

8-6-2009

## Face-Work Within Blogs: The Use and Modification of Real World Rituals Within a Virtual Setting

Matthew LeBlanc  
*University of New Orleans*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td>

---

### Recommended Citation

LeBlanc, Matthew, "Face-Work Within Blogs: The Use and Modification of Real World Rituals Within a Virtual Setting" (2009). *University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations*. 982.  
<https://scholarworks.uno.edu/td/982>

This Thesis is protected by copyright and/or related rights. It has been brought to you by ScholarWorks@UNO with permission from the rights-holder(s). You are free to use this Thesis in any way that is permitted by the copyright and related rights legislation that applies to your use. For other uses you need to obtain permission from the rights-holder(s) directly, unless additional rights are indicated by a Creative Commons license in the record and/or on the work itself.

This Thesis has been accepted for inclusion in University of New Orleans Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@UNO. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@uno.edu](mailto:scholarworks@uno.edu).

Face-Work Within Blogs: The Use and Modification of Real World Rituals Within a  
Virtual Setting

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
in  
Sociology

by

Matthew LeBlanc

B.A. University of New Orleans, 2007

August, 2009

Copyright 2009, Matthew LeBlanc

## DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother. Her constant belief in me and support of my dreams has helped to keep me centered and guide me along the long road of higher education.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge my thesis committee: Vern Baxter, Ph.D.; D'lane Compton, Ph.D.; and David Allen, Ph.D. Their support and constructive criticism helped make this thesis what it is today.

I would also like to thank my friends Danilo Levi, Ph.D.; Joseph Su, Ph.D.; and Matthew Landry for their support.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Tables .....	vi
Abstract .....	vii
Introduction .....	1
Literature Review .....	4
On Face-Work .....	4
“On Face-Work” Applied to Blogging .....	12
Theories of Postmodern Self Presentation .....	16
Self Presentation in Computer Mediated Communication .....	22
Methods .....	28
Findings .....	33
Discussion .....	36
Unique Forms of Correction .....	52
Conclusion .....	53
Bibliography .....	58
Vita .....	61

## LIST OF TABLES

1. Distribution by Blog Genre and Overall Distribution of Corrections .....	34
---	----

## ABSTRACT

In his Essay "On Face-Work" Erving Goffman identifies the rules for a number of face-to-face interaction rituals. Among these rituals are two ways of correcting participants within an interaction. The first correction ritual, the *interchange*, allows offending interactants a chance to save *face*. The second ritual, the *points making game*, is a way for interactants to cause other participants to lose *face*. This thesis analyzes the content of a random sample of blogs to see if the rituals described above are employed in online interaction, specifically looking at blogs and how the context of the rituals is modified, including whether and how they are modified. It was found that the ritual of the *interchange* was modified. The ritual of the points making game though left unmodified occurred with greater frequency.

Keywords: Erving Goffman, Face-work, Blogs, Computer Mediated Communication



## Introduction

Erving Goffman is widely known for his observations on human interaction. Goffman (1959) relied primarily on observations, not formal scientific method, when analyzing people and their interactions. By thoroughly examining his own observations, Goffman was able to see what others did not. After making observations about a particular arena of discourse, Goffman (1959) would move to a different arena and make observations about what new forms of ordered interaction took place there.

In his essay "On Face-work" Goffman (1967) observes a number of rituals associated with the way people present their "selves" to others. These rituals take the form of politeness, apologies, compliments, and corrections. Every participant in a social interaction attempts to convey a self that is found acceptable by all participants involved. This is done by either expressing character qualities that are viewed as respectable, or by hiding character qualities viewed as offensive. Of the rituals examined by Goffman, two are examined in this thesis. These two rituals are two different ways to correct persons within the social interaction. The first ritual is known as the *interchange*, and it is a positive form of correction that allows people to maintain social standing for their "selves" within a given interaction. The second ritual is more like a game where participants try to cause the loss of social standing for other's "selves" by *making points* during a social encounter.

New technology has expanded and sped up communication so much that many argue that time and space are compressed. This compression has allowed for self presentation and social interactions to occur among individuals who live continents

away from each other. The greatest example of this new technology is the internet. The internet makes possible a multitude of communication tools, including the blog.

Blogs are web pages where specific topics are discussed. What is discussed is based on the blogger's choice. The subject of blogs can take almost any form and can cover any subject from text, to video, music, art, or audio broadcasts. However, blogs are not one sided. After bloggers make a post, the readers/viewers are given the option to comment on whatever was read, said, heard, or watched. These comments can be whatever the commenter wants to post. Some comments are complimentary, and some are confrontational.

Here, however, is where this researcher sees a problem. Does communication, which is mediated by a computer, follow the same rules as communication that occurs face-to-face? It is important to remember that the rituals Goffman identified for face-to-face interactions were used during social interaction as a whole, not just communication. Without the variable of physical presence, interaction becomes limited. It would also not be unreasonable to speculate that this lack of physical presence would lead to an increase in anonymity. Due to these limitations of the medium, most online interactions take the form of written communication. For this reason corrective communications within blogs were studied.

Using Goffman's observational technique, blogs were observed and the correction techniques used by the blogging community were examined. This study addressed two questions. First, do the correction rituals of *the interchange* and *points making game* that Goffman (1967) identifies in "On Face-Work" mirror the rituals engaged in on blogs? Second, to what extent are computer mediated correction rituals

the same as what is expected drawing from face-to-face examples; and to what extent are they different?

## Literature Review

### “On Face-Work”

The first step in answering these research questions is to understand how Goffman saw the world of social interaction. Goffman was interested in correcting what he viewed to be flaws within the symbolic interactionist’s school of thought. Like Mead, Goffman (1959) thought that there was no one overarching society that influenced people; instead, individuals gained their concepts of self within the different interactions engaged in during everyday life. Whether an aspect of self is presented or hidden is based on the context of a discourse; who is part of the discourse; and, finally, what is expected from everyone in the discourse.

Goffman is most widely remembered for his book *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959). In this work Goffman likens the interaction process to a stage production. People are actors playing roles dictated by their situation. Different situations and settings demand different role performances. Any given person plays a number of roles as he or she progresses through the day. Each of these roles presents a self the social actor wants the audience, be it an individual or a group, to see. Though Goffman is able to catalogue numerous roles as well as multiple situations in which these roles are played, he does not make clear what the rituals are that go into playing these roles. This is important because identifying people as social actors was the first step in identifying the rituals used in performing their roles.

When Goffman wrote *Interaction Ritual* (1967) he catalogued the ritual actions that occur in face-to-face encounters. The first essay in this book, “On Face-Work,” is critical in understanding why and how these rituals take place. The two key concepts

identified by Goffman are those of the *line* and *face*. These two aspects of ritual are the foundation of social interaction. They dictate the atmosphere of every encounter, and more importantly, the role that interaction participants will play in any given encounter.

Goffman (1967: p5) states that a *line* is "...a pattern of verbal and nonverbal acts by which he expresses his view of the situation and through this his evaluation of the participants, especially himself." This is the outward presentation of self. Each individual has his or her own personal feelings, emotions, ideas, ideals, likes and dislikes, and in every conceivable social encounter, a person must choose to express or hide these representations of self in light of expectations and reactions of others. The combinations of expressed and hidden representations of self are *lines*, and the *line* a person takes can and often does change from social encounter to social encounter. *Lines* change because the person presenting the *line* will try to express his or her *line* so that it conforms to the expectations of the group evaluating the presenter.

For Goffman (1967: p5) *face* is "...defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the *line* others assume he has taken during a particular contact." In this respect *face* and status are almost interchangeable. The only difference is that *face* also entails the rights and responsibilities associated with the status. The higher the status, the more face-work is needed to maintain the status. Hence, the less status a person has, the less face-work will be needed, and the closer an individual's *line* follows group expectations the less face-work is needed.

The *line* an individual takes is of primary importance in social interactions. The reasons for this is because lines are evaluated based on the expectations of others and dictate the reaction of others to *face* claimed. If the *face* someone claims is not

entirely consistent with his or her *line* then that person is said to be *in wrong face*. If, however, the *face* a person shows is completely inconsistent with his or her *line*, then that person is said to be *out of face*. When people are either *in wrong face* or *out of face*, then *face-work* is needed (Goffman 1967).

It can be argued that simply viewing other people's interactions is a form of social participation. Goffman (1967: p15) accounts for this argument when he discusses a basic form of face-work called the *avoidance process*. Not participating, not expressing a *line* is the first way to engage in the *avoidance process*. The next way to engage in the avoidance process is to avoid topics of conversation that might contradict an already established *line* and, therefore, threaten an existing *face*.

It must be understood that *face* maintenance, or *face-work*, is not something an actor does by himself (1967: pp.27-31). Instead, face-work is a process in which all actors within a given interaction are expected to participate. There are ritual techniques that allow actors to aid each other in maintaining or gaining *face*. One technique is known as *the corrective process*, and it follows steps known as *the interchange* (1967: pp.19-23).

The use of the *corrective process* is necessary:

“When participants in an undertaking or encounter fail to prevent the occurrence of an event that is expressively incompatible with the judgments of social worth that are being maintained, and when the event is of the kind that is difficult to overlook, then the participants are likely to give it accredited status as an incident—to ratify it as a threat that deserves direct official attention—and to proceed to try to correct for its effects (1967: p19).”

This means that when a person has done something or failed to do something and has been found *in wrong face* or *out of face*, and that action or inaction is too grievous to ignore, then that *line* must be corrected.

There are four steps that can be taken during the *interchange*: challenge, offering, acceptance and thanks. However, two of these steps, offering and acceptance, are necessary if *face* is to be saved. If this seems odd, think of the offering "Excuse me," and the acceptance "Of course." (1967: p20)

The challenge step occurs when a participant calls attention to an action or inaction that causes a person to be found *in wrong face* or *out of face*. This step is only necessary when the offending individual is not aware of his or her offense, or not aware that his or her offense is grievous enough to require an offering. (1967: p20)

The offering step occurs when an individual, usually the offender, becomes aware of an offense and takes action to try and "re-establish the expressive order (1967: p20)." Understand that if a person recognizes an offense which requires an offering it is possible that he or she can initiate an offering before a challenge is made.

