full of bilious

irritation" (as cited in Anderson, 2011). It seems feasible then that social validation

of FoMO comes from mimicking linguistic techniques of a medicalized emotional

diagnosis.

The mock-medicalization of FoMO is representative of the current

conversation in the media. Blogs and media articles all claim that FoMO is an illness

and that they have the "cure" (Reagle, 2015). For instance, Reagle (2015) references

an online publication that wrote of "ways to combat nasty FOMO feelings"(as cited

in Burton, 2014). Further, the *Huffington Post* has many articles about FoMO that

generally depict FoMO in relation to a medical disease that is curable (Reagle,

2015). As a result, the emotional intensity of FoMO is justified by the perceived

sense of reality and controllability through cure.

There are two arguments to be made regarding FoMO is an illness. Through dissecting FoMO and tracing it to the rise of consumer culture, FoMO has been shown to be a reconfiguration of a preexisting phenomenon. Where the divide begins is in the application of distress as defined by Howitz (2002). The first argument that can be made is that FoMO has always existed historically and it cannot be just distress that causes this emotion. On the other hand, the argument can be made that because envy has shifted and modified with the social environment, it is a form of distress. I believe there is no clear distinction. "Conspicuous consumption" (p. 7) – which Reagle (2015) explains as spending excess money to obtain luxury goods and outward economic worth – is not a new phenomenon. Envy - which may be one driver of consumption - has not been reinvented but rather reconfigured as new social networks are generated and "conspicuous sociality" (p. 8)—the wealth of friends and happiness— is amplified through social media. Therefore it cannot be said that FoMO, as an unlabeled emotion, did not exist in different cultural models of emotion.

Social Technologies of the Self

The self is structured by emotions. The way that individuals view their own self and portray the self to others is in reaction to emotions, which in the previous chapter, were examined to be in relation to society. Subsequently, the self is cultivated by the emotional reaction to societal expectations. Evidence of this is suggested through the way that the image of the self has changed in conjunction to societal changes. In the proceeding chapter, I examine how the self is constructed in

relation to society as well as the emotions that help determine how the self is portrayed.

According to Michel Foucault (1988), the concept of "the self" can be traced to the Ancient Greeks who preached the "rule" or idea, "to be concerned with oneself" (Foucault, 1988, p19). This rule, governed social discourse and guided individual actions. There exists a bilateral interaction between culture and the concept of the self that simultaneously influence one another. The original Western concept of the self gave way to the idea to "know yourself" (Foucault, 1988, p22) as society began to think of the self as an attitude rather than an action. Foucault (1988) articulates the modern Western notion of the self is "a reflexive pronoun... it conveys the notion of identity" (p. 25). We create the self in a socially desired portrayal in accordance with cultural desires. The self is what is assumed to be the individual's subconscious characteristics, which in reality is simultaneously socially constructed and individually acted out.

Anthropology has long examined the notion of selfhood in relation to culture. What one portrays as the self is what is considered socially desired. Marcel Mauss traced the root of the self back to its Latin (rather than Greek) origins. Specifically, he traces the idea of the self to the term "persona," which refers to a "mask". As Tom Boellstroff (2008) explains, "Masks originally de-individualized by reducing the wearer to an 'artificial role' but eventually became synonymous with the true nature of the individual" (p. 118). Therefore the ultimate significance of persona finds parallel meaning to that of the "self" as explained by Foucault (1988). Like the notion of the self, the mask shifts significance in relation to what is

current and desired by society. Originally, the mask was believed to be a false

portrayal of the self and then became thought of as the portrayal of the true self as

self shifted to reflect an unconscious process. This move in discussion of the "self"

created an inability to simply act as though one was concerned with the self -

instead one must adjust their attitude. In conjunction with this societal shift in

thought, the ability to falsely portray the self through the mask was

extinguished. Knowing oneself as an attitude must be the "true" self because of the

unconscious properties.

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The subject of the self is not unique to anthropology. Psychology and

psychiatry are closely linked to the exploration of the individual self. The pioneering

work of Sigmund Freud explored the formation of self in-depth (Foucault, 1988, p.

6). He theorized therapeutic and psychological concepts that he termed

"psychoanalytic techniques" (Foucault, 1988, p. 6). Specifically, Freud's theories

rested on his immense expansion of the working dynamics of the unconscious and

conscious mind (Hutton, 1988, p. 124). However, the Freudian perception of the self

differs from that a Foucauldian view as the latter examines the self not as an

emotional process but as a social occurrence (Hutton, 1988, p. 125). In other words,

the question for Foucault, Mauss, and anthropologists who draw on their example is

how modern concepts are historical and occurring. Similar to the previous

argument that FoMO has historically existed in a non-medicalized terminology,

Foucaultian thinkers such as Hutton (1988) historicize the psychoanalytic method

saying it "is derived from sometimes ancient remedies of self-help, now

camouflaged in a medical vocabulary" (p. 132). The Western cultural concept

asserted relevance to psychological self-analysis through medicalization. A

Foucaultian approach to the self explores the ways that society changes in tandem

with how ideas such as the self are conceptualized. In this regard, I examine the

ways the self is perceived and created in relation to cultural and social changes.

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The self is created as an outward representation of oneself in relation to the

immediate social, cultural, and historical context. There exist historical features in

the creation of the self that are seen in modern social media. For instance, Foucault

(1988) refers to a technique which he entitles "letters to friends and disclosure of

self"(p. 27). This technique fosters the ability to know the self through writing

about one's own everyday experiences (Foucault, 1988, p. 27). In this sense,

individuals are encouraged to reflect on actions that enable them to examine their

portrayal of their own self in relation to the shifting societal standards. The self is

continuously created and monitored by social influence.

Individual selves can be effected by social influences and further can

fluctuate based on the environment in which they are situated. According to

Foucaultian thinker, Patrick Hutton (1988), Foucault utilizes the terminology

discourse in reference to any space where human behavior is delineated (Hutton,

1988, p. 127). In these spaces, human behavior establishes the social meaning of

words as they relate to actions. The policing process creates a need for human

behaviors to be construed into binary oppositions to define ways one is expected to

behave (Hutton, 1988, p. 126). Hutton (1988) expands saying, "we are condemned

to a quest for meaning whose meaning is that our human nature is continually being reconstituted by the forms that we create along the way" (p. 140). Common human behaviors exist as they are, but only finding meaning in human discourse and reinforced through the social pressures. Further, the pressures of this discourse define self in accordance to rules and regulations of the appropriate social insinuations and languages.

The discourse that individuals find themselves situated in are not predetermined but rather created by individuals abiding by social rules and sharing experiences that create societies and cultures. A good example of disclosure is Benedict Anderson's (1991) notion of "imagined communities," through which we come to understand ourselves as part of a nation, a state or some other community. How then do identities emerge out of such fictive spaces? Presumably most people would agree that if you meet a stranger abroad who is from the same country as yourself there will exist certain understandings between each of you regardless of the reality of the shared space. This is due to a set of common discourses—learned through schools, civic institutions, entertainment, media, and so forth. What imagined communities enable is shared experiences and information that unite individuals and create shared social rules that create the behaviors and language that are accepted and not accepted. The self is created relative to the language used to create and maintain social expectations of behaviors.

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Imagined communities gained their powerful status during the time of mass printing (Anderson, 1991). Mass production and circulation of newspapers created

a different kind of community than had existed before. The events that made news in a local town were shared nationally and united individuals across countries. In the 21st century, imagined communities have the ability to grow more than ever due to social media. Social media has become one of the largest technologies of the self in Western culture enabling individuals to unite and share common experiences and create communities that transgress national boundaries. Individuals are able to connect with others in order to share and create their "self" for and with the global Internet community.

The expansion of imagined communities can be examined by understanding "networked publics".   In *It's Complicated*, Danah Boyd (2014) examines spaces called "networked publics" which are where communal interactions occur.   Networked publics can be any area of interaction such as a shopping mall food court or a social media forum. By interacting and participating on social media, individuals are creating imagined communities through these networked publics.

Media cites (or networked publics) are distinguished by what Boyd (2014) refers to as "affordances"(p. 11). Affordances not only differentiate media cites, but they serve to determine what sorts of communication can occur within the networked publics. Boyd (2014) defines affordances saying, "they make possible – and in some cases, are used to encourage – certain types of practices, even if they do not determine what practices will unfold" (p. 10). The ways, in which these affordances are exerted in different proportions, differentiate networked publics. Boyd (2014) emulates four affordances that determine the communication occurrence throughout networked publics:

- persistence: the durability of online expression and content;
- visibility: the potential audience who can bear witness;
- spreadability: the ease with which content can be shared; and
- searchability: the ability to find content.

(p. 11)

Social media enables persistence of conversations over long periods of time as well recordings of previous content. The affordance of visibility enables sharing of information often to very large audiences. Boyd (2014) states, "In networked publics, interactions are often public by default, private through effort" (p. 12). The content that is shared is often easily spreadable. This affordance of spreadabilty is applicable for numerous situations such as sharing pictures, links to articles and, finally, the affordance of searchability that enable the recalling of old content or finding friends. Searchability according to Boyd (2014) is largely in reference to search engines where a few key words can find an abundance of information. (p. 12) The importance of affordances when discussing social media is to understand how individuals may strategically create and maintain the self. Through understanding the way that these affordances function, individuals may selectively compose their identity of the ideal self.

Media technologies are a modification of the technology Foucault (1988) labels "letters to friends and disclosure of self"(p. 27). It is by sharing information through social technologies that imagined communities are created. The everyday experience is broadcasted through pictures and messages to friends that create an outward experience of the self much like letters to friends. Writing allows personal reflection in a public space as a way to ask for help from others and for reflection towards self-improvement. While the technologies have changed the techniques of

the self have also changed in conjunction with culture while simultaneously remaining similar to traditional methods of knowing the self.

Social Marketing

In the broadening networks for display of the self, self-marketing becomes vital when examining the relationship between the self and culture. Due to modern technology, communities are being established on a global scale. Through the ability to share information online, individuals are sharing experiences and values, creating these socially mediated imagined communities. Through this interconnectivity, the self and society become mutually constitutive. Foucault's (1995) model of discipline, discussion of self-promotion is simultaneously explored as self-monitoring is a consequence of such regulations of society. I argue two aspects of the self in relation to culture: I suggest that not only is the creation and portrayal of the "self" regulated by social guidelines and rules, but furthermore the rules of these networked publics are created based upon the selves who participate within the space.

