

Social Computing Capstone

Day 6: Online Social Identity and Comparison

CSE 481p | Winter 2022

Amy X. Zhang

Assistant Professor | University of Washington, Allen School of Computer Science & Engineering

Schedule for today's class

- Short lecture + discuss reading (social comparison) (30 min)
- Lindsay Blackwell from Twitter is joining us to talk about her work (20-30 min)
 - Please prep in your mind questions for her based on your reading on restorative justice!
- Group work time and 1-on-1 check-ins (20 min)

Announcements

- (before class) G1 is due! Let me know if you would like an extension. We'll leave comments in your doc, and then you can work on getting the text up onto your website as your first blog post.
- G2 is due next Tuesday - it is a 5 minute presentation by your group to the class. It should be in a "pitch" style - sell us on your project direction! Motivate your direction and ideas using your user research and summarize what you learned. Feel free to ask questions of the class to get feedback. All group members should participate in presenting.
- Tuesday is dedicated to presentations and feedback.

Online Social Identity and Comparison

How do we demonstrate our identities online and compare ourselves to others?

- Self-presentation
- Context collapse
- Friendship paradox
- Alt accounts



"On the Internet, nobody knows you're a dog."

Self-presentation:

“All the world’s a stage and we are merely actors” - Shakespeare

Like actors, we oftentimes have a “front stage” (when we know people are looking) and “back stage” behavior that are different.

In the “front stage”, we do things to improve our public self-image.

In the “back stage”, we can relax and step out of character.

In the offline space, we do this naturally through actions like stepping in and out of the home. **Online, performativity becomes heightened and oftentimes quantified.** Do you ever feel stress about how you are choosing to present yourself on social media?

ERVING
GOFFMAN

THE PRESENTATION OF
SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE



“One of the most trenchant contributions to social psychology in this generation.” —American Journal of Sociology

Self-presentation: We are different people when we are in different spaces

We do not have a static set of behaviors that we perform in every environment.

Like actors, we change our behavior to guide the impressions that people form of us.

Our behaviors change as we enter different social environments.

It's not necessarily "inauthentic" to present different faces!

ERVING
GOFFMAN

**THE PRESENTATION OF
SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE**



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Self-presentation: We are different people when we are in different spaces

Amy in CSE 481 p

teacher

Amy with Ph.D. students

advisor

Amy with partner

wife

Amy on social media

it's complicated

ERVING
GOFFMAN

*THE PRESENTATION OF
SELF IN EVERYDAY LIFE*



*“One of the most trenchant contributions to social psychology
in this generation.” —American Journal of Sociology*

Context collapse

First coined by danah boyd, it builds on Goffman to observe that social media sites don't allow us to specify specific audiences when we post.

So a post you meant for your friends can be read by your coworkers. Your post with an in-joke can be reshared to a huge audience that doesn't get the context.

This can lead to "context collapse", which can lead to instances of public shaming because of a perceived norm violation.

