

This essay will look at the current research regarding authenticity online and then propose research on how the average person perceives authenticity online. To begin, we will look at the current research consensus and look on how it can be expanded. Previous research has been done on how people interact with authenticity online, however, most of these articles get their data from systematic reviews of certain peoples accounts online, while others instead ask participants via social media about their thoughts on social media. I believe that this can be a flawed way to go about getting data for such studies as it is reliant on people who participate in social media, which may omit some more cynical views of social media. As such, I'm going to try and answer the question "How does the average person perceive authenticity online, do they truly believe what they see, or is it viewed as a facsimile of authenticity".

There are a few concepts that are quite important when talking about authenticity online. Firstly, there is the idea of "Context Collapse", which is when multiple different audiences get flattened into one (Marwick and boyd 122). Secondly, there is the idea of the "lowest common denominator", which is a term created by Bernie Hogan which is the idea that one posts content online that is socially suitable to the people who may not be the intended audience of a post, but can still see the post. (383) These two ideas form the basis for how we look at people's posting behaviours online. It must also be noted that there are a few distinct types of accounts that you will see online, those being personal, professional, and corporate. This essay looks at how people interact with the first two for the most part, as when it comes to authenticity online, corporate accounts don't really matter as most of what they post is marketing materials or ads.

Bernie Hogan uses Erving Goffman's dramaturgical approach, which he describes as "a metaphorical technique used to explain how an individual presents an "idealized" rather than authentic version of herself. The metaphor considers life as a stage for activity. Individuals thus engage in performances, which Goffman defines as "activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influ-

ence on the observers”(Goffman 22). This continued presence allows individuals to tweak their behavior and selectively . . . give off details, a process he termed ‘impression management.’”(Hogan 378) to show that a person’s “performance” online is catered to an audience that is causing said person’s performance to “consist of the selective details that one presents in order to foster the desired impression alongside the unintentional details that are given off as part of the performance” (378). However, as pointed out by Pitcan et al, social media complicates this as the different ways we present ourselves to separate audiences, or “code switching”, isn’t easily done since the separate audiences are collapsed together. On top of that, the impression management literature based off Goffman, fails to adequately account for the structural differences that affect individuals options and risks. (164)

Works Cited

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

Hogan, Bernie. "The Presentation of Self in the Age of Social Media: Distinguishing Performances and Exhibitions Online". *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, vol. 30, no. 6, 2010, pp. 377–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0270467610385893>.

This article introduces Goffman's dramaturgical approach in regards to social media, as well as intruding the concept of the lowest common denominator when it comes to online activity. This is used as a basis to examine the reasons behind filtering of the self online.

Marwick, Alice E., and danah boyd. "I tweet honestly, I tweet passionately: Twitter users, context collapse, and the imagined audience". *New Media & Society*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2011, pp. 114–33. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444810365313>.

Pitcan, Mikaela, et al. "Performing a Vanilla Self: Respectability Politics, Social Class, and the Digital World". *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 23, no. 3, 2018, pp. 163–79. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jcmc/zmy008>.

This article looks at how people in lower economic statuses curate their image on social media to appeal to what is so called "respectable". In addition, it also expands the idea of "Context Collapse".