

TWITTER: MAGICAL MIRROR OF SOCIAL REALITY

by

Salman Mogaddedi

A Thesis

Submitted to the

Graduate Faculty

of

George Mason University

in Partial Fulfillment of

The Requirements for the Degree

of

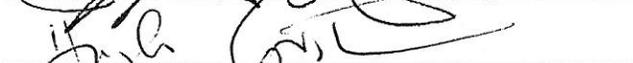
Master of Arts

Cultural Anthropology

Committee:



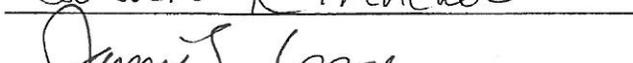
Director



Susan R Trencher

Susan R Trencher

Department Chairperson



Jannet S. Cooper

Dean, College of Humanities  
and Social Sciences

Date:

December 4, 2013

Fall Semester 2013  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA

Twitter: Magical Mirror of Social Reality

A Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Name of Degree, as in Master or Doctor of Science or Philosophy at George Mason University

by

Salman Mogaddedi  
Bachelors of Arts  
San Jose State University, 2009

Director: Jeffrey W. Mantz, Professor  
Sociology and Anthropology

Fall Semester 2013  
George Mason University  
Fairfax, VA



This work is licensed under a [creative commons attribution-noncommercial 3.0 unported license](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/3.0/).

## **DEDICATION**

This is dedicated to all those that strive to help us better understand what makes us human.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

I would like to thank Professor Jeff Mantz for his patience and valuable advice and remarks. Professor Trencher for introducing me to so many different aspects of anthropology throughout my time at George Mason. My discussions with her and the topics we discussed ranged far and wide and I always left with valuable lessons. Professor Hugh Gusterson for his advice, comments, suggestions and for always sending me valuable articles and documents pertaining to this thesis, which greatly helped me. I would like to thank all those at the anthropology department especially those whose classes I took such as Professor Andrew Bickford, Professor Linda Seligman and Professor James Witte. I would like to thank Professor Rutledge Dennis for introducing me to the ideas of Erving Goffman and for the discussions on these ideas we have had. And finally I would like to thank my family especially my wife for helping me in all aspects of this project and for her encouragement and support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|                    | Page |
|--------------------|------|
| Abstract.....      | vii  |
| Introduction.....  | 1    |
| Chapter One.....   | 7    |
| Chapter Two.....   | 20   |
| Chapter Three..... | 29   |
| Chapter Four.....  | 54   |
| References.....    | 60   |
| Table One.....     | 30   |

## LIST OF FIGURES

| Figure  | Page |
|---|------|
| Figure 1 What We Share vs. What Friends Read..... | 43   |

## **ABSTRACT**

TWITTER: MAGICAL MIRROR OF SOCIAL REALITY

Salman Mogaddedi, M.A.

George Mason University, 2013

Thesis Director: Dr. Jeffrey W. Mantz

This thesis examines how users *perform* on the social networking site known as Twitter. It surveys the works of Erving Goffman, Victor Turner and contemporary thinkers such as Sherry Turkle and Tom Boellstorff. The goal is to discover whether the theories of symbolic interactionism, dramaturgy, performance and virtual communities apply to current usage of Twitter. And whether Twitter as it is used by millions of people around the world provides any new insights for social theorists.

*Culture is created from time to time, but it is performed all the time. Once it is created, constant performance keeps the culture alive. Doing culture is performance whether it is industrial or business processes we do in work hours, or ritual, or preparing a meal. Culture can be stored in the form of artifacts and writings; it can be remembered in people's heads. But to be living, vital culture, to be performed constantly*

-Paul Bohannan

## **Introduction**

Performance is the universal act that allows participants of a culture to express themselves to others in their community. The human species is unique with the drive to perform in such complex ways. Understanding and inquiring into this phenomenon will I believe bring us closer to understanding human nature and the webs and complexities of human societies adequately. There have been two divergent views and methods of study on this topic: the psychological and anthropological. The psychological approach to the study of performance has been to point to personality issues or biological forces to explain performance, whereas anthropologists have argued that performance is a result of practices and mores that dictate the performance behavior. The difference can be seen as a split between internal and external forces. This paper will focus on the role Twitter plays in impacting the current theories on performance and identity construction. There

was a wide variety of different social networking sites I could have chosen and many would have offered fruitful insight into the topic in question. Twitter was specifically chosen because the medium has introduced to individuals a very unique way of interacting, collaborating and performing with one another. Literature on human interchange in the real world has been amply documented and illustrated, but virtual communities such as Twitter provide new insight and context into the theories of performance discussed by theorists such as Erving Goffman five decades ago. What is unique about Twitter is the constraints it places on the user in terms of conveying one's message, the influence it wields in terms of economic, political and social factors and finally the fact that this medium has permeated our everyday lives, from the small act of interacting with friends, to its use by journalists, politicians, celebrities pundits and so forth. This medium has become a powerful force in our social lives and will only become more prevalent. My methodology will be to use the research that has been done on social networking sites (SNSs) in general, and Twitter in particular, as well as the work on self-presentation by prominent theorists. I will further be using my own observations and investigations as a participant observer in Twitter as well as using library research.

Edward Sapir argued that “all cultural behavior is patterned,” claiming that “many things that an individual does and thinks and feels may be looked upon not merely from the standpoint of the forms of behavior that are proper to himself as a biological

organism but from the standpoint of a generalized mode of conduct that is imputed to society rather than to the individual...” (Sapir 1927: 282). It is society, the unconscious collective society, which develops the patterns that can be observed and which imbues them into the participants of the community. Cultural patterns such as ritual and other performances in which humans engage is not only biologically inherent in human beings and in their psyche (something Victor Turner argued for in his essay “Body, Brain and Culture”), but it is human society as a whole and culture, and not just the individual, that determines outward behavior. Society and social space dictates how one will behave in the presence of others. Ritual and performance therefore can be said to be products of not just the thinking processes and desires of an individual, but of society as a whole, or at least a niche of society.

Discovering and identifying cultural patterns in the virtual world through examining different ways Twitter is used to allow individuals to present themselves to others will be the crux of my research. Using Turner's work on theater and the concept of social drama and Goffman’s work on *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, I will attempt to see if these real world theories may apply to the virtual world and, if so, how. We are not always what we portray ourselves to be when interacting with others, and much of our external behavior is a result of how we want others to see us as. With the advent of SNSs users are now able to fashion themselves in whatever way they desire. Virtual communities give users the added benefit of becoming separated from reality.

This paper will explore the literature on these topics as well analyze findings from my own ethnographic exploration of performance on Twitter.

Virtual communities are a world into themselves, rife with symbolism, vibrant communities and sharing of information amongst the members. By studying the different human behaviors and interactions that occur in virtual communities, one does not have to limit the scope of work to anthropologists, but can also benefit from the rich works of previous philosophers and scientists who have touched on similar themes. This can help elucidate the topics we will be exploring. Earlier anthropologists and sociologists, especially those who worked within the paradigm of symbolic and cognitive anthropology, had the advantage of witnessing and conducting their ethnography in real time, and living and interacting face to face with the culture they were studying. While the traditional method of ethnography is to have a firsthand account of what is observed, I will be investigating performance, human behavior and interaction in the digital world, which makes it more challenging although more fruitful, as Boellstorff (Boellstorff 2010) has illustrated. Studying performance in virtual communities helps us peer into the consciousness of people, and helps us translate their external behavior, actions, and rituals and to analyze it and understand what they are getting at, because of the advantages that these media provide. Victor Turner said that cultural performances are language composed of “cultural media... whose modes of communication... include not

only spoken language, but non-linguistic media as song, dance, acting, and graphic and plastic arts combined in many ways to express and communicate the content of...culture” (Turner 1988:23). Twitter as a cultural medium consists of both linguistic and non-linguistic signs, which provide a rich source of not only cultural content, but also a platform for an analysis of human behavior in the digital world. It is filled with pictures, linguistic uses to express feelings that would not have been used in face to face interactions.

Unlike Second Life and other virtual worlds, Twitter does not give the user the ability to live vicariously and to perform through their own creations with creations of avatars, but it does allow users to perform in other ways. Participants work along the parameters set by Goffman’s work on dramaturgy in which he identified the concepts of ‘front stage’ and ‘back stage’. When the word “stage” is being used it does not necessarily imply an actual stage one would see in a theater, but can be thought of metaphorically as the space in which interactions occur with other individuals in daily life. For example, a restaurant server is obligated to present himself in a formal way while serving customers, but while backstage will automatically change roles and become less formal and relaxed, though even here performance is not terminated. There may be co-workers one may interact backstage with whom social relations may be more relaxed.

And finally there is the “outside” in which there is no audience and the individual is alone with no performance occurring.

What I find uniquely interesting about Twitter is the fact that the theories of performativity fit very neatly with the way Twitter is used. This SNS provides both a front stage and a back stage and gives users space for impression management to allow them to construct their own realities and identities. An example of how this happens is with the usage of pictures, tweets, and videos and whom one follows and is followed by. In Second Life as in real life there are the different stages I briefly mentioned. With Twitter it seems that the stages are not so distinct, that users are engaged in both “front” and “back” stage, as well as “outside, ” simultaneously. The multiple stages are in a sense collapsed into one imagined audience, a phenomenon called “context collapse”(Marwick 2010). Unlike virtual worlds like Second Life the user does not have the ability to perform with an avatar or a “virtual self” but must resort to the tools at their disposal. As a result of Twitter’s 140 character limit, users have to think of ingenious ways to get their message across, using newly devised linguistic codes and hashtags and visual cues. Some argue that this limits creativity and expression, but it can be argued and observed that in fact such limitations force users to be creative in their outward performance.

## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **Theory and Background**

In this section I will lay out some of the theoretical paradigms that I will be using from the field of symbolic anthropology as well as the works of theorists such as Sherry Turkle, Victor Turner and Erving Goffman's work on presentation. Furthermore I will briefly speak about online communities and the performances and presentation of self that occurs within.

#### Symbolic Anthropology

The field of symbolic anthropology arose when anthropologists began to view the symbols and signs of the people they were studying worthy of interpretation. It seeks "to understand how and what social situations and life experiences were represented in ritual events, giving meaning to these experiences and providing orientation and commitment to social interaction" (Colby and Fernandez 2009). Symbolic anthropology has always been an issue of concern, because of the deep importance anthropologists placed on

studying and analyzing the language of the people in question, especially with the work of Malinowski and his analysis of the Trobriand language. The analysis that it entails requires it to maintain the complexities of culture, as well as the externality of it. When analyzing a certain action or artifact, the meaning or essence of it must be studied by looking at the totality of the object. The term symbol can be defined as “a thing regarded by general consent as naturally typifying or representing or recalling something by possession of analogous qualities or by association in fact or thought” (Turner 1967: 322). However, what becomes challenging is that even within a society a symbol may not have the same meaning to all members. Cultures and societies are not monolithic and may attribute different meanings to different symbols, yet conclusions may still be drawn on what it is that a particular symbol may mean to a culture as a whole.

The signature contribution of symbolic anthropology to larger disciplinary concerns about the driving forces of human behavior might be best summed up with Turner's contention that cultural performance was “not unidirectional and ‘positive’- in the sense that the performative genre merely ‘reflects or ‘expresses’ the social system or the cultural configuration, or at any rate their key relationships-but that it is reciprocal and reflexive- in the sense that the performance is often a critique, direct or veiled, of the social life it grows out of, an evaluation (with lively possibilities of rejection) of the way society handles history” (Turner 1988). What Turner is essentially arguing is that

performance is the vehicle to symbols and that it does not arise out of a vacuum, but has underlying stimuli attached to it, such as religious, political or social forces. Performance is a site of contestation and negotiation between and among members of a society. The reader will be exposed to the various ways in which users of SNS fit this description of Turner, in which the medium of SNS, particularly Twitter, is used to “critique” social life or to present oneself in a desirable manner.

### Alone Together

The phrase "alone together" is taken from Sherry Turkle's book titled *Alone Together: Why we expect more from technology and less from each other*. In our modern society the act of interaction has changed radically and her research has shown how SNSs and virtual communities are responsible for fundamentally altering the nature and meaning of human interaction. An entire family may be sitting in a living room while each member is in its own “world,” interacting with possibly hundreds of other people, while the people next to them are ignored. This is what Turkle meant by her title *alone together*; we may be in close proximity with one another, yet be more engaged with someone thousands of miles away. What the individual is doing can be very complex as well. They may be chatting, playing in Second Life, or tweaking or constructing their SNSs to convey what they are feeling at the moment. They may be mindlessly looking at

the countless pictures added by their friends, editing their own photos and creating new identities for others to witness.

These are people who have moved from conducting real life performance to cyberspace performance. When one looks carefully into the activities occurring within cyberspace, the ideas of performance and dramaturgy of Victor Turner and Goffman resonate and apply to it. As opposed to real life face to face interaction, cyberspace has equipped the individual with a wider audience and more choices for identity projection. The aim of this section is to illustrate how studies that explore cyber communities and SNSs provide us a foundation for conducting our own investigations on users of Twitter. Furthermore we will get a better understanding of the activities of cyber communities and SNSs in general.

By now almost every American and much of the population of the world with internet access has either been exposed to cyber-communities and or plays an active part in it. It has become a fact of life and an experience that does not seem to be going away. Therefore, it can be fair to say that whatever observations will be concluded in our own investigation or facts from other sources that will be shared can be applied to a wide arena of the world population. With the emergence of technological innovations such as SNSs “boundaries between the real and virtual [have been eroded] as they mov[ed] in and out of their lives on the screen. Views of self become less unitary, more protean” (Turkle

2011: xi). And just as views of the self have changed in cyberspace, they have also spilled into real life. When discussing virtual communities, we can no longer think of them as some abstract entity which is seen and experienced behind a screen with no repercussions to our real lives.

Performers of a play or a movie are well aware of the dichotomy that exists between the two different roles they may undertake. They can readily switch roles and keep the roles distinct from one another. This was Goffman's contribution to our connection between the real world and the theater. As for performers role-switching, Goffman observed that "sometimes the individual will act in a thoroughly calculating manner, expressing himself in a given way solely in order to give the kind of impression to others that is likely to evoke from a specific response he is concerned to obtain. Sometimes the individual will be calculating in his activity but be relatively unaware this is the case. Sometimes he will intentionally and consciously express himself in a particular way, but chiefly because the tradition of his group or social status require this kind of expression and not because of any particular response that is likely to be evoked from those impressed by the expression" (Goffman 1956: 3). This observation applies to virtual communities very well. With sites such as Facebook and Second Life, roles are not kept distinct and static for many people, but meshed, blended together and taken to a whole new level. Users take on new identities for themselves, switch genders, ethnicities and so forth. Even if they do not take drastic steps to change their roles online, there is

still a sense of performance online that is different than how they would behave in real life, and in many cases users may not be aware of this.

The idea of *real* or *reality* is also altered when people engage virtual communities. Users become so immersed in virtual life that they begin to lose the idea of what is real in their daily lives. Turkle observed that, “when a part of your life is lived in virtual places... [a] vexed relationship develops between what is true and what is ‘true here’, true in simulation. In games where we expect to play an avatar, we end up being ourselves in the most revealing ways; on social networking sites such as Facebook, we think we will be presenting ourselves, but our profile ends up as somebody else—often the fantasy of who we want to be. Distinctions blur (Turkle 2011: 153).” It is clear that many people from Turkle’s examples as well as my own observations, recognize that people take online interactions and performances very seriously. Thus an individual playing a role of an avatar that he or she has chosen will carry on that role very seriously and often think about it off-line and even play the role in real life.

Emotions flare up in cyber-space leading to what can be termed *cyber-rage*, akin to road rage, all between people who have never met one another before. This form of anger towards online users is understandable because of the distance and absence of face-to-face interaction, which makes anger very easy to occur. Virtual words have made it very easy for someone to be callous to an online user because of the absence of sharing a real physical space with one another. On the other hand, friendly emotions are also very

strong and cause many users to become attached to their virtual friendships. The fact that such emotions are vested and thrown onto the screen gives added credence to the argument that virtual communities are real communities to people, despite what critics of SNSs may claim. Critics such as Robert Putnam point to the rise of atomization of the American population because of access to television and internet consumption by the general population. These criticisms are not only made by researchers, but by many people from the general population who believe that these connections are tenuous. As to the reasons why people become so attached and take seriously interactions in cyberspace, it can be that friendships that are struck on these sites do feel real to many people. Users feel more comfortable to express themselves to people behind the screen than they would in real life. And finally that people in virtual communities may provide the emotional feedback that they lack in their real lives. These bonds that are formed can be very strong for many users and lead many people to treat online relationships as if they were the same in real life.

#### Facebook as a stage

The days of impressing people in real life with fashionable clothing and hairstyles have slowly been overshadowed with the advent of profile making, online performances and presentation. Shakespeare's oft repeated words *all the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players* rings true in our current discussions. The making of a

profile, something so simple and straightforward, is in itself a ritual and performance and is something that is given great thought because of the implications it may entail. Turkle illustrates the process of a high school senior going through this very experience pointing out to her that “when you have to represent yourself on Facebook to convey to anyone who doesn’t know you what and who you are, it leads to a kind of obsession about minute details about yourself. Like, ‘Oh, if I like the band State Radio and the band Spoon, what does it mean if I put State Radio first or Spoon first on my list of favorite musical artists? What will people think about me?’ I know for girls trying to figure out, ‘oh, is this picture too revealing to put? Is it prudish if I don’t put it?’ you have to think carefully for good reason, given how much people will look at your profile and obsess over it. You have to know that everything you put up will be perused very carefully. And that makes it necessary for you to obsess over what you do put up and how you portray yourself...and when you’re thinking of yourself in a bad way" (Turkle 2011:185).

We hear from this teenager a dilemma of what millions of users of Facebook and Twitter and other SNS users have to go through, a complicated task of impression management for many of them. Sites such as Facebook and MySpace allow users to tailor their profile in a particular way that allows them to convey who they are, in a very limited space. This limited space forces users to be very concise, using words sparingly, but it also brings out creativity. However, even with this creativity only so much can be said or expressed with constricted platforms. Therefore people are to think of themselves in

“reduced terms, in ‘short smoke signals’ that are easy to read” (Turkle 2010: 185). Users take everything into account, from what they write in the *about me* sections, to the pages and groups they like and join. They will link themselves with groups they like and join, establishing themselves with groups that they feel will boost their *image* amongst other members of the virtual community. Users will *friend* as many people as they possibly can, this is especially true of MySpace users, and in the Twitter world they will either *follow* other people or have *followers*. The accumulation of all these friends and followers is in most cases superficial. There is a t-shirt that explains it quite well, *I would have no friends without MySpace*. The issue is that, although these things are happening in the virtual world, they translate to how we treat real friends and acquaintances in the real world. Users are in effect using these *friends* and *followers* as a form of social currency to establish their popularity and importance to others. Some argue that it is ironic that all this newfound friendship online is happening at the same time that real life friendships are on the decline (Putnam 2001). The decline of friendships can either be attributed to more time in the virtual world, an increase in work hours or to the effects that SNSs have instilled in many people. Just as it is easy to ‘friend’ or ‘follow’ someone online, it is easy to discard them as well. This easy discarding of virtual friends can be said to seep into our real lives and is how we treat friends in real life, relationships that are easily discarded.