Article

I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience

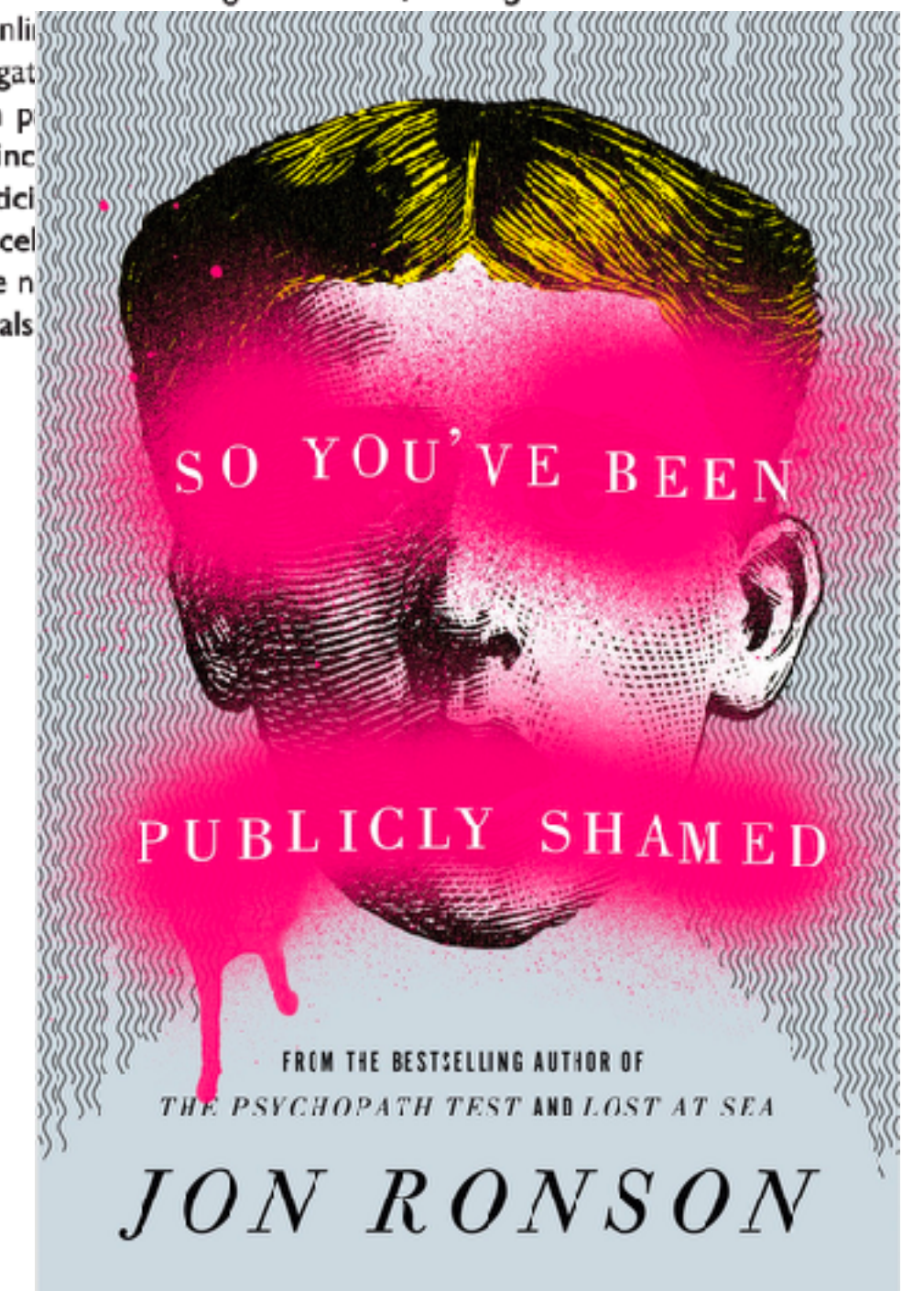
Alice E. Marwick
New York University, USA

danah boyd
Microsoft Research, USA

Abstract

Social media technologies collapse multiple audiences into single contexts, making it difficult for people to use the same techniques online as in face-to-face conversation. This article investigates 'imagined audiences' on Twitter. We talked with people and their followings to understand their techniques, including concealing subjects, and maintaining authentic self-management resemble the practices of 'micro-celebrity' and strategic self-commodification. Our model of the networked-to-many communication through which individuals are evoked through their tweets.

new media & society
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As one's followers grows beyond small groups, people may take a "lowest denominator approach" - posting what is most agreeable to the most/most important people in their audience. Or they self-censor. **How might this affect how you post?**

Then, say a lot of people are posting this way, how might this now warp your perception of reality...or even actually change reality by impacting broad cultural trends? (See our reading - what leads to "Instagram Face"?)

