

IN4MATX 153: CSCW

**Class 4:
Self-Presentation**

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TA Dennis Wang
Reader Weijie Du

Announcements

- A1 due a week from today
 - More detailed rubric up on Canvas, if you'd find that useful
- You should now be able to see PollEv participation on Canvas
 - Last Wednesday (practice, will get removed) and Monday participation posted
 - We'll probably have to tweak the syllabus slightly to account for activities rather than classes

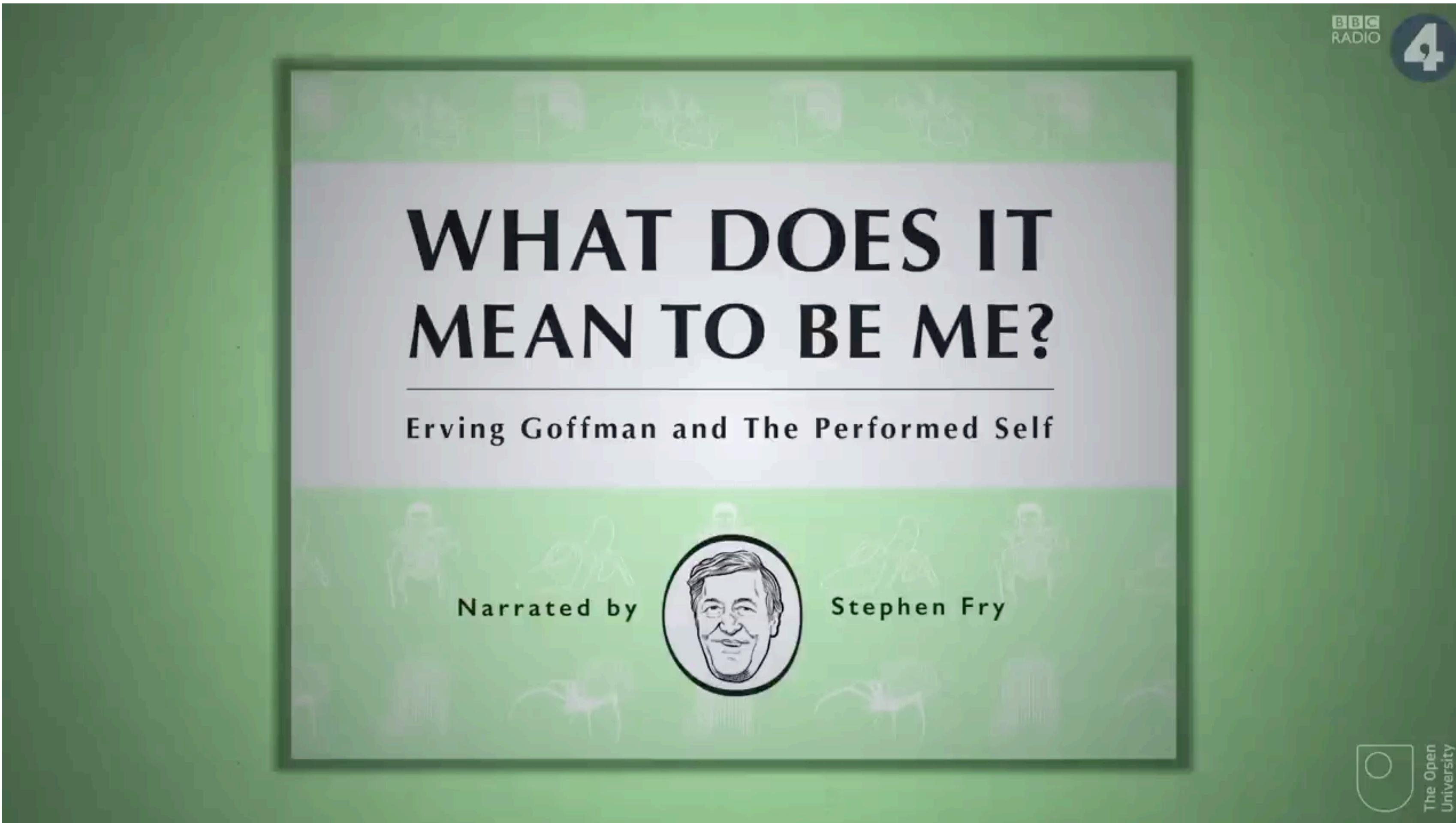
Today's goals

By the end of today, you should be able to...

- Describe theories of self-presentation, and reflect on how they manifest in social media
- Articulate common components of profiles, and how people make decisions on what to present in profiles as a result
- Discuss strategies that people take to manage how others perceive them online

Presentation of Self in Everyday Life

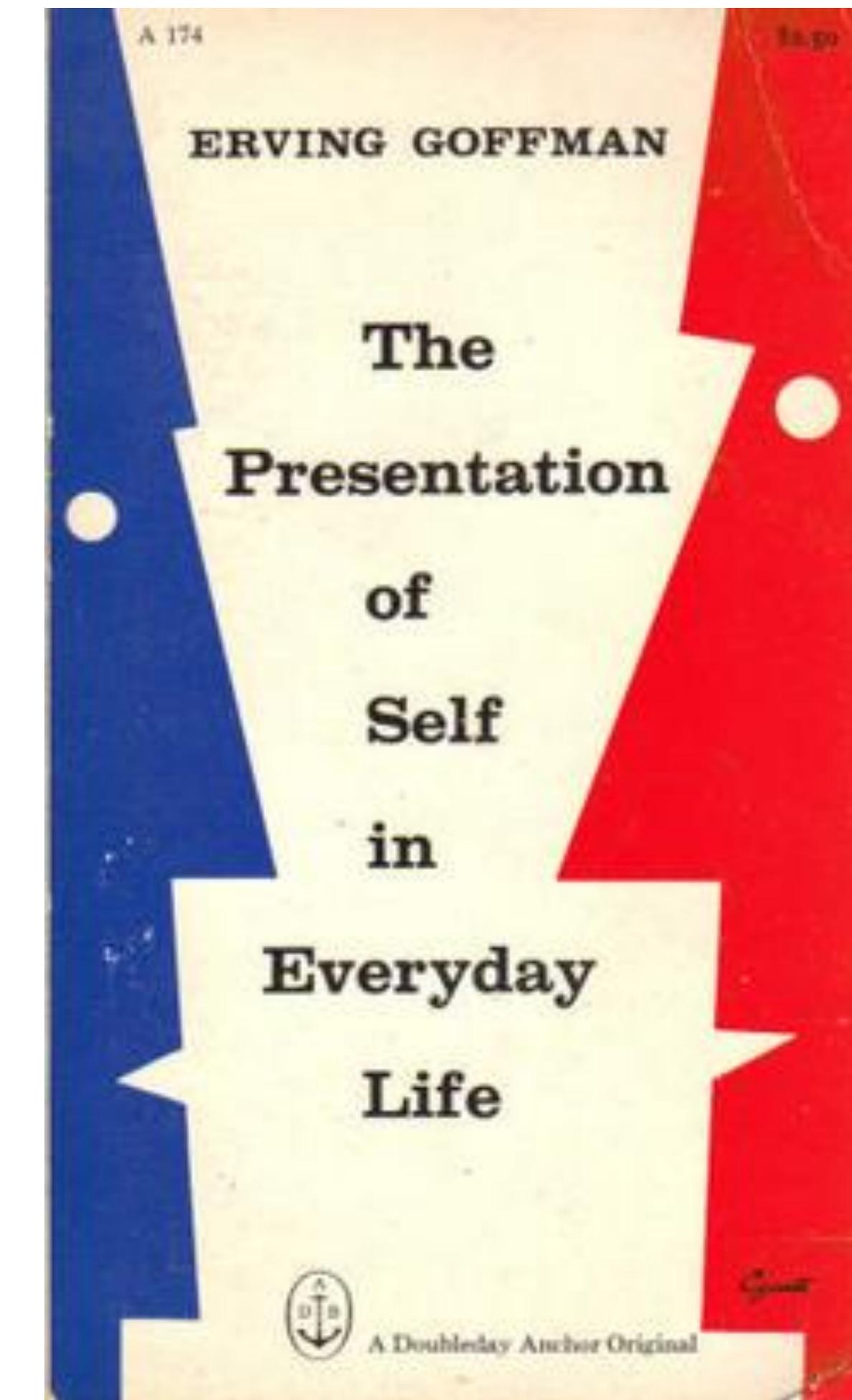
Presentation of self in everyday life



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6Z0XS-QLDWM>

Presentation of self in everyday life

- All the world's a stage
- Any time you're interacting with someone else, you're on stage, and performing
 - You're trying to control the impression that someone has of you
 - Maybe you're trying to put your "best" foot forward



Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. 1959. Garden City, NY, 259.

Presentation of self in everyday life

- There are multiple dimensions which guide this impression, which Goffman unpacks
- Say you're going on a date with someone.
 - Setting: Do you suggest a casual restaurant? A movie?
 - Appearance: What do you wear, and what does that say about you?
 - Manner: Do you behave really interested? Aloof?

Presentation of self in everyday life

- Setting, appearance, and manner are common tools used in theater to tell the audience about characters
 - Is this conversation happening in a formal space? A dark alley?
 - Does how this character is dressed suggest that they're wealthy? Sporty?
 - Does how this character is talking suggest that they're funny? Sophisticated?