In face-to-face encounters offerings take many forms. Sometimes people claim that threatening actions or inactions were only meant jokingly, or happened accidentally. Sometimes people will offer an apology or some form of physical reparation. Sometimes a person will claim that he or she was not acting of his or her own accord. Sometimes a person will claim that any actions or inactions that threaten his or her *face* were intentional and that the others within the encounter mistakenly gave the offender too much or too little *face* (1967: pp.20-22).

Once an acceptable offering has been made acceptance can happen. To end the interchange, the offending party conveys some form of gratitude to the challengers. This last step is known as thanks (1967: p22). It is important to remember that even though these steps are something all parties involved are expected to participate in graciously, some situations dictate a departure from the model. Sometimes challengers will not accept an offering, viewing it as weak or disingenuous. Sometimes offenders will give multiple offerings in hopes of demonstrating how sincere his or her regret is. Sometimes offenders will ignore the challenge and continue with offending actions or inactions. The consequences of this last tactic can sometimes be dire, and can take the form of violent reprisal (1967: p23).

There are also ritual techniques that participants can use that can cause others to lose *face*, or that can initiate a situation where an individual is setup in a strategic position to gain *face*. This is known as *aggressive face-work*, and it begins: "When a person treats face-work not as something he need be prepared to perform, but rather as something that others can be counted on to perform or accept..." (1967: p24) In these situations, face-to-face encounters cease to be a practice in maintaining the expressive order, and instead become an arena where a game is played. Like most games, this game is won by scoring more points than the competition.

The rules to the previously mentioned game are simple. Step one is to try and exploit any and all contradictions found between an adversary's *line* and *face*; this is how a participant makes points and wins the game. Step two is to keep one's adversaries from finding a contradiction between your *line* and *face*; this denies your adversaries points. (1967: p24) This contest can be held among friends where it is



played for fun as a game, sometimes known as “busting chops,” or it can be held amongst enemies where it is treated as a serious competition. It should be known that whether making points is treated as a game or as a competition it is usually agreed upon by all parties involved. In fact, if an individual attempts to make points in a situation where the other participants of the encounter are not interested in making points, then he or she runs the risk of losing *face* in that encounter.

How a person goes about hiding and exploiting contradictions between *line* and *face* vary from encounter to encounter. However, the most common method is to introduce favorable facts about oneself and unfavorable facts about the opposition. To this end, it is almost a requirement that an audience is present. If the player, or points maker, can force his or her adversaries into a situation where they have no satisfactory response to the accusations, then a point is made, and the match is won. If, however, one's adversaries can successfully deflect an accusation and then deliver one of their own, then they gain the points. In this way a person always takes a risk by initiating a points making competition. (1967: p25)

The most important thing to know about *face*, however, is how emotions play a part in face-work rituals. When people are *maintaining face* they feel pride in how others view them and interact with them. (1967: p6) When people are in *wrong face*, or *out of face*, they feel shame and embarrassment at how others view and interact with them. (1967: p8) To engage in social interactions is to risk great rewards or punishments. As Goffman says: “...While his social face can be his most personal possession and the center of his security and pleasure, it is only on loan to him from society; It will be withdrawn unless he conducts himself in a way that is worthy of it.”

(1967: p10) To fully understand how important pride and shame are to social interaction a few articles that discuss the real world applications of *face* maintenance were examined.

David Luckenbill and Daniel Doyle (1989) analyze both structural models of violence and cultural models of violence to explain why violence is prevalent in minority subcultures. The cultural model of violence views violence as a product of conformity to distinctive cultural norms. The structural model sees violence as a product of structural discontinuity; most notably the uneven distribution of resources. (1989: p420) Analyzing the structural model first, Luckenbill and Doyle (1989: p423) note that there is a ritual, similar to Goffman's interchange, which initiates violent disputes. The first step is the naming. This is where one person sees the outcome of another person's actions as being harmful to the observer. The second step is the claiming. This is where the injured party expresses grievance and demands reparation. Notice how this step is almost identical to Goffman's *challenge*. The final step is the dispute. This is where the harm doer rejects the victim's claim. At this point in the structural model is where violent reprisal by the injured party is a distinct possibility. Next, Luckenbill and Doyle (1989: pp.426-427) apply this ritual to the cultural model to find out when violence will be the most likely response to the dispute. They found that violence was the most likely outcome when the properties of the self are harmed. In other words when someone causes another to lose *face*, violence is a likely response. When the harm is done in front of people, and it is done by people of equal status, aggressive responses are more likely. This study makes it clear that *face* is something that is guarded with extreme emotion, especially in face-to-face interaction.

The next article takes Goffman's ritual to the classroom of a college campus. In this article Shane Sharp and Gregory Krodsmeier (2008) offer a demonstration teachers can use to show students "the power of face-work and tact in influencing and structuring their own individual behavior." These instructors devised this demonstration for the class when Goffman's "On Face-Work" was discussed. The instructor came to class with the front of his shirt pulled an inch out of his front pant's zipper. He then taught the class as normal for about thirty minutes before asking if any of the students had noticed the shirt hanging out of the zipper. Everyone admitted that they had seen the shirt. He then began asking why they did not speak up. He then began relating their responses to Goffman's essay. Students who were embarrassed to admit they had noticed the *faux pas* were attempting to save their own *face* by ignoring the source of their own embarrassment. He explained that the students felt personally embarrassed by the situation because of emotional identification (2008: p361). Students who did not want to embarrass the instructor by pointing out the *faux pas* were attempting to save the instructor's *face* by employing a *face saving* strategy known as tactful blindness (2008: p361). The one student out of all the classes that broached the subject before the instructor had chance to broach it himself was also shown to be feeling emotional identification due to her intense blushing and nervous laughter (2008: p362).

Gilmore and Warren (2007) take this argument one step closer to showing that emotion will play a part in blog discourse, by demonstrating the role emotions played for teachers conducting classes online. They analyzed the role intimacy, play, and shame/pride played in the online classroom. For shame/pride they used Goffman's theoretical framework. They noted that their students became more involved in

discussions online because the nature of the medium alleviated many of the students concerns about embarrassment. However, they also found that students had a greater emotional attachment to what they said since what they said was an online representation of their face. They also noticed how classes would often bring out a paradoxical mix of pride and shame from the teachers. The teachers felt pride in their student's capabilities; however, they felt shame that they had underestimated their students going into the class. This article demonstrates that online interactions can elicit emotions just as face-to-face interactions do.

These three articles make it clear that *face* and *face-work* are emotionally charged. Whether in a poor neighborhood, a college classroom, or an online classroom, threats to *face* are met by extreme emotional responses. It is clear that real world settings demand that *face* is maintained so that self can be protected. This project, however, is interested in seeing if *face-work* is done on blogs. To that end it is important that the reader understands what blogs are and what aspects of Goffman's findings can be applied to them.

#### "On Face-Work" Applied to Blogging

The first question asked is, "How does someone express a *line* in the Blogosphere?" There are a couple of answers to this question. First, someone can express a *line* by being an active member in a particular blog community. In this way a person's likes and dislikes are shown to the world by his or her posts and/or comments. The second way a person can express his or her *line* is by creating a profile, if such a feature is allowed in a blog. That profile can contain as little or as much about an

individual as that person wishes to share with the community. Also, an individual is not required to use the same profile from blog to blog. In this way an individual is allowed to alter his or her *line* from online encounter to online encounter.

Goffman (1967: p7) cautions that *face* is not something that is part of a person's body but is instead part of the flow of events. This means that a person must participate in ongoing events. Members of the blogosphere are given a *face* when they are actively blogging. Blogging is now defined as posting to one's own blog or commenting on another person's blog. When people blog they are including themselves in a computer mediated social gathering. By doing this they establish a *line* and are given a *face* by the members of their blogging community. However, like in face-to-face social situations, once a person is given a *face* he or she is expected to engage in face-work to maintain his or her *face*.

Bloggers engage in the avoidance process by refusing to blog. Any given blog can be viewed by countless numbers of people. However, it is only after a person comments on a post that he or she is given existence within the ritual order. Once a blogger has started an interaction, he or she abandons the *avoidance process* and should be expected to participate in other forms of face-work when necessary.

This study is concerned with how much of the face-work ritual behavior is mirrored in blogging exchanges. It must be recognized what cannot be mirrored due to the medium. To aid in this undertaking interaction participants were identified. There were two types of participants. The blogger is the person who maintains the blog and makes the post. The "commenters" are the people who read the posts and comment on

them. Either of these types of participants can take the role of challenger and either of these types of participants can make an offering.

Another bit of information that must be remembered is that the steps of the interchange, in face-to-face encounters, do not always take the form of words. Body language in the form of smiles, frowns, shrugs, and hand gestures can represent a step in the *interchange*. Audible clues such as grunts, groans, laughs, and “tsk” can work as a step of the *interchange*. Examples could be found where a form of touch or smell was a step in the *interchange*. Face-to-face correction does not need to take the form of words. Most blogs, however, require words in order for any interaction to occur.

There are a number of types of blogs, the most common of which are written blogs. There are, however, vlogs (video blogs), photologs (photography blogs), artlogs (art blogs), and Podcasts (audio blogs). It is possible that something seen or heard in one of these alternative types of blogs could elicit a challenge. If it is speculated that Goffman’s rules apply to blogs, then one would expect the challenge and any further steps of the *interchange* would take the form of typed words. This being the case, it is expected that most *face* threatening actions take the form of typed words on blogs, and that the steps of the *interchange* are also typed.

As was discussed with the *corrective process*, this study is interested in discovering whether or not Goffman’s corrective rituals apply to blogs. As with the corrective process it is important to identify what aspects of the points making game cannot be mirrored in blogs due to the medium. First it should be noted that points making in face-to-face encounters is relatively brief. In fact the length of an encounter is directly related to the time it takes to convey embarrassing information about one’s

opponent. This act can take a few seconds at best and a minute or two at worst. However, the comment threads of blogs can last for days. With this information it is speculated that it is possible for a points making game or competition to go on much longer on a blog than in real life.