The social rules that are created by the self and that additionally serve to create the self are unwritten - but everyone knows them. There are certain ways of acting on social media that are deemed appropriate, which might lead us to conclude there exists certain deep-seeded patterns or systems in societies that regulate good (and bad) behavior. The way in which an individual renders the self is a product of their interpretation and application of such social rules.

Michel Foucalut's *Discipline and Punish* (1995), elaborates on this mutual

constitution of self and society as an expression of a particular form of power. Foucault (1995) explains, there was a shift in methods of punishment that accorded with a shift in modes of social organization (p. 10). Originally the body served as an instrument for punishment (Foucault, 1995, p. 11). Individuals would be tortured or killed according to the whims of the king (or sovereign) (Foucault, 1995, p. 11). As the penal system came into place, punishment no longer affected the body rather it harped on the soul (Foucault, 1995, p. 30). Punishment now serves as a discipline mechanism being feared but mysterious in its absence of public viewing (Foucault, 1995, p. 9).

Further, Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1995) examines the mechanisms that lead individuals to follow the unwritten societal rules through exemplifying Bentham's Panopticon. The Panopticon is inversely a representation of the power relations of society and individuals and as such is enacted through the architectural design (Foucault, 1995, p. 205). The building stands in a circular perimeter with individual holding cells, windows opening to both the outside and indoor central ring and in the center of the ring stands a tower which is used for surveillance of the inmates (Foucault, 1995, p. 200). The Panopticon embodies the elements of "visibility" and "unverifiable" as prisoners are confined to solidarity unable to see other inmates nor see or verify if they are being watched, similarly, the tower enables surveillance without inmates seeing or verifying their activity (Foucault, 1995, p. 201). Foucault (1995) explains,

> Hence the major effect of the Panopticon: to induce in the inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power. So to arrange things that the surveillance is permanent in its effects, even if it is discontinuous in its action; that

> the perfection of power should tend to render its actual exercise
> unnecessary; that this architectural apparatus should be a machine
> for creating and sustaining a power relation independent of the
> person who exercises it; in short, that the inmates should be caught
> up in a power situation of which they are themselves the bearers
>
> (p. 201)

Foucault (1995) credits this model of discipline to its relation of power intended to

create continuous uncertainty/fear leading to self-monitoring. This model of

discipline is not confined to The Panopticon, rather should be understood "as a

generalizable model of functioning; a way of defining power relations in terms of the

everyday life of men" (Foucault, 1995, p. 205).

Foucault's (1995) observations about the relationship between surveillance

and disciplinary power are useful for thinking about how social media harnesses

unwritten rules that individuals follow. The model of discipline and punishment

that Foucault (1995) explores serves as a model for understanding how society and

the self interact. Foucault (1995) explains the functioning of The Panopticon saying,

> Its an important mechanism, for it automatizes and deindividualize power.
> Power has its principle not so much in a person as in a certain concerted
> distribution of bodies, surfaces, lights, gazes; in an arrangement whose
> internal mechanisms produce the relation in which individuals are caught
> up"
>
> p. 202

The working of society on the self as society holds the power over the self but it is

the individuals who are caught up in this mechanism that create the society. This

type of society is what Foucault (1995) refers to as a "disciplinary society" (p. 215).

The Panopticon serves as a model of discipline and simultaneously as a

model of self-marketing. Disciplines "are techniques for assuring the ordering of

human multiplicities" (Foucault, 1995, p. 218). The Panopticon exemplifies the

privatization of punishment that creates self-monitoring and self-marketing for fear

of constant judgment of the public. The knowledge of being monitored by others creates discipline and fear of punishment.

Social media is a "discipline society" for it functions in such a way that discipline of the larger society enacts on individuals' selves. The self is displayed on social media according to what is socially acceptable aiming to avoid social ostracism as discipline on the soul. Social media as a technology enables individuals to monitor their image of the self through strategic self-branding of their appearance in accordance the unwritten rules of the media culture. As forms of the self-shift and new media and networked publics come into being, outward personas are formed which express the self through distinct affordances of each technology. Much like Foucault's (1995) model of discipline, individuals on social media are factored to the constant surveillance by society and self-monitor to follow the social media "rules" and avoid discipline.

<p style="text-align:center">***</p>

Social media has enabled individuals to self-market in a much more controlled and yet incomplete way than ever before. Media websites such as Facebook allow individuals to write about themselves, share pictures and videos, write to friends and more. However, it is an incomplete representation of the self. In her anthropological research, *Un-Friend my Heart*, Illana Gershon (2011) examines the effects of Facebook on the self and relationships. Facebook profiles present a representation of the "self" which can be reflexively managed. She further argues there exists a United States neoliberal self which "uses market rationality to manage itself as though the self was a business that attempts to balance risks and

responsibility appropriately in its alliances with other selves and businesses"(Gershon, 2011, p. 873). The goal of portraying the self is to display all the best assets, skills and components of the self in order to compete with other "businesses". The self is set in a series of relationships between competitor's risk and reward. Further, networking businesses increases the profile value. For example, Facebook deploys agencies that are established to encourage individuals to value their worth based on number of friends or business networks. Visibility of such information enables individuals to evaluate selves based on profile information.

The individuals "business" status relies on a hierarchical, socially constructed, system of symbols that are dictated by cultural values. In each networked public values may differ according to affordances, but according to Marwick (2013) each media technology "rewards status seeking practices that reflect the values of the community" (p. 77). The role of social media in interpretation of self worth is to gain and maintain status through displaying culturally desired traits. This self-branding requires strategic construction of the persona in accordance with culture and cannot be the authentic subconscious self. The self can be argued to be the group as opposed to the individual.

Conclusion

Cultures dictate the ways in which emotions are discussed and put into action. There are two aspects of FoMO as a product of society that must be studied in order to understand this modern phenomenon. First, FoMO is an emotional state

that has become medicalized in order to fit into a societal niche. Second, it is a projection of the self in relation to others of similar or the same culture. Individuals fear deviance from the cultural normality of emotions and construct themselves to depict the ideal self. The desire to fit the self into culture is driven by the emotionality that is FoMO. What appeals to the individual is what is seemingly in accordance with societal thought. The self is monitored in accordance with culture so as to avoid punishment of the soul and emotions. Therefore we brand ourselves to be the ideal persona, to show our lives are in accordance to cultural values.

Self-branding consists of consumerism as well. Advertisements that market cultural values in their products or businesses appeal to the individual's desire to be the ideal self and to follow the rules of the community. Social media serves as a medium for this type of consumerism. It serves as a space to find the latest trends that enable the consumer to imagine better versions of their self. But it also becomes a space where individuals can portray a modified version of their selves that is what society desires. FoMO is constructed socially but not necessarily controlled individually.

Social media creates a constant need to consume and share aspects of users lives that portray themselves as fitting the cultural mold of emotional ideals. The explanation of envy is a key to the understanding of FoMO that is only heightened in the face of interconnectivity and consumerism on social media. We consume marketing advertisements because we aspire viewers to buy into what we are "selling" ourselves to be.

How to Be Yourself When You Are Not a Person

       I pulled up to a one-story house in a neighborhood with winding roads and over grown trees. It looked just as it had in my childhood. The house was painted yellow with white trim and the yard was well manicured. As I parked my car at the end of the driveway, Adam walked down a small hill from the back door to greet me. An old parent of a childhood friend whom I had not seen in many years looked just as I had remembered him. He stood only a couple inches taller than me with a wide but thin frame. He was wearing jeans and a gray sweater with dark gray running shoes. After exchanging greetings of friends whom had not seen each other in recent years, we walked to the back porch where he had set up a laptop, an iPad and several papers spread out on a glass table. We sat at the low table in white wicker patio chairs and discussed school and his move back to Connecticut from Missouri.

       Adam is a Managing Director for an advertising agency named Red Fuse. He had been relocated to Missouri from New York to move his advertising work to an alternate location where he could continue to work on Pepperidge Farms advertising. His company, as promised, sent him only for three years. He had only returned four days earlier and was still working from home. The interview began by discussing why he got into advertising. His response summarizes several aspects of what my paper is about. He sells in only several sentences, advertisements, advertising as a business and product manipulation and personification,

        I began to study advertising in college and began to do some
        internships and then I was in the business of advertising. I liked the

idea of being able to convince people to change their behavior without talking to them. Just in the words, pictures, and placement we choose we can get you to do something you were not originally going to do.

Adam

Through advertising, marketers attempt to strategically make connections

with their audience in order to sell their products. With social media now being a

large medium for advertisers, the "words, pictures, and places" must be modified to

the affordances of each media. Social media has altered the marketing industry by

changing the way advertisements are created, displayed and perceived by the

viewer. Successful advertising must not only be in unison with the ways the specific

social media works, it must also match the qualities that individuals value about that

particular media site. Social media is a space for human interaction, it is a space to

communicate and share between friends, and it is a humanistic space. Because of

this, products must be humanized to sell and advertisements have to be interactive

just as social media was designed. Further, social media has altered the way that

advertising agencies are reaching the consumer. Agencies are able to know much

more about their client than with traditional advertisements. Being able to cater

towards specific interests and target specific populations greatly helps companies

sell their products. The interactive aspect to social media advertising means that

the consumer is also able to interact with the brand in a public setting by reviewing

and sharing information. Advertisers use this to their advantage, as story telling has

become the most personal and productive manner of marketing on social media.

Ultimately, in order to sell, brands must create an image of a seeming human

product in order to relate and unify with the culture of social media.

This chapter discusses the ways that marketers create social media advertisements through observation and manipulation of social occurrences. In addition to Adam, I conducted several other interviews with professionals in the fields of social media at YouTube and AMC Networks, as well as advertising at BARKER, and Proctor and Gamble. Each interview was conducted using an interview guide that asked about personal, social and professional encounters with social media and social media advertising. Each interview was recorded so that I would be able to focus my attention on the interviewee as well as to ensure accuracy in my analysis. I began each interview by stating I was studying social media and its impact on individuals personal and social lives. Towards the end of the interview I began to ask questions specifically tailored to FoMO.