Presentation of self in everyday life

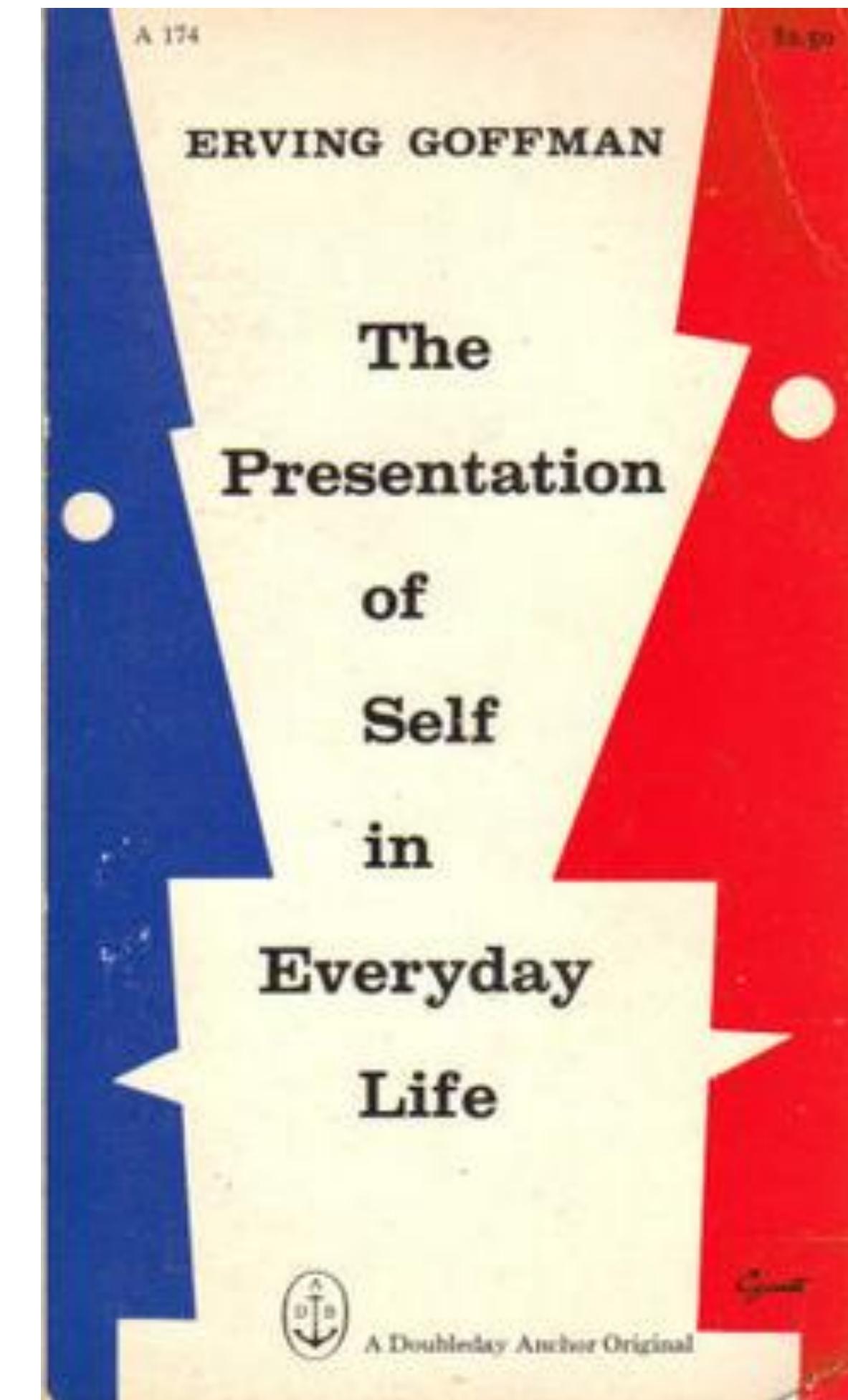
- And, we don't have a static set of behaviors
- Like actors, we change our behaviors to guide the impressions that others form of us
- Our behaviors change as we enter different social environments

Presentation of self in everyday life

- Professor Epstein in IN4MATX 153: teacher
- Professor Epstein in meetings with Ph.D. students: advisor
- Professor Epstein with his family: dad, husband
- Professor Epstein with friends: wait, professors have friends?

Presentation of self in everyday life

- Analyzing social interactions through the lens of theater, or *dramaturgy*, gives us tools for making sense of why people act the way they do in front of others
- We can use this practice of *dramaturgy* to understand interactions on social media as well.

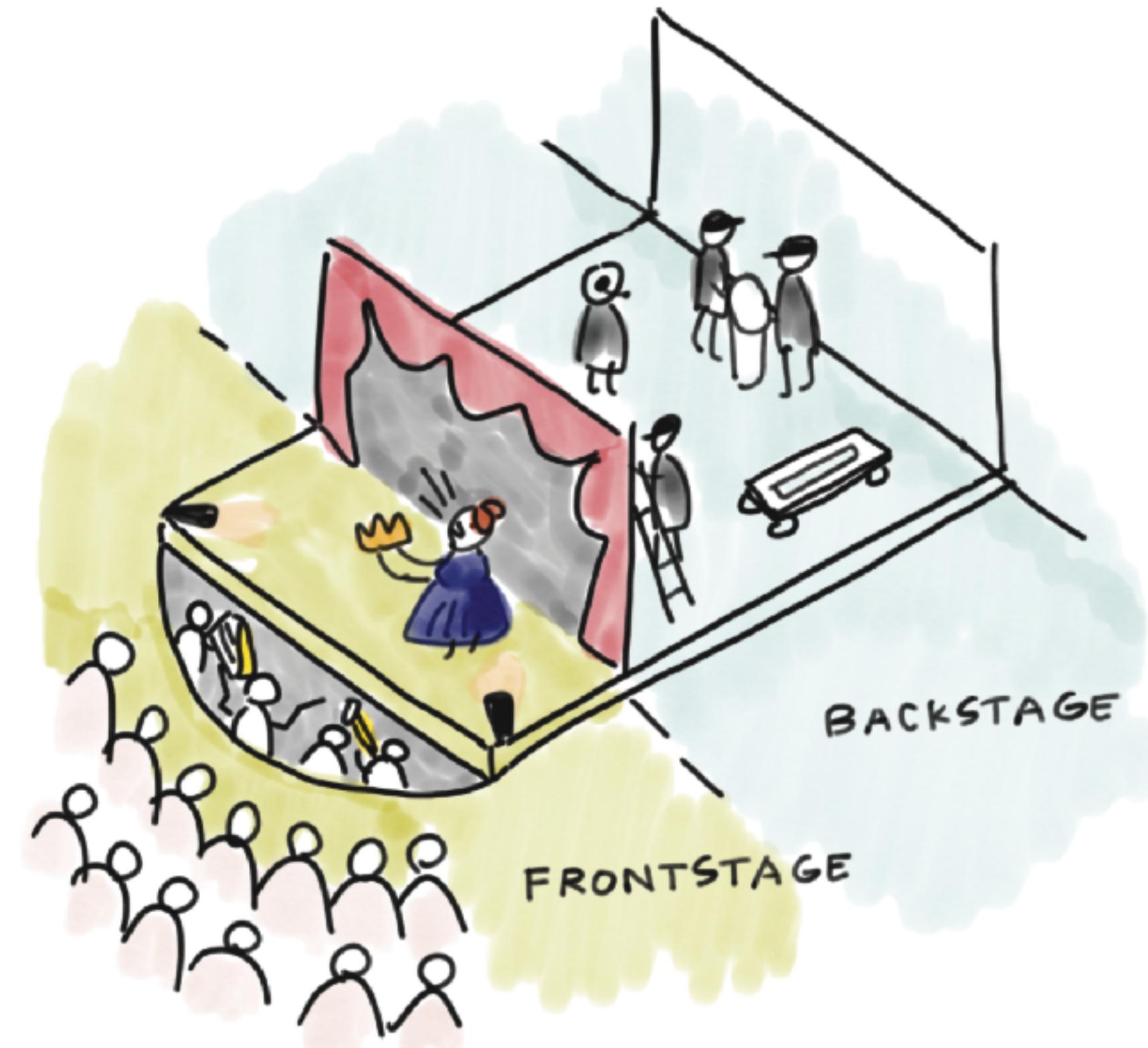


Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. 1959. Garden City, NY, 259.