These sites provide users with a tabula rasa, allowing them to recreate themselves as they want to be seen. Gone are the days in which only models had the privilege of showing the world their airbrushed images; now not only do users edit their pictures, but they are editing and recreating their lives and personalities. In fact these tasks can become so daunting that people will go ‘cold turkey; canceling their account to get away from it all, claiming various reasons for doing such. Other reasons are that people “lose touch with their ‘real’ friends as they spend hours keeping up contacts with the ‘friended’. Some, not yet many, rebel against the reality that Facebook owns (in concrete terms) the story of their lives...they agonize over what photos to post. They digitally alter their Facebook photographs to look more appealing” (Turkle 2011: 274).

Although much of our talk on performance in the virtual world has seemed negative, there are positive aspects as well. Cyber-communities, regardless of whether one even feels they can be called *communities*, provide opportunities for people to overcome shyness, to discuss important issues with others; issues of abuse, depression and hopelessness. When people join sites such as Second Life and design avatars “they are not themselves but express important truths about themselves” (Turkle 2011). A case study in the book *Alone Together* is one in which a 13-year-old girl victim of abuse of her father’s alcoholism creates an avatar that is “physically and emotionally strong” (Turkle 2011). In many cases people who lack self-esteem in the real world, have it strengthened in virtual communities and may become stronger emotionally in real life.

Avatars, a topic that deserves its own thesis, can alter a person's psyche in the real world, as will be shown later. Performing with an avatar, whether being aggressive, generous, open and self-confident has the possibility of transforming an individual.

### Construction of identity and self in virtual communities

Performance is almost always about projecting a preferred self or identity to others that one wants. Goffman called this impression management: people "attempt to convey an impression to others which it is in their interests to convey" (Goffman 1956). With social networking sites these *impressions* are given off not by physical or verbal movements, but through the ingenious use of images (photography, artwork, signs etc.) and through the use of the written form. Identity searching and constructing one's identity and how an individual wants to be perceived by the community at large is universal. One can look at the networking sites of people across the globe and see patterns of performance and impression management being conducted. The process of identity construction "is through the feedback received as one manages impressions during social interactions and reflects upon the appraisals of others"(Salimkhan, Manago and Greenfield, 2010). And once this feedback is digested and understood, it is performed in front of others. Identity development is something that is explored and performed from an early age in all cultures. However, children in industrialized nations tend to explore different identities and come to a fully accepted identity of themselves faster than those in

non-industrialized nations. During the period of adolescence when children are going through school and until their college years, they are constantly getting feedback from their peers, learning about themselves and other personalities and constructing an identity that fits them. This behavior continues throughout their lives and has spilled over into the virtual world where there is a loop of feedback and an exploration of identity and performance by individuals.

With the advent of SNSs and virtual communities, these media have become “identity workshops” (Nolan 2012). Users have different means of going about and constructing their identities in virtual communities. In the case of sites such as Second Life, individuals use avatars to construct their ideal individual, but with sites such as MySpace, Facebook and, recently, Twitter identities are constructed in different ways. According to research, users of MySpace were discovered to engage in online performance by using visual metaphors “to display and solidify connection with others.” And with the use of photos and visual cues users create a “visual narrative of social identities connecting past and present social selves” (Salimkhan, Manago and Greenfield, 2010). The usage of photos is a very important medium of self-presentation for many users. Photography is also used not only as a means of self-projection, but also a means to tell a story to others. An individual posting a picture of a recently earned diploma or a newly purchased automobile is in fact intending to project more than just the picture. And, just as in real life, there is continuous feedback from other participants that validate

the performer. Likes, re-tweeting and sharing of photos help people get feedback on their performance. This platform is different from other platforms in that it generates a constant discursive feedback through the use of photography and language use. In the virtual world identities are not unitary and users may construct multiple identities. For example, a user may have a MySpace account solely for the use of projecting music or art tastes or even using it to show their artistic and musical talents to others. And they will in addition to this have another site such as Facebook or Twitter to construct another identity for themselves, possibly one that is tailored to making them more professional or academic looking to others. Users that construct these identities carefully monitor themselves to give out the appropriate feel to other people. Adolescents make similar tactical moves and have shifted from Facebook to Twitter to remove themselves from the constant monitoring of parents and adults.

## Chapter Two

### Anthropology of social media and cyber-communities

Theoretical work on cyber communities and social media is slowly coming to fruition, with multiple disciplines making major contributions. The spectrum of inquiry in this field ranges from the study of activism in SNSs to identity management, gender and race issues, communication studies and the anthropology of space. With so many different approaches to this field of study, the most effective way to carry out a study of online communities is “for those who seek to understand the offline social, cultural, and historical processes involved in the global flows of information and in diffusion, development, and acceptance of new technologies...such an approach involves bringing research back from cyberspace and virtual reality into geographical, social spaces, to

address a variety of issues such as ways in which new participants are socialized into online practices; how gendered and racialized identities are negotiated, reproduced, and indexed in online interactions” (Wilson and Peterson 2002: 453).

The very idea of calling SNSs a ‘community’ is a contentious issue. There are arguments claiming that the term “community” would not be applicable to SNS such as Second Life or Facebook because of the supposed weak ties that are formed. Despite the disagreements the overwhelming consensus is leaning towards considering SNSs as forms of communities. Like much of the language we use in everyday communication, terminologies have different connotations and the term “community” is open to many different interpretations. People who feel they can count on the assistance of their neighbors would consider themselves living in a community in which there is mutual assistance and interaction. Others would argue that a community consists of people that offer emotional support, advice and just an opportunity to converse with others. If we take the latter definition of community we can conclude without any stretch of the matter that virtual communities are strong and binding communities.

The term *virtual community* was coined by Howard Rheingold, author of the book *The Virtual Community*. Rheingold begins his book by illustrating the uniqueness of virtual communities, saying, “my seven-year-old daughter knows that her father congregates with a family of invisible friends who seem to gather in his computer. Sometimes he talks to them, even if nobody else can see them. And she knows that these

invisible friends sometimes show up in the flesh, materializing from the next block or the other side of the planet” (Rheingold 2000: xv). Virtual communities are not a phenomenon to be trivialized, but to be taken seriously because of the deep connections that people make. Rheingold’s “invisible friends” might be trivial to many non-users, but throughout his book we encounter the deep bonds that are developed online and how these friendships translate to real life. Rheingold himself speaks of instances in which virtual friends after interacting online for a period time decide to meet in real life and form even deeper bonds. He speaks of a parent whose child is diagnosed with cancer and seeks the help of virtual friends, some who happen to be in the health field, to offer him solid advice in helping his son deal with his illness.

The issue of ownership is another a major topic of debate in the field of social media. This concern for “ownership” of identity is very problematic and a topic of great debate among legal scholars. There are instances of individuals putting great time and effort into their avatars, building incredible buildings on “land” they have purchased, only to have it all taken away. Many would argue that this is theft of both intellectual and private property. There is great wealth in virtual worlds, with one virtual world richer than the country of Bulgaria and the power and wealth of these worlds is expected to rise (Virtual kingdom richer than Bulgaria, BBC article 29 March 2002). Communities such as Second Life have their own currency and people may purchase and sell their “goods” online. Services may also be offered, such as labor, entertainment and prostitution. Users

do take a risk when engaging in online activities because of the time, energy and emotion they pour into their avatars or profiles. As of yet there is no clear-cut answer as to whether digital property is actual property, but recent court cases and law reviews are recognizing the importance and validity of digital property beginning to protect it.

According to experts about 375,000 Facebook users die annually which makes one wonder, who retains the rights to their digital identities? Estate lawyers are slowly realizing the importance of this question, although it has not gained traction among the majority of SNSs users. One reason is that some users do not consider digital property such as photographs and blogs as real property because of the assumption that happens online is not connected to real life. This mode of thinking is shifting slowly with many people including their “digital assets” into their will, recognizing that life in cyberspace is connected to real life. Sites such as *TheDigitalBeyond.com* are capitalizing on this new trend and urge users to appoint a digital executor to handle all their SNSs and email and digital photos and offer advice on how to go about this. There is a recognition that flicks, photos, blogs, and status updates and tweets are synonymous to journal, scrapbooks and letters, and that these new technological messages have immense meaning to people. There is an acknowledgement among popular SNSs of the importance of digital ownership. The juggernaut of the social networking arena, Facebook, is beginning to treat digital accounts as real property. They are allowing relatives of the deceased the option of either memorializing the account (in which only friends can view the timeline of the

deceased), or having the account terminated. With the passage of some time it we can predict that our legal system as well as our societal expectations will become accepting of the fact that a Facebook page or any other SNSs is a form of ‘property’ and that ownership of digital archives will be given more credence.

In addition to the issue of ownership of digital property, there is the issue of identity ownership. There are cases in Second Life in which avatars are hacked into and, as a result, the hackers begin to destroy the credibility and character of the avatar, causing great emotional distress. There is also the fear from users on SNS of having their photos, videos etc. stolen or altered to reflect poorly on the person. There is very little to do to protect one’s identity in the virtual world other than continuous vigilance. The idea of ownership is one to be taken seriously because of the psychological effects that virtual worlds have on users. Emotions are poured into the avatars and communities that are built, and are therefore worthy of allowing users to be considered “owners” of their work.

The occurrence of a global virtual community can understood by analogy with David Harvey’s analysis of different labor arrangements and the effect technology has had on them and on political economy. He argued that, as a result of fast communication and travel due to technological advances, a compression of *time and space* occurred. Taking the analogy of a compression of *time and space*, we can observe that within virtual communities there is slowly an emerging of a compression of *reality and virtual*.

