

THESIS

INSTAMAN: A CASE STUDY OF MALE IDENTITY EXPRESSION ON INSTAGRAM

Submitted by

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ABSTRACT

INSTAMAN: A CASE STUDY OF MALE IDENTITY EXPRESSION ON INSTAGRAM

Navigating conversations about identity and masculinity can be hard for some young men. Society has a particular view on what makes a man manly based on cultural expectations and social norms. Instaman: A case study of male identity expression on Instagram qualitatively looks at how men talk and express themselves on a specific social media website. The researcher looks at two different research questions; RQ 1: How are traditional freshman and senior males using Instagram to express their identity? And RQ 2: How has an individual's male identity expression changed between freshmen and senior years? The researcher hypothesized that freshmen would focus more on themselves and seniors focusing on aligning with a larger community. Moreover, it was hypothesized freshmen would be less knowledgeable about their own masculinity.

After the research questions is a discussion about the researcher with an explanation of the scope of the research. Next is a literature review including topics such as Identity Theory, Social Identity Theory, Communication Theory of Identity, Hegemonic Masculinity, Expressing masculinity in a feminized terrain, and information about Instagram use.

The methods section of the paper explains how the researcher chose freshmen and seniors to study because they are in transition periods in life. A case study using two different data collection techniques is explicated including artifact analysis and in-depth interviews. Eight participants were chosen, and each had ten Instagram posts to analyze with a follow-up forty-five-minute interview about their posts and thoughts on masculinity.

The results indicate that while the hypotheses were generally accurate, there seemed to be a good variation throughout all participants. Only a few seniors exclusively fixated on aligning with a larger community. Nevertheless, the most fascinating aspect of the study was to hear how the participants thought about their own masculinity. Every participant understood the difference between societal perceptions and their own mentalities, which translated to their posting habits. Not a single participant engrossed themselves in expressing hegemonic masculine ideals, but rather wanted to show facets of their identity that they do not normally get to express when they are not online. Therefore, it appears that Instagram is a place where men feel comfortable expressing all parts of themselves.

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DEFINITION OF TERMS

Identity: One's self-perception and acquired information from surrounding people and communities (Goffman, 1959; Sherwood, 1965).

Communication Theory of Identity: "focuses more on mutual influences between identity and communication and conceptualizes identity as communication rather than seeing identity as merely a product of communication" (Jung & Hecht, 2003, p. 266).

Freshmen: Traditional aged students who have recently graduated from high school (or the equivalent).

Seniors: Traditional aged students who have completed their previous three years of college in succession.

Time: The two year gap between freshmen and senior year.

Masculinity: A man's adherence to gender roles and behaviors associated with the role (Saucier, O'Dea, Stratmoen, 2017).

Auxiliary Resources

Performativity: The act of presenting oneself in the best light in terms of social network post choice (Farquhar, 2012).

Self-disclosure: "involve[s] the act of revealing personal information about oneself to another," (Collins & Miller, 1994, p. 457).

Emerging Adults: "is distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations" (p. 469).

Chapter 1 – Introduction

Researcher Bio

Growing up, I never identified with media exemplars such as many sports players, western cowboys, or body builders. I was never the child who was over-aggressive in sports, or followed the norm of being hyper masculine. In many settings where I was expected to be a lumberjack or outdoors man, I never quite lived up to those hopes. Exemplars like John Dorian from “Scrubs” and Phil Dunphy from “Modern Family” were men who I looked up to because they did not exhibit the form of masculinity I was taught was normal. Up until recently, I thought my mentality about masculinity was odd and counter-normative. I had to learn by myself how to feel comfortable in my skin and how not being hyper-masculine is still a form of masculinity. After reading about hegemonic masculinity, masculine ideology, and traits one can exhibit to show manliness, I realized my mentality is not unique and fully accepted. Due to my upbringing, I was motivated to explore how other men think about their masculinity.

Research Statement

Who am I...today? Upon looking at oneself in the mirror, this question is answered in numerous ways throughout everyday interactions. Identity is a conversation with the self in relation to the communities with whom one engages. More specifically, identity can be broken down in multiple ways, but one way is to consider binary gender differences. Males and masculine identity literature is growing in size, and I will explore male identity expression in a digital environment. The topic of online identity expression, on the other hand, has little published research, but is also expanding. Therefore, male identity expression in a digital environment has yet to be fully explored, based on research published of the topic. For this thesis, I will conduct a case study of male identity expression on Instagram, a predominantly female social networking site (Pew, 2016). Finding out different ways of how males express their

identity online through artifact analysis, coupled with in-depth interviews is the primary focus of this thesis. While various disciplines such as psychology, mass media communications, and sociology to name a few, all study identity, an overarching definition has not been fully comprised. For my research, identity is defined as one's self-perception and acquired information from surrounding people and communities (Goffman, 1959; Sherwood, 1965). To know oneself is to accept personal identity. Moreover, "not all messages are about identity, but identity is part of all messages," (Hecht, 1993, p. 79). Therefore, male identity expression on Instagram will give insight into the motivations of posting and relaying personal information online.