Dramaturgy and social media

Dramaturgy and social media

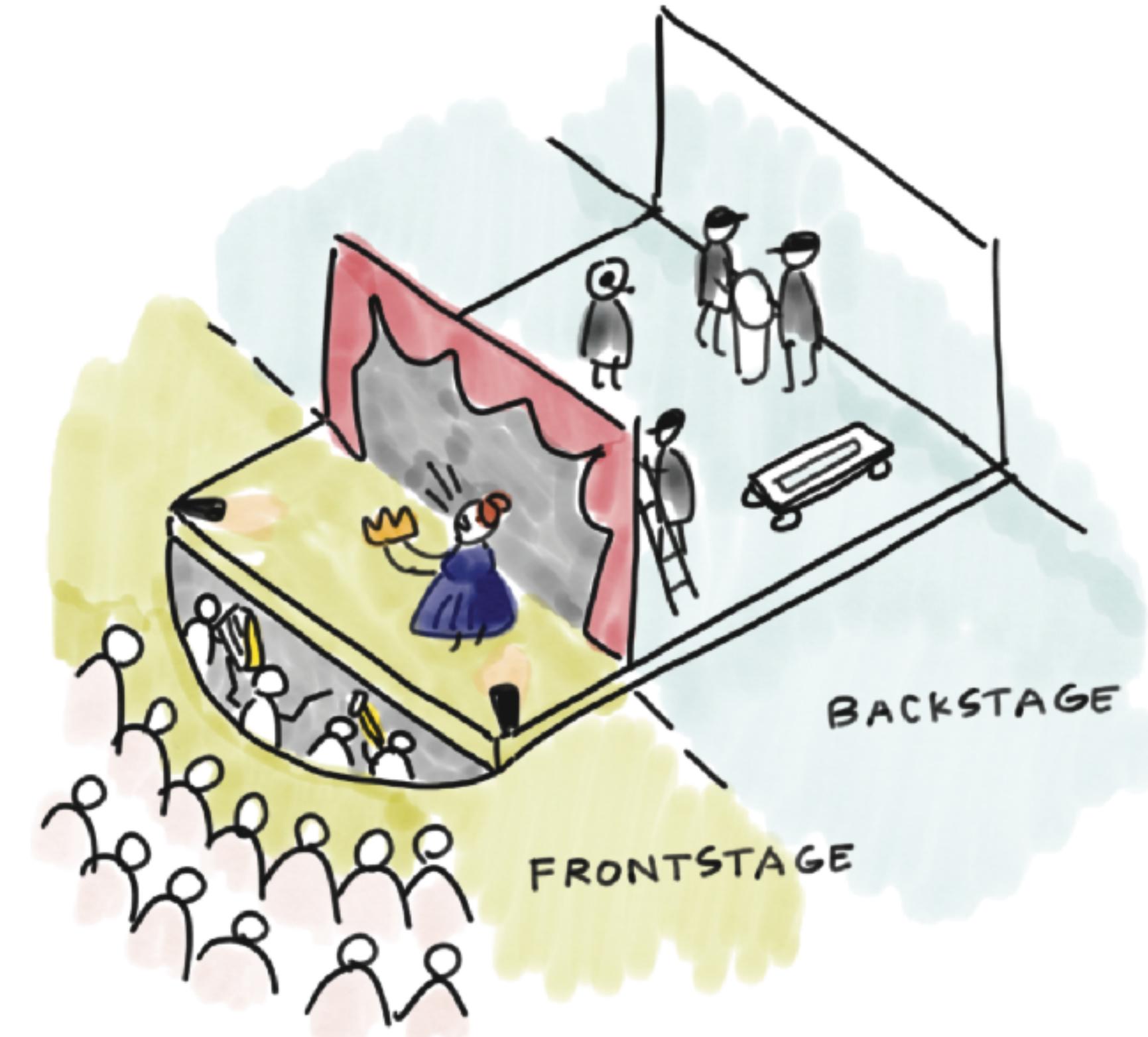
- “Front stage” and “back stage”
 - When you’re in the front stage, you’re in the public eye
 - When you’re in the back stage, you’re more private



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Dramaturgy and social media

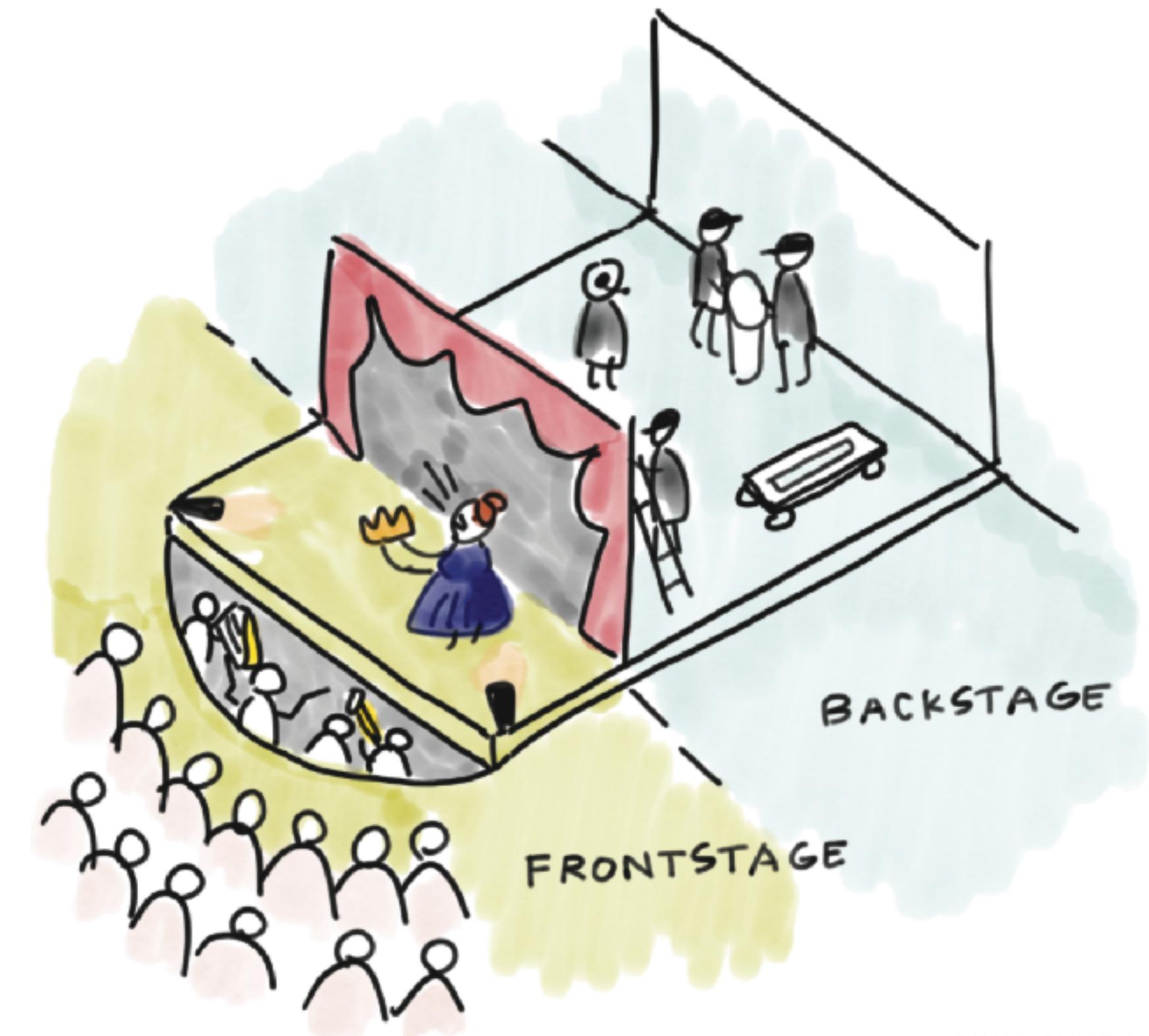
- Front stage
 - Every time you decide to post or share something about yourself, you're signaling something to your audience
 - Maybe you're trying to highlight that you're a cool or interesting person



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Dramaturgy and social media

- ... but the backstage still isn't completely private.
- In closer relationships, you may be willing to let someone see parts of your “back stage” self
 - Chat with them in a chat app, for example
 - Your conversations here may be less “filtered”
 - But, you're still performing