Humanizing Advertising

Advertisements are intended to enhance consumer awareness of a product and increase sales through humanizing the products. Marketers purport to understand how to work with particular platforms for advertising as well as how to target specific populations. Design of advertisements in relation to their placement has a large role in the success of the ad. In contemporary Western culture individuals are exposed to numerous ads a day in virtually every aspect of life. Television ads, ads on the highway, in magazines, on websites, in movies, shop windows—the places for exposure are all over. We are drowning in ads. Without the proper combination of ad type, messaging and population of viewer, the ad will fade into the background. According to *New York Times* journalist, Louise Story

(2007), the marketing research firm, Yankelovich, estimated in 2007 that an

individual living in a metropolitan area saw upwards of 5,000 ads per day.[1]

<center>*****</center>

Adam, explained that social media has changed the face of consumerism

simply by its immense presence. "Business wise it has exploded the ways we can

reach someone. But it has also created a lot of fragmentation of messages and over

saturation of messages. So how many messages do you see a day that is some brand

talking or trying to sell to you so its not become everywhere in every part of life its

not just reading a magazine or watching TV". Consumers must feel that they are in

need of a product because the ad tells them it is meant for them it is something that

they should desire to be the best version of themselves.

As previously discussed, advertisements are essentially present in every

aspect of an individual's life. Apart from making personal advertisements, it is

essential to reach the individual on several different mediums. Chloe, an account

manager at BARKER advertising agency, stated that, "the more you're exposed to a

message the more you will feel like you need something". In order to really stand

apart from the millions of advertisements visible every day an individual must be

exposed to it several times. Adam said that he believes social media is the future of

advertising but there is no one media that is most important. Similarly to Chloe, he

explained that in order to really reach a client, you have to try and reach them from

every aspect of advertising possible. Thus, breaking through to the consumer

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[1] (http://ruby.fgcu.edu/courses/tdugas/ids3332/acrobat/seeanad.pdf

means the brand must appeal to aspects of the individual's every day life that are not overlooked, the personal relationships.

Ensuring marketing success begins by creating a name for the brand that is in agreement with the ways that social media is already being used. Chloe, explained, "It's challenging to break through unless it's really relevant to conversation on that particular media". Social media advertisements must depict a unique brand personality similar to how individuals share their own personalities on social media pages. In doing so, the brands burrow their way into the existing structure that individuals already recognize.

Tailoring

The process of brand creation involves not only ensuring the advertisement works with the media, but it must also work with individual's interests beyond social media. Social media enables agencies to customize ads. Adam explained that advertisers are able to tailor their adds to the individual which he exemplified using his dog food brand. "We find out more about you through social media. Then we use what we know, for instance if you are a runner, and we will send you articles about running with your dog. We try and get to know you better on a personal level". Utilizing the personal aspect of social media agencies increase the likelihood of an individual finding interest in an ad. This is similar to Chloe's statement that advertisements must be relevant to the conversation; they must also feel relevant to the individual's subjective life. The process of advertising in a social media oriented

setting involves tailoring in two steps, tailoring the ad to the media, and tailoring the ad to the individual.

In line with social media tailoring, many individuals in advertising fields suggest that social media has not changed advertising drastically. Chloe stated, "It's a very personal and human space so people aren't interested or receptive to non connecting brands. So we are trying to reach people through stories… something that people relate to…. Social media is a space designed for human interaction," Chloe further explained, "The process [of advertising] hasn't changed there's just a new market out there so… you have to figure out how to tailor your ideas to that media". This is important to realize when discussing tailoring to media. The message that the ad is trying to convey should remain the same regardless of where it is presented; however, the way that the message is relayed to the viewer differs depending on the medium.

Bidirectional Conversation

What is unique about social media advertising is that there exists a bidirectional component that was not seen in marketing previous to social media. Consumers are able to respond and talk with brands on social media. Adam explained, "The interactive aspect of social media is important because its not about us going to them its about making them come to you. So we could send you another coupon and then you use it once but if you're interested you have to come to us and find what you're interested in or what we have made you desire through advertising". He further explained the importance of social media for advertisers

saying, "People go to social media to find out more about the product than before". From an advertising stand point, this can be both beneficial and challenging. On the one hand, the consumer's ability to respond, rate, or discuss products can start conversations, boost exposure, and encourage the personable feeling of the product. On the other hand, consumer ratings can just as easily cause harm to the brands. Countering the possibility of damage to the brand through online comments is often the responsibility of advertisements.

Additionally, marketers are responsible for ensuring their ads are being properly received through examining the feedback provided by consumers. Social media as a platform for marketing has greatly altered advertising from traditional methods. Traditional advertising in newspapers or on billboards would send a message and then companies would wait to see if there was a return of the advertising in purchases. Today, advertising agencies are able to post ads and through computer technologies, see which ad is being clicked through most often. Mark, an Art Director at BARKER, explained that the Internet can be used in a way that is similar to focus groups, albeit with an instantaneous and immediate feedback of information. In this way, marketers are able to more quickly realize when the message has succeeded or failed.

In this bidirectional structure, telling stories is often essential for creating good product name associations. Brands will try and sell their personality in several ways. First, brands will often create Facebook pages where individuals post messages and pictures that reflect their personalities. With brands, advertisers do the same. Adam explained, "Even before you go to a brand a lot of the time people

will go to their Facebook page because they want to learn more about the brand's personality than about their product so I think that's a big phenomenon". With social media, company advertisements are now having to back up their products with more than just facts, its about who they are and why should someone buy from you instead of the competitor. Using social media is an effective way of reaching consumers and finding out about consumers as long as it is done properly. Sara, the Associative Creative Director at BARKER, explained that they have seen a lot of success through Facebook advertising. However, companies have to realize that where they post their ads relates directly to who will see the posts. For instance, posting to a company's own Facebook page is not as beneficial for the brand because only those following the page will see their ads. Therefore there must be multiple methods in place in order to reach the consumer through as many mediums as possible.

Branding

The way that marketing agencies go about framing and branding their advertisements is dependent upon what brand they are working with as well as what aspect of the brand they are attempting to emphasize. Sara explained that the way each advertisement is created is dependent upon the client, "It's called the feed matrix and so we start by examining how we want to position the product, outward facing to the consumer or internal. Based on that we write tag lines and information per project or client or whatever we are doing". They then are able to create tag lines based on the product's intended message, "We want to hit different areas so

some are functional, emotional benefits some are experiential and dynamic". What aspect is focused on is dependent upon what the client wants to emphasize. For example, functional would be an ad that emphasizes that there is 20 percent off a product. An experiential ad, on the other hand, would exemplify to customers their uniqueness which they could take part in. An example of an experiential advertisement that was discussed frequently at BARKER was Slim Fast advertising. According to Sara, generally speaking, this is an experiential advertisement because you want the individual to experience what is being shown. In a Slim Fast's

Instagram post by BARKER, the image reads "It's Your Thing" as a thin woman appears to be laughing and dancing in the background of the big white letters. Viewing this advertisement, the consumer sees a happy healthy individual and reads a message that is personable and enticing to the customer.

Brands that are not established names often use spaces such as social media to create their image and personality. Mark discussed this explaining that social media is a place where you can advertise "who" your brand is. It is also a space where you can figure out "who" your brand is not. Mark explained this saying, "A brand that's not established you can also use social media from the perspective of seeing where companies like yours have failed". Social media provides instantaneous feedback on brand success as well as a learning space. If brands decide to attempt a marketing strategy the company will be able to that is unsuccessful relatively quickly and change their technique. Ideally however, social

media enables brands to discover how they will market based off of other successes and failures.

Brands that are already established and do not need to rebrand themselves often find success moving from one advertising platform to another. Mark discussed how Allstate Insurance ads exemplified this move. The Allstate campaign bridges their ads from television to social media. A simple Google search will display their presence on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, and Google+. He told me to think of an Allstate commercial, he then asked if he were to show me a still ad of Allstate, what voice would I read it in? While this may or may not be the case for everyone, Mark and I read Allstate ads in the voice of the commercial narrator, Dennis Haysbert. This concept shows how established brands may more easily cross into the realm of social media because individuals recognize them making the ads stands out due to feeling of comfort and familiarity.

Challenges of Branding

Creating a personality for a brand that is appealing to individuals is essential and generally done through advertising. One of the challenges discussed by advertisers was trying to rebrand an already very public company. For example, Mark discussed the task of rebranding PepsiCo, a massive cooperation that was facing marketing issues due to its image as an un-personable and un-loyal company. The task was to create advertisements that countered this image of the company. The responsibility of BARKER was to "shift the perception of PepsiCo in the mind of consumers from being this big evil corporation to, 'hey they actually do stuff for the

community'". By telling stories on social media about the good deeds the brand

does, the consumers perception ideally changes and individuals feel more connected

and supportive of the brand.

Another example of rebranding concerned BARKER's largest client, Slim Fast.

Mark explained that Slim Fast needed to be made relevant to the conversation again.

The goal was to "revitalize it so it's not a 40 year old brand that your mom used".

They did this by showing the struggles that individuals faced losing weight and

letting them tell stories about their struggles and successes. As with PepsiCo, the

name was rebranded but focused on the results rather than the community

involvement.

Story Telling

With the rise of social media, brands not only strive to tailor their product

sales to specific individuals, but they make the product feel emotionally personal to

the consumer as well. The way this is done is through story telling. According to my

interviewees, the stories that the advertisement tells is much more than creating

desire for a product—the product must emanate human like characteristics, which

in turn create a sense of reliability or social desire to connect one's self to that

product. Social media pages for products and companies begin to build this

platform for a social connection to an inanimate product. Companies, brands and

products are created by organizations that generally lack an entirely united

foundation, advertisers harmonize and humanize the machine and create a singular

personality according to Mark. As previously discussed, social media is a place for

personal connections, showing a product has a personality where the consumer can "talk" to the company as a singular person. Story telling in marketing is about social desirability to have a human connection with a non-human business.

A common theme reoccurring throughout my interviews with individuals in advertising and social media occupations was the need for advertisers to tell a story. Creating an image or personality of a brand is vital to creating a personality that meshes with certain values. Lance, the Director and Global Head of YouTube Spaces explained,

> It used to be that if an advertisement told me Kraft Macaroni and Cheese was the best, that was true. Now, your generation is growing up and Kraft Macaroni and Cheese says 'it's the best' and the consumer is saying 'well how do I know that's true?' Well they go online and research it. They will look at a review and if the review doesn't say it's the best then they don't buy it. So what's happening is advertisers have learned they need to actually represent their brand beyond the traditional end

According to Lance, companies are beginning to advertise through stories especially on social media. He further expanded on this theme using McDonalds as an example of a company that used story telling to revitalize their company name. After being under scrutiny for having fake chicken in their chicken McNuggets, McDonalds used story telling to rebrand how consumers thought about their food. The moral of "the story" is this: stories that have positive associations that the consumer wants to be associated with are successful ads.