Background

I used three theories of identity including Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory to define what identity is and how its dimensions are seen; additionally, Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) looks at the various roles and frames of identity (Hecht, 1993, 2009; Stryker and Burke, 2000; Tajfel, 1972). Since society has become more digitized and mediatized in recent history, I will look at how individuals express their identity online. Also, masculinity theories on hegemonic masculinity, masculine ideology, and masculine traits, along with online self-disclosure and performativity will be explored. Masculinity is defined as a man's adherence to gender roles and behaviors associated with the role (Saucier, O'Dea, Stratmoen, 2017). This concept will help guide my research, especially with finding emerging themes. Moreover, self-disclosure "involve[s] the act of revealing personal information about oneself to another" (Collins & Miller, 1994, p. 457). Finally, performativity is the act of presenting oneself in the best light in terms of social network post choice (Farquhar, 2012). While the latter two are auxiliary in nature because they are not my main focus, having the knowledge is beneficial to be able to better explain male identity expression in a digital environment.

Overarching Research Question and Scope

In order to explain how men share their personal identity on Instagram, I will explore male identity expression by doing a case study comprising two data collection techniques: photo elicitation artifact analysis and in-depth interviews (Wimmer and Dominick, 2014; Hutchinson, 2016) To do so, a purposeful sample of traditional-aged college male freshmen and seniors will be used. I chose this population because college is typically a place people learn, define, and refine their own identity and their identity relative to the community around them. At this stage of life, students are becoming emerging adults. According to Arnett (2000), an emerging adult is someone between the ages of 18-25 who “is distinguished by relative independence from social roles and from normative expectations” (p. 469). Since students are starting to become more independent (either entering or leaving college), arguably these two levels are very formative periods in people’s lived experiences. While identity is a continual conversation with the self, spanning throughout an individual’s entire life, a younger population usually have these vigorous conversations during high school and college. Instagram will be used as well because many traditional college aged students are using Instagram (Pew, 2016); randomly selected and participant selected pictorial posts with accompanying text will be analyzed. Once I analyze all the artifacts collected, interviews will add depth to my interpretation. While I cannot hypothesize what I will find, figure 1 below represents the themes I might find over time. For freshmen, I might find more personal and enacted themes, while for seniors I might find more relational and communal themes.

Conceptual Framework

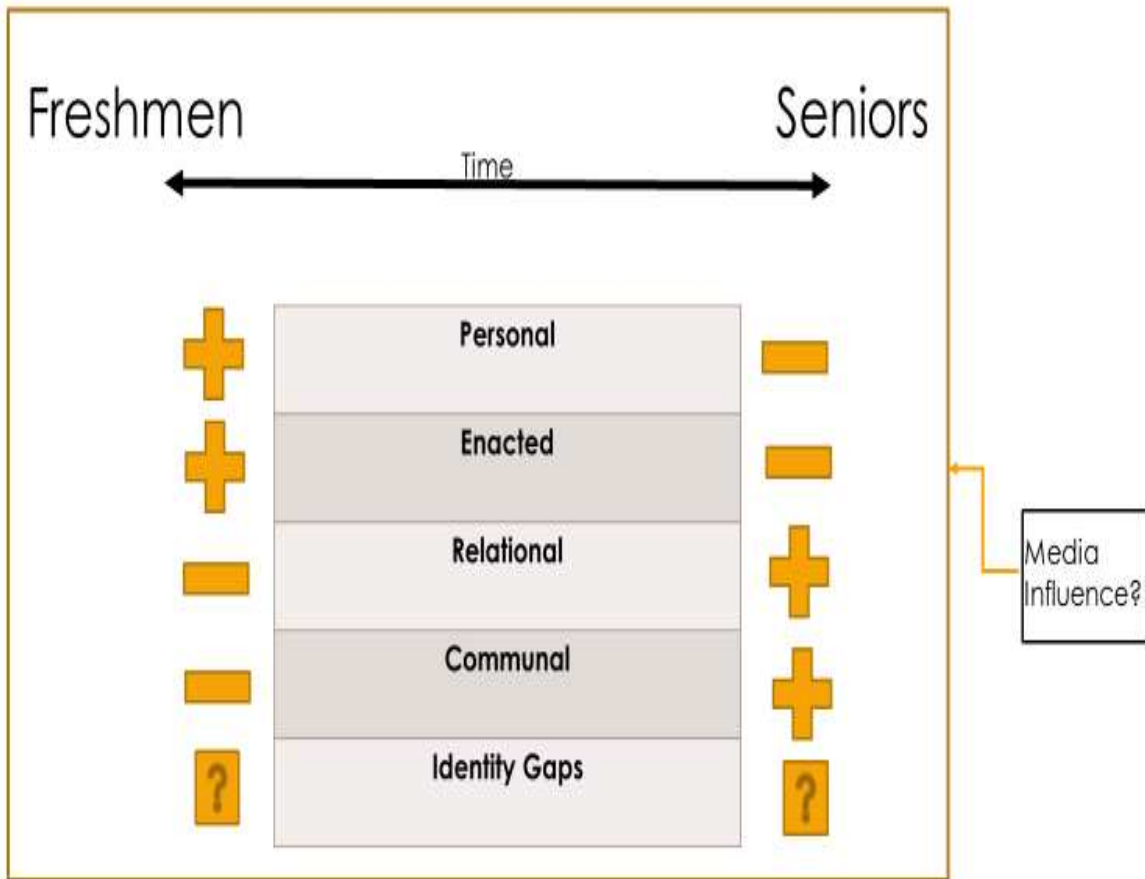


Figure 1: Possible emergent themes over time based on student grade level

Potential Contributions

Due to the growing nature of the literature on masculinity and online identity expression (Anderson, 2005, 2009; Connell, 2005; Donaldson, 1993; Hecht, 1993, 2009), my contributions will be twofold: advancing the expanding literature and furthering the discussion about how identity is expressed in a digital milieu. I hope to also pave the way for future research opportunities since my goal is to one day become a Mass Media Communications professor. Moreover, I hope to show that social media can be used to express oneself without the fear of

ridicule or shame. The results could help inform about how young men are thinking and talking about masculinity, which could inevitably show the change of mentalities over time. Future gender-based classes could use this case study to show that identity and masculinity conversations happen at an early age and these conversations occur throughout transition periods. Overall, the study gives insight into posting habits, cultural components, and advances masculinity related dialogs.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