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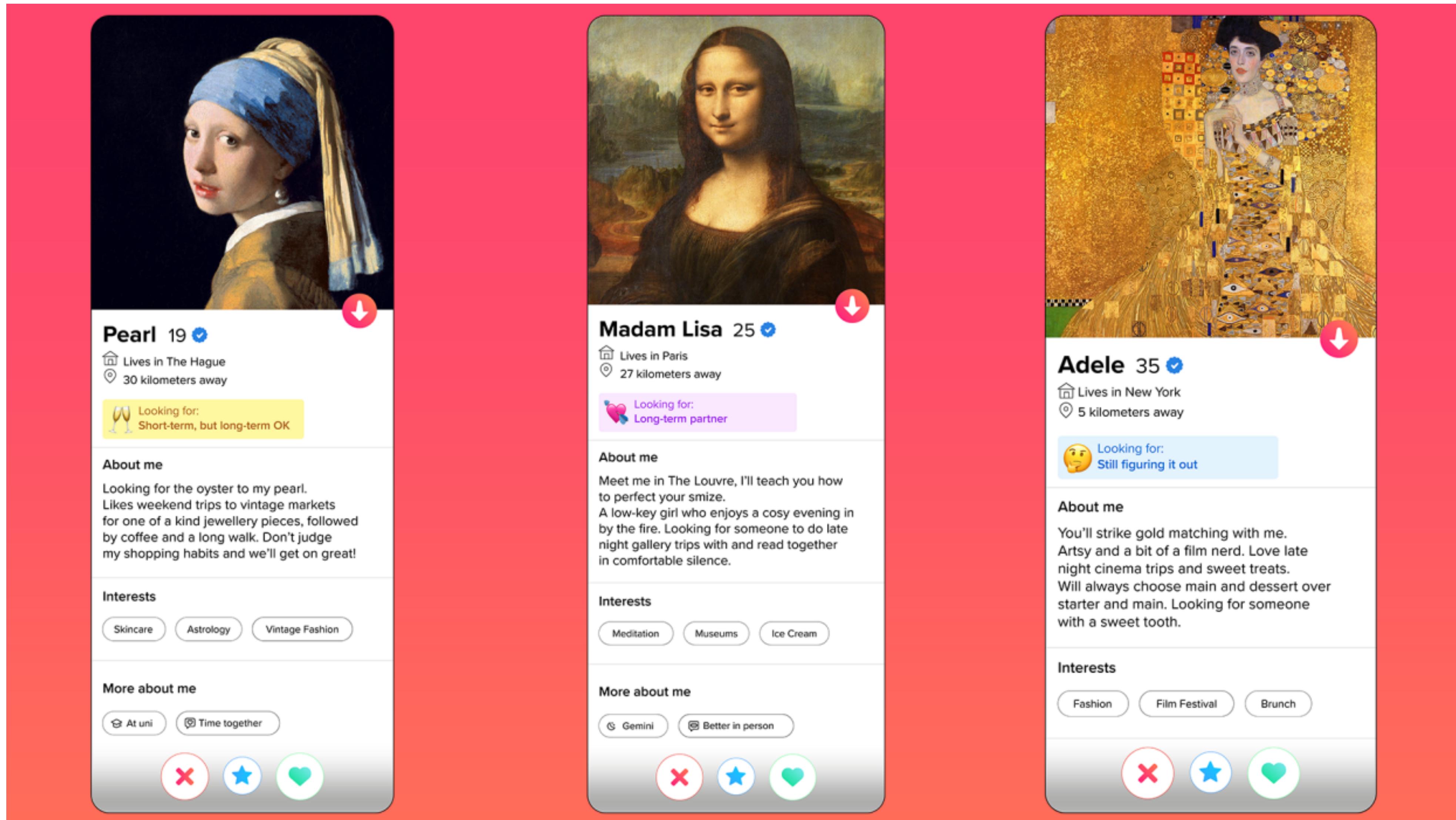
Discuss: Imagine a profile for a dating app like Tinder. What might someone be trying to convey about themselves?

What might someone be trying to convey about themselves in their dating app profile?

Nobody has responded yet.

Hang tight! Responses are coming in.

Tinder: performing on the front stage



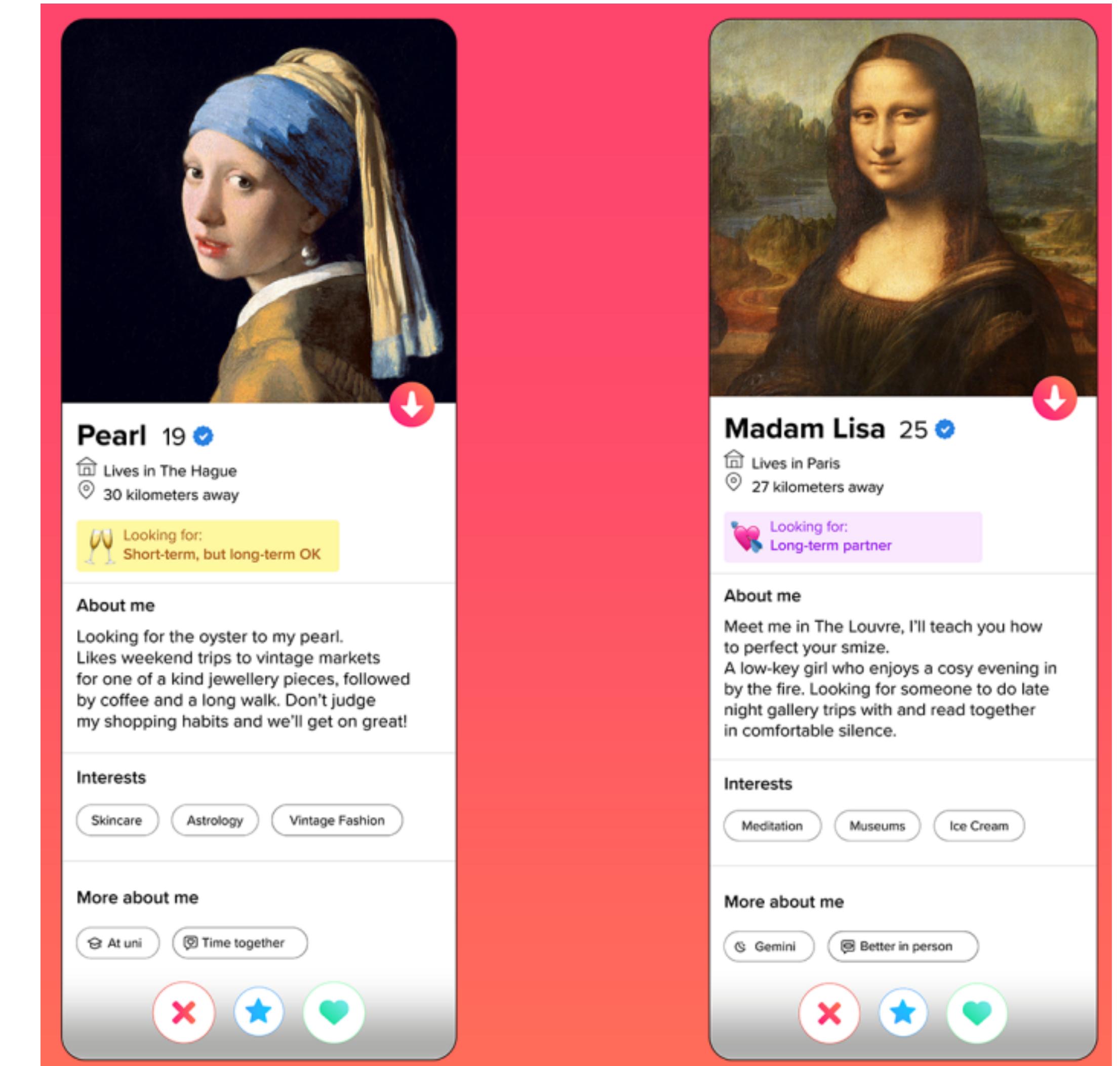
Impression management and Tinder

- When you're performing on the front stage, you're trying doing *impression management*: trying to influence how others view you
- Impression management has two processes:
 - Impression motivation
 - Impression construction

Impression management and Tinder

Impression motivation

- First, people must become motivated to want to present themselves in a particular way
 - This is pretty obvious in dating environments: you want the other person to like you
 - People therefore might describe their bodies, income, hobbies, etc. differently



Ward, J. (2017). What are you doing on Tinder? Impression management on a matchmaking mobile app. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(11), 1644-1659.

Impression management and Tinder

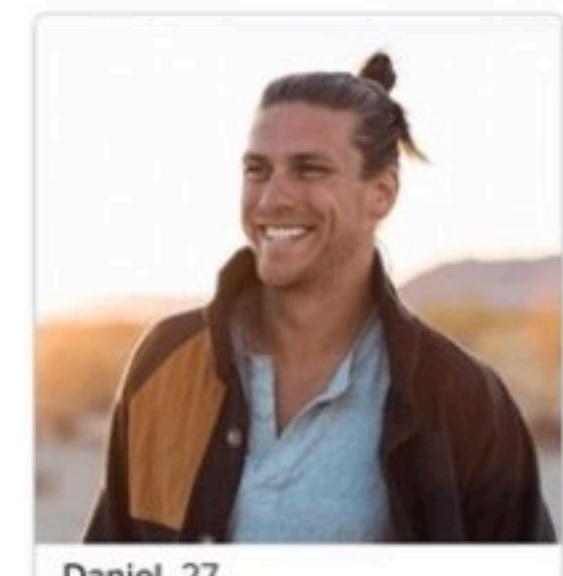
Impression construction

- Second, people must choose the impression they want to make and pick a tactic to make it
 - Deciding what pictures, text, etc. to use in a profile

What should your first Tinder picture be?

All related (35) Sort Recommended

Nick N.
Personal development and dating coach · 2y

Daniel, 27
Director of Business Development at S...


Harry, 26
Went to Sacred Heart University


- Pictures matter **a lot**. Especially the first one. Tinder is designed in such a way that your pictures are the single most important factor to get matches.
- Make sure your pictures are **supreme quality**. I always recommend paying a professional model photographer who specializes in this kind of photography. Those guys know how to make excellent photos.
- If you can't afford that, ask a **friend who has a good camera** and some skills to arrange a photoshoot.

But, people use Tinder for all sorts of different reasons.

Impression motivation and Tinder

- You might want to present yourself in a particular way, but it may be to support different goals
 - Entertainment, an ego-boost, fun
 - Finding a partner
- How you go about presenting yourself in the app is influenced by your goals
 - A witty profile designed to get engagement
 - A heartfelt profile designed to find your soulmate
- Goals can change over time, which requires

Impression construction and Tinder

- How you go about presenting yourself (*impression construction*) in the app is influenced by your goals
 - A witty profile designed to get engagement
 - A heartfelt profile designed to find your soulmate
- People's goals can change over time, which requires revisiting and re-evaluating profiles

Impression construction and Tinder

- People experiment with their profiles
 - What kind of person matches if you include a philosophical quote in your profile?
 - A photo with a pet? A photo in nature?
- People learn from others how they should construct their profile
 - What sticks out about the people you're swiping right on?