Goffman points out that the recipient of a points making accusation can reverse the situation and make a point. Goffman also explains that it is possible that the original points maker could then counter the reversal. However, Goffman warns that, though multiple levels of reversal are possible, it is rare that reversals escalate past level three; except in staged encounters. As long as a blog post is active, however, there are few limitations to the amount of time commenters or bloggers can take in crafting a response to other commenters. Taking this into account it is speculated that one might see many levels of reversals that might not have been possible in face-to-face communication.

Another difference that should be acknowledged is that, like in the corrective process, it is improbable that that physical and audible context clues will be available to dictate the frame of the situation. As Goffman (1967: pp.27-31) explained, the choice to make points is usually agreed upon by all involved participants. This is done either through direct verbal statement or indirect contextual clues. It can be assumed that, without the benefit of contextual clues, many blogs might contain a mix of both the *interchange* and points making competitions.

It should also be known that many blogs have a "Terms of Service Agreement," which would allow the blogger or blog administrator to remove any commenter who behaves in a manner that violates the Terms of Service. These agreements are not

very strict, and are primarily in place to keep commenters from using language that other blog viewers might find offensive. It can be speculated that these Terms of Service, would not stop points making from occurring, but would keep it on a more friendly and/or civil level.

The important role face-work plays in face-to-face interactions, as well as the extent to which emotions play a part in these encounters has been examined. It has also been noted how the structure of blogs allows for the use of face-work within this virtual setting. It is now possible to make this first hypothesis. It is hypothesized that the face-to-face rituals of the *interchange* and the points making game will occur within blogs.

It should be noted that this hypothesis comes from an overarching theory that says it is possible for an individual to present self in a medium that is not face-to-face. This theory is not a new one. Many theorists have studied not only the effects of technology on the presentation of self; but the effect of technology on the formation of self as well. To understand effects of technology on the formulation and presentation of self this study examined the writings of some other Sociologists and Social Psychologists. These theorists and researchers discuss not only the impact modern technology has had on the formulation and the presentation of self, but also the benefits and drawbacks of using such technology.

### Theories of Postmodern Self Presentation

Gergen (1991) conjectures that the accessibility of contemporary technology is a possible a threat to our formation of self. Gergen theorizes that we are constantly



bombarded with all this input, with no way to truly escape it while being part of the social world. Since we cannot escape it, we will find ourselves saturated with new ideas and new ways to live. This saturation will cause dissolution of the self. Gergen (1991: p6) thinks that “emerging technologies saturate us with the voices of humankind--both harmonious and alien.” This saturation forces us to constantly reevaluate our inner selves and try to incorporate the new information into our self construction. Gergen calls this constant reevaluation *Multiphrenia*.

“*Multiphrenia* is the splitting of the individual into a multiplicity of self-investment.” He states, “As one’s potentials are expanded by the technologies, so one increasingly employs the technologies for self-expression; yet as the technologies are further utilized, so do they add to the repertoire of potentials” (1991: pp.73-74). In other words, technology creates a snowball effect. The more a person uses technology the more potential selves a person uncovers; these selves require more use of technology to understand them better.

The first component is the “Vertigo of the Valued” (1991: p74). This component sees the goals and values of others becoming our goals and values. The more others we incorporate into ourselves, the more of these values appear until we are overwhelmed by conflicting value systems, as well as being overwhelmed by the responsibilities we have to these newly formed relationships. The second component is “The Expansion of Inadequacy” (1991: p.76). As with the “Vertigo of the Valued,” “The Expansion of Inadequacy” comes when we incorporate others into ourselves. These other’s values become our values, and when we are unable to live up to the myriad of conflicting values, we find ourselves in a constant state of inadequacy. The third

Component is “Rationality in Recession.” “What is rational in one relationship is questionable or absurd from the standpoints of another” (1991: p 77).

At first glance this description of self formulation sounds the same as the way Goffman views the creation of self. Remember, Goffman thought that self was created and redefined as an individual found themselves in different situations. Gergen thinks that as new situations present themselves, due to technological influence, individuals gain new aspects of self. The difference between Goffman and Gergen is that Gergen does not account for agency. Individuals have the ability to pick and choose which value systems they wish to subscribe to; if there is a value system that makes us feel inadequate, we may very well spurn it for a value system that makes us feel good. Gergen fails to acknowledge people’s ability to build relationships with people whose rationality appeals to them, while rejecting relationships with people whose rationality does not.

When Goffman (1959) discusses front and backstage behavior in *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, he talks about how people will change behavior depending on who is watching them. Just encountering and observing a different value system is not enough to change the self. One must also choose to incorporate those values into his or her life. It is entirely possible for individuals to see other people’s goals and values as unimportant. It is also possible for individuals to see other people as unimportant or unworthy of their time. Blogs are good technological examples of the many different viewpoints that can be presented on the internet. It takes an active effort to traverse the nearly unlimited number of web pages on the internet. A person might waste an

afternoon reading blogs that do not mirror his or her own value system; however, there is no guarantee that these readings will change that person's point of view.

Gergen ends his book on a hopeful note. He believes that the saturation of the self will lead to a globalized self. In his words: "For as such technologies become increasingly effective, we become increasingly populated with the identities of others, and come increasingly to recognize the extent of our relational embeddings. As this occurs, the separation between self and other becomes diminished, and warfare becomes a nonsensical proposition" (Gergen 1999). This sounds like a very pleasant future. However, after reading the introduction to the 2000 edition of the book it was found that there was a dark side of human connection Gergen failed to anticipate, but has since observed. The idea of agency and picking value systems has come back to torment Gergen. People are using technologies to cement relationships with likeminded people and then attack those that do not agree with them. Though this is an unpleasant turn of events, it does give insight into what might be witnessed on blogs. The formation and expression of an in-group/out-group mentality amongst some bloggers and commenters might be observed.

Gubrium and Holstein (2000) take a different approach to the construction of self. Gubrium and Holstein see these various forms of input and accessibility as opportunities for self construction. Even though the stream of input is continuous, people are able to pick and choose what *going concerns* fit their lives and selves. The phrase *going concerns* was originally coined by Everett Hughes. (1984) Going concerns are "a ways of characterizing relatively stable, routinized ongoing patterns of action and interaction" (Gubrium & Holstein 2000: p102)

Gubrium and Holstein postulate that self is fluid and that people may create false selves that surface to deal with unavoidable situations that their true self would find unpleasant. This sounds almost identical to Goffman's Ideas on front stage and backstage behavior. Gubrium and Holstein warn that if we find ourselves in situations that force our false self to the surface often enough, we may very well lose sight of our real self. Even though this sounds similar to Gergen's argument, it is different in that these unavoidable situations cause individuals to choose to suppress their real selves. If there is a choice, than there is personal agency.

Gubrium and Holstein assume, like Gergen, that there are almost unlimited sources of self creation. However, unlike Gergen, they do not see these sources as an unavoidable barrage, but instead as a buffet from which we choose going concerns that best represent our true selves. Therefore, the technologies which Gergen sees as people's greatest problem, Gubrium and Holstein see as people's greatest opportunity.

Finally, Wynn and Katz (1997) examine postmodern psychoanalytical writings regarding the internet. They found a number of problems with the postmodern psychoanalytical, the first being that it was not grounded in accepted theory. They do not think that the internet radically alters the social basis of identity. (1997: p298) However, they do recognize the possibility of variations of social bases of identity in online communication, and they also see variations on the constraints of social interaction. They acknowledge how the internet causes a shift in public and private boundaries, but they warn that before we examine new technologies we need to realize that technology is a social construct (1997: pp.306-307). Also, when analyzing self presentation on the internet we need to take into account the internet's ability to act as a

panopticon (1997: pp.310-312). Behavior on the internet will be modified to account for people feeling that they are being watched.

To support their argument, Wynn and Katz examine personal web pages. They found that the links people made to other web pages gave great insight to people's selves. They even identified how the ambiguity of the public/private boundary often found people sharing what others might consider to be too much about themselves. Finally, they found that the fundamental flaw of postmodern psychoanalytical writings is that these writings believe people desire to escape their physical selves. Instead, Wynn and Katz see the internet as a tool with which people try to present their physical selves to a virtual audience (1997: p324).

New technologies, especially the internet, enable individuals to understand the most prevalent aspects of self, in other words what their *line* is. This is done by exposing people to new and/or different ideas, ideologies, thoughts and beliefs. People are also able to learn how best to present a *face* appropriate with a chosen *line*. This should not be taken as technology determining behavior. Instead, all technology, especially the internet, should be looked at as a catalog of thoughts and beliefs from which anyone who has access to the technology can create a *line*. However, if this study is going to continue with the hypothesis that the rituals observed by Goffman are applicable to blogs then it is important to examine how Goffman has influenced research into online communication.

## Self Presentation in Computer Mediated Communication

Bellamy and Hanewicz (1999) “assessed the degree to which emotion management factors constrain hostile types of communication within electronic chat room settings.” This study is direct in its observation of social norms within the setting of chat rooms, mainly *flaming behavior*. Flaming is a form of aggressive face-work. Bellamy and Hanewicz gave a questionnaire to one hundred and fourteen undergraduate and graduate students.

“Overall, the results indicate that flaming behavior is reduced when people define the chat room situation as having normative standards of conduct. However, the correlation is stronger for males more so than females and for low sociable users more so than high sociable users. Significant differences are revealed among the relationships between the emotion management factors and flaming. For both high and low Locus of Control groups, shame and guilt are shown as factors that control flaming interactions in predicted ways, but it is more pronounced for externals on the guilt factor as is the inverse relationship between pride and flaming” (Bellamy & Hanewicz 1999).

Flamers are attempting to *make points* by driving away anyone who opposes them. Bellamy and Hanewicz found that when rules defined flaming as being against its norms the people were less likely to flame others. This tells us that even online people have a sense of self that they wish to protect by subscribing to normative behavior. Also, since shame and guilt were two factors able to control flaming behavior in both high and low locus of control groups, it can once again be supported that people have invested interest in protecting their self image displayed online.