I have done previous work articulating how offline communication theories of identity are transferable to an online environment (Gallegos, 2017). Thus, I will be drawing from my previous work using the four frames of identity based on the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI), and identity gaps developed by Hecht (1993, 2009). Moreover, Identity theory as presented by Stryker and Burke (2000) and Social Identity Theory (SIT) from the work of Tajfel (1972) will be used to explore the caveats of identity, while also helping me find and articulate themes for analysis and questions for in-depth interviews.

Identity Theory takes pieces from sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis, communications, political science and history (Stryker & Burke, 2000). All these elements comprise Identity Theory since the concept has been studied throughout time and across disciplines. Identity therefore is hard to comprehend and it is even harder to define. However, this theory takes into account multiple perspectives ranging from self-verification theory, symbolic interactionism, self-reference theory and self-categorization theory (Stryker & Burke, 2000).

Social Identity Theory mainly posits that identity and behavior are shaped by the environment around a person. Individuals thus have their identities shaped by the groups they

participate in, which is separate from an individualistic perspective. According to Tajfel (1972), social identity is “an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership” (p. 69). Once a person invests time and emotional connection with a specific group, their rules, behaviors, and regulations shape their behavior. Much like with Identity Theory, SIT explains how identity is derived from other group members’ participation and shared social values.

One of the main theories of identity especially related to communication is the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) developed by Hecht (1993). Identity formation is one part internal, and one part socially constructed. Either way, communication is necessary to fully explicate identity in an individual’s own life. Many vehicles of experience which shape identity come from cognition, psychology, behavior, emotion, and spirituality; all of these pieces are negotiated through intrapersonal and interpersonal ways (Hecht, 1993). When an individual wants to understand the self, not discussing how communication factors in is to ignore a major facet which shapes the self. Moreover, Hecht (1993) developed four frames of identity: “personal, enacted, relational, and communal” (p. 79). While these were developed before the emergence of the internet as it is known today, the frames can still be accounted for in the digital world.

Apart from communication theories relating to identity, masculinity will be explored, relating to how men identify and behave both on an individual and collective level (Cuthbert, 2015). The way men act and express themselves online is an extension of who they are, or at least how they want to be perceived. Self-disclosure and performativity also play into decisions on what pictures to post and why.

Research Questions

RQ 1: How are traditional university freshman and senior males using Instagram to express their identity?

RQ 2: How has an individual's male identity expression changed between freshmen and senior years while at university?

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Communication Theory of Identity

One of the main theories of identity especially related to communication is the Communication Theory of Identity (CTI) developed by Hecht (1993). Identity formation is one part internal, and one part socially constructed. Either way, communication is necessary to fully explicate identity in an individual's own life. Many vehicles of experience which shape identity come from cognition, psychology, behavior, emotion, and spirituality; all of these pieces are negotiated through intrapersonal and interpersonal ways (Hecht, 1993). When an individual wants to understand the self, not discussing how communication factors in is to ignore a major facet which shapes the self. Hecht (1993) alluded to identity and its components as "tides in the ocean, each integrated into the whole ocean (i.e., human experience) and yet each with identifiable characteristics (i.e., a separable realm of experience)" (p. 77). The analogy presented is a good way to take the conceptual identity and comprehend it in a more concrete way. Each component helps form identity, but without communication, these pieces cannot be fully presented and known by others. This concept, however, not only informs about identity, but also masculinity since masculinity is tied to identity. The different forms of masculinity are emphasized and deemphasized based on culture, location, and circumstance, very much like how identity is expressed. Therefore, CTI will help this study not only show how identity is expressed in a communicated way, but also how masculinity is expressed as well. Hecht (1993) further formed his CTI from psychological, sociological, and anthropological perspectives, combining them into a communication driven way by articulating that identity comes in the form of messages and the links between them. Although some pieces of identity are considered symbolic or personal, there are still communication variables which must be considered to create and express those pieces of identity. To better explicate these communication channels, Hecht

(1993) developed four frames of identity: personal, enacted, relational, and communal (p. 79).

While these were developed before the emergence of the internet as it is known today, the frames can still be seen in the digital world, which will be discussed later in this thesis.

The personal frame is such that identity is personally formed through a dialogue with the self. When an individual is introspective about who they are, they experience self-cognition, feelings about the self, and a spiritual well-being (Hecht, 1993). This outcome/experience is not necessarily seen by talking to oneself in the mirror, but rather developed through lived experience. Finding a religion that works is a part of accepting some sort of spiritual well-being, which is then added to a piece of personal identity. When it comes to expressed masculinity in terms of the personal frame, a gym selfie can be considered a textbook example. A gym selfie requires the poster to think about their own body and how potentially confident they feel in their own skin. Moreover, “identity has been known as self-concept or self-image and provides an understanding of how individuals define themselves in general as well as in particular situations” (Hecht, 1993, p. 79). How one appears, or wants to appear, comes from developing how one feels and knows the self; the gym selfie articulates this concept in a visual way. When interacting daily, a dialogue with how one wants to be viewed is considered. Even getting dressed in the morning is a ritual in a personal frame of identity because feeling confident, comfortable, and accepted socially is considered before walking out the door.