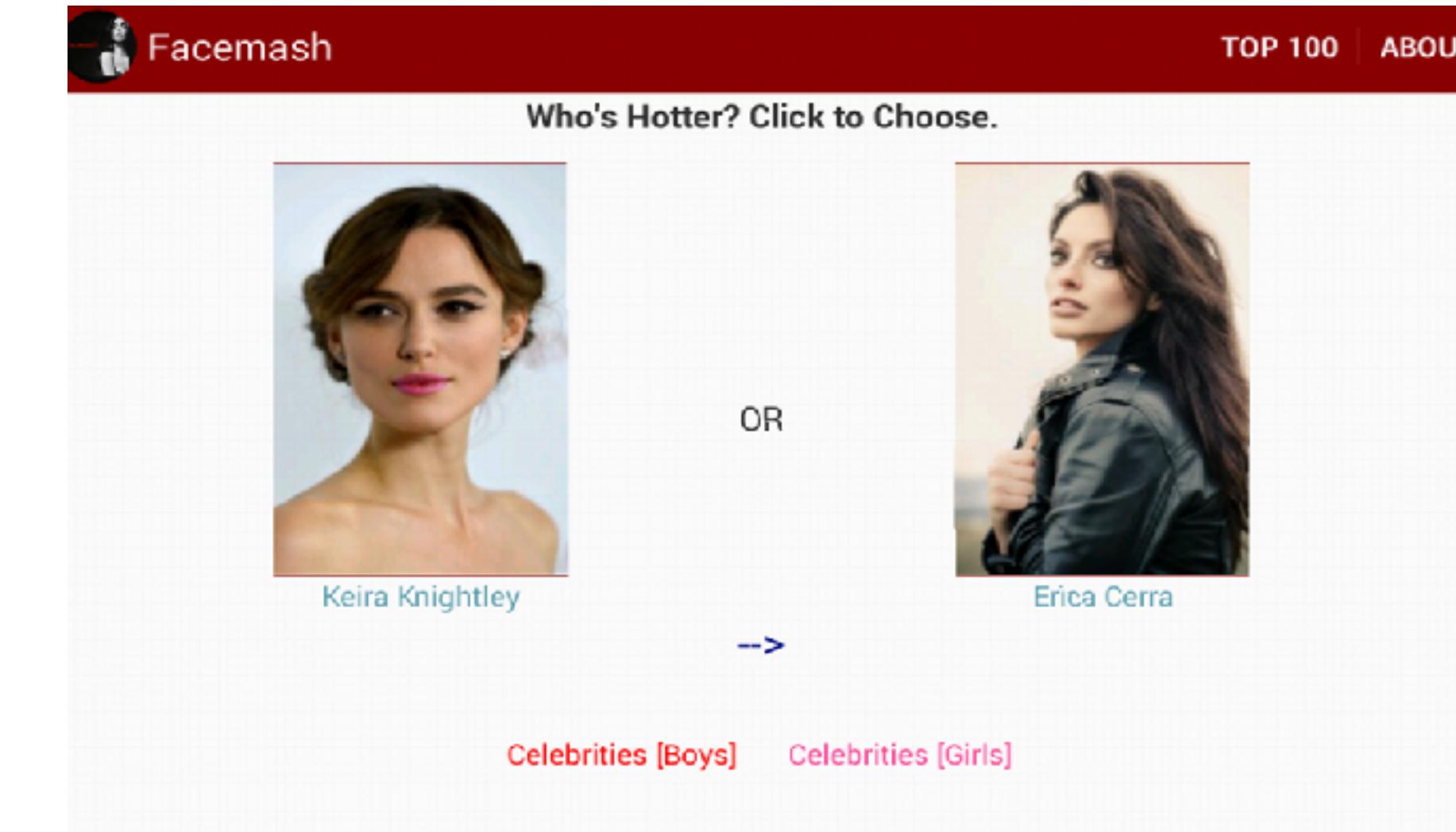
Impression management and Tinder

- But, these technologies are constantly changing, as are people's practices within them
- How people used Tinder in 2017 may effectively describe how some people use Tinder today
 - But, people's norms may also have evolved
- Or, the technology has changed sufficiently
 - Like Facebook, Tinder has continued to add more and richer profile elements, potentially deemphasizing the impact of the profile photo

Why are profile pictures so central to online performance?

Profile pictures

- The roots of profile pictures are not wholesome
 - Mark Zuckerberg made facemash.com to rate the attractiveness of Harvard students based on their pictures in the University's public face book
 - Depicted in The Social Network (2010)
 - Zuckerberg claimed in testimony that it was a prank, but there's a link to profile pictures being a focal point



<https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2003/11/19/facemash-creator-survives-ad-board-the/>

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/the-switch/wp/2018/04/11/channeling-the-social-network-lawmaker-grills-zuckerberg-on-his-notorious-beginnings/>

Profile pictures

- Early Facebook centered information around education, political preferences, relationship status, music, movies...

- These changed as Facebook moved beyond college students

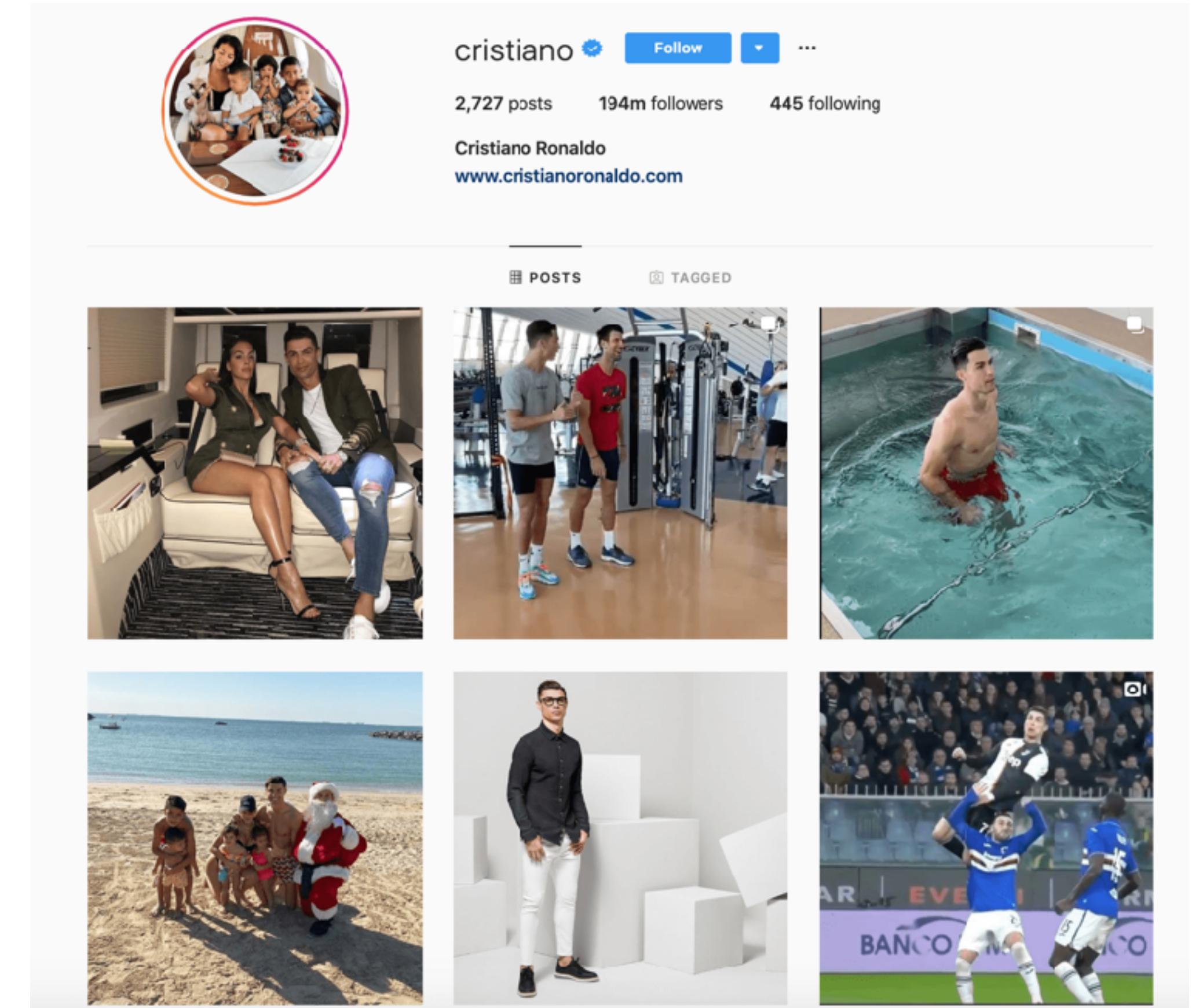
- Profile information diversified
- Some components became more and less visible

The screenshot shows Mark Zuckerberg's Facebook profile. At the top, there is a large profile picture of him smiling. Below it, a sidebar on the left lists links for 'Wall', 'Info' (which is selected), 'Photos (826)', and 'Questions'. On the right, the main content area displays his basic information: 'Has worked at Facebook', 'Studied Computer Science at Harvard University', 'Lives in Palo Alto, California', 'From Dobbs Ferry, New York', and 'Born on May 14, 1984'. Below this, there is a section titled 'Education and Work' showing his employer 'Facebook' (Feb 2004 to present - Palo Alto, California) and his college 'Harvard University' (Computer Science - Psychology). It also lists his high school 'Ardsley High School' and 'Phillips Exeter Academy Class of 2002'. A 'Philosophy' section quotes him as saying, "All children are artists. The problem is how to remain an artist once he grows up." To the right, there are several ads: 'Police Auctions' from gsauctions.gov, 'SF Bucket List' from partners.livingsocial.com, 'Stay close to your team' from AT&T, and 'Craft Beer Attorney' from craftbeerattorney.com.