Papacharissi (2002: p643) uses Goffman’s theory in her analysis of “how individuals use personal home pages to present themselves online and analyzes the tools used in this new channel of mass communication.” Papacharissi examined one thousand internet homepages. She surveyed respondents and analyzed their

homepages. She determined that individuals used the tools available in webpage design to present self and form a community. She also found that, depending on the webpage provider, individuals had more or less restrictions to self presentation. Some webpage providers provide many tools which users can utilize. These tools enable self expression, which assists in self presentation.

Self presentation is the combined activity of taking a *line* and claiming and/or being given *face* for that *line*. The more tools people have at their disposal the greater ability they have to maintain *face* and conduct *face-work*. Home pages are visual tools of *line* taking and *face* claiming.

Morand and Ocker (2003) use politeness theory to analyze computer mediated communication. Though politeness theory was not conceived of by Goffman it is still firmly rooted in his theories of self presentation and face-work. After analyzing the role politeness theory plays in computer mediated communication they went on to analyze the effect the dramaturgical perspective plays in computer mediated communication. They developed eight propositions and two sub-propositions which they applied to computer mediated communication. The last thing to note about this article is that the researchers believe that, as computer mediated communication becomes more normative, we will see normative routines of politeness develop. Here are some of the propositions.

*Proposition 1: The exposure of face, the commission of Face Threatening Act 's (FTA's), and the employment of linguistic politeness routines used to redress FTA's, will occur quite frequently in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) (2003: p5).*

If Proposition 1 is correct, then the first hypothesis will be supported, since "*linguistic politeness routines*" can be described as corrective face-work.

*Proposition 1a: The specific form of FTA's (e.g.: interruptions, intrusions) will differ in CMC interaction (2003: p5).*

If Proposition 1a is correct, then modifications made to the *interchange* and *points making* game will be observed.

*Proposition 2: Individuals in CMC modes are aware of and motivated by dramaturgical concerns (e.g.: aware of desire to appear competent, interesting, considerate to others, and of phrasing messages in such a way as to preserve relational harmony) (2003: p5).*

If Proposition 2 is correct, then the use of face-work on blogs will be observed.

*Proposition 6: Positive politeness shares significant commonality with the following relational ties used in CMC research: friendship, group cohesion, solidarity, and intimacy (2003: p7).*

If Proposition 6 is correct, then in-groups will play a large role in the attitudes of commenters and bloggers

*Proposition 8: Flaming derives from both senders' intent and receivers' misattribution due to CMC leanness (2003: p7).*

If Proposition 8 is correct, then both types of correction, *interchange* and *points making*, will be used against the same individuals.

Bortree (2005: p25) also used Goffman's ideas to examine "...two aspects of teen girls' blog use: (1) challenges and hazards of conducting interpersonal communication in a mass medium; and (2) self-presentation strategies used to negotiate a dual audience." She observed the progression of forty blogs, conducted an in-depth analysis of six of the girls who were part of the larger community, and interviewed thirteen bloggers. She found that:

"Blogging appears to be a useful creative tool for teens to use in maintaining relationships. By creating this 'safe' space for self-expression, teens are able to read about each other's lives and share their own experiences. Possibly, the bloggers are able to build and maintain an



image that will afford them more access to friendship groups. However, the balance they must keep between intimate sharing to maintain close relationships and making inflated claims to impress a larger group of teens may put them at a greater risk of alienating one of the two, or possibly both, groups.” (2005: p38)

These small groups are able to form around shared *lines*. Because these groups share similar lines they create an emotional interest in protecting each other's *face* and maintaining the ritual order.

Brignall and Valey (2005) examined previous writings about social interaction and the effects of the internet. They also examined the statistics of online activity from 2000 to 2002 to support their finding that the internet is gaining in popularity and becoming an important communication tool. They discuss age as an important factor in online interaction, as well as the limitations previously discussed, namely the lack of social context cues. They cite social interaction theories, including those of Goffman, to stress that face-to-face contact is necessary to develop social skills. Finally they theorize that “children of the internet generation” (2005: p343) might not be learning relevant social skills and might be violating interaction norms in online interaction because online these interaction norms are not the societal norm. However, they also speculate that online interaction might now be considered a new form of role-play. If this is true, then online interaction might be a new element in the development of the self. The thought that children might not be developing normative social skills could be important if an excess of disruptive behavior on blogs, that would interest children and adolescents, is found.

Jeanne M. Brett et al. (2007) examined online dispute resolution and the importance of language and *face* within these disputes. They discuss the important role

*face* plays in resolving disputes. Then they examine how giving and taking *face* modifies dispute resolution and creates six hypotheses based on the literature. They hypothesized that expressing positive emotions, giving a causal explanation, offering suggestions for resolution, and showing firmness of one's position would increase the likelihood of resolution. They also hypothesized that expressing negative emotion and giving commands would decrease the likelihood of resolution.

Brett et al. conducted an experiment to test the six hypotheses, with a sample three hundred and eighty-six eBay disputes. They used the Linguistic Inquiry Word Count (LIWC) program to analyze the positive or negative connotation of words within response pages, and finally created control variables. They found that showing positive emotion and offering suggestions for resolution did not help resolve online disputes. However, offering causal explanations, showing firmness in one's position were shown to increase the likelihood of resolution. Also, showing negative emotion and issuing commands lowered the likelihood of resolution. If offering a causal explanation is similar to making an offering in an *interchange* it makes sense that this tactic aided in conflict resolution. However, the difference in findings when examining how expressing positive and negative emotions play in online dispute management should be kept in mind when analyzing corrections within blogs.

Watanabe (2007) created an online Bulletin Board System; also known as a BBS or forum, and a blog dealing with spirituality. They administered a Spirituality Psychological Test to understand the motivations of posters. They found that people's beliefs that were negatively symbiotic, that is to say people who were not interested in learning other people's spiritual viewpoints had a tendency to make conflicting and

intolerant posts. They also found that people who were interested in understanding and implementing positive self-change retreated from the BBS to the safety of the blog. Within the blog people felt they could better express themselves in the form of a monologue because they could delete intolerant comments made by others. A final note of interest is that the researchers found the intolerant posts made to the BBS beneficial because they added diversity and helped combat the polarization of views. What is interesting about these findings is the author's view blogs as monologues. The ability to leave comments should see blogs framed as dialogues. However, this different viewpoint should be kept in mind when analyzing the data, since it predicts fewer and shorter interactions online. Also, the power of the blogger to delete posts needs to be recognized as a new aspect of communication unique to the internet.

This literature review has identified differing schools of thought regarding technology's impact on the formation and presentation of self. One school of thought sees technology as harmful to the self. This school of thought sees self formed and presented online as being shallow compared to self formed and presented in face-to-face encounters. The second school of thought sees technology as beneficial to the self. This school of thought sees self formed and presented online as having more options than a self formed and presented in face-to-face encounters. Regardless of which view is more accurate, these readings allow for a second hypothesis. It is hypothesized that the rituals of the *interchange* and the points making game will be modified in online use. This hypothesis creates two research questions. First, how are correction rituals modified for use within blogs? Second, why are correction rituals modified within blogs?

## Methods

Blogs allow the blogger to speak and interact with a group. Anyone can join this group simply by reading the blog. People will read blogs that capture their interests. Because people are intimately familiar with their own *line*, they will be able to spot when a blogger or fellow commenter is *out of face* or in *wrong face*. How corrections on blogs are formed and implemented is what this study will analyze.

To start, correction must first be defined. This task would have been much easier had Goffman provided a definition of correction. Sadly, Goffman only provided a definition of when correction was necessary, as was pointed out earlier. However, starting with when a correction is necessary a definition can be built. Correction, a form of face-work, is necessary when the *face* a person possesses does not match the *line* he or she has taken for himself or herself.

This last statement is problematic because typically members of a blogging community are strangers in real life and know nothing of each other except that they share the same interest in blog genres. This little bit of knowledge, however, does allow people to make the assumption that any participant in a blog interaction should have knowledge of the topic being discussed. It is difficult to talk about something one does not know about without looking foolish. Most people do not want to look foolish.

For the purposes of this study; ***Correction is a challenge or accusation made by one blog participant to another, indicating disagreement with the other.***

Deciding whether a correction is a challenge, the first step in the *interchange*; or an accusation, the first step in a points making competition, depends on the context of the situation. To this end, the research tool known as content analysis was employed.

“Content analysis is a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts” (Palmquist 1993). The for selecting content analysis is because by reading through blog entries and comments and looking for posts which match the definition of correction stated above is an effective way to evaluate the extent of face-work on blogs.

The type of content analysis used in this thesis is relational analysis (Palmquist, 1993). Examination of specific words or phrases within blog entries and comments is not the focus of this thesis, so conceptual analysis is not used. What this thesis examines is how corrective threads relate, either positively or negatively, to blog posts. Relational analysis investigates how an idea or statement relates to the whole text. Corrections that attempt to use *the interchange* have a positive relation to the person being addressed since they attempt to negate or lessen the loss of *face*. Corrections designed to *make points* have a negative relation to the person being addressed since they attempt to heighten the loss of *face*.

The study began by randomizing the blogs that would be investigated. Two websites were used. The first one, <http://www.wikio.com>, lists the most referenced blogs for each month. This website categorizes blogs into groups such as business, entertainment, sports, politics, and so on. Blogs were sampled from the four categories of business, film, sports, and politics. These categories are generalizeable in that each category is followed by individuals of different sex, gender, sexual preference, race, age, and class. The second website is <https://www.blogger.com>, a web community that allows users to create their own personal blog. It is from this group that the fifth category, the personal blog, was sampled.

The top ten blogs in each of the five categories were randomized, using the randomizer program found at [www.randomizer.org/index.htm](http://www.randomizer.org/index.htm). The study examined these blogs for a week, selecting random posts. The study data were collected from these posts. Each post was sampled over a five-day time period to allow commenters to make comments. Every week for ten weeks the blogs were randomized again. Five blogs sampled a week and one post sampled from each blog for five days totaled twenty-five posts every week. After two and one half months it was expected that two hundred and fifty posts would be collected.