The enactment frame is the next frame articulated by Hecht (1993). This frame posits that roles of identity are enacted in social arenas and communicated while also being interpreted through messages outputted (Hecht, 1993). Identity formation therefore is partly socially constructed because one a piece of identity is internalized, or when an individual wants to internalize a piece, they must first express and communicate this in a social realm. Through

behaviors, messages, actions, and expressive maneuvers, an individual enacts a role they either think will be socially accepted, or attempts to have that socially accepted. Some enacted expressions of masculinity are either personally accepted, or a performative act to show alignment with a potential hegemonic ideal. For example, a boy might wear a shirt saying, “pimpin’ round the world,” in an attempt to either express his adherence to manliness, or just to show that he wants to fit in a particular group. Either way, this enacted expression of masculinity and identity can be on social media for the public to interpret. Furthermore, “not all messages are about identity, but identity is part of all messages,” (Hecht, 1993, p. 79). Hence, identity is embedded in communicative processes in daily interactions.

Identity as a relationship frame is the third of four frames. It is difficult to discuss the enactment frame fully without consideration of the relationship frame since experience comes in relational interactions. Relationships are either how two or more people define their connection with one another, or an individual’s relationship to their environment as a certain moment in time. Conversation with the self and with those around an individual define relationships and become a jointly negotiated construction of reality (Hecht, 1993). While enactment is the act of doing, relationship is knowing and choosing which role of identity is appropriate. The two are therefore connected since enactment comes from a realized relationship. For example, “a dating couple established an identity as a couple which aligns it within the larger group” (Hecht, 1993, p. 80). Relationships can be both micro and macro, but the decision on how these are enacted are negotiated and understood by the individuals engaging in this dialogue. As it relates to masculinity, a posted picture of a man interacting with another male friend can show an ambiguous relationship. This ambiguity can be intentional to make sure they could adhere to hegemonic social norms.

The last frame is the communal frame. While this one may seem like a reiteration of the other frames, it is actually a frame in which an individual defines oneself in the larger group. In communities, roles and expectations are established which dictates action and belonging. The rules are not quite known, or the intricacies are not known to an outsider because roles and rules are jointly held, remembered, and taught to new members (Hecht, 1993). However, once an individual delves into a community, these roles and rules are shared so that an individual shapes their communal identity around what is learned. Fitting in with the hegemonic ideal of masculinity is an example of how an individual can delve themselves within a community with norms and expectations. Therefore, a picture of a man with a group of other men engaging in a stereotypical manhood act such as smoking a cigar in a men's only cigar bar could be seen as a man expressing his communal identity with other men. Additionally, "communities will have a hierarchy of identities, with some more central to its notion of membership than others" (Hecht, 1993, p. 80). For example, proper presentation style is established in the Journalism and Mass Communication department at many Universities and to be considered professional, the central stylistic expectations are to be met, otherwise an individual loses their credibility in a communal frame.

All the frames articulated by Hecht (1993) are both separate and weaved together. These frames can be split up for analysis, but together they are seen in real world applicability. The crossroads of two, three, or four frames is known as interpenetration of frames (Hecht, 1993); how two or more frames are understood and enacted at one time. While the discussion so far has been on identity in general, these frames can be seen as expressions of masculinity as well. An individual engages in communication online just as much as offline and these frames are a way to analyze online interactions, especially with manhood acts in mind. From lurking (being

present without engaging), showing one's adherence to a certain type of masculinity, to formulating posts, these communicative frames help an individual define their identity.

Identity Gaps

In addition to the communication theory of identity (CTI), Hecht has worked with the concept of identity gaps. Identity gaps are “discrepancies between or among the four frames of identity” (Jung & Hecht, 2004, p. 268). While the four frames of identity (personal, enacted, relational, communal) can be a guideline to how identity is communicated, there exists unanswered themes which do not fit into the four frames. They exist because people rarely express their true feelings or emotions due to social stigmatization and social norms (Jung & Hecht, 2004). For example, a man wearing a t-shirt with a picture of a kitten might fit into the enacted frame because they are expressing in a physical way that they identify as a cat lover. However, upon interviewing said individual, they explain they hate cats, which is a personal frame statement. The disconnect between what is said and what is shown is an example of an identity gap. When two people meet, each has their own life experience, and also expresses their identities in different ways; the messages received are often misinterpreted and identity gaps manifest (Jung & Hecht, 2004). Gaps can occur between all four frames of identity. According to Jung and Hecht (2004), “a discrepancy or a contradiction can arise between the personal and relational frames, or between the persona and enacted frames. Even when these frames contradict each other, they coexist and work together composing an individual's identity” (p. 267). Although contradictions do exist, identity is intact; the same can be said for expressed masculinity. In a given situation a man might wear a certain clothing item to fit into the environment, even if they don't fully believe what they are expressing (i.e. a gap between the personal and enacted frame). Therefore, when it comes to exploring male's identity expression on Instagram, only one data collection technique is not sufficient. I might find and assign CTI

themes to posts, but without the in-depth interview for context, my analysis might not explain the full picture. Instead, the interview should help enlighten the details behind the posts while also trying to find any identity gaps, which will be explicated.