But, front stage performance goes beyond curating your profile.

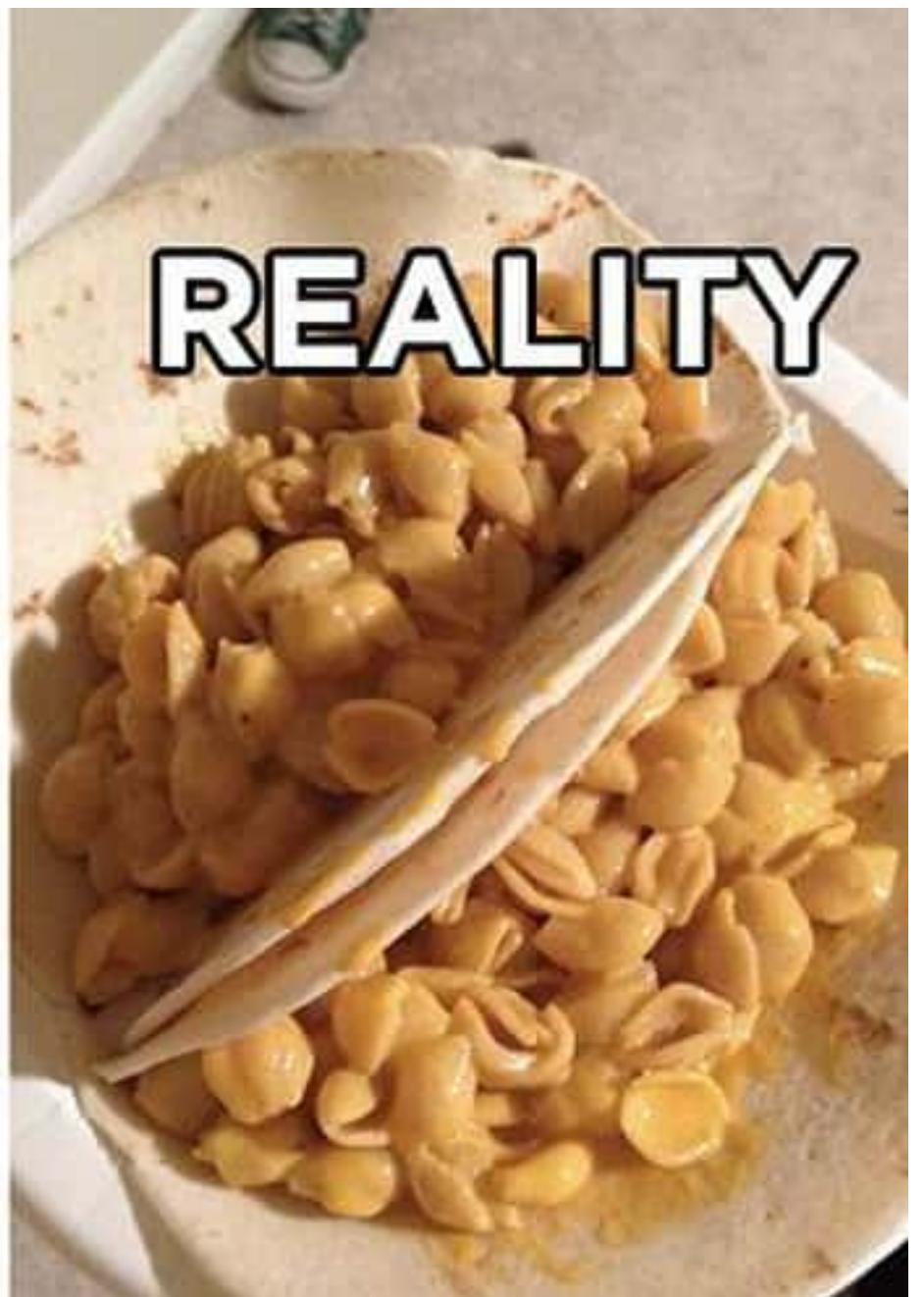
Shared content and performance

- But, shared content is also part of front stage performance
- The move from primarily text (~Facebook) to images/video (~Instagram) has resulted in more dense, and more carefully curated performance



Shared content and performance

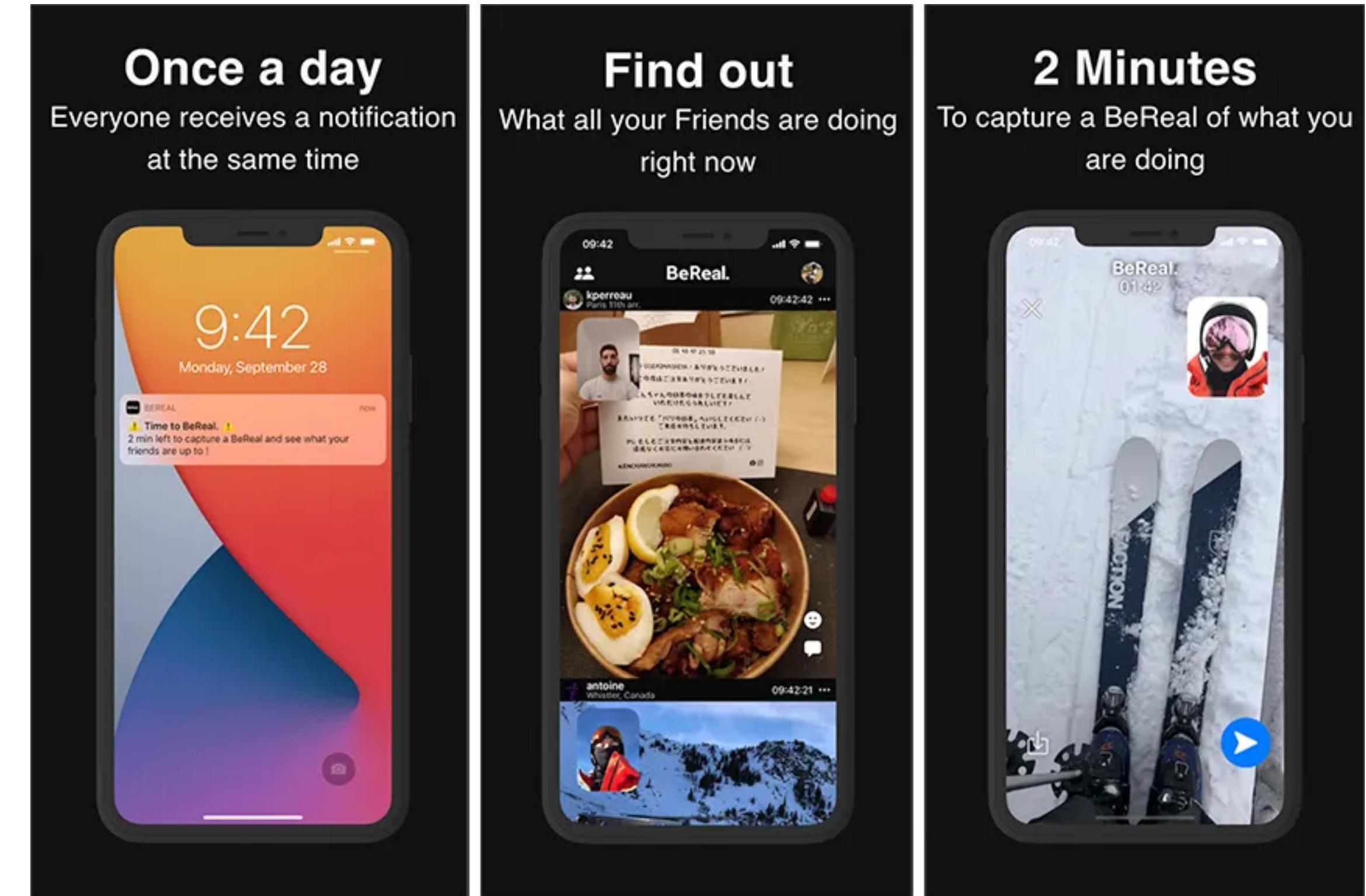
- Goffman's theory highlights that people choose what about themselves to present
 - And social media is no different from in-person interaction
- And further, people choose how to present it
 - Filters, cropping, etc.