The success of branding and rebranding companies like Slim Fast can be explained by their personable and relatable story telling. Chloe stated, "Seeing people going through the same thing you are is really compelling and motivating and this jut just an image of a bottle with health facts because people don't really

care maybe there's a better medium where that's good on a website where people are vetting a product but its not the right place on media because its social its about being able to tell a story and relate to people". Products convey messages that are relatable to others because then they feel connected and understood by the product's personality. This can be exemplified through an advertisement such as Snickers. Mark explains the slogan "you're not you when you're hungry" is effective, "because it's a basic human feeling that when you're hungry you need something to satisfy your hunger and you act differently when you're hungry". The advertisement connects individuals in a way that they feel a brand or product is applicable and emotionally relatable. Snickers do not have emotions but it is the way that they frame and discuss snickers as a story that the consumer feels emotionally understood.

Impulsivity and Accessibility

Social media not only is a space for advertising but it's a space where the convenience of browsing products enables sales increase. Several individuals who worked in the advertising industry with whom I spoke discussed the impulsivity of online shopping. This is an aspect of social media that advertisers can harness in selling their products. Chloe explained that social media is "making purchase decisions much more impulsive because people are always trying to stay up to speed and it happens so much faster when you are looking at other people's lives all day long. You see what they are buying what they are consuming and there is no privacy anymore so because of that salability factor and the fact that there's no off

switch in peoples lives its definitely driving consumerism that's much more and much more accessible there's so many more ways to buy. The instantaneous gratification is right there you can buy things with the click of a button". This is part of what advertisers try and do by showing their brand appeal in the advertisement campaign.

Through using social media characteristics that define the medium and create its success, advertisements harness these features already available and created for them. Sara as well as several other individuals working in adverting mentioned that they found accessibility to be a large part of how social media has changed the way that individuals see advertisements. Sara stated, "I think its so much more available and accessible and things can really come to you than you going to it is a whole different way of going about shopping and interacting with products". This interactive component of technology enables companies to harness a human characteristic enabling interaction between humans and objects.

While social media has made advertisements much more accessible and personalized, many of the individuals I spoke with agreed that it has not drastically changed the way that advertising is done. Steve, a monetizing strategist for AMC Networks, explained his view that social media has not really changed consumerism. Several other individuals stated similar things as they explained that social media only enables a new space not a new marketing concept. Steve stated that, "it is just another outlet it has not really changed the game, if I were to see an advertisement for jeans on a billboard I am no more likely to buy them if I were to see them on Facebook". This is similar to what Chloe mentioned saying that you are still creating

the same message just tailoring it to a different platform. However, changes such as

being able to reach a larger audience with a singular advertisement is unique to

social media advertising.

Creating Inanimate Life

Marketers discuss products and brands that have, personality, human

relationships and emotional connections. But these traits are characteristics of a

human being applied to an object. The humanizing of objects is a commonly

observed experience in anthropological research. Many anthropologists have

observed such experiences in ancient religions as Karl Marx (1887) explains, "In the

ancient Asiatic and other ancient modes of production, we find that the conversion

of products into commodities, and therefore the conversion of men into producers

of commodities" (p. 51). Marx (1887) identifies this humanization as "commodity

fetishism" (p. 48). Objects become commodities not through their use value but

rather through the process of creation (Marx, 1887, p. 48). Marx (1887) explains,

> A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the
> social character of men's labour appears to them as an objective
> character stamped upon the product of that labour; because the
> relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is
> presented to them as a social relation, existing not between
> themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the
> reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things
> whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by
> the senses.
>
> <div align="right">p. 48</div>

Fetishism of commodities is further established through the social character of the

labor that produces the commodity (Marx, 1887, p. 48). In general, the value exists

in the social rather than the physical use value. This Marxist explanation of commodity fetishism is essential in exploring the humanizing strategies of marketers.

Social media has become a large part of human interactions and essential in the humanizing of marketing. The human relationships through non-human mediums have enabled marketers to essentially disguise objects in a human networked public. The social phenomenon of human interactions where there lacks physical human contact is what marketers are harnessing in their advertisements. Individuals feel emotional connections through social medias due to obtaining personal information through these mediums. Further being able to have bidirectional conversations enhances these relationships. Harnessing such traits of social media, advertisers morph these qualities into a brand that appears human rather than mechanical. Just as Marx (1887) exemplified, objects retain value in market through enforcing the social. The goal of social media advertising is creating a human on a non-human medium out of a non-human object or brand.

Branding BARKER

When I walked off the elevator into the BARKER office, there was one large room with desks flowing into the waiting room and receptionist desk. The layout was very light with windows lining three of the walls and the couches, walls, and tables were all white, while the desk chairs and the wall behind the desk accented the room in red with white letters reading "BARKER". I walked up the white spiral staircase to the second floor where the atmosphere was much the same except for

the wall spanning a quarter of the office length, directly at the top of the stairs. This wall was painted in chock board paint and had words written all over it in different colors. In the middle were the biggest words of all, "What is BARKER?". The writing on the wall surrounding the question was answers from the employees. Some of these answers were trivial such as "good food" and others more serious such as "personal experience". When interviewing employees at BARKER, I asked them the same question, as well as asking what branding BARKER means. I received a variety of responses the most common being, "we are working on that". I further inquired on how they would sell themselves to a client to which I was met with a reoccurring response, BARKER is a "personal experience". For BARKER, many believed the two responses are seemingly one of the same. Mark noted that when pitching to a client, BARKER tailors their "catch" to reflect their success and experience in relation to their area of interest. The personal experience derives from the size of the involvement of many individuals in the company as well as personalization of sales pitch. The personal experience is emphasized through the involvement of a small cohesive group working on one project as opposed to the scatter of outsourcing project components as other agencies do.

BARKER agency is a small company in New York City who hired Mark to work on the branding of BARKER. Upon establishing an advertising agency, the creator should have in mind uniqueness or specialization of the company. Mark explained that "An agency should really be an idea but a lot of people create agencies that are just like the others and then add this layer of creativity to brand the agency, but branding is just branding its not necessarily making this pen (holds

up a black pen) any different than that pen (holds up the same pen in grey)".

Agencies that were once "essentially built on assembly lines" now rely on the

creator's ideas to create the agency's personality. The goal of branding an agency

like BARKER is not to creatively design the exterior image of the company, but to

find what the company was built on that makes it unique.

Selling an agency to a client is much like selling a brand. According to Mark,

each agency or brand has a different "positioning" which affect the "taglines and

what they communicate [as a company]". In the same sense, brands are trying to

sell products to the daily shopping consumer; the agencies are trying to sell their

business to the company consumer. He expanded on this saying, "Some [agencies]

just have really good work and so they just need to show their work and have a style

so you know where that work came from when you see it, some agencies make up a

process and they use that, some agencies make it more about a philosophy". The

same can be said for the brand of companies as well as the agencies clients. Because

of this chain of selling to consumers, several individuals at BARKER including Mark

explained that the way that BARKER pitches to a client differs depending on whom

they are and what they are trying to sell. For example, BARKER is "70% female and

the majority of [family] purchases is made by females… so that's a selling point for

some companies to use BARKER". While the final selling point for each client differs,

BARKER consistently pitches to their clients the advantages of their small business

as a cohesive group.

The characteristic of the founder of BARKER, John, is described to parallel the

movements of the company as "multifaceted". What makes BARKER authentic

according to Mark, is that the ideas and personality of the founder, is in line with that of the employees as well as the company, "for [BARKER] what John believes is almost identical to what we all believe". Upon explaining the way that Mark is trying to sell BARKER, he exemplifies how the theme of "multifaceted" work is engrained in the company, "So the way I sell BARKER is that its all real. We do everything in house. We have all kinds of cross functional talent so its more efficient and so we move faster because people are wearing multiple hats and I think it makes the solutions more holistic… it's a lot more fluid and its because that's what John [the founder] is all about… It pushes people to feel comfortable going outside and beyond what they are supposed to deliver". Each individual having involvement in many aspects of each project exemplifies the multifaceted aspect that Mark was discussing. He explained that because this is what the company was founded on, this is a large part of what he sells to clients, the personal experience, dedication and fluidity that BARKER has.

BARKER is being branded as a personable and multifaceted agency. However, there are further parallels between selling BARKER to clients and the products clients are trying to sell to their consumers that can cause questioning of this assumed branding of BARKER. As previously discussed, the positioning is a similar strategy for both BARKER and their clients. When BARKER is selling a personable experience through tailoring, they are using positioning to sell an image of their "self" much like social media enables brands and individuals to do. Further, branding a company diminishes the focus of the employees who are the brand. BARKER seems to be attempting to avoid depersonalization by focusing on the

individual component. However, BARKER is still very much trying to humanize the

company as a valuable commodity to relate to the human experience to gain clients.

Chapter 3:

Creating a Persona

In 2014 Madison Holleran, a freshman at the University of Pennsylvania

committed suicide and the story of her death took the media by storm. Upon being

interviewed, Laura, a Union College Freshman, explained her understanding of how

individuals portray their persona on social media verses real life, drawing on

Madison's story in her explanation.

> I think that people feel the need to portray their 'best self' over social
> media. In general, people only post their happiest moments and
> memories on social media. For example, that girl [Madison] from U-
> Penn. She was a beautiful, bright, talented girl whose family and
> friends thought she was happy because of the things she posted on
> her social media. She portrayed herself as a happy and lively person
> and that is what her friends and family saw. But she unfortunately
> ended up committing suicide, and no one really foresaw it. So yeah, I
> think that either a lot of people aren't truthful about who they really
> are, or they just don't show their whole self, only the positive parts.