At the end of the five day period, each post was copied and saved verbatim. This study limited the data analyzed to five pages of text, including the post itself. To aid in this goal all advertisements, hyperlinks, and pictures were deleted from the copied versions so that only the post and comments remained. If the post was more than five pages, the study allowed up to five pages of comments beyond the number of pages the post takes up. If a post did not change after a day the study allowed five pages of comments for each day the post remained. Five days of comments resulted in hundreds of pages of text. Had the above described limitations not been added there would have been more comments than was feasible to examine in this study.

Each post and accompanying comments were read and analyzed. If the post has no comments, it was marked as such and logged for overall analysis. If a post has comments but no corrections it was logged for an overall analysis. If a post has corrective comments, they were logged and counted. Data was sought that used the *interchange* process (or a variation of it), or that used the *points making* process. There were no set word or phrases that indicated the type of corrective process used;

however, there are clues, which will indicate the process used within the comment. These clues are described below.

A correction which includes a compliment, or is simply a polite or neutral explanation of that which is being corrected, is part of *the interchange*. A correction that uses a qualifier to take power from and soften the blow of a correction is part of the *interchange*. A correction which includes an insult is part of the *points making* process. A comment can also be *points making* without directly insulting the speaker by simply discrediting the individual being addressed.

This process logged what form of correction was being used: the *interchange* process and the *points making* process. If the *interchange* is used, the step being observed was logged. If someone was observed *making points* then the accusation or level of reversal was logged. The screen name of the person making the step/points, as well as the screen name of the person who was challenged or accused was also logged. This is important because the definition of correction requires one blog participant to address another. Both hard copies and digital copies of all blog posts are being kept for future reference and analysis.

The next step was to code the data and enter them into a database. This database includes: the screen names of the speakers, where this data were obtained, and what type of correction these data represented. This database will be extensive since any one post could have dozens of people making corrections, as well as dozens of different correction threads.

Coding was kept simple for each type of correction so as not to corrupt the data by segmenting them unnecessarily. For *face saving* comments the data were coded

based on which part of the *interchange* was observed. The number “1” represents the *face* saving correction also known as the challenge. The number “2” represents the offering given by the corrected party. The number “3” represents the acceptance of the offering. The number “4” represents the thanks given by the corrected party. Since this is an *interchange*, it is possible for an individual to enact more than one step of the ritual. For situations such as these the code represents each part of the *interchange* the individual enacts. For example, “2, 4” means a person gave an offering as well as thanks.

For *points making* comments, the data was coded as “Reversal #.” “Reversal #” of 0 indicates an accusation, the first *points making* correction within a thread. Any “Reversal #” of 1 or greater indicates subsequent counter accusations, which occurred within a thread.

The database was analyzed to answer some statistical questions. How many corrections use the *interchange*? How many corrections use the *points making* process? How are the two types of corrections distributed within and across the genres? The findings gave a better understanding of whether interaction processes described by Goffman are used online, how they are used, and why they are used.



## Findings

A total of two hundred twenty-four blog posts were coded. Of those two hundred twenty-four posts twenty-eight (13%) had no comments, one hundred twenty (53%) had comments but none that fit the definition of correction, and seventy-six (34%) had either an *interchange* correction or a *points making* correction. Within those seventy-six posts, one hundred eighty-five comments were identified which were part of either the *interchange* or *points making* correction ritual. The one hundred eighty-five corrections were sorted into two categories: *interchange* and *points*. Ninety-nine (54%) of the corrections were part of an *interchange* and eighty-six (46%) of the corrections were part of the *points making* game. (See Table 1)

It is here that support is found for the first hypothesis. Having observed ninety-nine examples of the *interchange*, and eighty-six examples of the *points making* game, it can be said that Goffman's rituals of the *interchange* and *points making* game do occur within blogs.

The data were next examined to determine how the steps of the *interchange* were distributed and how many reversals of the *points making* game could be observed. This examination of the data is important because it is these data that indicate how the rituals were modified for online use. Challenge made up ninety-five of the ninety-nine observed correction steps in an *interchange*. Seven observations were made of offerings and one observation of thanks, with no observations of acceptance. It should be noted that on three occasions an offering was given in conjunction with a challenge, and that on one occasion the thanks was given in tandem with an offering. Of the eighty-six observations of the *points making* game being played seventy-five of the

observations were of the initial accusation while eleven of the observations were of a first step reversal. There were no examples of counter reversals or higher.

It is here that support is found for the second hypothesis. It is also here that the first research question is answered. The *interchange* has changed from a four step ritual to primarily a one step ritual consisting only of the challenge. Although a few examples of offering and thanks were observed, no examples of acceptance were found. It was also noted that the points making game occurred about 46% of the time. Even though the points making occurrences were less than the observed *interchange* occurrences, there are still more than would be expected since points making violates the expressive order. Goffman states that maintaining the expressive order is normative procedure. That being said, however, it must be noted that no points making reversals were seen after the first reversal. This is consistent with Goffman's findings.

With the second hypothesis addressed and the first research question answered, this study could examine why the observed ritual modifications happened. To accomplish this task an in-depth analysis of how corrections were distributed within and between genres, as well as a qualitative analysis was needed. At this point, it should be noted that the data gathered only provides a partial explanation of why the rituals are modified. These explanations that follow in the discussion section are based on the observations of the researcher. These are preliminary findings that invite further study into the rituals being discussed.

**Table 1: Distribution by Blog Genre and Overall Distribution of Corrections**

Genre	Interchange	Points	Total Corrections
Business	30 (67%)	15 (33%)	45 (24%)
Film	17 (63%)	10 (37%)	27 (15%)
Personal	9 (64%)	5 (36%)	14 (7)
Political	12 (30%)	28 (70%)	40 (22%)
Sports	31 (53%)	28 (47%)	59 (32%)
All	99 (54%)	86 (46%)	N = 185

## Discussion

To answer the second research question, the distribution of corrections between genres was examined. The sports blogs had the most corrections with fifty-nine (32%). It was followed by business blogs, with forty-five (24%) corrections; politics blogs, with forty (22%) corrections; and film blogs, with twenty-seven (15%) corrections. Finally, personal blogs only accounted for fourteen (8%) corrections.

Of the fifty-nine corrections observed in sports blogs, thirty-one (53%) were part of an *interchange* and twenty-eight (47%) were part of the *points making* game. Of the forty-five corrections observed in business blogs, thirty (67%) were part of the *interchange* and fifteen (33%) were part of the *points making* game. Of the forty corrections observed in political blogs, twelve (30%) were part of the *interchange* and twenty-eight (70%) were part of the *points making* game. Of the twenty-seven corrections observed in film blogs, seventeen (63%) were part of the *interchange* and ten (37%) were part of the *points making* game. Finally, of the fourteen corrections observed in personal blogs, nine (64%) were part of the *interchange* and five (36%) were part of the *points making* game. The significance of these numbers is that *interchange* corrections make up the majority of corrections in all genres save sports and politics.

Sports blogs had the most corrections. The distribution of corrections on sports blogs (53% interchange; 47% points) is very similar to the total distribution of corrections (54% interchange 46% points). There are a number of possible explanations for these findings. First, it is possible that factual information such as player positions and team rankings can be misquoted. These mistakes lead to

corrections. Since it is possible for anyone to make a mistake, it is in the best interest of all parties involved to help someone who has made a statistical or factual error save *face* since the commenter's next post might also contain an error.

Sports blog commenter, **starz31** corrects another commenter, **enterkrod**, whose original comment, said this about the Mets interest in signing Michael Young:

“might as well look into it..but why would we look into a shortstop role unless he would move to 2nd base?”

**starz31** responds with:

“enterkrod: Young has played in over 300 games at 2B from his early years in Texas (some guy named Arod was playing SS at the time)

He'd be a great fit as a 2B and in our lineup, but unless they were taking a discount b/c of his contract, it wouldn't be worth what we'd have to give up.”

**enterkrod** ends the *interchange* with:

“ohhhh ok..i would look into it..but im not gonna give up anything good to take him on”

Though **enterkrod** is correct in stating that Young is currently a short stop, he has put himself in *wrong face* by failing to know the fact that Young played second base at the beginning of his career. Failing to know this fact before making a comment places **starz31** in the position of having to correct **enterkrod**. This is one of the seven situations where the challenged individual made an offering. The “ohhhh ok...” indicates a realization of the challenged error. The sentence “...i would look into it..” is the offering where **enterkrod** shows agreement with **starz31** as well as the post which he had previously questioned. The rest of the statement is meant to show expertise in the subject being discussed in an effort to strengthen his *line* as a knowledgeable baseball fan who has the right to post, which is dictated by his recently saved face.

In the following example commenter, **exick** corrects a blogger, **Kevin Arnovitz**, who made a mistake when making this rule based statement:

“The league has upheld Rasheed Wallace's two most recent technical [sic] fouls, which means the current count is at 10. When and if Wallace hits 16, he'll be suspended one game. Each subsequent T will cost him another game”

**exick** caught the mistake and made this challenge:

“On Rasheed's technicals, unless the league recently changed the rules, he will be suspended for one game for every other technical he receives starting with the 16th, not each subsequent one.”

This challenge leaves an opening for an offering because **exick** uses the qualifying statement: ...unless the league recently changed the rules...” This gives the blogger an opportunity to admit fault and make amends. However, no offering was observed for this *interchange*.

Second, sports fans have opinions that are often based on a favorite team and/or player. In posts and comments where the team's and/or the player's abilities are discussed and compared, there is a good chance that heated disagreement and *points making* might occur. What will become more obvious as other genres are investigated is that when there is an obvious situation of “in-group/out-group” discussion, there is a good opportunity for points to be made. Also, since statistics are widely available in sports, people will often back up their *points making* accusations with a statistical argument.

