

Reflection Essay

The people closest to us may not really be the person they portray themselves as. Yes, that can be a hard pill to swallow but humans enjoy putting on an act when they enter the social aspect of life. All social interactions that take place between us humans are about putting on a front that we believe is what others want to hear. Let us consider our species all a bunch of actors, constantly trying to reap the benefits of an audience and constantly searching for this feeling of approval and appreciation from them. What goes on when the audience (friends, family, employees etc.) is not around, is most likely an entirely different act than what is shown when around those people.

Throughout my entire life I have always been surrounded by my supportive parents, I have a great group of really close friends back at home in Charlotte and a large group of great friends at college in my fraternity, I have always played sports and loved it. Yet, for the past few years till the present day, I have this empty void inside of me. I tend to fall into phases of really bad depression and forget about all of those things I just listed off. When I fall into these phases, I close off all communications with my friends and family and just stay by myself and think and rot in bed for days on end. I have never really found a way to fix why this way and I feel as if I will never be able to fill that empty void inside of me. The craziest part about all of this is that I have never told a soul. Not my parents, not my closest friends, nobody. I put on this act that I am content with who I am and that I never have any problems, I make sure that everyone knows I am happy, so they never raise or ask any questions that I do not want to answer. I laugh at unfunny jokes, engage in conversations that I cannot stand to listen to, it is all simply just an act for the audience.

invitation, I spent the entire day in my bathroom and room doing nothing but thinking. I spoke to not a single person in my family that day and I did not want to go through any human interaction at all, especially with my friends at the time. However, I overthought extremely and figured if I did not go bowling with them that they might think something is wrong and begin to question who I am. So, I went. Throughout my time at the bowling alley, I was being bombarded with questions that on the inside I did not want to answer, but since I am trying to portray myself differently than how I really was at the time, I had to go along with the act and answer. When I would sit by myself or go to the bathroom alone, I became a completely different person than who I was while I was in front of an audience. The most relieving feeling ever was when we finished, and I got back into my car, and I could officially stop putting on this act to falsely portray who I really am. Once I got off the front stage and entered the back, I almost found myself at peace and still due to this day.

Erving Goffman explains that all human interaction is just like play. In short, the people you communicate with are your audience, and you perform on the front stage. The performance is your entire interaction. The stage is the setting in which the social interaction takes place in, for example, living room, kitchen, school etc... Goffman mentions that posture and demeanor are large aspects of social interaction because it helps portray the front that is most liking being shown. Your audience is most likely to be constantly scanning for details while you are performing your role, with the audience constantly judging, there will be times where your role occasionally fails. When things become awkward or uncomfortable, that is when you know that you failed the act of portraying your certain role. Once the social interaction is gone and the audience is away, that is when you enter the backstage. The backstage is when you can stop your act and put an end to the front that you are showing to your audience. The backstage is where

await the next social interaction that will come.

This concept is not always shown in person, in today's society social media is an extremely popular use of technology and everyone is on it. When celebrities or your friends are uploading photos for the world to see, they are most likely trying to show off or put on a front about the life they live on the front stage in front of an audience. They will tend to flaunt this magnificent life or story for lots of people to see because they strive for this type of envy, they want their audience to try to be like them and want what they are showing on social media. But in reality, the backstage of their lives is most likely to be not everything they are showing off on these social media platforms, all they care about is their act and the attention they receive from doing so. Social media in the recent years has truly shown how real Goffman's concept about the front and backstage really is, it is well known and extremely common for people to “flex” these amazing lives that they say they live, technology has made it super easy and greatly accessible for people to show off on the front stage.

For a long time, we as humans have been taking part in Goffman's concept of the front and backstage without even realizing it, once he was able to decipher the concept and put it into words is when people realize how accurate it really is. I am such a firm believer of this concept that Goffman provided us with because I have taken part in it for years without knowing it until I learned about it in my Sociology class. I have also been seeing for the longest time over social media and when I am simply having conversations with people I know. Ervin Goffman's analysis on the performance of humans and how they are all actors trying to portray the ideal image of themselves is not far from the truth. I hope that one day we can live in a judgmental free social environment where myself and others no longer must act on our stage constantly being someone we are not, and that we can always stay in touch with who we are and let our

for our performances.

Works Cited

Goffman, Erving. *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. Bantam Doubleday Dell
Publishing Group, 1959.