What drew attention to Madison's death was her social media persona, which

sharply contradicted her inner turmoil. Media sources consistently refer to this

online persona. *Dailey News* stated, "She left a flood of photos on her social media

accounts showing her smiling with friends. One posted on Instagram just an hour

before her death shows a beautiful image of Philadelphia's Rittenhouse Square at

sunset".[2] ESPN stated, "**THE LIFE MADISON** projected on her own Instagram feed was filled with shots that seemed to confirm everyone's expectations [of her happiness and success]: Of course she was loving her first year of college. Of course she enjoyed running".[3]

Social media enables individuals to create a persona that reflects specific aspects of them. What individuals choose to share depends upon the image they believe is appropriate for that particular media as well as what others will find desirable. Media profiles that individuals create are strategic and manipulated by the unwritten rules of the space. There is a key tension here: the image of the individual, which is seen on social media, is created through social pressures, and yet it is supposedly representative of a self that is a complete and true personality. Creating an identity through social media has for many people blurred the line between the self in a virtual world and the self in a human world. The interactions occurring through a virtual world greatly alter the way that face-to-face communication and individual development are occurring. Relationships are maintained and constantly reinforced or created through online communication with incomplete identities. The ability to constantly live virtually as the controlled and ideal self does away with the need to fully mold the spontaneous human self. There exists the problem of separating the human self from that of the social media enhanced self. The "self" in a virtual sense encounters many contradictions; it is real

[2] http://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/upenn-track-star-jumps-death-philadelphia-article-1.1585337
[3] http://www.espn.com/espn/feature/story/_/id/12833146/Instagram-account-university-pennsylvania-runner-showed-only-part-story

and yet it is false, it is personally created yet socially rule abiding, it is fragmented and yet whole. Social media is a medium for interaction but it shakes the understanding of the true self in terms of where it can be found and how it is created. In the proceeding chapter, chapter 2, I aim to understand the way in which these seeming contradictions push each other forward by drawing on interviews with current Union College students.

Snap Shots

The self that is portrayed on any variety of social medias is a cultivated persona. Many of the individuals who I interview draw a strong distinction between the self on social media and self in person. However, each recognized that regardless of such, snap judgments are made, certain pictures are shared, and the assumptions of complete personas are created. Through social media there is always lacking a certain aspect of the self that can be shown through the multidimensional human self as Lily explains, "there is so much you don't get from one picture, you miss the full context surrounding that snapshot in time". On social media viewing a picture is image but it lacks voice, what is understood from words lacks image and tone, what is understood from video lacks context etc. Kevin, a male senior at Union College, explained that due to the inability to capture entireties of personas "you can post certain things to make yourself seem one way when you really aren't". Social media enables snap shots of the individual in a strictly one-dimensional and strategically constructed sense which Anthony, a senior male at Union College, explains enables partial understanding of individuals personas

saying, "If people post things you can tell a little about them like most specifically a

sense of humor, but you cannot get a full personality understanding". This

selectivity that one makes in what they post and what they share creates an image

that is simultaneously conscious and unconscious as what people choose to post

generally stays in the guidelines of social acceptance. Michael a sophomore male at

Union, explains that generally, "People are trying to portray the perfect life in the

way that they believe others will value most". When several individuals expressed

this portrayal of the ideal life, I followed up by asking if social media can ever

portray a true self then? This inquiry returned my interview to responses much like

Anthony's who had expressed incomplete understanding of the persona. Similarly,

Erica, a senior female at Union College, suggested that social media representation

of the self was very much a sculpted image of ones self saying "…even candid's are

posed I mean for most people [their social media page is] a persona to be

maintained". Examining this idea with that of the ideal persona according to Max,

then mediated selves are sculpted to portray the ideal self. The "posed" aspect of

media is a constructed persona of a "social ideal" which are only a small part of the

human persona.

Media Etiquette

In maintaining a persona each media source affords certain norms or rules of

behavior. Informants at Union outlined many of the assumptions about how people

are supposed to behave on different media platforms. For example, Instagram was

explained by several individuals as being a place for more artistic expression of the

self, while Facebook is more representative the individual. Amanda, a sophomore female at Union College, explained, "On Instagram you kind of have this pressure to be like the most artsy. On like Facebook you kind of want to look more professional like it's kind of like an online resume to me its kind of how I think of it sometimes". Not only do the different media spaces have unwritten rules of images, the tone behind each image is different. As Maria, a senior female at Union college, explained, "Instagram you put the best picture you could possibly put but on Facebook I think its relatively more of a representation of who you are because you put hundreds of pictures up". Another student, Emily, a female senior at Union College, added to this, explaining that she was "more professional on Facebook because friends with grandmas and ants and stuff so I feel more comfortable to post things like from parties and more risqué things on Instagram". Each social media has environments that encourage particular behaviors, which are in accordance with social pressures that may encourage conformity. Josh, a male senior at Union, says as much when discussing pictures he took while overseas. When the topic of his abroad trimester was discussed, I asked him if and why he posted pictures from his trip, to which Josh replied, "I felt obligated to post them to be honest, because I think its in social media culture. It makes you feel like you should - or you have to post pictures from trips because that's why you have the media and that is what others do with media". Many things can be noted from this quote such as the social pressures of expectations, which structure the portrayal of the self as well as the cultural rules that structure the usage of media.

According to interviewees' assessments of the unwritten rules and affordances of each media, portrayals of individual's personalities are modified in unity to particular media traits. This supports a viewpoint in which all social media persona are constructed, incomplete, and arguably false; however, many respondents argued that this was not about the falsification of identity, but rather these online persona represented bits and pieces of their larger self. Kendal, a female sophomore at Union, explained that the affordances of social media that enable an individual to portray snap shots of their life as they desire are used because "you always want to put your best self out like, even if its just to show off to your friends… like I know when I was in high school, colleges and future employers will look at your Facebook and social media so a lot of times like you want to portray the best like 'oh look I'm fun and I do all these fun things, but I can also be respectable' and its hard to balance all that stuff on social media". This exemplifies a sculpting of the persona online that is incomplete of the entirety of the personality.

Similarly, many college students discussed that regardless of its incompleteness, social media can be used to represent you as an entirety of a person. Businesses, schools, friends and family can see social media and make snap judgments based off of appearances. Several individuals cited this as a reason for monitoring and modifying social media pages. For many individuals' different social media pages are used for different purposes not only because of the affordances or social rules, but because of who is viewing their profile. When asked if she portrays herself accurately on social media, Savannah, a sophomore female at Union, explained,

I would say I change myself, in the sense that I monitor what I post. I don't post anything that I don't feel comfortable with the whole world seeing. My parents always told me that once you post something on the Internet it is there forever, so I am always cautious of how I portray myself on social media. And it goes without saying I only post pictures I look good in (laughs) that's for sure

In this case, Savannah explains the need to appear a particular way on social media as more than just following the social norms but as acknowledging the messy crossover between the virtual self and the human self. This lack of distinction makes necessary monitoring and modifying social media pages as well as the realization that while society seems to know that social media is just a snap shot of an individuals life, judgments and associations are made based on the virtual self.

The Self as a Product

Creating a self on social media is much like branding a product. The aspects of the self are seemingly contradictory, however, the self on social media is socially influenced and yet intensely personal. What can be noted is that the personal aspects are in fact only those traits or characteristics that the individual believes society will find most desirable. Appealing to the social desires of the social media forum requires strategic self-branding. Luke, a male freshman at Union College, suggested that "it's inevitable that if you give people the structure or the means by which they can make themselves seem like a really put-together person that they will take every opportunity afforded to them to do so...it's just natural. Why would you not try to portray or to perpetuate the best version of yourself that you possibly

can? It gives people the opportunity to do that. It affords them the ability to show everyone only those aspects of their character and their lives that they want them to see". As previously mentioned one must create a persona that is fitting for that particular media. The ability to strategically manipulate the image of the self is not unique to human interaction as what is considered appropriate behavior varies upon the environment. Though the affordances of media enable modification and re-creation of the selves to a much greater extent.

Social media affordances enable individuals to not only think through their words or actions at a slower rate than in person, but they can also edit their choices at a later time. Being able to strategically choose words and erase previous comments enables alterations to be made to a persona and can shift the social media self away from that of the impulsive human self. Amanda explained, "I think online I'm not exactly myself. I think online I'm more conservative than I am in real life. Because it is like a more refined version of myself because I do have time to like even if I post something I have the chance to go back and edit it. Like on Facebook if I comment on someone's photo and I realize that's not what I wanted to say, I can take it back. But in real life you can't really do that". Examining the behaviors that social media enables leads to the understanding that the social mediated self is distinct from the virtual self. The human self cannot be managed and maintained in such ways as the mediated self.

There exists a Western ideal discussed in the previous chapter (Social Technologies of the Self), in which we see individuals desiring to express the optimal life whatever that may mean. A senior female at Union college explained

that on social media, "A lot of people feel the need to appear as though you are someone who has it all together or the total package. Appearing funny yet sophisticated, fun and outgoing yet still studious. People feel a pressure to post a certain way to uphold a trendy image". (Kimberly) The ideal of social media from appealing to the non-virtual ideal and allowing strategic creation of an "appearance" of the "total package" according to cultural standards. Kimberly as well as several other interviewees suggested that the ideal life is seen on media through evidence of the individual being social and having "fun". Posting pictures or videos of enjoyable events seemingly expresses what is socially desirable.

Judgment

Judgments play an immense role in creation and maintenance of an online persona and to a large extent they stem from our Western ideals. Those who are seemingly in the majority and conform to the socially accepted media usage, the fear of judgment is what drives their conformity. It molds what is the expectation and what is the exception in terms of behaviors on social media. According to Emma there is a lot of pressure on social media to appear a certain way that often leads to anxieties of being judged by others. Emma, a senior female at Union College, states, "I get self conscious about the way people view me as a person. I mean even now, I assume that people judge the selfies I take and the stuff I post on social media, but I'm okay with people judging my confidence, but if they start judging my insecurities it just makes me more insecure". Judgments are a form of social disapproval or punishment. Several individuals explained how pressure exists on social media to

appear a certain way, which Emma reveals exist due to the fear of judgments. Individuals construct their persona to avoid the negative feelings of judgments by portraying the social ideal.

The fear of judgment is what drives individuals to keep their profiles edited and to post strategic aspects of their lives. The way that a profile displays the Western ideal is age and life situation dependent. What for someone in college may be seen as happiness, having friends and doing well in school, is different from another person who is older and has a family and children. Morgan, a freshman female explained,

> There's definitely a lot of aspects [of social media] that cause that anxiety. On one hand, it's the pressure of wanting to look like you're having a good time and you're enjoying yourself. I know that going to college, the people you were friends with in high school that you're not seeing as much in college so you kind of feel the need to justify to them that you're also having a great time with your life because they can't see that from where they are and I think you kind of feel that you have to show that you're enjoying yourself.