Identity Theory

How an individual defines oneself both socially and individually is the basis of identity. One major aspect of identity is how one identifies with a specific gender, whether that be man or woman. This gendered identity forms how a person performs, expresses oneself, and interacts in given situations. Stryker and Burke (2000) both have done work into how identity is formulated and defined, together explicating Identity Theory. Identity Theory takes pieces from sociology, psychology, psychoanalysis, communications, political science and history (Stryker & Burke, 2000). All these elements comprise Identity Theory since the concept has been studied throughout time and across disciplines. Identity, therefore, is hard to comprehend and it is even harder to define. However, this theory takes into account multiple perspectives ranging from self-verification theory, symbolic interactionism, and self-reference theory and self-categorization theory (Stryker & Burke, 2000). In this section, identity theory will be explicated so it can be better understood when discussing masculinity. Through their work, Stryker and Burke (2000) combined their ideas into one that incorporates two essential portions: identity formed through social structures and its influences on social behavior, and the internal dynamics of self-processes influencing social behavior. Altogether, identity as articulated by social behavior is influenced by external and internal dialogues. Society around an individual dictate how one fits in the grander scheme, while an acceptance of oneself is expressed through actions. Hence, when an individual wakes up to start the day, a conversation on how they will act and present is managed. For example, when a man wakes up, he has to think of which environments

he will engage in, which could shape how he expresses himself; the individual might change communicated identity by trying to fit a hegemonic ideal of masculinity such as being aggressive and stoic.

In relation to Identity Theory, the external and internal social structures are both considered as a part of identity formation. Social structures provide a place where individuals interact in specialized personal networks and their actions are “through roles that support their participation in such networks” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 285). How men align their actions to be consistent with a majority of other men in a situation is an example of how males fit into a social structure. These realms can be work places, friend groups, restaurants, and clubs among many others which have their own rules and roles members abide by. Therefore, this social structure dictates which identity role one must fit into in order to be accepted socially. When a man enters a situation which requires him to fit a certain standard, most will in order to convey a sense of belonging in the social realm. Roles and frames are thus ways to interpret pieces of identity. Additionally, “social roles are expectations attached to positions occupied in networks or relationships: identities are internalized role expectations” (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286). Therefore, role choices within these networks are functions of identity since a dialogue with the self in regard to the community is established. Identity is thus malleable since it is choosing between appropriate social behaviors, according to this theory.

Moreover, identity salience is key to understanding Identity Theory. Identity salience (strongest expressed identity) is seen as first choosing from a hierarchy of personal identity and then expressing which identity will be invoked when posited in a specific situation (Stryker & Burke, 2000). Higher salience of identity can thus dictate which behavior will be exhibited. Salience of an identity relative to other identities shapes how one potentially behaves. If being a

sports fan is of higher salience, then behaviors in specific environments will reflect that 'sports fan' identity. A man fitting into a hegemonic ideal is an example of a salient identity coming forth in order to fit into a scenario. In addition, commitment to a salient identity is necessary to shape behavior. Therefore, "commitment shapes identity salience shapes role choice behavior" (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 286). For example, when moving to a new town, if an individual finds a community where their previous highest salience is supported, then their internal identities remain stable; however, if they do not, an individual will change their highest salient identity as to be accepted into the new community. Once again, identity is an internal and external dialogue to properly position oneself within a larger societal picture. Even though masculinity is a part of personal identity, social environments shape how a man expresses himself as well.

Social Identity Theory

Another theory which needs to be considered in relation to identity and masculinity is the Social Identity Theory (SIT). Social Identity Theory stems from the work of Tajfel (1972) who wanted to understand how identity was shaped by a social environment. Social Identity Theory mainly posits that identity and behavior are shaped by the environment around a person. Individuals thus have their identities shaped by the groups they participate in, which is separate from an individualistic perspective. According to Tajfel (1972), social identity is "an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 69). Once a person invests time and emotional connection with a specific group, their rules, behaviors, and regulations shape their behavior. A social group is one in which the member communally identifies and expresses their shared adherence to the same social category; the members use a social comparison process to determine who is in and out of the group in terms of similar

interests or identities (Stets & Burke, 2000). For example, if men go to a sports game, they are often expected to be loud, boisterous, aggressive, and outgoing; in this instance, the unsaid social rules dictate how a man expresses his identity. He will either conform to the rules, or risk being potentially ostracized. While identity formation comes from a group, according to SIT, one does not necessarily need to be engaged in the group. Instead, to have one's identity and behavior shaped by a social group, an individual doesn't need to try and strive toward a group's goals, but rather perceive themselves intertwined with the overall dynamic of the group (Ashforth & Mael, 1989, p. 21). Being a hegemonic masculine man in U.S. American society is a constant conversation with how one wants to be seen. Even though some men might not engage in so-called manly activities, identifying as a man can dictate words and actions. Moreover, "liking" pictures on a social networking site's fan page, for instance, can help a person not only feel their identity connected with the group, but they also don't need to be fully present to associate themselves with the overall whole. Social identity does, however, differ from other identity theories because it does not concern itself with how an individual personally identifies; SIT concerns itself with a sense of belonging. Ashforth and Mael (1989) state:

Social classification enables the individual to locate or define him- or herself in the social environment. According to SIT, the self-concept is comprised of a personal identity encompassing idiosyncratic characteristics (e.g. bodily attributes, abilities, psychological traits, interests) and social identity encompassing salient group classification. Social identification, therefore, is the perception of oneness with or belongingness to some human aggregate (p. 21).