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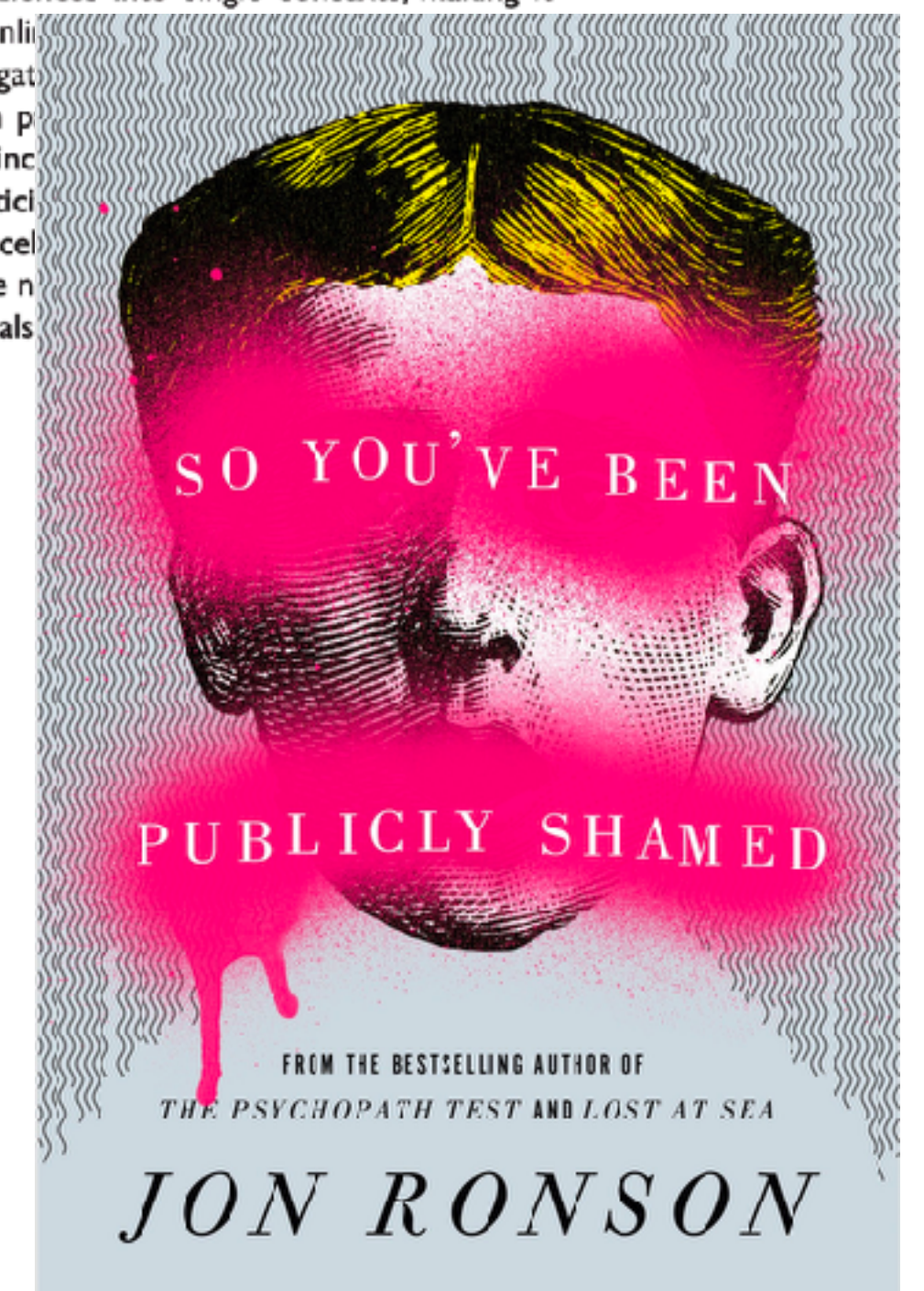
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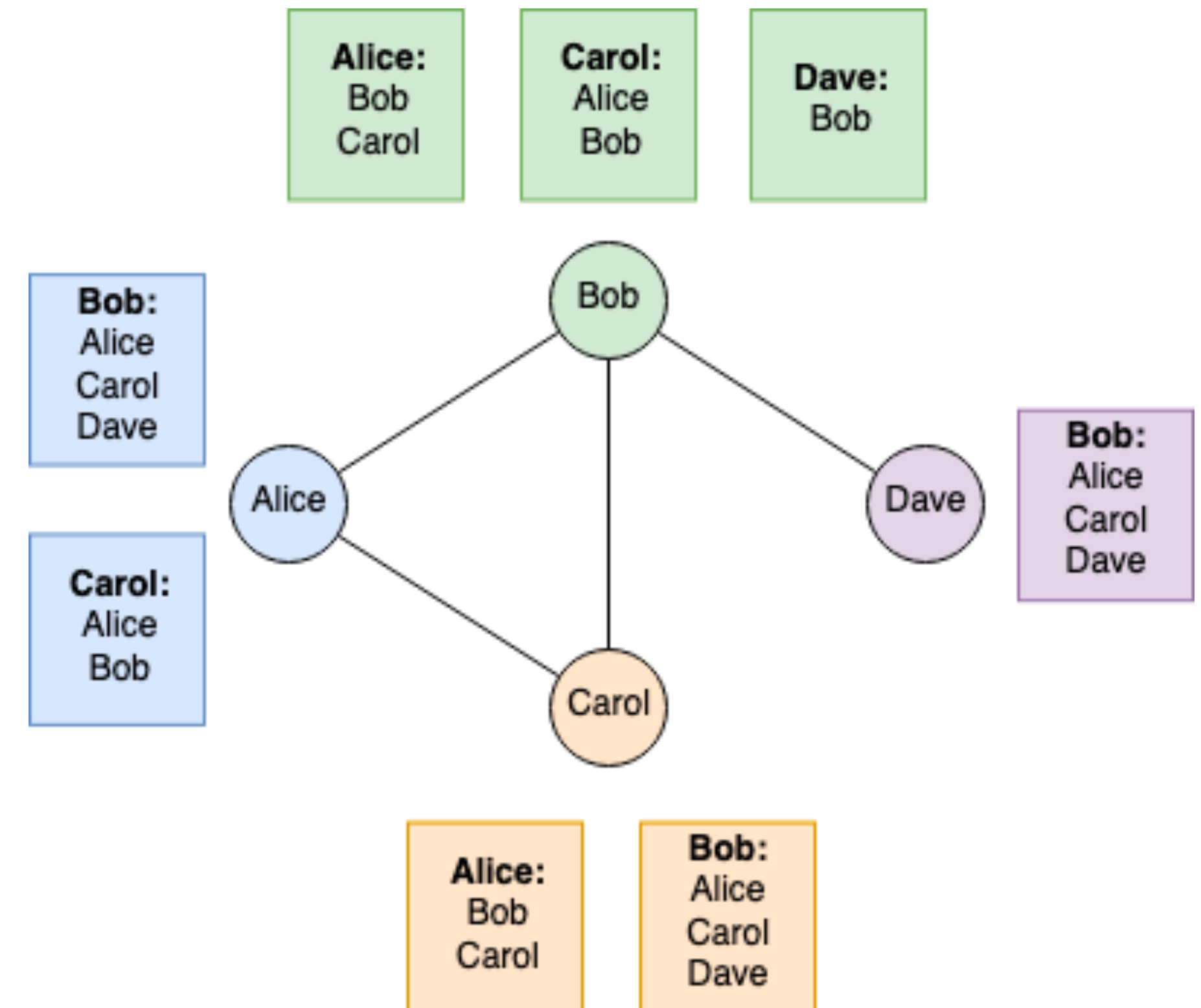
Friendship paradox