Savannah similarly stated, "I think a lot of the time in college there is a pressure to always seem like you are doing something cool or exciting". In college being social is the ideal showing that you have friendships is equated to happiness. Why there exists this feeling that you "need to justify" to your friends is due to the culture of social media. It is a space to sell oneself to the ideals of Western society because it affords you the ability to edit who you are as a virtual self to avoid negative judgments.

The extent to which an individual fears the socially mediated self determines how individuals present the self. Social media is used at very different magnitudes depending upon the individual, for some they thrive, others they avoid, and some

blend in. People who are scared of the judgments may minimize themselves and their activity on media. While some see the ability to create a virtual self as an opportunity. Those who fear judgments can either be kept in place by social expectations or they may thrive on judgments that enhances their presence.

Mediation

Social media creates a divide between the real world and the virtual world that has become much less distinctly clear. Social media is like a mediator it allows human interactions in a space lacking in-person interactions. While social media is a virtual space individuals are still attempting to create real world representations of themselves. Social media is not face-to-face interactions, still it is human interaction in the sense that humans are the creators and the users. It follows Western values and cultural expectations, but the way in which it is represented differs with each individual.

Many interviewees at Union recognized that there can be seen a distinct difference between the virtual self and the human self when examining other's profiles.

> Most people I think portray themselves how they want to be seen, but it's not necessarily not who they are it's just not all of who they are… it's a lot easier to judge them [in person], but on social media you'll see a guy who in person is really obnoxious, but they have pictures of all these cool people or whatever so they seem like an interesting guy. I think it makes it a lot easier to be fake with some people on social media. But other people don't really care and they will just post whatever they want. But I don't think social media is a good way of judging somebody
>
> James

The idea of the true or false persona can both be used as a mechanism to avoid punishment. There are those who avoid social norms of media and can avoid the punishment of being a follower, and those who do conform avoid being socially different. While recognizing that social media is not a good way of judging others selves on media, James explains that online judgments are not necessarily accurate because of the ability to be "fake".   This ties to the incompleteness that is also a large part of social media that several individuals talked about in terms of snap shots of individual's lives.

Relationships

Social media affords individuals the opportunity to have fewer face-to-face interactions. Through interviews I found that many individuals found a generational difference. As younger generations grow up, they search for their identity, but many feel that finding a unique self is not possible when there is no space where individuals are disconnected from others. Having accessibility to social media makes interconnectivity easy and practically impossible to be without. The self is necessary for confidence, social interaction skills, jobs and much more. The self is supposed to be personal and unique, but many have questioned how this can be the case if people are developing individuality without being an individual. There exists a bidirectional effect of social media and the representation of the self. By developing with social pressures on social media the self is not fully developed and what is represented on social media as well as in person is as society dictates.

The way that many of the individuals who were interviewed realized the perceived damage that social media has had on the development of the self was through thinking about other generations. Being asked to think about how other generations grew up with media and how it has effected them lead to the conclusion by many that our generation (the college aged students) have been damaged socially, however many believe that younger generations will be worse off as technology advances and becomes ever more prevalent. Anthony outlines the potential differences between real time interaction and the impact of the self in relation to others. Anthony suggested that social media will be damaging for college students future as employees:

> Older generations may be better with social skills and so they are in a better position to succeed in the real world because they are better equip to network and make real relationships because that is what they had before. They had to talk to people face to face and be good with responding quickly while now people can sound smart or witty or appear in a positive light that may not be true to who they are because they can think and they can proof read [on social media].

The ability to constantly be influenced by interactions online alters the way that the self is distinguished as individual. There is an element of strategy in online interactions of appearing to others as society dictates, what we portray is not individualized. In person interactions are immediate, lacking the ability to edit, mold and craft our conversations; but virtually, there is a component of control, of constant monitoring of the self. It is this monitoring that diminishes the ability to distinguish the "self" as individuals.

This uncertainty of one's own self is in some ways new. The larger the social media presence, the more individuals talk of generational issues. College aged

interviewees discussed younger generations struggling to define who they are.

Arguably, their feelings stem from their feeling of less certainty about themselves

than their parents generations. Samantha a junior at Union College explained this

saying, "younger generations are having less opportunities to have real

relationships and because they are more connected they are more reliant on others

for their sense of self. Without social media you have people who know more about

themselves when they get older". Interviewees seem to believe that

interconnectivity as an individual process has altered the development for the

worse. The uncertainty of self in the human world further complicates the

understanding of the creation of the self in the virtual world as " people want to be

seen as attractive and what ever they think that means that other people will see

them that way, then they will do it" (Samantha). People rely on relationships with

others for self-affirmation. The way in which individuals appear "attractive" is

determined by society, social media enhances the ability for individuals to create

these pressures and therefore determine such standards. In effect, individual selves

are created in reaction to the ideals which society dictates.

Is there a Self?

The creation of the self in a socially mediated era blurs the lines between real

and fake, complete and incomplete, self and society. The self that is being displayed

through social media is supposedly reflective of the self in the human world. But

living with interconnectivity that social media provides, we cannot create the self

without it.

> [social media] affords [users] the ability to show everyone only those aspects of their character and their lives that they want them to see which I think is pretty dangerous to a younger generation or a younger, more vulnerable mind because instead of exploring and reflecting upon the nature of their "self" so to speak, they get to fabricate it and manufacture it, and believe that that's it, that they're this sort of monolithic being of their own creation. I think a person is largely responsible in the real world, largely holds the ability to create the person that they want to create, but not on this artificial platform, this facade of unimportant, superficial qualities.
>
> Luke

The virtual rules are intertwined with that of the human rules and ideals. They have become codependent and indistinguishable. Yet the affordances of the two are drastically different. How one represents the self on media cannot be separated nor can it be the entirety of a personality. The creation of the self in reality and virtually is complex, but not indistinguishable in how it is enacted.

Chapter 4

Instagrammers

As I sat in Lily's living room on her big gray couch, the both of us wearing

sweat pants, t-shirts, glasses and no makeup, Lily and I examined an Instagram page

of a girl who had jet-black hair, fair skin, and detailed makeup. The girl in the video

was nicely dressed, talented, and the same girl that was wearing glasses and sweats

on the couch next to me. Lily is a senior at Union College and an engineering major.

She has both a personal Instagram as well as a makeup tutorial Instagram account.

The contrast between online visual persona and the in person persona was stark

and I describe the setting as evidence of how the self is virtually displayed.

> Lily: [Social media] is such a snap shot of your life because no one
> goes and posts "oh iv had such a terrible day I'm a awful person," like
> no one does that but honestly if I have had a bad week I post a prettier
> picture of myself then I usually would because it makes me feel better
> about myself and it sounds horrible but you want certain people to
> like the pictures and you want the most likes because its reassuring of
> who you are or really who you present yourself to be on media.

> Lily: If you meet someone and they have fifteen hundred followers
> you're like oh I need to be friends with that person and I mean I feel
> like that's a thing so I'm sure when you meet someone and they have a
> ton of followers you want to be friend with them.

> ME: so what do you think when you meet these people then?

> Lily: there's many ways to think about it. I mean it can be someone
> who people just really like. But then there's also those accounts that
> people tailor to be... to appear, a certain way. There are plenty of
> beauty accounts that I follow and it's a person and it's their main
> Instagram account but they're posting to try and get a certain kind of
> follower. So if they tailor their account and they do really high quality
> videos they are going to get a lot of followers. I mean even other kinds

of accounts like funny accounts or just really pretty girls it's the same idea.

This conversation with Lily shows that for her social media is strategic and planned. In the first place, it is only a highlight reel of an individual's life. While Lily claims no one posts bad things about their lives, several other individuals indicated to me that people display either the highs or the lowest lows in their life on social media. However, this still suggests a certain level of selectivity. Lily does not define herself in a human sense by her makeup account but she does define who her virtual self is on her media page. Having to tailor social media is not unique to makeup or fashion accounts, rather it is an exaggerated and enhanced version of what individuals do in creating the self on their personal accounts.

The affordances of Instagram have enabled individuals to construct their identities as well as consume and display product advertisements. Several individuals who I talked to have both personal and themed Instagram pages that they manage. They are involved in pages for makeup, fashion, fitness, and food. There is a strategic creation and maintenance of an individual creating a brand Instagram page. Upon being interviewed, Christina as well as several other individuals referred to what they called "Instagrammers" whom are the individuals that build profiles midway between a personal Instagram account and a professional product account. What these individuals have done with their Instagram pages exemplifies how individuals in general on social media may create their self as well as how products create the image of a self to appeal to the culture.

I interviewed several individuals at Union College who are deeply involved with themed Instagram accounts. Lily runs a makeup account where she posts

makeup tutorials. As a relatively new makeup Instagrammer, she has a relatively

small number of followers, however she provides an interesting angle on how to

create her identity as she is still in the process of doing so. Savannah runs a food

account and participates in Spoons Union club at Union College. Amber runs a

fitness and food account and has the second most followers of the individuals I

talked with. She explained that she likes to post easy to make healthy food and

quick exercises on her page and describes it as a motivational health tone. Christina

runs a food account with her three sisters, and she was the person with the most

followers and pictures of the individuals I interviewed. Christina regularly posts and

partakes in events related to her food account. Throughout the interviews,

Christina's experience and "success" as an Instagrammer appeared evident by her

ability to most clearly verbalize her processes of running a themed Instagram

account. While none of these individuals qualify as Instagram famous, their

alternate forms of Instagram pages illuminate interesting insight into not only

alternate methods of social media usage, but also into the creation of a self.

Instagrammer "Self"

Instagrammers I interviewed explained how creating a unique persona for a

non-self Instagram requires strategic manufacturing. One of the distinct traits of

Instagram is that only one photo can be posted at a time. Media such as Instagram

are spaces where individuals create accounts of their own identities. Therefore

Instagrammers must fabricate a human face and personality for their non-human

based accounts. Having to post individual pictures refines the viewer's attention to

the particular image more than, for instance, posting an entire album of photos to a Facebook page. For an Instagrammer, each picture they post serves to create a further aspect of the "self". When discussing her work with food Instagramming, Savannah explained, with "food media you can only post things that look good. And there are places that have really good food but just don't photograph well so you cant post them". Theme accounts must be strategic in tailoring their media to conform to the audience while also remaining in their "personality" of the theme. For instance, a food account would not post a picture without at least some aspect of food. The need to satisfy both of these components increases the importance of choosing the photo to create or maintain an image. In a sense, Instagrammers are creating a human self by branding their image as a food, makeup, or exercise experts in the same way that advertising agencies brand their products.