The differentiation between what is real and not is hard to distinguish as the happenings of the virtual world spill over into the real world and vice versa. In Rheingold's book we see communities being established, a community of friends and support networks that console one another, advise one another and so on. When a father announced that his son was diagnosed with cancer the entire community not only offered prayers and good will, but advice on who to see and the best treatment available, a perfect illustration of social networks in action. And these virtual communities tend to become real communities in the real world.

Users in these communities experiment and engage in different identities. One does not have to remain in isolation and daydream about desires and wishes. All one has to do now is join a virtual world and carry out whatever one desires. Changes in identity are very common in virtual communities and are very important to look into. Identity changes can include the transformation of race, gender, and sexuality, and allow users to experience what others may experience in these categories' experience. As an example Caucasians who chose to be African-Americans in Second Life really got a glimpse of the racism African-Americans may encounter and this experience may have a lasting impression for those involved. With the newfound ability to dabble with different identities the "traditional notions of human identity [have] become increasingly irrelevant even as they begin to seem the most pertinent. Instead, we must recognize the ways in which "identity" is used as a way of rendering people legible to those who

exercise power” (Whitehead and Wesch 2012: 6). The ability to change ones identity is to exercise power. Even in our own culture a form of power and control is “identity theft,” which leaves the victim powerless and frustrated. With the advent of new technological media that allow people to modify and experiment with different identities, traditional notions of identity come into question and must be reexamined. Our behaviors online are merely an extension and amplification of our real lives and identity is a concept we give to ourselves. There is a need to reexamine traditional notions of identity because of the globalized world we live in and the close interchange we are beginning to have with one another. Our global village both in the real world and in the virtual world will force us to rethink what we mean by identifying as “white” or “black” etc. Identities are losing their rigidity and are becoming more fluid.

Performance studies conducted by Turner and Goffman illustrate the varieties of performance human beings engage in. Goffman’s contribution was to look at the everyday and mundane actions of people as an object of study. Turner was interested in looking at rituals and theater performances as a unit of analysis. Symbols and tangible objects that people hold on to during their performances were an important aspect of his work. Both theorists have had their work extended to the study of virtual communities and the diverse performances that are engaged within them especially with the identity transformations, gender roles and rituals. Boellstorff’s *Coming of age in Second Life* best illustrates the different phenomena that occur in virtual communities. Acting as a

participant observer, Boellstorff studied the life of Second Life residents, their interactions with one another and the vibrant culture of their virtual world. There are many interesting facts in this book: the loss of personhood, the importance of space, intimacy and sexuality, the sharing of culture and more importantly it teaches us the factors that make us human and what distinguishes and binds us. If by community we mean the network of people supporting one another emotionally and physically then we can conclude that virtual communities do meet these partial criteria. In Boellstorff's work we see a wide variety of people forming very tight net relationships with one another. There are support groups, people strike up intimacy and some marry on Second Life. Others assist each other in terms of giving directions on how to navigate in Second Life or just life lessons. Second Life users may not be able to assist one another physically, but they fill a void in many people's lives and offer a community in which all can be members.

Users of Second Life choose avatars in which they construct their desired identities online. They can create their identities online in a way in which they allow their inner desires to come alive. Virtual worlds make this easier because of the anonymity that is provided; performing in such a way in real life would be very difficult. Many experts point to this and argue that the divide between gender roles is being eroded online and that this may spill over to real life. Another unique aspect of Second Life is the assistance it gives to people who are mentally or physically handicapped. It allows them to

experience things in Second Life that they could not do in real life. There is an occurrence in the book of an interaction between a sister and her schizophrenic brother: “Joseph and I explore places for hours, spend time talking, create things. It is amazing to watch him do things in here that he could never do in RL (Real Life). For instance, in RL he lives with my mother for obvious reasons. Soon after he came into SL (Second Life), Joseph put a cabin on a piece of land and decorated it with a few small items. I visited him and he said ‘This must be what it feels like to move into a college dorm for the first time.’ It broke my heart, but made me happy at the same time—because in RL he will never get to experience that, but here he can. If it were not for Second Life I would never have this experience with my brother because of his disability”(Boellstorff 2010: 148). There are many examples like this in his book in which Second Life and virtual communities in general provide users with an alternate life, a life they could never achieve if not for sites such as Second Life. If this boy Joseph had not had Second Life, his real life may not have been so pleasant, Second Life provided him a platform to be someone else, to expand his creative and artistic skills. Sites like Second Life give an opportunity to engage in performance in a manner that would not have been possible in the real world.

## Chapter Three

### Introducing Twitter

The Pew Internet research site, which monitors SNSs such as Twitter, shares its results annually to the public. Their most recent study points to the high usage among African Americans and those that earn less than \$30,000 annually. An explanation for the predominant presence of African-Americans on this site is that Twitter is used by many entertainers and musicians and African-Americans tend to use the internet mainly for following such people, thereby making Twitter a popular site for them. Education levels of the users tend to be predominantly high school students and the largest age group is between eighteen and twenty-nine.

Table 1

### Who uses Twitter?

*% of internet users within each group who use Twitter*

|   |            |
|---|------------|
| <b>All adult internet users (n=1729)</b>    | <b>15%</b> |
| Men (n=804)                                 | 14         |
| Women (n=925)                               | 15         |
| <b>Age</b>                                  |            |
| 18-29 (n=316)                               | 26**       |
| 30-49 (n=532)                               | 14         |
| 50-64 (n=521)                               | 9          |
| 65+ (n=320)                                 | 4          |
| <b>Race/ethnicity</b>                       |            |
| White, Non-Hispanic (n=1229)                | 12         |
| Black, Non-Hispanic (n=172)                 | 28**       |
| Hispanic (n=184)                            | 14         |
| <b>Annual household income</b>              |            |
| Less than \$30,000/yr (n=390)               | 19         |
| \$30,000-\$49,999 (n=290)                   | 12         |
| \$50,000-\$74,999 (n=250)                   | 14         |
| \$75,000+ (n=523)                           | 17         |
| <b>Education level</b>                      |            |
| No high school diploma <sup>2</sup> (n=108) | 22         |
| High school grad (n=465)                    | 12         |
| Some College (n=447)                        | 14         |
| College + (n=698)                           | 17         |
| <b>Geographic location</b>                  |            |
| Urban (n=520)                               | 19**       |
| Suburban (n=842)                            | 14**       |
| Rural (n=280)                               | 8          |

Source: Pew Research Center's Internet & American Life Project Winter 2012 Tracking Survey, January 20-February 19, 2012. N=2,253 adults age 18 and older, including 901 cell phone interviews. Interviews conducted in English and Spanish. The margin of error is +/-2.7 percentage points for internet users. \*\*Represents significant difference compared with all other rows in group.

Another study of Twitter by Pear Analytics studied the updates that appear on it came to the conclusion that 3% of tweets were connected to news, 3% spam, 5% self promotion, 40% totally pointless babble, 37% conversational and 8% of pass- along value. When one looks at the different breakdown we can conclude that Twitter's entire output can be said to be of self-promotion. Professionals in the entertainment industry as well as politicians from around the world use this platform to present themselves. Entertainers rely on it to self promote and market themselves to the millions that follow

them. Politicians use Twitter to reach out to the millions of people they represent to in order to persuade them on certain issues. Even the “pointless babble”(40% of the content of Twitter) is a form of expression, self-performance and activity that is worth looking into. Users who are continuously posting pictures of themselves or are constantly informing others as to their whereabouts may be seen by some as engaging in pointless babble, but when one examines their tweets closely, it can be seen that users comprehend Twitter as a stage in which they present themselves to the outside world.

The concept of sharing real time information, as Twitter does, is not a new concept and can be considered a continuation of an earlier form of technology called The Notificator. Patented in 1932, the device consisted of a long paper scroll, which moved mechanically behind a thin glass door. Passersby would simply inject two pennies into the device and write a short message (like Twitter there was a word limit), close the glass door and have passersby view it for any messages directed to them. The first major public use of this device was initiated by Japanese rail stations in order to keep passengers connected with one another. Like most technological innovations, it later evolved to be used in ways unintended by its original designers. People began to use it as their own personal message boards and would use it to cancel appointments or to keep friends up to date on their location. Twitter, therefore, can be considered an evolution of this old relic, which allows users from around the world to view notifications, pictures, and videos and

allow further creative uses of the medium to a wider audience. (Twitter's Old Hat If You've Used The Notificator The Guardian. 2010)

Twitter's classification is contentious. Some maintain that it is a virtual community while others call it a micro-blog. When one looks at both sides of the issue and the reasons given, it can be said to be an amalgamation of both micro-blog and virtual community. Although it lacks the uses of avatars associated with Second Life, self- presentation and sharing of information and support amongst individuals is still very strong among Twitter users. Users are allowed a maximum 140-word limit to express their thoughts and feelings. Self-presentation is an ongoing process with Twitter because of the ability to tweet at any moment. The format is rather simple: an account holder has "followers" and those that he or she "follows." Unlike other social networking sites there is no reciprocity when it comes to friendships. With Facebook there is a one to one friendship exchange: if A becomes friends with B, then B automatically becomes a friend with A. With Twitter a user may have thousands of followers and yet may only follow a handful of people. Follower's and those being followed can be viewed as an audience in a play. The more followers one has, the more receptive your actions will be. In Twitter the promise of response and acknowledgment of one's actions may not be guaranteed and therefore users must go the extra mile in making themselves stand out.