SIT explains how identity is derived from other group member's participation and shared social values. Social groups or networks individuals participate in "provide their members with a shared identity that prescribes and evaluates who they are, what they should believe and how they should behave" (Hogg, 2016, p. 6). If these shared social values add a positive aspect to an

individual's life, they are more likely to stay in that particular group. This occurrence can be seen online in relation to being a part of a specific community where one feels supported and a sense of belonging. When an individual comes across a group, whether online or offline, a slew of thoughts about belonging spark. Once an individual sees the group, they will categorize and classify themselves in relation to said group in order to find meaning and fitting in (Stets & Burke, 2000). In this way, the self is reflexive and adaptive as long as the group they engage with fits within their own thoughts of personal identity. For example, a cat lover joining an online forum about how to properly maintain and raise cats fits both; while simplistic, this shows that the individual identifies with the group and will adapt themselves to fit into the group dynamic.

SIT is a look on how the group shapes the member and the ways groups change or stay stable based on its ability to garnish strong identity salience and how one group acquires meaning in relation to others (Tajfel, 1972). Therefore, while identity is individually shaped, being a part of a group such as being a man in society, which itself derives its own identity from comparing with other groups, is the basis for SIT. In relation to Instagram, potential picture posting decisions can be partly based on how the images will or will not be accepted based on the situation it is in. For example, Facebook and Instagram have their own set of implicit rules which users adhere to in order to gain favor. Therefore, for pictures to be accepted on a particular platform, one must try and fit their image with the overall group. Showing off muscles or taking a gym selfie is an example of how a man might post on social media to gain recognition of his masculinity and his alignment with a manly act of working out. The group, in this case other users on Instagram, could determine which images will be accepted and which will be rejected (in terms of likes and comments). Potentially, when males post on Instagram, they will use

images that highlight their masculinity to fit into the overall hegemonic ideology of manliness. Image choice and image representation are not only associated with the group, but also with most salient identities. Now that identity has been explicated further, the focus goes to theories and examples of how a man is labeled a man.

Masculinity

Identity, while integral to the conversation of this study, is not the only focus. Instead, an exploration into the mind and performance of a male is necessary. To fully understand how male students use Instagram, one must understand the constraints and roles of masculinity in society. The following paragraphs will outline masculinity. One aspect considers how masculinity was originally understood and articulated, and the other is the current framework surrounding masculinity. A discussion of what masculinity means individually and at a macro-level will be examined, while also expressing how masculinity is currently measured. To be a man does not mean to follow a predesignated path, but rather accepting (while sometimes adhering to) masculine traits amongst hegemonic masculinity which permeates the society one is situated in. One must also keep in mind, many men reject and resist hegemonic masculinity, and many are outcasted due to this aspect.

Hegemonic masculinity.

Masculinity is a multi-dimensional concept which has been explored in various disciplines such as social science, criminology, psychology, communication, and education to name a few. The concept can be broken down into sub-categories for analysis: traits, ideology, and hegemonic masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Pleck, Sonenstein, Ku, 2004). These three can be thought of like an inverted pyramid in terms of their description of masculinity: hegemonic is the overall social pressures put on a male, ideology being more specific, and traits are physical or emotional characteristics a man holds. All three, moreover, are

related to identity because to be a “man” in society means adhering to or negotiating what it means to be male and how to properly express manliness (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Masculinity, like identity, is in constant flux with no true definition or standard, but rather socially constructed and imposed on males based on their cultural participation. For example, in Minnesota, manliness can mean being a hockey player and a lumberjack, while in Texas it can mean being a football player and being a cowboy. Even though these are stereotypes, the example shows different ways masculinity can be categorized in different regions (Fiebert & Meyer, 1997).

Hegemonic masculinity has been explored by many authors and “refers to an idealized form of masculine character” (Waling, 2017, p. 428). What it means to be a man, and how to express it is culturally situated, but nonetheless happens in most societies. Masculinity, therefore, “is a lived experience, and an economic and cultural force, and dependent on social arrangements” (Donaldson, 1993, p. 646). Being masculine comes with practicing socially constructed norms such as role expectations of being a “breadwinner” which has allowed men to dominate over women (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). Hegemonic masculinity is thought of in terms of not only a power struggle, but also the expectations to perform manliness based on the situation. It refers to an ideology of what it takes to be a man and how one should potentially act. Going hunting in comparison to participating in sports can exhibit a duality of masculinities, which can be referred to as a salient hierarchy of masculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). The way a man acts at a sporting event versus a women’s rights rally are different forms of how masculinity can be presented; the former being more aggressive while the latter being more subversive with both still considered masculine. One form of masculinity can override another based on environment such as a “men who receive benefits of patriarchy without enacting a