Commenter, **Twins GM**, accuses another commenter, **CubbyFan23**, of making this invalid opinionated quote about the Royals signing Willie Bloomquist:

“What is this world coming to? This guy shouldn't get anything more than a minor league invite. What hope I had for Dayton Moore has quickly gone down the tubes.”

**Twins GM** then uses **CubbyFan23**'s original post to signify whose *face* he is attacking:

““What is this world coming to? This guy shouldn't get anything more than a minor league invite. What hope I had for Dayton Moore has quickly gone down the tubes.”

This is coming from a Cubs fan that signed Miles?

Miles career avg/obp/slg/ops

.289 .329 .364 .693

Bloomquist

.263 .322 .324 .645

Not that far off for a guy that will be a backup not a starter like Miles”

By pointing out that that the original quote comes from “...a Cubs fan...” and then pointing out that the Cubs “...signed Miles?,” and finally adding statistics that closely compare Miles to Bloomquist, **Twins GM** is able to cause the loss of **CubbyFan23**'s face. He does this by pointing out that Bloomquist is a backup, and that Miles, a comparable player, is starting for the Cubs. Though it is clear by his screen name that **Twins GM** is a fan of the Minnesota Twins, he has also made it clear by his points making accusation that he views the Cubs as being in his out-group. To this end he is willing to defend a decision made by the Royals, in order to make points against a Cubs fan.

After blogger **Tim Dierkes** posts:

“Pirates president Frank Coonelly joins Mark Attanasio (Brewers) and Drayton McLane (Astros) in supporting a salary cap,”

**cowsarecool220** says:

“Tim-

I've noticed that the three teams that have publicly voices [*sic*] their support for a salary cap are all in the NL Central.

I think the reason they support a cap is they are in a division with the Cubs who will always be able to out spend them.

The Cardinals are the team in that division that has not called for a salary cap. They are the most successful team in the division over a long period of time and the Pirates, Brewers and Astros could be just as successful if the [*sic*] emulate the Cardinals.”

**Aduncaroo** responds:

The Cardinals are cheap. They try and hide under the umbrella of a small to mid market team, when in fact they are a mid to high market team. Ownership pockets a ton and the fans deserve a better product after filling that stadium over and over.”

By saying, “The Cardinals are cheap.” **Aduncaroo** accuses **cowsarecool220** of having an invalid positive opinion of the Cardinals. He then goes on to claim that the team misrepresents itself and that the ownership is greedy. These are three accusations which are meant to cause **cowsarecool220** to lose face. In this situation **Aduncaroo** places the Cardinals, and their fans, into the out-group.

Business contains the second largest proportion of corrections. However, *interchange* corrections make up about two thirds of the corrections and points making corrections represent about one third of the corrections. Reading the blog posts and following comments helps to clarify this point. Most business posts deal with current economic theory, and all of them were applied to the contemporary economic situation in some form. Since economic schools of thought are constantly gaining and losing popularity it is in the best interests of all economic theorists to maintain civility when having economic discussions and disagreement.

Here is an example of commenter, **Rorty**, disagreeing with blogger **Brad DeLong** who said:



“This makes me think I should finish writing up one of the talks that I gave in Singapore--the point of which was that Chicago economists today are profoundly ignorant of what the Chicago School of economics--the school of Friedman and Stigler--believes.”

**Rorty** disagrees that modern Chicago economists are ignorant of the school of Friedman:

“As a former student at Ullinois, [*sic*] where we had a lot of newly minted macro PhDs from Chicago, I think it may be a better argument that the kids think of themselves as more of prodigy of Lucas than of Friedman. The RBC model of the economy, as well as the High Finance's, Fama above all, complete [*sic*] severing from macroeconomics (Ketchup Economics triumphant!).”

By using the qualifier “...I think it may be a better argument that...” **Rorty** offers a challenge with room for an offering, though no offering is forthcoming.

Here is an example of commenter **Paul Schreck** challenging this statement made by blogger **Paul Krugman**:

“Nobody who was at all familiar with this literature could make the logic mistakes that are coming fast and furious from the fresh-water economists”

**Paul Schreck** responds:

“You sell freshwater students short. While there is clearly a bias towards real business cycle among the freshwater crowd and work coming from these macro schools, most PhD students are aware of the distinction. Furthermore, private opinion of model choices, assumptions and old arguments are often more critical than public opinion.”

Saying “You sell freshwater students short” is a challenge against part of the bloggers post. By saying “While there is clearly a bias towards real business cycle among the freshwater crowd...” **Paul Schreck** shows understanding of **Paul Krugman's** statement. However, he elaborates on why he disagrees with the blogger. This

elaboration, as well as understanding previously shown, is an opportunity for an offering. However, no offering is forthcoming.

There are some economists out there who subscribe whole heartedly to one school of thought. This mindset forms an “in-group/out-group” situation as previously described. When there is an obvious situation of “in group/out group” discussed, there is a good opportunity for points to be made. Also, economic policy is tied to political belief. When issues of political belief come into play, an “in group/out group” situation arises, and points are made.

This example starts with commenter **In-House** making this comment:

Now you're talking, file for bankruptcy losers. The U.S. taxpayers shouldn't be footing the bill for poor management and unbelievably overpaid union employees.

Labor cost per hour, wages and benefits for hourly workers, 2006.

Ford: \$70.51 (\$141,020 per year)

GM: \$73.26 (\$146,520 per year)

Chrysler: \$75.86 (\$151,720 per year)

Toyota, Honda, Nissan (in U.S.): \$48.00 (\$96,000 per year)

Here is what **to 2:46** thinks of this comment:

“Another thing — you think Ford and GM employees are a bunch of overpaid fat cats? You think they're raking anyone over the coals? YOu [*sic*] think that those employees are to blame? I sure hope that's not what you're implying. But if it isn't, please revisit your points. But I appreciate the stark costs data you posted. Those facts do speak for themselves. But the emkployees [*sic*] are just real, working people. Is adding them to the ranks of the already unemployed really the answer? Think of the consequences of bankruptcy. Resist blaming the most vulnerable. Fire the real fat cats first, and take away their riches first — before sacrificing the workers.”

**In-House** responds:

“2:55, I'm not implying anything. I'm saying it, poor management and overpaid union workers are to blame. As for the workers ending up unemployed,[*sic*] tough. They've been making \$80k, \$90k, and many

over \$100k a year. If they haven't saved money for a rainy day then I don't feel sorry for them. Doesn't anyone take care of themselves anymore?"

Here "**In-House**"? "**Head-In-Arse**" seems more appropriate. says:

"Well, what you're saying then, is that your head needs to be rescued. Seriously, "In-House," with wage stagnation being the real culprit behind these historically awful times, and unlikely to improve anytime soon, you seem too willing to ignore reasonable insight like that of 4:18 and instead you want to kill the peasants. And you ignore reasoned comments like 3:45, 3:46 and 3:49, too. The elite kings who make millions get out unscathed in your world — even though it is THEIR misguided leadership and short term greed that led America down the crapper in the auto race against Japan. Remember "Honda drops"? Well, you should. America needs a home team in the game, but I'm not saying bailout the companies either. I'm just saying the idiots who have reaped the big bucks and wealth over the years from greed and poor management [*sic*] is NOT the union workers who toil daily to make fat cats fatter. DON'T blame workers for doing their job as singularly well as America's workers can. Get your head out of that dark place and revise your wrong-headed views, please.

By saying "I sure hope that's not what you're implying," **to 2:46** challenges **In-House's** previous comment by making it unacceptable to blame the workers. By adding "But if it isn't, please revisit your points. But I appreciate the stark costs data you posted. Those facts do speak for themselves" he gives **In-House** an opportunity to make an offering; as well as attempting to help save **In-House's** *face* by complementing his data. **In-House**, however refuses to take the hint and accuses 2:55, the time that **to 2:46** made his post, of being too sympathetic. By saying, "I'm not implying anything. I'm saying it, poor management and overpaid union workers are to blame," **In-House** makes his economic belief system clear. By saying, "As for the workers ending up unemployed,[*sic*] tough," **In-House** insinuates an accusation that **to 2:46** is wrong to have sympathy for the auto workers. Finally one of the eleven points making reversals occurs. In this case the reversal is made by a commenter whose very name is an insult to **In-House**. This reversal uses both insults and references to previous posts to

accuse **In-House** of maintaining a *line* that is unacceptable on this blog. It is interesting to note how the commenter ends with “please.” This just goes to show that some people are so invested in the expressive order that they will attempt to maintain it even when they are in the process of disrupting it by engaging in a points making game.

Political blogs have the next highest amount of corrections. With points making corrections accounting for seventy percent of the political correction, political blogs differ greatly from other blogs and the overall correction distribution. However, this should not be surprising. It is easy to see how people who belong to one political party or another can maintain an “in group/out group” mentality. As stated before, when there is an obvious situation of “in group/out group,” there is a good opportunity for points to be made. Since most of the people posting and commenting on the blogs belong to one political group or another it should not be surprising that more people are making points than are engaging in the *interchange*.

This example is of points making correction and the reversal made by the original accused commenter. First **Ted Cole** makes this comment about Obama:

“Obama is a one-trick pony and his administration is just the Clinton 2.0 version of the disaster that we had in 1992 and 1996.

And I am so tired of hearing idiot liberals spout off about how inspired we should be about this pathetic excuse of a POTUS. His is the most inexperienced PE in modern history. His isn't inspiring whatsoever... he is a joke that was elected by the sheeple of America... and each and every one of them has their hand out for something from our newly elected Dear Leader.

Belle... the only thing to like about the new administration is the knowledge that it will fail so miserably that in 4 years we can only hope that this socialist is long gone.”

**William J. LePetomane** responds:

“Ted Cole: yet another positive, uplifting voice from the radical right.”

**Ted Cole** replies:

“William J. LePetomane: I guess I just haven't been brainwashed to believe that a larger Federal Government... which by the way Bill... has never solved any problems... can actually succeed at producing anything. Can you name an invention that was created because government got bigger? How about a problem that the government has solved by getting larger?”