Hashtags (#) are employed before a tweet is updated to categorize and organize the topic or issue the user feels a comment may fall under. The @reply (username

inserted) is used to direct the message to whoever the message is to be targeted to. The hashtag is “not only part of online culture,..[but is] defining a new era of communication on the web and IRL (in real life). With over 140 million Tweets projected on Twitter every day, hashtags serve a method to the madness—the ability to group conversations into an organized timeline. The hashtag, which started out as a way to index conversations in Twitter, has now substantially altered how people convey, relay and discover information in and out of the popular nichework. The hashtag has become an effective form of #selfexpression” (The Hashtag Economy, 2011). Hashtags in youth circles have become part of youth expression and language and one sees them being used in papers students write as well as in graffiti on walls. It very well might become part of our linguistic lexicon once the generation currently using it matures into adulthood. Unlike Facebook and MySpace, which allow users to create groups pertaining to a particular cause or subject that others can join, Twitter users simply use the #hashtag before a statement to have a free floating group that anyone can participate in. Other SNSs have groups that one must apply to and then be accepted into, but Twitter has broken down that barrier and all that want to be congregated into a group may do so. Twitter users such as Brook Baynes (political commentator, satirist) use hashtags strategically to post tweets targeted to the user following that she has and other users do similar things especially for marketing purposes.

Tweets can best be seen as “analogous to bees in that they exist both as individuals and as part of a collectively built whole (i.e., the hive). And, like bees, a single tweet is a self-functioning unit in and of itself. Indeed a single tweet can also pack a powerful sting! Ultimately, if an individual tweet is perceived as important to other users, it can travel far and wide, crossing many networks in the process. This is particularly true of tweets in social activism” (Murthy 2013: 12). Tweets, although limited to 140 words, pack a lot of meaning and can be compared to the symbols we use in everyday life. Rene Descartes’ famous philosophical proposition *cogito ergo sum, I think therefore I am*, can be transformed to say *I tweet, therefore I am*. The former proposition means that to doubt one’s existence is proof that one exists. When people tweet about mundane matters, it should not be dismissed as unworthy of study and acknowledgment, but be viewed as people asserting their own existence, affirming their identity and constructing their ‘selves’. People who tweet mundane topics are in fact presenting themselves to millions in a fashion that suits them. Celebrities and journalists rely on tweets heavily to promote themselves and give their two cents on matters trending in the news world. Journalists have taken their commentary from newspapers to a wider and more accessible audience by offering their commentary on Twitter. As a result of the large following many Twitter users have, they must tailor their messages to this diverse group. People have diverse interests from news to commentary to music movies etc. and experienced Twitter users when performing want to keep all their followers and cater to

them all (by different performances for them). It is similar to a lecturer or speaker, invited to speak on a topic, who will ask “who is my audience?” in order to effectively and relevantly speak to them.

### Theories of Performance in Twitter

Goffman considers performance as “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers”(Goffman 1956: 13). We will use this definition of performance theory to understand how technological media such as Twitter conform to this definition, and how the behavior of Twitter users influences the observers.

There are a variety of different ways in which users perform with Twitter. Examples include the type of pictures and videos that are posted, the type of followers or those following an individual has, uses of hashtag, creative uses of the 140 word limit etc. In the real world when an individual encounters another person in his space, the individual “implicitly requests his observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. They are asked to believe that the character they see actually possesses the attribute he appears to possess”(Goffman 1956: 10). It is natural that all people want to be taken seriously in their daily lives and this especially matters when different roles are played in their daily lives. In order for others to accept our performance as authentic, the performer *must* believe in the performance he/she is

conducting. The audience is not “asked” to believe, but the performance is done in such a way as to convince the audience that what he or she is witnessing is real. Users of Second Life actually feel their performance in the digital world manifest itself in the real world, so finding courage in a virtual world may in fact translate to having courage in real life. Another example is of users of Facebook that join certain intellectual groups, post “intelligent” comments and share pictures of themselves in a book shop or library. They are in fact implicitly requesting their “audience” to assume that this is who they are. Twitter users are no different and have a reputation of updating their status to their audience at a rapid speed. This in itself can be seen as a method of authenticating oneself to the larger audience, to show that one is ever-present.

Presentation in the real world is “governed” by certain cues that we all give off, mainly non-verbal communication. In the virtual world such cues are non-existent which forces users to be creative in their methods of communication. Examples of this are ones just given above. Other examples of this may be the way in which a user of Twitter will repost another’s tweet, tweet a profound quote, upload political and social commentary to show others one’s awareness and insight on the particular topic.

Goffman and Turner used the idea of theater as an analogy for how human beings engage in performance and presentation in the real world. Goffman took the idea of a stage and broke it into two distinct arenas. The first geographical position discussed by Goffman is the “front” which is dominated by “that part of an individual’s performance

which regularly functions in a general and fixed fashion to define the situation for those who observe the performance” (Goffman 1956: 13). The front may also include any type of setting such as a physical layout of a room or location. A setting is usually something that is permanent to the front, such as a building layout or prison yard, and therefore it will determine the behavior of people that enter its domain. Setting is an extremely important characteristic of our daily lives, whether we are cognizant of it or not. Politicians and people of status often purposefully choose a setting to conduct their ceremonies which allows their power and influence to be projected very clearly. Retail stores purposely and strategically set items in geographical areas to entice potential buyers to purchase them. In the digital world the concept of front and settings are strongly present and should not be thought of as missing due to the absence of physical space. As a result Twitter does have a front stage along with a backstage, and because of the lack of physicality both have collapsed into one stage. The front stage may be the Twitter feeds one sees either publicly or sometimes restricted to the outside. Another example of the front stage may be the photographs or videos that may be shared with others. The backstage in this case would be the personal messages one can send to others. Goffman believed that social interaction was akin to a drama and that once alone, the individual would be his “true self.” However, contrary to this the experience of being alone is very rare now with Twitter users since all of life is displayed on the screen for others to view.

The front stage in Twitter and the settings that are fixed determines and helps users construct their performance. It consists of a profile picture in the center top with a backdrop of a picture. The sections of pictures and videos are on the left hand side, and to the right of that are the sections of comments. Users may keep their profiles private or allow all to view their stage. Unlike situations in real life in which we see the people we are performing to, users of Twitter do not see the people they are performing to, their audience in the physical sense. Individuals who post a picture or tweet are performing to an “imagined audience.” Walter Ong argued that “a writer’s audience is always fiction”(Ong, 1975) and since self- presentation is a collaborative activity between doer and receiver, individuals are constantly managing what they will do in the front stage. Twitter users must imagine their audience in the same sense that a writer imagines his or her audience when writing a book. It is not readily known who will be viewing; therefore users perform linguistically and visually through the use of photos. It is said that a writer “writes to his audience” conveying his story or message in the language that would be understood by the audience that he wants to reach out to, and the same holds true to Twitter users. An author usually knows who his audience will be. If he is writing a text on anatomy, it can be assumed that it is not directed to the lay reader. The same holds for users of Twitter. The “imagined audience” on Twitter is not always a uniform group; it is diverse with different people and different interests. A Twitter profile may consist of followers who may be a spouse, sibling, parent, colleague and just people who desire to

follow a celebrity or a person of great prestige. Soraya Dorabi who is the social media strategist for the New York Times said that “I’m constantly aware of my followers,” meaning that she knows who her audience is and uses this knowledge to enhance her productivity. To “know one’s audience” means to know as much as possible about the individual or groups. It takes into account demographics such as age, race, language, class and so forth and uses this information as a tool of leverage in one’s interaction with them.

To make her job easy in knowing whom her audience is Dorabi uses a site called Twittersheep that looks into the feeds of Twitter users one may wish to know more about. This application will then inform the inquirer of the type of person they are dealing with by analyzing who the Twitter user follows, is followed by and what they tweet about. Her method of catering to all her followers is “say you’re an author, a book aficionado. Most [of your followers] have tagged music as a passion. You might want to throw them a bone about your favorite song. There are a lot of Venn diagram overlaps in this community. It’s to your advantage to be as much as part of a community as possible which means engaging with people’s interests” (Marwick 2013: 251). Sites such as Twittersheep have helped people compensate for the inability to know who their “imagined audience” is. Furthermore to have access to this application gives one a greater advantage of performance than those in real life. Twitter users are constantly “throwing a bone” to people they follow or are followed by; and we do this in real life as well. This

strategy of “throwing a bone” that Twitter users engage in is what was called by Goffman “staging talk.” He said “the talks that comedians and scholars give are quite different, but their talk about their work is quite similar. To a surprising degree, before the talk, talkers talk to their friends about what will and will not hold the audience, what will and will not give offence; after the talk, all talkers talk to their friends about what will not give offence; after the talk, all talkers talk to their friends about the kind of hall they spoke in, the kind of audience they drew, and the kind of reception they obtained”(Goffman 1956: 112).