strong version of masculine dominance could be regarded as showing a complicit masculinity” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 832). Moreover, hegemonic masculinity has shifted in how it’s seen throughout the years. From John Wayne and his rugged expression to the male underwear model celebrities such as Mark Wahlberg, the ideal man has changed, but the idea of hegemonic masculinity has not. Overall, hegemonic masculinity gives a guideline to how a man should act and behave, with no one-true exemplar. The hyper-aggressive form of hegemonic masculinity is still apparent in many sports clubs, however, “a less oppressive, means of being a man might become hegemonic, as part of a process leading toward an abolition of gender hierarches” (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005, p. 833). However, the fluxing nature of hegemonic masculinity came from a misunderstanding of what it means to be a man. The idea of hegemonic masculinity came about with the insurgence of homophobia and heterosexuality (Donaldson, 1993). As a term, it was used to describe the overall pressures and power dynamics society puts on men, and how they can adopt mentalities of manliness. Manliness is not defined, but known to most men and “while centrally connected with institutions of male dominance, not all men practice it, though most men benefit from it” (Donaldson, 1993, p. 645). Over time, a man negotiates his personal masculinity, what should be expressed and how they will live up to societal expectations. As alluded to earlier, there is not one ideal exemplar, but media can help influence the hegemonic masculine ideal. War heroes, sports stars, and Hollywood celebrities can help shape how men benchmark their own masculinity (Donaldson, 1993). For my study, I will be asking participants in the interview sessions about their favorite media celebrity, how they define masculinity and what “manly” means to them. The idea is that masculinity can be seen as being a stay-at-home father or a body builder.

Traits and ideology.

While hegemonic masculinity is the cultural standards imposed on men, masculinity can also be seen as traits and ideology. Masculine traits and ideology refers to the features or mindset a man has which follows suit with the overall hegemonic masculine ideal (Pleck et. al, 2004). For example, some men have the mindset that to be a male means to be aggressive, and one way to show that is muscularity. According to Saucier, O’Dea, and Stratmoen (2017), “the beliefs that men must protect themselves, their reputations, their families, and their property against threat and insult, with physical aggression if necessary,” (p. 1) can manifest in mindsets and physicality. Men, based on their social conditioning, become vigilant of themselves and their expressed masculinity when in the presence of another man. They size up one another to assess threats by shows of force or physical appearance (Saucier et. al, 2017). Therefore, the body becomes an external indicator of manliness, showing both traits and ideology in practice. Ideology, on its own, is the idea that men fully believe and adhere to socially constructed norms of masculinity. From an early age in Western societies, men are taught the value of being tough, the value of not crying, and emotional vulnerability. Some men adhere to male stereotypes because they believe that is truly what it means to be a man, based on internalizing masculine stereotypes (Pleck et. al, 2004). Through social learning, behaviors can thus be influenced as well. According to Bandura (2009), observational learning breaks down into four parts: attentional, retention, production, and motivational processes. To purposively learn a behavior, one must see the event, remember it, reproduce it on one’s own terms, and judge if there are adverse effects, potentially adding the behavior into one’s own repertoire if it is not met with negativity. Therefore, in regard to masculinity, a man sees exemplars in the media and their own lives and modifies their behaviors based on their observations. If a boy, for example, sees his

father or superhero use violence as a means to alleviate tensions, then the boy may likely act in the future according to what they saw performed and modeled. This reinforced the hegemonic masculine ideal also strengthened the boy's ideology in what it means to be masculine.

According to Wailing (2017), a male learns societal pressures of being a man through "media representation and consumption pressures, body image and muscularity pressures, performative sex and desirability expectations, and the fear of social judgement both from those who expect and from those who reject particular performances of masculinity" (p. 429). Ideology and traits can be learned by past experience, which shapes how a man sees and expresses himself.

However, there is a discrepancy based on environment.

Orthodox vs. inclusive masculinity.

In addition to traits and ideology, men have to navigate different environments. Playing sports and going to a ballet are completely different venues and allow men to express their different masculinities. Some of these environments can be limiting. An orthodox masculine environment is one where only a certain type of masculinity is accepted (Anderson, 2009). Actions, mentalities, and expectations are more in the Western tradition where a man cannot show emotions, their homosexual tendencies/performance, and must be aggressive. Anderson and McGuire (2017) looked at a prominent men's rugby group in England for a year to see if there was an orthodox masculine environment. They found that the coaches exhibited an "out of date" orthodox mentality, while the players were more inclusive. The coaches, in this case, had one type of masculinity they expressed, but it was not in-line with the mentalities of their players. Even in an aggressive sports environment, such as rugby, an inclusive environment can exist. In terms of inclusive masculinity, Anderson (2009) explains that an environment can exist where all types of masculinities (homosexual, bisexual, heterosexual, among others) are

accepted. An inclusive environment allows its participants to be fully themselves and exhibit an action such as being flamboyant, without being seen as outside the norm. The norm, in this case, is being whoever a man identifies as. Cheerleading clubs where men are members can also have a range of environments; some clubs adopt a more orthodox about how a man should act, while others allow all members to be themselves without ridicule or condemnation (Anderson, 2009). With these two environments in mind, it is easy to see how the term ‘masculinity’ is a Pandora’s box of different definitions, ideologies, traits, and hegemonic ideals.

Masculinity measured.