I love how you Obamaphants all think that now he has been elected that we should all fall in love with him. Sing Kumbaya and love one another. Would that be just like the way you all supported George W. Bush for the last 8 years? You are a hypocrite Bill!!! I am willing to bet my paycheck that I paid more in taxes on my house and car than you did in income tax last year. So essentially you are spending my money not your own... all the while you have your hand out waiting for Big Gov't to solve all your pathetic problems.

You should try making some real money and then come to the table and demand that people like me pay more in taxes.

I don't want a refund check I just want more of my OWN money back. I will spend it much more intelligently than Barry Obama will. But he thinks that we are too stupid to know how to do anything and that the only solution to our myriad of problems is more government.

I am sorry but if you believe that then you are not as smart as you think you are Bill.”

**William J. LePetomane** uses sarcasm to accuse commenter **Ted Cole** of having the wrong opinion about Obama. It is seen how sarcasm is used to cause **Ted Cole** to lose *face* for his anti-Obama comment. It can be seen how Ted Cole uses every *points making* tool at his disposal to defend his in-group position. He uses insults as well as ideological and economic accusations to try and cause the loss of **William J. LePetomane's face**.

There are still people engaging in the *interchange*, however. This smaller group of people is made up primarily of individuals who are correcting historical or factual

mistakes. There are also the few individuals who seem to recognize that, regardless of political party, we are all Americans and should engage in civil discussion. These individuals most closely follow Goffman's *face saving* system.

**NC** says:

The Republicans need to focus on Eric Holder Jr. and the Rich pardon, and Hilda L. Solis and the horrendous card check legislation. The remainder seem [*sic*] pleasantly middle of the road

**Axl** says:

"NC, You're basically saying Republicans need to focus on their pet issues to obstruct Eric Holder and Hilda Solis. Leahy is no fool, he moved Holder's confirmation hearing as close as possible to the end of Bush's term. I assure you, Bush will issue a couple of stinking pardons before January 20th and the news cycle will be very different than you anticipate by the time voting is about to happen. Obama has in hand at least 10-15 Senate Republican votes he needs to get Holder through.

Card Check already passed in Congress and Hilda Solis cannot be denied confirmation by a minority party based on a policy difference on properly passed legislation that Republicans happen to vehemently disagree with. Not in this environment where Democrats have such a strong majority in the Senate. It's no accident Solis is a fiery Latina. Good luck stopping her when workers are being trampled by employers across the country.

The people I suspect will have unexpectedly tough confirmation processes will be Tim Geithner (why he let Lehman fail, why he had to restructure and soften AIG and Citi's bailouts) and Bill Richardson (who faces a growing donor ethics scandal)."

We see how **Axl** uses facts about the timing of appointment hearings, as well as legal rules about appropriate reasons for blocking appointments to challenge **NC's** beliefs. He also discusses who he believes would be difficult appointments to confirm. This is an effort to keep the conversation fluid as well as give **NC** an opportunity to make an offering.

Film blogs are second to last for the amount of corrections. There are a few reasons for this. There are a few times when commenters disagree over who would be a better actor for a role, or director for a movie, and in these disagreements there are points to be made. However, more often than not there is no invested interest in the success or failure of a particular actor, director, or movie. In these cases correction often comes in the form of the *interchange*.

These next two examples are corrections from a film blog which queried its readers as to who should play Superman for the cameo in the upcoming Green Lantern movie.

**ThaJackal** said:

“Include Flash, Green Arrow and Aquaman from Smallville”

**Anthony3** replied:

“Include Flash, Green Arrow and Aquaman from Smallville? LOL! That would be even worse casting than that piece of crap JLA movie Miller was doing. When they make a JLA movie the JLA better be played by MEN.”

It is evident that **Anthony3** has very strong feelings about the cast of Smallville and does not think very highly of these actors, or of their portrayal of their characters. This correction is an accusation against **ThaJackal's** taste in actors. However, the very same post had an *interchange* correction made by another commenter.

Here **Bruce** challenges the opinions of other commenters:

“What up people [*sic*], TL, Anthony, and Hype.....you guys are wrong in my opinion B. Routh was an average SM....the man who needs to be in the cameo, JLA, and re-booted franchise is Tom Welling especially after this season, season 8 he has taken the character to whole new level....C. Reeve before he passed on nominated TW to take the thrown [*sic*]....Jackal, I agree with you with GA, AM, but Flash needs to be someone else, from all the actors in SV, he's the young, every else is in

their upper 20's which is the age to play these characters.....BTW I think we can all agree on this, WW should Megan Fox”

By using the qualifier “in my opinion,” **Bruce** leaves an opening for an offering. He also agrees with **ThaJackaL** about character casting for everyone save the Flash. This shows that he is not completely committed to supporting **ThaJackaL**, which is another attempt to leave room for an offering. Finally he attempts to maintain the expressive order by offering Megan Fox as a casting choice for Wonder Woman.

By reading the comments a person can see how movie fans can often reach a general consensus on whether a movie or actor's performance was bad or good. It is when someone's opinion contradicts the general consensus that corrections are initiated. The type of correction used often depends on the atmosphere of the blog, and the attitude of the speaker towards the film being discussed.

This example starts with blogger **Nikki Finke**'s comment about the mini-series *John Adams*:

“**Tom Wilkinson** won **BEST PERFORMANCE BY AN ACTOR IN A SUPPORTING ROLE IN A SERIES, MINI-SERIES OR MOTION PICTURE MADE FOR TELEVISION** for *John Adams*, HBO's most boring mini-series ever.”

**Sherrie** corrects:

“John Adams was not a boring series. Guess Nikki has issues with a series that was not only historically accurate [*sic*] (a rarity by Hollywood's standards) but the performances were terrific. Any award that series wins is deserved.”

Notice how **Sherrie** tries to cause **Nikki Finke** to lose *face* by accusing her of disliking the positive qualities of the mini-series.

Here, however is commenter **dadaist** starting an *interchange* correction by challenging blogger **Nikki Finke**.



**Nikki Finke** said:

“Don Cheadle just introduced the clip for *Burn After Reading*, and wondered aloud why the Coen brothers have never hired him for any movie. Considering how few people actually go see Coen Brothers movies, Don, consider yourself lucky. “

**dadaist** challenges:

“Nikki, I love you, but you cannot complain about *Bride Wars* and then take a cheap shot at the Coen Brothers. Put it this way, every single person in this industry who you do happen to wholly admire would much rather be involved with those two (in an above-the-line or below-the-line context) than make money. It’s about talent, craftsmanship, creating something together. Yes, the bottom line is of paramount import, but if that were what we were collectively seeking, all you would have is *Bride Wars* and *Beverly Hills Chihuahua* [*sic*] and Tyler Perry movies.”

**Dadaist** starts his challenge with the qualifier “I love you, but...” as a way of showing that this correction is not meant to be too damaging to **Nikki’s** face. His second sentence starts with “Put it this way...” in an effort to show **Nikki** a new perspective on what she is critiquing. This is an attempt to give **Nikki** a chance to make an offering. **Nikki**, however, does not make an offering.

Personal blogs are the genre with the least amount of corrections. The reason for this is simple; people who read personal blogs are either part of that personal blogging community or know the blogger in real life. This becomes evident when the post and comments are read. These blog posts are ripe with comments about other blogs within the community and references to face-to-face interactions. The people of this community have an invested interest in maintaining the *face* of their friends and neighbors since this is a community that reflects upon them. In fact it is possible that the quantity and quality of these interpersonal blog relationships lead to a decrease in corrections. If this is the case, then anonymity could be one catalyst for corrections.

This is not to say, however, that corrections do not occur. Two types of corrections were observed in this study, one a strategic use of the *interchange* by the blogger, and the other a new type of points making that is unique to the internet.

The strategic use of the *interchange* by the blogger was discussed by Goffman as aggressive face-work: “If a person knows that his modesty will be answered by others’ praise of him, he can fish for compliments” (1967, p24)

This example is an observation of blogger **Mike Terry** criticizing his own photographic skill by saying:

“If you are saying or thinking - "pssh,...I could have taken that." Let me be the first to say - I know.”

Many members of his readership responded with corrections:

**Angry girl** said...

Wow! You are so talented! Luck has nothing to do with it. Great job!”

**BIG B...little b** said...

I couldn't have taken it... I think it's perfect.”

**Ryan** said...

Yeah Mike – Anyone could have taken it but nobody would have. Most would say that would be cool and walk by, but you stop and say that is cool and take a picture. You have always been like that – you are creative and not lazy. I think that is why you are so good. By the way congrats on your recent success. Your pretty [*sic*] much a celebrity.

The new type of points making correction mentioned before is something unique to the internet. As stated previously, most sites have a “Terms of Use Agreement.” People who violate these Terms are removed from the site. A number of personal blogs were observed where the Administrator or Blogger had removed a post. Remember points making games are won when “...the only reply the others will be able to think up will be one that terminates the interchange...” (1967, p25)

To completely remove a person from the conversation, at the same time erasing his or her comment and ending the interaction, is an extreme version of *making points*. This thought can even be taken one step further if it is recognized that the blogger now has the power to not only cause the loss of another's face, but the ability to completely destroy that person's face. If a person is permanently banned from a blog, then any relationships he or she made are now over, any lines he or she had taken cease to be, and any *face* he or she claimed becomes non-existent. In essence a banned blogger no longer exists. All that is left are virtual fossils reminding people that a commenter used to exist on that particular blog.

**Hari Raman** said...

"This post has been removed by the author."

**免費情色視訊** said...

"This post has been removed by a blog administrator."

Commenters can return under a new screen name, or go to a new blog. However, if a commenter returns to a blog he or she was removed from then the renamed commenter is now inconvenienced by having to reform relationship, retake lines, and reclaim face, all without "outing" himself or herself as a banned individual.