Twitter users share a feeling that many would agree to: “when I tweet, I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately. Pure expression of my heart.” Is this really the case? How honest and passionate are the messages updated by Twitter users? In the current culture that we live in, a celebrity prized culture, promoting oneself has become promoting oneself as a commodity to others. Although what is tweeted may be honest and very passionate, much of it is driven to self-promote; this is especially true for celebrities that use the site. In the celebrity prized culture we live in, driven by the desire to be recognized by others, the tempo of performance is increased. When observing the egoism play itself out in the Twitterverse, one is reminded of Shakespeare’s line “a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury signifying nothing.” Meaning that no matter how you tell your story to others in your audience, it is just words with little or no substance and interest and inflated for others to consume. Egoism plays a major part in performance

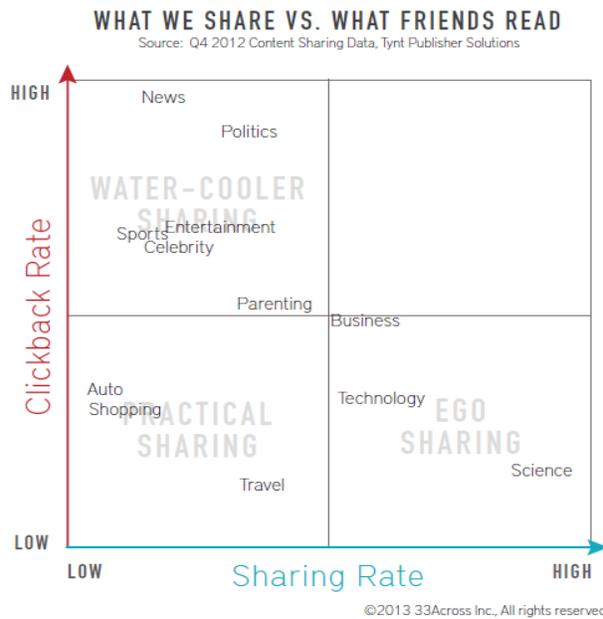
as it does in Twitter. Egoism is about centering the “I” in all affairs and Twitter has its large share of users who are interested in making themselves centers of attention. Goffman observed “we often find that the individual may deeply involve his ego in his identification with a particular role, establishment, and group and in his self- conception as someone who does not disrupt social interaction” (Goffman 1956: 156). To illustrate and prove the connection of egoism in the usage of Twitter and other SNSs we can simply look at networking applications such as Klout, that help measure an individuals online influence in regards to Twitter and other SNS. Klout is an application similar to Twittersheep, but it gives a score to each user from 0-100, basing the score on the level of influence they project in the social networking sphere. Points are garnered simply by having your page visited the most and having your tweets and status updates recognized, shared and retweeted with others. If user’s tweets are shared with someone influential, such as a politician or a celebrity, then the points increase for that lucky individual. Applications such as Klout have expanded past Twitter and Facebook and are partnering with many other SNS. This according to some critics is hazardous for the user because of the social problems it may cause many users. If one is unsatisfied with ones score, one may work towards racking up higher scores by expanding one’s online activities, which only benefits Klout and thereby causes anxiety to the users.

Such sites undoubtedly increase the performance level of many users. Users will go to many lengths to attract more people to their sites. When people write a book or

spray graffiti on a wall, they are not doing it just for their own pleasure, but are motivated to have their message shared. The same case applies to those users of Twitter. It is not enough to tweet a 140-character message. It must be commented on, re-tweeted and acknowledged as existing. “When we examine a group or class, we find that the members of it tend to invest their egos primarily in certain routines, giving less stress to the other ones which they perform” (Goffman 1956:22). Sites such as Klout may cause users to invest heavily in certain aspects of their profiles to attract more people to their site.

Another illustration of how sharing of links, ideas and articles is tied to ego was a study done by 33Across. The study focused on not just the number of articles that was being shared amongst people, but the click back rate, to see whether the recipient actually cared to read the link that was sent to it. For example if [www.gmu.edu](http://www.gmu.edu) had 5000 shares and 2500 clicks, then the click back rate would be 50%. The data as shown in the graph below provides interesting insight into our behavior online. According to the study for every 100- science articles that we read, we will share about twelve of them, whereas for every 100 men’s articles we are to read, we would only share one of them with friends or those in our social network. Oddly enough the data shows us that articles with a high number of shares are less likely to be read, and recipients are more likely read those articles that we are reluctant to share. Why would we share such information with others when this is the case? The answer lies in what Goffman had said about the role of ego in performance. According to the study “People like sharing content that identifies

themselves with specific topics regardless of whether the recipients are actually interested in the topic. We call this type of behavior ego sharing” (“New Research: Content Sharing Motivated Primarily by Ego,” November 10 2013, <http://www.33across.com/pressrelease>).



**Figure 1**

Role switching is common for performers on Twitter as it is in our daily lives. A man may transition roles from being a friend, husband, father, student and son. This can occur because of the new social responsibilities an individual may acquire throughout his life. There are different perspectives on the repercussions of such role switching. An individual may experience *role overload* or *role conflict*. The former means the individual lacks the resources and capability to carry out their roles, whereas the latter refers to the difficulties of carrying out one role because it conflicts with another role. For example a police officer pulling over his son for speeding would cause the police officer difficulty in choosing to perform his roles as a father or protector of the law. Goffman says “a professional man may be willing to take a very modest role in the street, in a shop or in his home, but, in the social sphere which encompasses his display of professional competency, he will be much concerned to make an effective showing” (Goffman 1956: 22). The “social sphere” according to Goffman determines the roles an individual will play dictated by their profession and social status. Role switching may have negative repercussions in individuals such as stress and the causing them to make the difficult task of choosing between one role and the other, but it also may benefit an individual. Research shows that “multiple roles are important for the development of personality and intellect” and that “women who hold the multiple roles of mother, wife, and paid worker have better health than women holding none or only some of these roles”(Marriage and Family Encyclopedia). Even though these ideas of role switching that we are discussing

are applied to people in real life, such occurrences exist in cyber space as well. In Sherry Turkle's study we were introduced to people who in real life were shy, possibly reserved and quiet, and in the virtual world became outgoing, spontaneous and projected an aura about them that attracted many people. These individuals in her study took on different roles to play, even in their virtual communities.

Role switching in the virtual world, especially Twitter, can take an ugly turn. A mother who is respected in the community, a teacher perhaps, may take on a different persona and become a bully online causing immense harm to the person on the other end. Different personas and masks are used by all of us in cyberspace and this is especially true amongst Twitter users. Abuses are abundant on Twitter, but mechanisms have been put in place to protect people. Role switching on Twitter has changed our view of the self. A notable Twitter user Richard Laermer (marketing executive and Huffington Post blogger) has five twitter accounts to "reach specific audiences." This is a form of multiple personality, in which people will break their identities into pieces to be associated with different communities. Turkle argues "we now have a sense of self as multiple. That is becoming the norm, to think of ourselves as a self that is a multiplicity of selves"(Turkle, Sherry. Interview with Simon Mainwaring. October 10, 2011). Twitter has allowed people to put on social masks on a different level. As a medium it acts as an architect in which multiple identities and personalities are practiced daily.

The act of role switching affects not only the person conducting it, but the observer as well. This is known as the chameleon effect. Goffman's criterion for calling an action *performance* is not only the act of performing, but also its ability to have "some influence on its observers." We can assume that "influence" on participants of performance can be either negative or positive. In the virtual world, particularly sites such as Twitter, the audience is not merely a spectator, but is influenced in many different ways. In the real world we have evidence that performance viewed by other people does have an influence, that people that watch and interact with others are influenced by their behaviors and actions. The *chameleon effect* refers to the "non-conscious mimicry of the postures, mannerisms, facial expressions and other behaviors of one's interaction patterns, such that one's behavior passively and unintentionally changes to match that of others in one's current social environment" (Chartrand and Bargh 1999: 893). One can debate whether these actions are performance or simply habits, performed unconsciously, but it is clear that the performance of person A may have a direct effect to person B, which is one of Goffman's criteria for an act being considered a performance. Researchers claim that there is a link between perception (what one observes another do) and behavior (the act the observer carries out). Those that want to restrict viewing of violent video games and movies to young children use this theory, arguing that one imitates what one observes. The fact that this theory is applied to real world events should not negate the usefulness it may have in the virtual world. One study performed

with avatars in the virtual world illustrated how people in congregation online do mimic one another's movements (in this case avatars) even in the digital world. Although the findings in the study and the idea of looking into such a phenomenon is still in its infancy, we can safely assume that those that mimic and project interests and ideals to others do receive higher acknowledgement. In fact, the idea of impression management, tailoring one's behavior online, is connected to the idea of a chameleon effect. The chameleon effect follows impression management and the latter is done sometimes to achieve the former (chameleon effect). Impression management is not performed without aim, it is to get results and action that are desired or simply to have others think highly of the performer. Impression management is the art of conducting one's performance to influence the behavior and perspective of other people. The individual engages in a sort of mimicry of those that he or she is following or is being followed by. Since SNSs allow users to create their 'selves' from a blank canvas for others to see, we get a picture, a "reality" of them, that is in actuality an ideal picture. The audience that views these tweets and pictures are not aware of the façade of these presentations. In a play an audience viewing the front stage knows that the performance being conducted is not real, even though they may be affected by it. However, with the collapse of context and the different stages of our lives merging into one stage, there has been a loss of what is *real*. There have been many studies that have concluded that the audience is left feeling

depressed, sad and bad about themselves after viewing Twitter updates, along with Facebook status updates and Instagram pictures.

Since the stages have been compressed into one stage the audience is not aware that what they are viewing is performance, but think that it is in fact a part of real life. A study done by the University of Michigan with a sample of 82 students who used Facebook concluded “We were able to show on a moment-to-moment basis throughout the day how people’s mood fluctuated depending on their Facebook usage. We measured lots and lots of other personality and behavioral dimensions, like, for example, frequency of Facebook use, but none of the factors that we assessed influenced the results. The more you used Facebook, the more your mood dropped... The negative effect of Facebook use on happiness became more pronounced the more you interacted with other people within that time frame” (Geoffrey Mohan, “Facebook is a bummer, study says” Los Angeles Times, August 14, 2013). Although the sample size was small there have been numerous other studies conducted in different countries that show that users feel more depressed about themselves when viewing others profiles. Why is this so? It is because of the “fear of missing out” people have when viewing others on their expensive vacation, or the fact that “friends” of theirs have an active social scene etc. An audience member may feel that he or she is inadequate and fall deep into depression. Users use the “accomplishments” of others as a benchmark for their own lives and feel bad for not living up to it. However, there are coping mechanisms and strategies people employ for

this. In order to counter this envy they may feel of people who self-promote excessively, users also counteract by self-promoting themselves, which in turn may make others envy them. This back and forth of outdoing one another is what the researcher called The *self-promotion-envy spiral* (Krasnova, Wenninger, Widjaja and Buxmann 2013: 13)

A user of Twitter posted on her blog similar sentiments such as these we have been discussing. She started off her blog by saying “I hate Twitter because it consumes me and I never stop thinking about it. I hate Twitter because it fills my brain with sad news and events. I hate Twitter because people are so mean to me for no reason and I don’t understand why. I hate Twitter because it exposes me to disgusting people who bully others. I hate Twitter because when I get mean messages, I like to look for mean messages about other people I like, because it makes me feel better, like I’m not the only one. I hate Twitter because it makes me jealous. I hate Twitter because it makes me feel bad about myself. I hate Twitter because it makes me feel good about myself” (Posted in Hello Giggles blog entry, August, 20, 2012). To show the effects Twitter usage has on emotions a poll conducted by Anxiety UK found that two-thirds of people found it hard to sleep after viewing Twitter and Facebook and “ 53 per cent said the launch of social networking sites had changed their behavior - and of those, 51 per cent said the impact had been negative. And in order to save oneself from this anxiety over 60 percent have admitted to shutting down devices and gadgets to get away from the stresses of these SNS. The anxiety they feel is from viewing the performance of other users, false

performance and presentation and assuming that it is authentic and proof of their own shortcomings.