Discovered by sociologist Scott Feld in 1991

Most people have fewer friends than their friends have, on average.

Why? It's a form of sampling bias in which people with more friends are more likely to be in one's own friend group. Or, one is less likely to be friends with someone who has very few friends.

This is an example of how being in a social network can distort one's local observations. Given the vast inequality in follow relationships online, this gets even more exacerbated!



Impact of social comparison online?

Research is still unclear. From Facebook's own leaked study: "**30% of teen girls felt Instagram made them feel worse about their bodies**" but these are self-reports [1].

Studies connecting usage with objective measures aren't able to find a clear link [2]. Also, some studies show use of social media make people feel better when they're depressed, stressed, etc.

It may depend to a degree *how* you use social media [3], as the term is so broad now to encompass so many activities. Lurking and scrolling is quite different from DMing friends.


[1] <https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-instagram-is-toxic-for-teen-girls-company-documents-show-11631620739>

[2] George MJ, Jensen MR, Russell MA, Gassman-Pines A, Copeland WE, Hoyle RH, Odgers CL. Young Adolescents' Digital Technology Use, Perceived Impairments, and Well-Being in a Representative Sample. *J Pediatr*. 2020 Apr;219:180-187. doi: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2019.12.002. Epub 2020 Feb 11. PMID: 32057438; PMCID: PMC7570431.