Constructing an Identity

Followers on personal Instagram pages are generally friends and family, so getting followers on a page that is not for oneself requires different approaches. The process of creating an image of the self is important. By creating an image, individuals create networked publics for Instagrammers. Christina and her sisters have the most active account and have had their food Instagram page the longest of the individuals whom I interviewed. Christina explained to me during the interview, the strategy behind Instagramming on her food media page. She stated that the important aspect is that "you always want it to look good because that is what people first look at". Further, the content of what is written about the picture write

is also very important, "we always add hashtags which actually make a huge difference. I have noticed that when we post a picture and later add them it makes a huge difference in how many people like our photos". What Christina stressed most was adding the location as well as tagging other food accounts in her picture. In one photo there can be up to 20 tags, which they use to tag better-known food accounts. She explained that often if the picture is good enough followers will share photos on their own account, which increases her followers. Another important aspect for gaining followers is the ability to communicate with others through comments and tagging friends in pictures that, ideally, then will begin to follow the account as well.

Many of the Instagrammers that I talked to began their Instagram pages because they enjoyed the topic and wanted to share with others, but over time they have become increasingly consumed by external influences. What Christina has discovered, however, is the more followers, the more her Instagram page becomes consumer branded. With upwards of 8,000 followers, her food media page attracts restaurant and food brands to supply free food in return for posting a picture on her page. This is similar to Lily who has been sent products by makeup companies to use in her videos. It can be easily noticed that Instagrammers selves are not only constructed, but very much influenced, sometimes by the financial profits.

Instagrammers have become a community which businesses use as a tool to reach potential clients. Christina explained that they have been invited to several events at restaurant with other food Instagrammers. At these events they are given food and those who attend take pictures and eat the food and share ideas about

pictures and places to eat. This community socially influences one another just as

other selves that create communities' influence the self.

In the presence of an entire community it becomes important to differentiate

yourself. Many themed Instagram accounts have the same intentions, making

constriction of unique identities a challenge. In this sense, it is important for each

media page to not only conform but also to create a sense of uniqueness. Beginning

to run her own makeup media account, Lily has examined what attracts viewers to

her account by attempting to appeal to the social environment and at the same time

creating a unique image. Lily explained that, "To stand out from the crowd you need

something that differentiates yourself. I am definitely still trying to figure out what

kinds of videos I am trying to put up and what kinds of things I am going to do in

videos like am I going to say something in each of my video but I made a logo for my

page so you're definitely trying to create yourself in a unique way that appeals to

your audience". This exemplifies a thought out persona that Lily is creating. But it is

not only the creation of the profile "self" but the maintaining of such image that

takes effort and thought. Creating a persona for both a professional and personal

account is much like marketing a product on social media. The product/self must be

sold and maintained through words and images that define who they are without

over-stepping the social boundaries of the particular media.

Appearance of Falsehood

The self that is the virtual separate of the human often becomes entangled

within each others social communities. Amber explained how her virtual fitness self

has been mistaken for her multidimensional human self saying, "I feel like when people have specific Instagrams people think that's all they do. They think that there's just this one side of you and they always associate it with you. But really that's only one part of who you are". This exemplifies several aspects of the self which media distorts with personal and professional accounts. The concept of behaving in accordance to situational social expectations is not unique to social media. Rather, evidences specifically to that of social media by exemplifying how individuals may construct specific aspects of the self. The human self cannot be fully explained on a virtual forum. As Amber explained, she enjoys many more activities than working out and eating healthy but her account depicts only that aspect due to the nature of her themed media as well as the unwritten rules of Instagram. With personal accounts the media may not be limited to one theme but there still exists a lack of context and complete character of the human self that allows for assumptions and incomplete understanding of others selves. Secondly, there is clear construction of a persona, much like in the creation of the self on personal media accounts. Amber's explicit dislike of social definition due to her media page references the appearing falsehood of this representing her identity and it was strategically constructed. Lastly, she exemplifies the unidentified line between virtual and human selves that enables assumptions of truth between one another.

There exists an additional appearance of falsehood with themed or professional media accounts that does not exist on personal media - money and advertising. This is an additional strategy and planning of posts that does not exist for private accounts. Further, it is more directly socially influenced as owners of

themed accounts are paid or receive benefits (such as free meals) from greater

exposure to their accounts. This not only increases the seeming falsehood of

identity but also in a sense is strategic to influence the viewer's perception on the

product. According to Savannah a picture may make the meal look much better than

it tastes but it will be posted because the owner gave it to you for free to post. From

a restaurant or company perspective, this is free advertising. Christina explained

often they receive requests for posts because they reach an audience who is

particularly suggestive. The ability to influence their flowers is assumed as each

follower must be particularly interested in the topic to a greater extent than the

general population.

Few Instagrammers had insight into the possibility of individuals

experiencing FoMO due to their Instagram pages, however, from interviews with

other individuals it appears that media theme pages do cause FoMO. It is interesting

to realize the strategic choices and external influences that create their media

personalities. The brand or business is using an image of a person (the themed

media page run by an individual) to connect in a more human way with potential

consumers. The need to keep up with the latest trends to avoid FoMO is largely

created by brands and disguised in a more human way.

Desperately Seeking FoMO

> I think that there's definitely a lot of aspects [of social media] that cause that anxiety. On one hand, it's the pressure of wanting to look like you're having a good time and you're enjoying yourself. I know that going to college, the people you were friends with in high school that you're not seeing as much in college so you kind of feel the need to justify to them that you're also having a great time with your life because they can't see that from where they are and I think you kind of feel that you have to show that you're enjoying yourself.
>   Morgan

> Definitely at college [I feel FoMO] sine we're all at the same place so if [my friends are] doing it I could definitely be doing it then. I'll feel resentment for myself that I didn't go out or especially if it's someone that asked if I wanted to go out that I said no and I'll see photos of their time out and I'll regret not doing it myself.
>   Morgan

Morgan's comments reveal a common thread that ran throughout the interviews with Union students—the need to show others you are not missing out. In creating the self, I discussed the need to appeal to Western ideals in a college context, which speaks greatly to this quest for belonging. What emerges from such anxieties is a search for those events or activities that others will desire. It is a vicious circle. Appearing as though you are not missing out leads to the sense of missing out on opportunities to participate. It is a two-part fear that perpetuates FoMO: the fear of being perceived as missing out and the fear of missing out on image enhancing opportunities.

Fear of Appearing to be Missing Out

Throughout interviewing Union College students, it became apparent that the feeling of FoMO was driven less by personal envy and more a social envy and desires to conform to a socially ideal self. Further, a large part of the ideal self for college students seems to be related to happiness, represented through having many friendships and experiences. In the simplest terms, individuals harness the affordances of social media to not only escape negative judgments but also to propagate FoMO for the viewer. Luke verbalizes the purpose of the mediated self appearing to conform with Western ideals saying, "I definitely incurred the proverbial "FoMO" quite frequently, especially when I was probably a freshman and sophomore in high school, in which people would just, I think intentionally, post things, not to hurt other people, but to make sure other people, in sort of this pathetic way, to make sure other people knew that they were with friends all the time. I don't think they were doing it to be malevolent. I think they were doing it for their own purposes and I would do the same thing if I hung out with other people". The way that individuals perceive their posts is not consciously structured to cause jealousy; rather it is a subconscious expression of the socially ideal self.

The great irony is that socially mediated projections of an ideal "self" may perpetuate feelings of anxiety. The envy which many individuals expressed was in reaction to absence from a situation in which they may have enhanced their external portrayal of "self". In such instances, individuals discussed "fun" and "happiness" to be images that cause social envy that is in response to the way that individuals project their image of not missing out. "I feel like I would most likely feel it through

a Snap Chat Story, or [when] everyone's having fun, laughing, there's music going, or even a picture where everyone just looks genuinely happy and you can tell" (Grace). Grace expresses her envy for the "genuine happiness" that she perceives on social media and that she did not herself obtain. Further, Grace discusses the individuals "look" of happiness, which is important when discussing how FoMO is perpetuated by wanting to maintain a particular appearance. Many students referred to specific events such as parties or club activities as reference to the place where the Western emotional ideal can most noticeably be seen as an event.

Manifestation of FoMO

There was strong disagreement about whether or not FoMO was part of the college experience. In general when individuals do discuss feeling a sense of FoMO, they can relate this experience to seeing pictures on media sites such as, Snap Chat, Facebook and Instagram. Several individuals explained that Snap Chat is the greatest source of FoMO because of its immediacy you can see in the moment what you are missing out on. According to Jason, Snap Chat is where individuals experience the most FoMO because "it's so recent and there's so little information you can pick up on with a story". He is referencing a Snap Chat story, where individuals post their pictures for all of their friends to see. Further, as Jason explained, there is little context so the picture or video lasting 10 seconds at the most, shows things that may or may not be reality. Morgan expands on this saying, "I'd say [the reason I experience FoMO] the most is Snap Chat because that's more an instantaneous thing, whereas with Instagram it's much more delayed so I don't

immediately think about it". The instantaneous aspect of Snap Chat allows individuals to be part of an immediate situation without the surrounding context. The situation feels more immediate and realistic, but they do not know what else besides the picture they see on Snap Chat what they are missing.

Discussion Surrounding FoMO

Throughout the interviews I was expecting many individuals to have FoMO due to not attending every party or social event on campus. There are several ways that individuals explain when they might feel FoMO. Some individuals expressed feeling FoMO due to the inability to participate in an event that they had the opportunity to but denied such an experience. Others experienced FoMO due to missing an experience where they may have benefited in some way such as creating friendships. The mere recognition of experiencing FoMO is recognizing that you are dependent on others to feel you belong. Because of this, some individuals deny experiencing FoMO in general but may talk of others who have had or often have this experience.

The situation that FoMO is experienced for some is dependent upon the opportunity to partake. Feelings of FoMO changed with age and life situations according to Emma, a female freshman at Union College who stated, "I would say I experienced it more [in high school]. I have more options of what I can do [here at Union], who I can hang out with, whereas my high school I did not have so many options and freedoms". This experience of FoMO is directed towards the ability to partake in an opportunity. Expanding on this, I talked to the class of students who

conducted a portion of interviews for me. They explained that FoMO is felt more for some individuals when they are unable to make the decision to participate. Restrictions put on the children in their homes during high school do not permit them to make the decision to go somewhere or do something and so they felt FoMO. In college "freedom" enables them to choose what to do and so they do not feel FoMO.