The negative aspects of viewing Twitter are only one side of the coin and we should not think that the influence of performance on an audience is only negative. Users who present themselves to an audience may in fact help uplift and motivate their audience to overcome challenges they may be facing. We can say with confidence that performers of Twitter played a big role in helping shape the uprising in the Middle East known as the “Arab Spring.” Virtual communities in Arab countries have helped stimulate debate, point to corruption and different ills of society and in turn shed light on many other problems. These actions thereby give other citizens a reaffirmation that there are others in their society who hold similar views and then are driven to take action on them. Furthermore, sites such as Twitter show people that there is an underground culture that is sympathetic to the grievances of fellow citizens. This is what happened in the Arab world: censorship failed and the society pushed forward debate and dialogue, which brought about major upheaval and change. Furthermore, individuals who use Twitter and other SNSs are influenced by people’s political and social engagement and may therefore want to be a part of the process as well. There is a reason why politicians and other prominent people in society use Twitter: they know the massive influence (positive or negative) it may have on others and society as a whole. Goffman’s theory of impression management has given rise to an occupation in which “impression managers/coaches”

use his theories on human behavior and persuade people in certain directions. Much of this work is now being done on sites such as Twitter. An entrepreneur touts Twitter's dominance over Facebook saying "Facebook is a cocktail party and so when you are engaged in Facebook you're surrounded, sometimes very peripherally but surrounded, by people that you know and you like and that are part of your social graph. Twitter's not that. Twitter is more like somebody standing on the street corner with a megaphone saying, 'Hey, if your interested in the Toronto Maple Leafs, check out this article!'" And I may be interested and I might check it out or I may just walk right by" (Fischer and Reuber 2011: 3). Many corporations are seeing the power of impression management and the influence that performative actions may have on their followers. Which is why companies like Dell are able to bring in \$3 million in revenues by using Twitter and why the head of the company Zappo's encourages his employees to communicate with customers and the outside world via Twitter saying that "for customers, I think it's a way to get an inside glimpse of what our people are like and what our culture is like. Our belief is that your culture and your brand are, ultimately, the same thing"(Fischer and Reuber 2011:3). This attraction by companies to use Twitter empowers the consumers and gives them an audience (company leaders) to voice their concerns and complaints and to have influence on product decision-making.

Victor Turner, unlike Goffman, separated performance studies into two categories, "cultural performance" and "social drama." According to Turner the latter is

“ a sequence of social interactions of a conflictive, competitive or agonistic type”(Turner 1988:33) in which there are four phases of social action

- “Breach of norm-governed social relations that have liminal characteristics, a liminal between more or less stable social processes;”
- “Crisis, during which there is a tendency for the breach to widen and in public forums, representatives of order are dared to grapple with it;”
- “Redressive action, ranging from personal advice and informal mediation or arbitration to formal juridical and legal machinery, and to resolve certain kinds of crisis or legitimate other modes of resolution, to the performance of public ritual. Reintegration of the disturbed social group, or of the social recognition and legitimation of irreparable schism between the contesting parties (Turner 1987)”

“Cultural performance” on the other hand is when culture is understood by marked parameters defined by performers and the audience. Unlike the performance of social dramas, cultural performances “belong to culture’s ‘subjunctive mood’ and are not always an accurate description of what is really happening. They furthermore include participants of a theater, concert and “also prayers, ritual readings and recitations, rites and ceremonies, festivals, and all those things we usually class under religion and ritual rather than with the cultural and artistic”(Singer 1972:71). The difference between the two is that social drama is meant to avert or damp down a crisis, whereas the latter is more in line with what Goffman was focusing on. The main difference between the two

theorists is that “Turner's model, like Goffman’s...allows us to escape a certain solipsism, or one-eyedness, by enlarging our field of reference. When Goffman says that people are like stage performers and Turner says that social conflicts are like plays, we are applying a model from one semantic network to a subject in another network whose characteristics we wish to elucidate by metaphorical comparisons. The metaphor, if it is a good one, will draw out some of the characteristics of the phenomenon but will leave others obscure or invisible that might well be picked up by still other metaphors seeking still different characteristics” (States, 1996: 7). Neither could have predicted that there would come a time in which individuals from around the world would have the opportunity to engage in performance and presentation with others through mediums such as Twitter. Of the two, Victor Turner came close to foreshadowing the trajectory of performance by saying “Genres of cultural performance are not simple mirrors but magical mirrors of social reality: they exaggerate, invert, re-form, magnify, minimize, dis-color, re-color, even deliberately falsify, chronicled events.” Although we do this to some degree in our real lives, the internet especially Twitter has allowed us to truly design, create, “dis-color, re-color and deliberately falsify” ourselves in a magical world, that being Twitter in which we become masters of our own lives and control how others see us. Much of his work on rituals have very little relevance to what our topic is about, but we can see important contributions from his theories of performance and the relevancy of it pertaining to Twitter.

## Chapter Four

### Conclusions

Human beings have the uniqueness of being referred to as *homo performans*-performing creatures. There are animals that engage in performances as well in order to show dominance or find a mate, but our performances are on a much different level, more sophisticated, complex and done for a variety of reasons. The theories of performances that we have been looking into were designed with the intention of focusing on rituals, the activities of people in everyday life and people who perform in theater. The early theorists who worked on these topics did not intend for their ideas to be applied on media such as Twitter simply because these media did not exist at the time. However, like any theory or idea that is introduced in the arena of discussion and learning, theory can be stretched and applied to different times and can be connected to other parts of human interaction and behavior. And with recent work from people like Sherry Turkle and Dhiraj Murthy we see the application of old theories to new technological media such as Twitter. Looking at the immense work on performance and the little of it we examined in this paper and our discussion on Twitter and other SNSs, we can confidently conclude

that the theories of Goffman, and of Turner partly, are related. The usage of analogies connecting performance to theater can be extended to Twitter. The only major difference we can possibly point to is that the performance that occurs on Twitter is on a heightened level, and that is mostly never ending and reaches a far wider audience. The other difference is that performance on Twitter is not conducted in a physical space, but on a screen. Individuals now simply sit behind a screen and conduct their performance and presentation to the rest of the world with the uses of avatars, photography and most importantly writing.

With the advent of SNSs and the fact that so many people use these sites we can argue that performance and presentation is not simply the physical act, but may now involve language usage, photography and videography and artwork. Conducting performance through writing is an ancient phenomenon, with the earliest graffiti being found in in Rome. The messages were either political or social commentary and some were messages directed to individuals akin to tweets or Facebook updates. Interestingly these graffiti were not placed in random places but on coliseums and on the walls of the homes of elites. Messages were not deemed effective by just writing them, but had to be placed in a particular location, similar to Twitter users and the methods they use to direct messages targeted to others. This type of presentation leads to drama (which has been around for a long time) and finally performance and presentation being conducted in virtual communities. It seems that the study of performance and presentation will be

focused more on digital communities as opposed to real life, simply because of the immense time we all spend online, especially those in western industrial countries.

Goffman's work is not a theory per se, but provides us with parameters on what to observe and what mundane activities may be worthy of analysis, general principles of social behavior. Goffman's six major principles of presentation are:

- Performance
- Team
- Region/stages
- Discrepant roles
- Communication out of character
- Impression management

Participants of Twitter have exhibited all of these different principles when presenting themselves on Twitter. It was illustrated that performance is conducted; teams are performances conducted by groups, clusters of people, and we have observed the importance of performing in groups with Twitter users. We noticed that the stages that would have existed in real life had collapsed and that users were performing on one stage all the time. Discrepant roles or roles that are inconsistent are very prominent on Twitter as we examined. Roles are continually switched, altered for the benefit of the performer and the audience. Users of Twitter are constantly communicating out of character,

meaning that they are taking up different personas to identify with. The medium allows for this because of the anonymity provided and because of the ability to play different roles. The ability to communicate out of character in this case is much more likely in Twitter because of the different mechanisms and roles people can take on. And finally we also observed that impression management is very prominent on Twitter and is very rarely absent with Twitter users because of the fact that they may be connected at all times.