Shared content and performance

BeReal (2020)

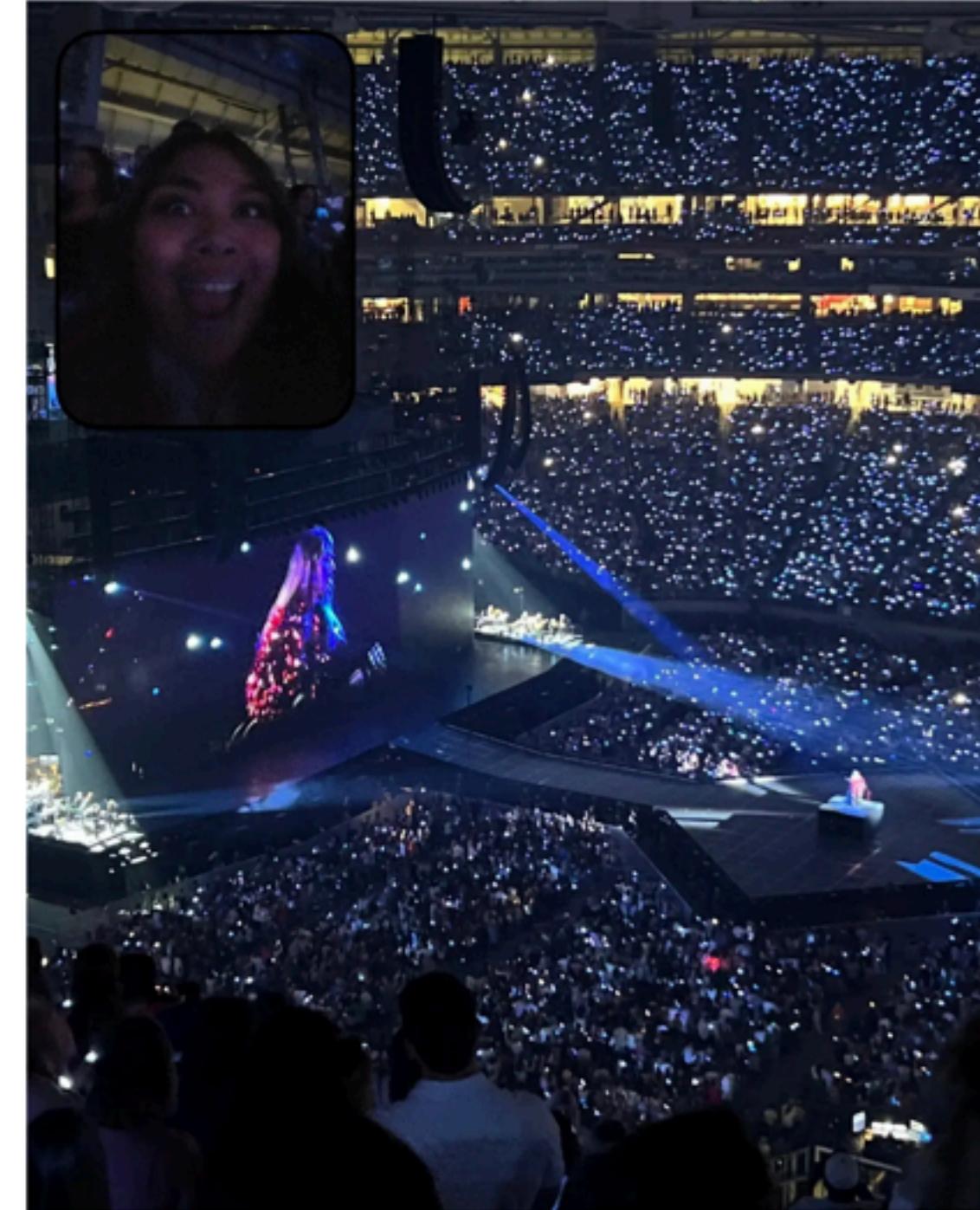
- An attempt at less performative content
- You get a notification at a random time and share what you're doing
- You get two minutes and one take: you can't keep perfecting your content
- You can't be doing cool things *all* the time... right?



Shared content and performance

BeReal (2020)

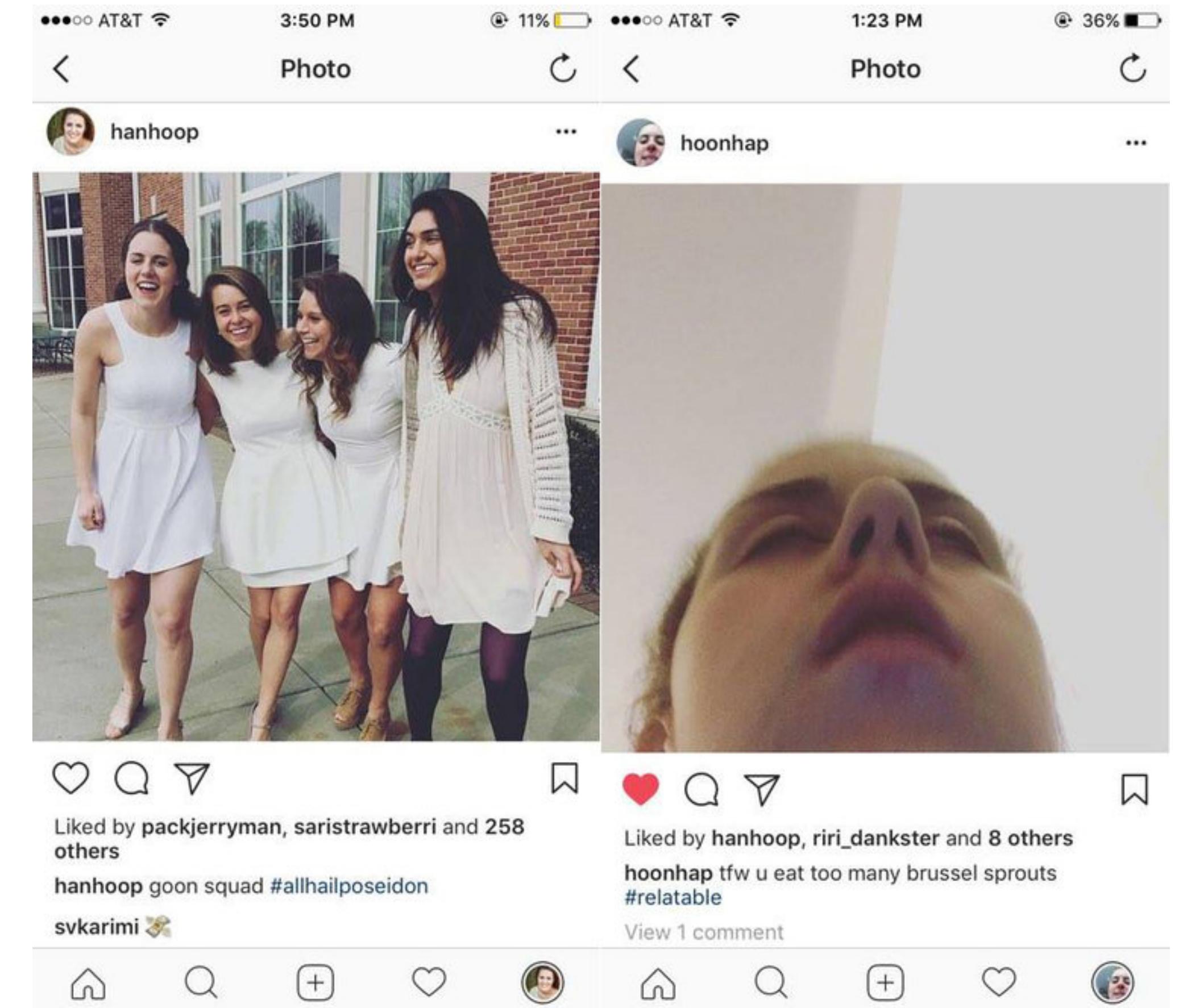
- But, that “real” content can be boring.
- But, people fake it anyways.
- BeReal peaked in 2022, and by 2023 users had dropped pretty significantly
- If you still use it, more power to you!



Sondra Tarmoedji received the notification that it was time to BeReal on her way to a Taylor Swift concert, but she waited until she was at the concert hall, and Ms. Swift was onstage, to take the photo.