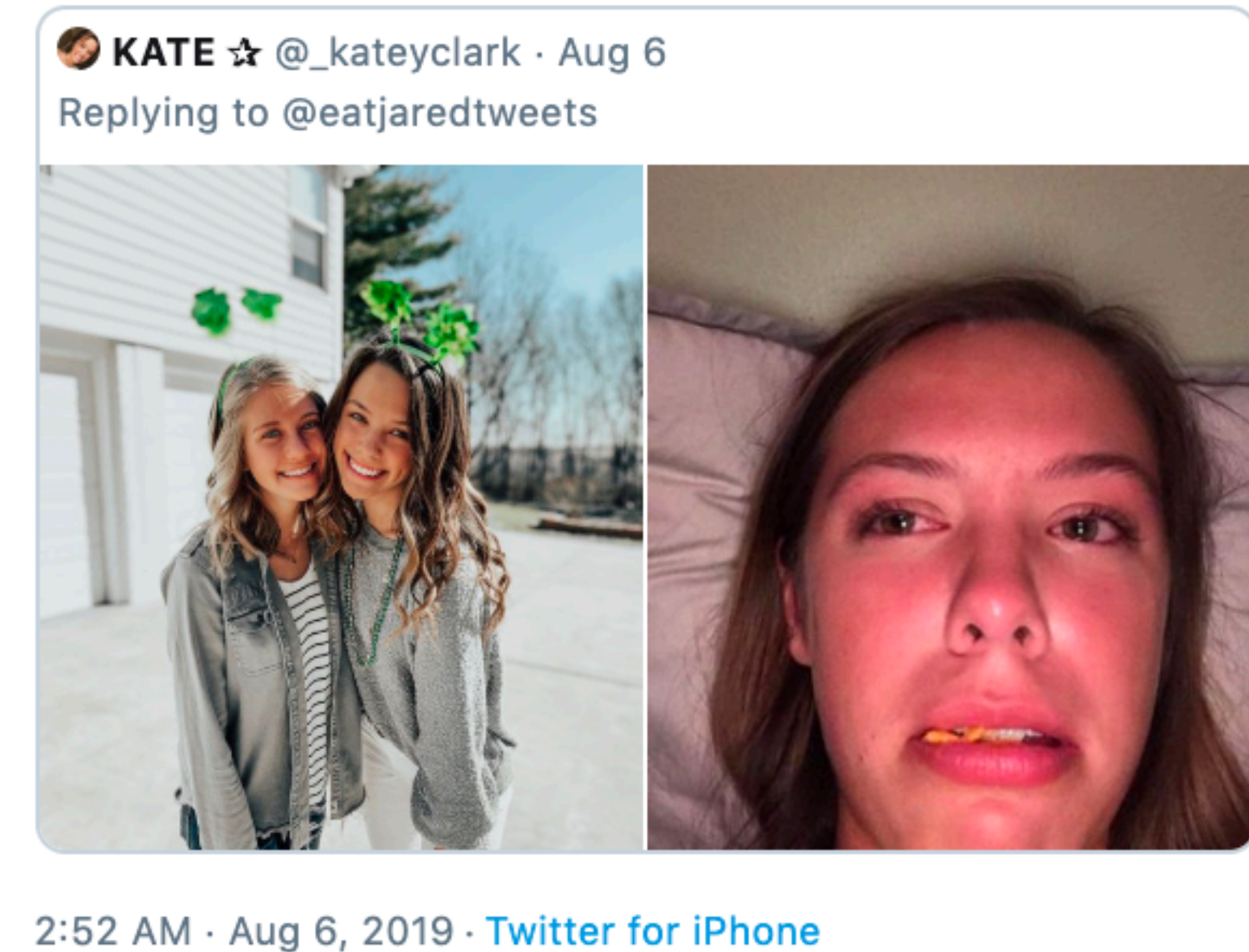
[3] Burke, Moira, Cameron Marlow, and Thomas Lento. "Social network activity and social well-being." *Proceedings of the SIGCHI conference on human factors in computing systems*. 2010.

Alt accounts



 **sam** ♀ ♥ ☐
@sipsamsam

" post a pic from your insta next to one from your finsta " this how it really be 🤔🤔🤔



Having a finsta alleviates social pressure for people. This put into place Goffman's "front stage" vs "back stage" behavior + reduces context collapse.

Do you have mutiple/alt accounts, and how do you find them useful?

However, it's still a blunt instrument compared to what we do offline. As these different accounts evolve over time, how might you see this shifting?