Much of our daily interaction with people is similar to theater. It consists of actors (participants), dialogue, improvisation and an audience. Furthermore, our own lexicon describes the chaotic interaction of people and groups of peoples as “drama.” In fact, many users of Twitter cite one of the drawbacks of the platform as its having “too much drama.” Dramaturgy, the study of Drama goes back to Aristotle when he said drama was a representation of “men in action and does not use narrative” (Aristotle 1449) and the study of performance is an extension of this minus the absence of narrative. Goffman used dramaturgy to study human behavior in everyday life whereas Turner uses his idea of “social drama” to understand the experiences of people who deviate from the norm of everyday life through their uses of ritual. With these two different approaches we see Twitter users utilize their medium in a ritual form deviating from their actual behavior in real life. The uses of social masks in Twitter are a case in point in which we very rarely show our true selves on Twitter or in any SNS. Goffman’s approach and unit of analysis

is the individual, and we get an insight of the individual impact of the person on Twitter. Turner's theories help us when we study Twitter and the performance in SNSs by the society as a whole, since his unit of analysis was the society or community rather than the individual. The constant updating of one's tweet has become a form of ritual for many people, exposing their thoughts and feelings to their imagined audience, while being absent to their real surroundings. The act of updating tweets is called a "ritual view of communication" in which each single tweet is a snapshot of that person's current social reality. Although the term *ritual* may have religious and spiritual connotations, as it did with Turner's work, it can also mean the collective act of consuming information and disseminating it. Turner's criterion was for performance to be conducted during social crisis in a community or even a rite of passage that must be completed. We see with users of Twitter that the medium is used during periods of social crisis in their own life or even a crisis in the news. Whenever there is a mass shooting or the events of the Arab spring which led millions of people to form communities online and engage in ritual of performance to show their solidarity and unity with the people in trouble. This explains why during a crisis the number of tweets increases exponentially, and when the crisis is over or averted the tweets come to a trickle. Rituals function as bringing about social change according to Turner, and we can positively say that the work of people on Twitter who see crisis and engage and confront it certainly brings about societal change. A recent account of this can be seen in the case of Trayvon Martin, in which it was social media,

particularly Twitter, that brought attention to a case, which might have gone on unnoticed by all. And furthermore the outcome of the trial blew the Twitterverse into frenzy. We can argue whether the role of Twitter brought about societal change or not in this case, but what cannot be argued is the impact Twitter is now having in bringing issues that concern, or should concern, many people to the forefront.

The hope of this paper was to analyze the theories of presentation and performance and to see whether these ideas would have explained the behavior of individuals online. I chose Twitter because of the fact that it is still a relatively new platform and because of the fact that users are still signing up to join the site. Much of our current discourse, whether in popular media, news circles or political commentary is almost always conducted via Twitter. When a politician or celebrity has news to announce it is done through the use of Twitter first. Just this fact explains the importance of this technological medium. Although the theories of performance that we have been discussing may have had some limitations, we can confidently say that what was stated by Goffman and Turner applies to what we observe on Twitter. Furthermore, when examined closely, the medium Twitter along with Facebook and whatever else will be introduced really does act as a “magical mirror of social reality” and serves as a vehicle for millions of participants to not only perform and present, but to serve as spectators and audiences to millions of users.

## REFERENCES

Sherry Turkle. 2011. *Alone Together: Why We Expect More From Technology and Less From Each Other*. Basic Books 1<sup>st</sup> Edition. 2011

Erving Goffman. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Anchor Books edition. 1959.

Howard Rheingold. *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Front*. The MIT Press Revised Edition. November 1, 2001.

Victor Turner. *The Anthropology of Performance*. PAJ Books. June 1 1988.

Robert Putnam. *Bowling Alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Touchstone Books by Simon & Schuster. August 7 2001.

Richard Bauman. *Verbal Art as Performance*. Waveland Pr Inc. January 1984.

Richard Singer. *What a Great Tradition Modernizes*. New York Praeger. 1972.

Dhiraj Murthy. *Twitter: Social Communication in The Twitter Age*. DMS-Digital Media and Society, Book 6. January 9, 2013.

Tom Boellstorff. *Coming of Age in Second Life: An Anthropologist Explores the Virtually Human*. Princeton University Press. (March 22, 2010).

Eileen Fischer and Rebecca Reuber. 2010. "Social Interaction via New Social Media: (How) Can Interactions on Twitter Affect Effectual Thinking and Behavior?" *Journal of Business Venturing*, 1-18. DOI 10.1016/j.jbusvent.2010.09.002

Tanya Chartrand and John Bargh. 1999. "The Chameleon Effect: The Perception-Behavior Link and Social Interaction." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 893-910.

Nicolas Ducheneaut, Ming-Hui Wen, Nicholas Yee and Greg Wadley. 2009. "Body and Mind: A Study of Avatar Personalization in Three Virtual Worlds." Proceeding CHI '09 Proceedings of the SIGCHI Conference on Human Factors in Computing Systems, 1151-1160. DOI 10.1145/1518701.151887

Victor Turner. "Symbolic Studies. 1975. Annual Review of Anthropology, Vol. 4. 145-161.

Samuel M. Wilson and Leighton C. Peterson. 2002. "The Anthropology of Online Communities". Annual Review of Anthropology. DOI 10.1146

Alice E. Marwick and Danah Boyd. 2010. "I Tweet Honestly, I Tweet Passionately: Twitter Users, Context Collapse, and the Imagined Audience." New Media Society. DOI 10.1177/1461444810365313

Ester Vosu. 2010. "Metaphorical Analogies in Approaches of Victor Turner and Erving Goffman: Dramaturgy in Social Interaction and Dramas of Social Life." Sign Systems Studies.

Mitja D. Back, Juliane M. Stopfer, Simine Vazire, Sam Gaddis, Stefan C. Schmukle, Boris Egloff and Samuel Gosling. 2010. "Facebook Profiles Reflect Actual Personality, Not Self-Idealization." Psychological Science. DOI 10.1177/0956797609360756

William Sims Bainbridge. 2007. "The Scientific Research Potential of Virtual Worlds.." Science, New Series, Volume. 317

Victor Turner. 1986. "Body, Brain and Culture." Performing Arts Journal, Volume 10. 26-34.

Victor Turner. 1982. "Images of Anti-Temporality: An Essay in the Anthropology of Experience." The Harvard Theological Review, Volume 75.

Daun G. Kendig. 1993. "Acting on Conviction: Reclaiming the World and the Self Through Performance." Anthropological Quarterly Volume 66

Victor Turner. 1980. "Social Dramas and Stories about them." Critical Inquiry Volume 7.

Gregory Lastowka and Dan Hunter. 2004. "The Laws of the Virtual Worlds." California Law Review Volume 92

Nick Yee, Jason Ellis and Nicolas Ducheneaut. 2009. "The Tyranny of Embodiment." *Artifact* Volume 2

John A. Bargh, Katelyn Y.A. McKenna and Grainne M. Fitzsimons. 2002. "Can You See the Real Me? Activation and Expression of the "True Self" on the Internet." *Journal of Social Issues* Volume 58

E. Gabriella Coleman. 2010. "Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Media." *Annual Review of Anthropology*. DOI 10.1146/annurev.anthro.012809.104945

Helen Harris, Jeremy N. Bailenson, Alexia Nielsen and Nick Yee. 2009. "The evolution of Social Behavior over Time in Second Life." *PRESENCE: Teleoperators & Virtual Environments*.

Gary B. Palmer and William R. Jankowiak. 1996. "Performance and Imagination: Toward an Anthropology of the Spectacular and the Mundane." *Cultural Anthropology* Volume 11

John, Graham St. 2008. "Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance: An Introduction." In *Victor Turner and Contemporary Cultural Performance*. Edited by Graham St. John. Berghahn Books.

Sherry Turkle. 1988. "Artificial Intelligence and Psychoanalysis: A New Alliance." *Daedalus* Volume 117.

Benjamin N. Colby, James W. Fernandez and David B. Kronenfeld. 1981. "Toward a Convergence of Cognitive and Symbolic Anthropology." *American Ethnologist* Volume 8.

Paul C. Adams. 1997. "Cyberspace and Virtual Places." *Geographical Review* Volume 87.

Patricia A. Adler and Peter Adler. 2008. "The Cyber Worlds of Self-injurer: Deviant Communities, Relationships, and Selves." *Symbolic Interaction* Volume 31

Don Merten and Gary Schwartz. 1982. "Metaphor and Self: Symbolic Process in Everyday Life." *American Anthropologist, New Series* Volume 84.

Charles W. Nuckolls. 2004. "Toward a Cultural Psychology of Voluntary Action Beliefs." Anthropos Institute

Waltraud Kokot, Hartmut Lang and Eike Hinz. 1982. "Current Trends in Cognitive Anthropology." Anthropos Institute.

Leo Howe. 2000. "Risk, Ritual and Performance." The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute Volume 6.

Sapir, Edward. 1927. "The Unconscious Patterning of Behavior in Society." In Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory, edited by Paul A. Erickson and Liam D. Murphy.

Turner, Victor. 1967. "Symbols in Ndembu Ritual" In Readings for a History of Anthropological Theory, edited by Paul A. Erikson and Liam D. Murphy.

Ania Lichtarowicz, "Virtual kingdom richer than Bulgaria", BBC, March 2, 2009, accessed May of 2013 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/sci/tech/1899420.stm>.

Aaron Smith and Joanna Brenner, "Twitter use 2012", Pew Internet and life project, May 31, 2012, <http://pewinternet.org/Reports/2012/Twitter-Use-2012.aspx>

"Twitter study 2009", Pear Analytics, August 2009

Geoffery Mohan, "Facebook is a bummer, study says" L.A Times, August 14, 2013.

Leo Benedictus, "Twitter's Old Hat If You've Used The Notificator", The Guardian, June 15 2010, accessed May 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/technology/2010/jun/15/the-notificator-precursor-of-twiitter>

Brian Solis, "The Hashtag Economy", June 16, 2011, <http://www.briansolis.com/2011/06/hashtag-this-the-culture-of-social-media-is/>

Walter Ong, "The Writers audience is always a fiction" PMLA, January 1975

"New research: content sharing motivated primarily by ego", March 28, 2013, <http://www.33across.com/pressrelease-032813.php#axzz2lWqYjzV7>