Shared content and performance : Finstas

- Finsta: “Fake” and “Instagram”
- Secondary Instagram accounts for sharing emotional, low-quality, or otherwise more personal content with close friends
- Contrasts with a “Rinsta”



Shared content and performance : Finstas

- The common practice of Finstas may have resulted in Instagram changing their app to make it possible to switch accounts

APPS / CAMERAS AND PHOTOGRAPHY / MOBILE

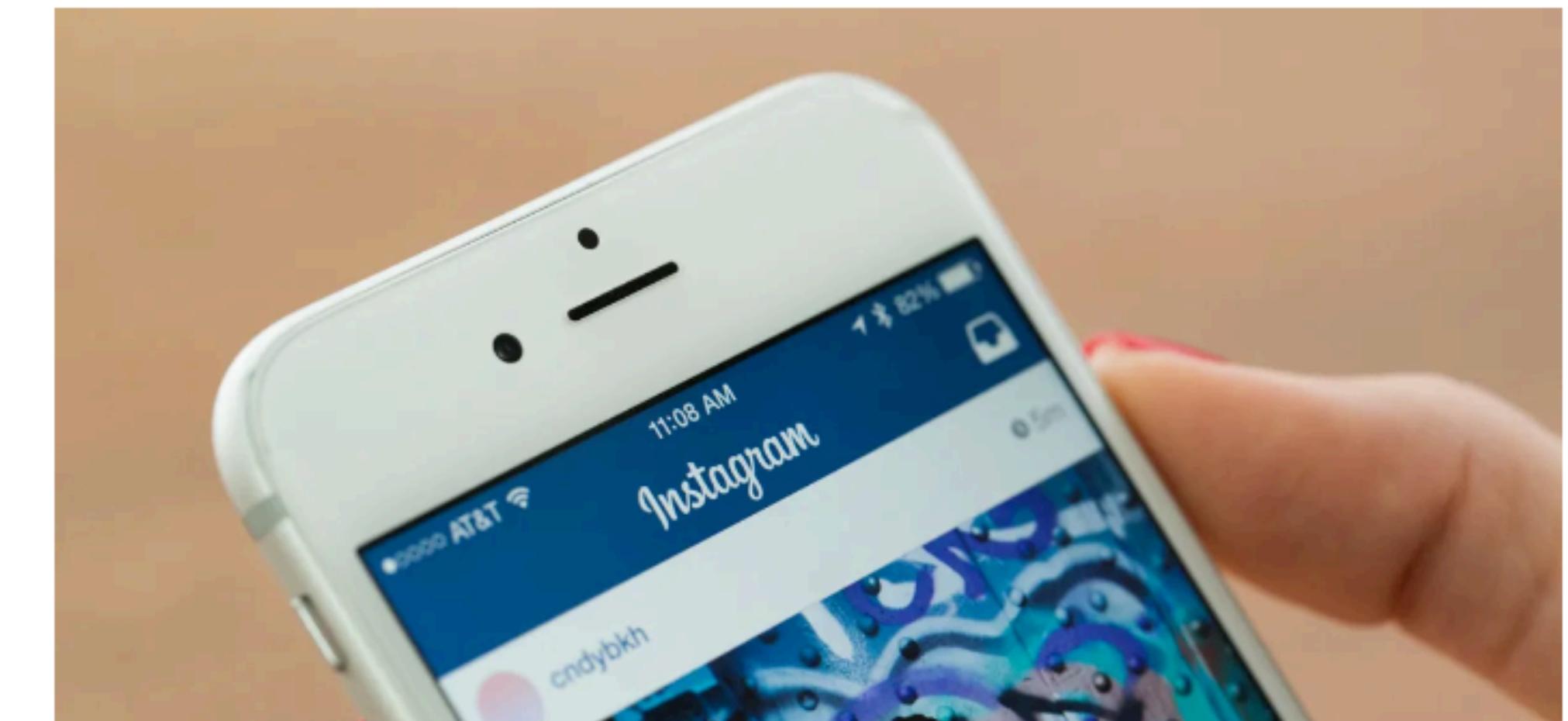
Instagram now lets you switch between multiple accounts

By [Chris Welch](#), a reviewer specializing in personal audio and home theater. Since 2011, he has published nearly 6,000 articles, from breaking news and reviews to useful how-tos.

Source [Instagram](#)

Feb 8, 2016, 11:09 AM PST

| [0 Comments \(0 New\)](#)



<https://www.theverge.com/2016/2/8/10939284/instagram-account-switching-now-available>

Discuss: what were the main findings from Xiao et al.'s Finsta paper?

Finstas

- Reconfiguration of Instagram from a *front stage* technology to a *back stage* technology
 - Just for close friends, blocking people who don't fit that description
- Idealized self -> unserious messiness
- Obligatory positivity -> vulnerability
- Superficial interactions -> deep engagements

Xiao, S., Metaxa, D., Park, J. S., Karahalios, K., & Salehi, N. (2020, April). Random, messy, funny, raw: Finstas as intimate reconfigurations of social media. In Proceedings of the 2020 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems (pp. 1-13).

Finstas

- Idealized self -> unserious messiness
 - Rinsta: professional behaviors
 - Finsta: NSFW content, drinking, etc.

Xiao, S., Metaxa, D., Park, J. S., Karahalios, K., & Salehi, N. (2020, April). Random, messy, funny, raw: Finstas as intimate reconfigurations of social media. In Proceedings of the 2020 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems (pp. 1-13).

Finstas

- Obligatory positivity -> vulnerability
 - Rinsta: no problems
 - Rinsta: happiness
 - Finsta: bad grades, bad relationships
 - Finsta: negative emotions, anger, depression, anxiety

Xiao, S., Metaxa, D., Park, J. S., Karahalios, K., & Salehi, N. (2020, April). Random, messy, funny, raw: Finstas as intimate reconfigurations of social media. In Proceedings of the 2020 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems (pp. 1-13).

Finstas

- Superficial interactions -> deep engagements
 - Rinsta: care about number of likes
 - Rinsta: comments tend to be more superficial
 - Finsta: don't care about number of likes
 - Finsta: deeper, more thoughtful engagement in comments

Xiao, S., Metaxa, D., Park, J. S., Karahalios, K., & Salehi, N. (2020, April). Random, messy, funny, raw: Finstas as intimate reconfigurations of social media. In Proceedings of the 2020 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems (pp. 1-13).

Finstas

- But, are these new norms good?
 - Are finstas just performative imperfection?
 - Do finstas create expectations that audiences will provide emotional support?
 - Will people have to make finstas for their finstas?

Xiao, S., Metaxa, D., Park, J. S., Karahalios, K., & Salehi, N. (2020, April). Random, messy, funny, raw: Finstas as intimate reconfigurations of social media. In Proceedings of the 2020 CHI conference on human factors in computing systems (pp. 1-13).

Another case: story features

Story features

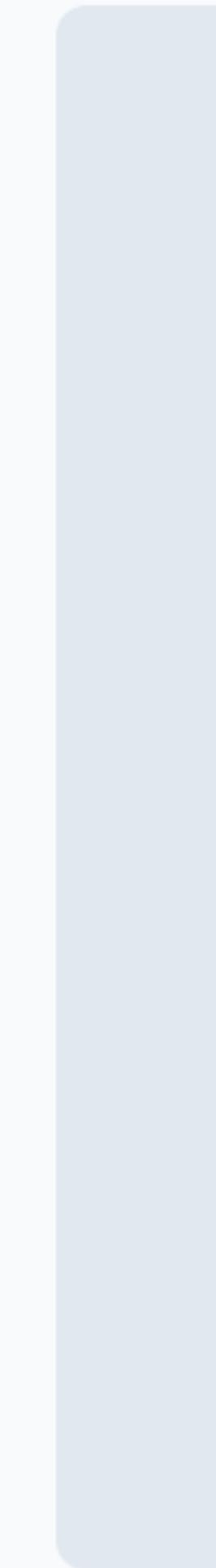
- Photos and videos, often with text captions
 - Can include other media like polls or music
- Available for 24 hours, then disappear
 - You can add them to your profile as “story highlights”
- First on Snapchat, then Instagram, Facebook (and YouTube for a time)



**Discuss: are story features front stage
or back stage content?**

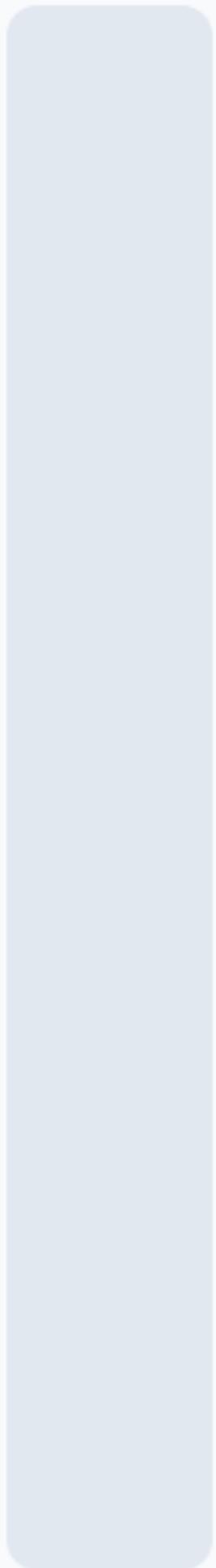
Are "story" features front stage or back stage content?

0%



Front Stage

0%



Back Stage

Dramaturgy and social media

- In general, stories tend to be a bit less filtered
 - Since they disappear, people are less concerned about public scrutiny
 - There's also a lower expectation of response, so people tend not to dwell on the message
 - But, it's all relative
 - Really, any social media content is performative



Bayer, J. B., Ellison, N. B., Schoenebeck, S. Y., & Falk, E. B. (2016). Sharing the small moments: ephemeral social interaction on Snapchat. *Information, communication & society*, 19(7), 956-977.

Today's goals

By the end of today, you should be able to...

- Describe theories of self-presentation, and reflect on how they manifest in social media
- Articulate common components of profiles, and how people make decisions on what to present in profiles as a result
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Class 3:
Feeds and their Algorithms

Professor Daniel Epstein
TA Dennis Wang
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