During the interviews with individuals who work in the field of advertising and social media, a reoccurring theme was vacation pictures. Jason's view is representative of many other students' opinions: "I never get FoMO for vacations, only really jealous… I only get jealous and not FOMO because I know I wouldn't have gone there anyway. It's not like I had the opportunity to go there with the people on the vacation. I would get FOMO if they asked me to come with them and I couldn't…and I saw them there or something". College students only get FoMO from turning down an opportunity, which they either cannot attend or later realize they would have had fun at had they attended.

Upon conducting my own interviews, several individuals concluded that they "felt more FoMO as an underclassman because I did not know what I was missing out on" (Kevin). For many, FoMO was experienced due to missing new experiences or the opportunity to feel they belong. James explained his constant feeling of FoMO because "[college is] so new. Because this isn't our second or third year, this is our first six weeks. It's like I want to be part of everything so I can create those connections and meet those people and not miss out on the opportunities or relationships I could be having before things have settled in a bit". This type of

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FoMO is fear of missing an experience where the individual would have made a profit of some sort such as fun, or belonging to a group.

Individuals also discussed FoMO as something that they had never experienced, although this was the minority of individuals. Angie recognizes that FoMO is often felt when individuals are reliant on others. She explains, "It's not like I want to be other people when I have FoMO. For confident people, I don't think Instagram or Snap Chat is enough of a trigger…I have so many things going on, school work, RA duty, clubs, focusing on my family and friends, and even just focusing on myself". Experiencing FoMO is suggestive of dependence on others that may not be socially desirable. Several other individuals claim to have not experienced FoMO as well but many recognize it in others. When examining these interviews where such situation occurs, some seem to answer according to social desirability of being independent and happy.

Throughout the interviews a gender difference appeared in individual's tendency to relate FoMO to their personal experiences. Of the interviews with non "Instagrammers", 13 were male and 23 were female, one interview was not specified due to incomplete interviewing and was disregarded in this analysis. Of those interviewed females were significantly more likely to relate FoMO to their personal experience. Males would generally acknowledge the existence of FoMO in others. For example, Conrad when asked if he experiences FoMO stated, "Not me personally because I really don't pay attention to it all that much, but I could definitely see how people can get jealous and experience FOMO from looking at things like Snap Chat stories and Instagrams". Conrad references others as

experiencing FoMO but not himself. In reference to discussion in Chapter 1, females

are expected to be more emotional than males in Western society (Horwitz,

2002). Due to the socially gendered acceptance of emotional expression, males may

be more reluctant to admit to the emotional expression of FoMO.

Products and Life Style

Having easy access to social media often causes individuals to feel as though

they need to keep up with social media trends and images in order to avoid being

perceived as missing out. Being able to see other users or celebrities and what they

have, leads individuals to feel FoMO for not only situations such as parties but life

styles and products. Morgan explains that since his use of social media, "I've always

been craving the best thing so I have something and I think 'what if I could have

something better' or 'what could I be doing better". Having access to information,

pictures and products is very influential on the individual. They fear missing out on

the latest trends and information others would see as valuable in their media

appearance.

Obtaining a higher life style or products through the influence of social media

occurs both in impersonal and personal ways. There are the influences of

celebrities or social media celebrities, and the influence of friends or family. Luke

explained, "I think that it's far more prevalent when they see their friends doing it

and it has to do with specific events that are close to where they live or going on

with a larger group of people that they know. They can see all these sort of models,

human models, or just these products that are put into a context that make the

[people] expect that they should conform to whatever standards are being perpetuated in the commercials". What individuals are buying into is the concept of the ideal self and FoMO of missing out on the chance to portray their own identity as such.

An introduction to anthropology student discussed with his interviewee the impact of celebrities on social media users as celebrities are generally those who people think have the best products and life styles. His interviewee explained "celebrities have a huge influence on what other people put on social media. People tend to follow a lot of celebrities on social media because they admire and desire to be like them. We see these celebrities posting certain pictures wearing certain designer clothing and living this fancy lifestyle and that makes a lot of people desire to be like them. It gives them an incentive to go buy whatever they are wearing because it looks nice on them". Celebrities have the reputation of living the ideal life, thus media users buy into their media image and model their own. The acceptance that celebrities have on social media with large numbers of followers represents their likability and their social inclusion. Fearing judgments, users follow these trends, ideas and products to show their social likeability in the same way and subconsciously have others envy what they present as their social mediated self.

Social media influences individuals to conform to the social expectations of that media in the most admired way possible. I asked individuals if seeing others media pages has ever caused them to desire a higher life style or better products to which many of them acknowledged social media did have the effect of doing. Much

of the experienced FoMO individuals discussed with life style and products seemed contradictory to previous statements. Individuals had mentioned that opportunity was key in feeling a sense of FoMO and without opportunity FoMO was not felt. However, the difference exists in that opportunity seems to apply only to social events while lifestyle and products are not reflective of social popularity rather personal desire and sculpting of an image of the Western ideal of happiness.

Without Media

The idealized self of social media creates feelings of FoMO, however, without social media, many argue that FoMO still exists. Social media is a platform that enhances the individual's ability to see others lives and display their own in reaction to FoMO. Luke explained, "I'd say that, sure, social media allows FoMO to propagate more swiftly through the youth, or all of society I suppose. But as far as which one came first, it was probably fear of missing out. They both just exaggerate each other and make each other stronger and more vicious and people can't seem to see that because of this exaggerated fear of missing out that they're being engulfed in". Emma similarly stated, "One can experience FoMO with or without social media, but I think FoMO is significantly more impactful and in some ways consequential with it is paired with social media".

Ultimately, the experience of FoMO is due to the fear of missing out regardless of if social media perpetuates the emotion. FoMO has long existed but social media enhances the emotion. What has developed with social media

however, is two fears, the fear of appearing to others as though you are missing out, and the fear of missing out on events that could have provided pictures or stories to show that you are not missing out. Samantha explained, "FoMO and especially FoMO at parties [has] a lot to do with the fear of being alone because [individuals] have not developed themselves without others [due to] the connectivity in social media". One of the ways in which the "self" and FoMO interplay, is the need to create the self as opposed to being ones self which causes a seeming anxiety of sorts that is the Fear of Missing Out.

Conclusion

Culture is responsible for the ways individuals think and behave. Through changing social conditions in Western society, FoMO has emerged in reaction to progressing beliefs about envy. Further, social technologies have enabled widening of communities to the extent that the social media communication has become their own culture. The self that interacts within these communities exists in different conditions from that of the human self, but not separate nor unique. The emotional state of FoMO is greater than a term used in reference to technology, but exists because of changing social circumstances. In a sense, social media has created a platform to propagate the emotional reaction to the intense presence of the public eye.

According to many individuals interviewed, it is the fear that they are missing out on something better than what they are doing. There is a seeming differentiation in determining what will make someone feel FoMO. Several specify that the opportunity must be presented and denied before FoMO is felt. Others believe that FoMO is felt through missing experiences with friends. However, all agree that social media enhances FoMO as posts only portray the highlights of events and this enables them to get a quick glimpse of what they were missing.

Social media as a society enables the creation of a representation of self, yet silently dictates how one behaves in this representation. These networked publics function as society with unwritten rules to regulate belief and behavior. Individuals are acting in reaction to fear of judgments to conform to the behaviors and appeal to the ideal self. The need to consistently configure the self to the exact measurements

of the ideal is for many the root cause of FoMO. Social media enables individuals to project images, words, videos, etc. of the ideal. Others may envy this causing FoMO but also people post to show others they are avoiding FoMO and that they do uphold the ideal.

Advertising agencies such as BARKER use similar tactics as an individual may use self-marketing. BARKER employees expressed their ability to engage an object in a human space such as social media in order to sell their product to the consumer. This was done through targeting audiences, adapting aspects of human users such as conversations, story telling and branding personalities etc. BARKER exemplifies how an individual may self-brand through social media as well as consume products in order to enhance their ideal self. More obviously is the consumption of products to enhance appearance, however, individuals are also able to create their self-online just as advertising agencies can create a self.

When interviewing Union College students I was interested in the ways that they use and understand social media in addition to the ways that FoMO was felt. Social media is an incomplete image of an experience and largely constructed and maintained through the affordances of the particular medium. The self ultimately is incomplete without society and this distinction becomes clear with the realization of experiencing FoMO. Upon inquiring generally about FoMO, the majority of individuals expressed having personally experienced FoMO before. Through this realization of prevalence of FoMO, many acknowledged a de-individualization of the creation of self due to media pressures to avoid FoMO.

FoMO is a socially experienced emotion enhanced by the social technologies and enacted upon by the need to create and maintain the image of the ideal self. Throughout studying the experience of FoMO, I experienced several obstacles. First, the technology of social media is ever expanding and changing. The latest trends in the most popular media, as well as what affordances each media allows changes constantly. From the beginning of researching for this thesis to the end of writing it, several medias have additional components that had not existed previously. For example, Instagram now affords individuals the ability to create stories and Facebook allows individuals to do live video streaming. Secondly, in the general discussion of FoMO as well as Keeping Up with the Jonses, this emotional experience largely is discussed negatively. Knowing this, social desirability has the potential to play a large role in the research of FoMO and interviewing process. Lastly, this thesis focused on the specific population of college-aged students at Union College and to a lesser degree individuals working in the advertising field. Future studies of this sort should examine larger geographic populations beyond Union College and further explore other age cohorts.

Ultimately it appeared that college aged individuals considered FoMO to be largely related to the creation and maintenance of the self as well as enhanced by social media. Parties and social situations where individual's friends were together were recognized as greatest FoMO inducing situations. Further, different social medias were suggested to produce different amounts of FoMO. Because snap chat is most immediate and brief it was most likely to educe the emotions of FoMO. Largely, FoMO is produced by the curiosity and assumption that what your friends

are doing is better than what you are doing yourself. Regardless of the suggested

activity that causes FoMO, it derives from what individuals believe is most socially

ideal. In general, it seems to be the ability to appeal to the ideal of social luxury,

lacking work and rather focused on free time experiences.

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