Finally, there is one reason why points making or *interchange* corrections are made; differing opinions. Everyone can form an opinion on any given situation or topic. Expressing or concealing an opinion in any given encounter is all part of taking a *line*. However, when an opinion is expressed, there will be someone in cyberspace who disagrees with it. When two people or groups disagree an opinion corrections may ensue. What form these corrections take, *interchange* or *points making*, will depend on the person making the correction as well as the nature of the setting. To find examples

of opinions being corrected one need only revisit the discussion section. Each of the examples previously given, except corrections of factual error, is of opinionated corrections. Some opinions were corrected with the help of facts and statistics, and some were corrected with the use of insults. Regardless, differing opinions are used as a catalyst to initiate correction.

### Unique forms of Correction

The reverse challenge is something Goffman does not include as part of the *interchange*, but is instead something that happens when a challenge is ignored. “An important departure for the standard corrective cycle occurs when the challenged offender patently refuses to heed the warning and continues with his offending behavior, instead of setting the activity to rights” (1967, p22). In the corrections where the reverse challenge was examined, the challenged offender claims that his or her previous statement, the one being challenged, was indeed correct and did not warrant a challenge; and that the challenger was the one who is now *out of face* for making that challenge. These reverse challenges are part of the *interchange* because they are often made with polite qualifiers, or are accompanied by supporting data, so as to offer the original challenger a chance to make an offering.

Sarcasm is another form of correction that Goffman does not discuss directly. Instead Goffman discusses the place of pranks in face-work. “The intent of many pranks is to lead a person into showing a wrong face or no face...” (1967, p8) Sarcasm is used for a similar purpose. A correcting individual uses a sarcastic accusation to cause a momentary loss of *face* of the person they address. The loss of *face* draws

attention to the topic discussed and after the moment of shame has passed all involved parties realize that the disagreement was really sarcasm meant to show agreement. In this odd way friends can play a points making game in an effort to support each other's statements. It is also possible for sarcasm to be used maliciously. A case in point is how **William J. LePetomane** used sarcasm to accuse commenter **Ted Cole** of not possessing positive personality traits.

### Conclusion

After thorough analysis support is found for the first hypothesis, the face-to-face rituals of the *interchange* and the points making game occur within blogs. Partially support for the second hypothesis is also found, as well as an answer to the first research question. The ritual of the *interchange* is modified in online use. Online, challenges occur more often than offering, acceptance, and thanks. The points making game, however, has not been modified except for the possibility of increased usage. Finally two reasons why there was an increase in the usage of points making and challenges were identified. First, opinions provide a catalyst for people to make corrections. Second, the formation of in-group/out-group ideologies increases the perceived need for correction.

Readers of this study, however, should not conclude that these are the only two reasons for an increase in observed corrections and decrease in offering, acceptance, and thanks. The two reasons reported were what were supported by the data; however, there are a number of other possible reasons. The impersonality of the internet is one possibility. The name a person takes for online activity is only a shell worn during virtual

interactions. *Points making* accusations lose much of their edge when wielded against the *face* claimed by a shell guarding a self sitting at a keyboard. For this reason points reversals, and offerings, seem almost a trivial waste of time when utilized on this medium. The timing of this study could also have been a factor. This thesis was conducted during the time leading up to and following a presidential inauguration. The heightened political energy might have played a part in the observed results. The age of bloggers and commenters may have been a factor. Without knowing the age of the people making corrections it is possible that some of them were very young and had not yet learned the normative standards of behavior. If this were the case it would not be surprising to see an increase in the violations of the expressive order.

Three limitations to this study have been observed. First, a number of corrections which had no bearing on the topic discussed were found in the data. These corrections were in fact related to, and continuations of, conversations which had occurred in previous posts. This is interesting because it mirrors a real world activity which the researcher has witnessed, and from time to time been part of: continuing conversations which were thought to have ended days, weeks, or even months ago. Second, a number of blogs which did not allow comments were observed. It was originally thought that allowing comments is a prerequisite for a webpage being known as a blog. Through the course of this study it has been realized that this is not the case. Some issues of sampling bias were created by the five pages of comments methodological limitation placed upon this study. After revisiting posts and reading comments, which came after the last comment sampled, few comments which

continued correction threads previously analyzed were found. It only happened a few times; however, it was enough to cause a rethinking of the methods.

For future study a revised methods section needs to include a caveat which would allow the researcher to randomize again when a blog is found not to allow corrections. A second revision is needed to allow the researcher to investigate conversation threads which extended from blog posts not captured in the original randomization process. Finally amending the methods to allow up to ten pages, or even twenty pages, of comments per post might alleviate the sampling bias and produce more accurate results. However, a long term study of this nature might want to remove the page limitation altogether.

A number of ideas may be considered for future studies in this field. One study would explore the presentation of emotions online. Goffman identified emotion, and emotional attachment to *line* and *face*, as playing a key role in face-work. Many of the previous studies examined in this thesis have agreed with Goffman on this point. Identifying emotions online, however, is no easy task. Face-to-face interactions offer physical clues as to what emotion is being expressed. Facial expressions, tone of voice, body language, blushing, and nervous laughter all play a part in emotional expression. Personal intimacy also plays a part in these interactions. Knowing a person's personality quirks allows an observer to distinguish between serious statements and joking statements. Online interactions, however, have no physical context cues, and anonymity can hinder the formation of relationships. For a study to explore the role emotions play in online communication a number of communication tools would need to be explored. Emoticons could be used to indicate the emotional

intention of a comment. Capitalization, italics, boldfaced and underlined words or sentences could indicate anger, a change in tone of voice, or perceived importance. Compliments could indicate positive emotion. Insults may indicate negative emotion. Qualifiers could indicate uncertainty or low emotional attachment to a topic or conversation. Another relational analysis study should be conducted to explore the role emotions play in online communication.

Another study could look for the presentation of deviant beliefs. Without the threat of physical reprisal people might feel more comfortable presenting racist, sexist, or homophobic beliefs. It would be interesting to see what contexts lead to these presentations and what responses and/or sanctions are placed on the offending persons. Also, correction rituals were not the only rituals Goffman identified. It would be interesting to see what other social rituals occur online, and how they differ from their face-to-face counterparts. Finally, it would be challenging to take any one of these studies, including this one, to a different online venue. Forums, chat rooms, video games are all online mediums where communication occurs. It would be worthwhile to compare and contrast the normative self presentation rituals which occur online.

In many ways postmodernism may be right. Technology does affect the self. Without physical contextual clues the self presented online is shallow compared to its physical world counterpart. Technology, however, is ever changing and people are constantly adapting to new environments. Even now people are defining normative standards of online conduct. At the same time communications technologies are becoming more accessible. With the invention of the "Smart Phone" and the constant improvement of visual and audio recording and playback devices, the landscape of the



internet is on the verge of a major change. Virtual interactions will soon shift from text based to audio visual. When body language and tone of voice affect virtual interactions we may well see people make presentations of self that closely resemble the self they present in real life. When this happens, we will see a greater degree of emotional value placed on these selves as well as a resurgence of the rituals used in self protection and *face* maintenance.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bellamy, Al., Cheryl Hanewicz. 1999. "Social Psychological Dimensions of Electronic Communication." *Electronic Journal of Sociology* (<http://www.sociology.org/content/vol004.001/bellamy.html>)
- Bortree, Denise. 2005. "Presentation of Self on the Web: an ethnographic study of teenage girls' weblogs." *Education, Communication & Information* 5(1): pp.25-39
- Brett, Jeanne M., Mara Olekalns, Ray Friedman, Nathan Goates, Cameron Anderson, Cara Cherry Lisco. 2007. "Sticks and Stones: Language, Face, and Online Dispute Resolution." *Academy of Management Journal* 50(1), pp.85-99
- Brignall III, Thomas W. and Thomas V. Valey. 2005. "The Impact of Internet Communications on Social Interaction." *Sociological Spectrum* 25(3), pp.335-348.
- Gilmore, Sarah and Samantha Warren. 2007. "Themed article: Emotion online: Experiences of Teaching in a Virtual Learning Setting." *Human Relations* 60, pp.581-608
- Goffman, Erving. 1959. *Presentation of Self on Everyday Life*. Garden City, New York: Anchor
- Goffman, Erving. 1967. "On Face-work." *Interaction Ritual*. Garden City, New York: Anchor
- Gubrium, Jaber F. and James A Holstein. 2000. "The Self in a World of Going Concerns." *Symbolic Interaction* 23(2): pp.95-115

- Hughes, Everett C. 1984. "Going Concerns: The Study of American Institutions." Pp.52-64 in *The Sociological Eye: Selected Papers*. New Brunswick, New Jersey: Transaction Books
- Luckenbill, David F. and Daniel P Doyle. 1989. "Structural Position and Violence: Developing a Cultural Explanation." *Criminology* 27(3), pp.419-435
- Morand, David A. and Rosalie J Ocker. 2003. "Politeness Theory and Computer-Mediated Communication: A Sociolinguistic Approach to Analyzing Relational Messages." Proceedings of the 36<sup>th</sup> Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences.
- Palmquist, Mike. 1993-2008 Writing Guides Content Analysis. Welcome to Writing@CSU. Colorado State University  
(<http://writing.colostate.edu/guides/research/content/index.cfm>)
- Papacharissi, Zizi. 2002. "The Presentation of Self in Virtual Life: Characteristics of Personal Home Pages" *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly* 79(3): pp.643-660
- Sharp, Shane and Gregory T. Krodsmeier. 2008. "The 'Short-Weenie': A Note on Teaching the Power of Face-Work and Tact in Social Interaction." *Teaching Sociology* 36: pp.359-365
- Watanabe, Mitsuharu M. 2007. "Conflict and Intolerance in a Web Community: Effects of a System Integrating Dialogues and Monologues." *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 13(2), Article 13.  
(<http://jcmc.indiana.edu/vol12/issue3/watanabe.html>)

Wynn, Eleanor and James E. Katz 1997. "Hyperbole over Cyberspace: Self-Presentation and Social Boundries in Internet Home Pages and Discourse."  
*The Information Society* 13: pp.297-327

## VITA

Matthew LeBlanc was born in Corpus Christi, Texas. He moved to New Orleans, Louisiana at the age of 6 and has lived there since. He received his B.A. from the University of New Orleans.