Masculinity has been explored in a multiplicity of disciplines. Many scholars prefer to use a qualitative methodological approach with an emphasis in in-depth interviews, participant observations, focus groups, and ethnographies (Anderson, 2004, 2009; Anderson and McGuire, 2017; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Fiebert & Meyer, 1997; Pleck et al., 2004; Suacier et al., 2017; Wailing, 2017). These qualitative methods were attempting to understand the male mentality and how it manifests in the mind and body. By asking questions, gauging reactions, and observing behaviors, the researchers were able to better define what it means to be a man and why certain mentalities exist. As mentioned earlier, masculinity is culturally defined, but each researcher has done their part to contribute to a better picture of males. Yet, apart from qualitative work, masculinity has been measured by various scales to try to quantify masculine ideology. According to Thompson, Pleck, and Ferrera (1992), “some of the instruments index individuals’ conformity with specific masculinity ideologies and others index personal consequences arising from the press of masculinity standards” (p. 576). They found twelve different masculinity measures including: The Macho Scale, Attitudes Toward the Male Role, Attitude Toward Masculinity Transcendence Scale, Attitude Toward Men Scale, Brannon

Masculinity Scale, Male Norms Scale, Stereotypes About Male Sexuality Scale, Males Norms Inventory, Male Role Attitudes Scale, Hypermasculinity Scale, the Masculine Role Inventory, and the Masculine Gender Roll Stress Scale (Thompson, Pleck, and Ferrera, 1992). For my research, I am using a qualitative approach because I would like to ask specific questions about my subjects posting habits and how they identify as a man. A future study could use a mixed methodological approach, interviewing men about their masculinity while also surveying them within a scale of masculinity. However, I am looking for explanations of themselves, rather than where they fit on a spectrum. As a limitation, I might not be able to judge accurately where my participants' masculinity fits in a general sense, but might get some insights into their expressed masculinity based on their family history or current living environment. Moreover, while masculinity is an aspect of identity, those expressions of manliness come with caveats. What a man decides to post, and how they choose to present themselves is a form of identity expression, but also has to do with shaping themselves online. By choosing some pictures and not others, performativity, curation, and image management are employed; this could come in the form of a man choosing to show a gym selfie instead of showing engagement in a feminist rally.

Performativity and Online Engagement

This section is a discussion on how identity (with regard to masculinity) is formulated and expressed in an online environment. While there has been dispute on the difference between online and offline communities, identity formation follows similar veins. Identity expression online is a dialogue with the self in relation to how one fits into a community. Even though online communities are more conceptual and still under examination, theories of identity apply. Identity Theory can be seen in online formation because people fit into "roles" online and structure their presence thusly. Men, for example, are stereotypically/traditionally expected to be

“breadwinners” and leaders in U.S. society, even if some men do not want to fit within those roles. However, some try to fit into these roles within society to gain favor, or keep status. Social identity theory can be seen online with posters and lurkers. An individual can either participate passively or actively, but both ways shape identity online. Moreover, the four aforementioned frames in Communication Theory of Identity are present online as well. Decisions about what to post, how an individual is seen, and how identity is shaped comes from personal, enacted, relationship and communal frames (Hecht, 1993). Even though offline and online communities are seemingly different, identity formation and expression are similar.

Performativity.

When a person wakes up to begin the day, they have to make a vast array of decisions such as what to wear, how to smell, and what demeanor to project when they walk out the door. While these decisions are internal conversations with the self, the outcome is a performative act to acquiesce to the social world. The act of performativity is trying to seek social acceptance by highlighting personal aspects, such as a descriptive shirt or color of hair, to present an ideal-self representation (Farquhar, 2012). For males trying to fit the hegemonic ideal, performativity comes in the form of changing one’s appearance and personal lexicon in order to achieve social acceptance. Moreover, performativity can be understood in both online and offline contexts. The decisions one makes to present to an audience is the act of performing. According to Cover (2012), “performativity, then, is identity produced through the citation of culturally given identity categories or norms in a reiterative process, and occurs across both offline and online interactions” (p. 180). By aligning oneself with the norms of the societal whole, a sense of social acceptance is gained, which allows a person to feel confident in a given scenario. These acts of performativity can come in many forms such as adhering to culturally accepted gender roles,

wearing a band t-shirt because you want to fit in to a certain crowd, or adjusting one's attitude to coincide with the majority in a given situation. Social media is one arena where performativity plays a central role. Pictures posted on social media tend to highlight the best of a person's personality, or curated personality. For men who want to fit into a majority of society, this can be choosing to show pictures of aggression, dominance, or other manhood acts instead of what they might personally like, such as ballet, in order to gain social acceptance.

Performativity to some means showing the world they not only conform to society, but also the representation is of the "actual self" (Farquhar, 2012). When it comes to identity, there is a debate on what the "actual self" truly is. Some see it as who you are behind closed doors and some see it as personal perception coinciding with the gathered image from society (Damasio, 1999). Nevertheless, each action a person takes in a social situation is potentially a performative act. These performative acts give meaning to not only the person, but how they fit into daily scenarios. The first thoughts on performativity came from Butler (1988), who described performativity in gendered acts. By her thoughts, the act of being "manly" and "feminine" were performative acts to align with societal expectations. According to Butler (1988), "the body is understood to be an active process of embodying certain cultural and historical possibilities" (p. 521). Each person is thusly expected to fit into the hegemonic cultural ideals and any deviation is seen as rebellious. Butler's work throughout the years has been cited multiple times and is mainly referenced on what it means to be 'performative' in words, thoughts, and actions. With these performative acts, comes intended and unintended consequences. For example, if a man wore a football shirt, he gives off intentional cues to how they identify; if asked about the shirt, the man averts gaze or changes his demeanor, these are unintentional cues which break the potential illusion of a "superfan" the man generates by wearing the shirt in the first place

(Farquhar, 2012). Therefore, performativity has multiple dimensions to consider; the decisions made and the cues produces. Combined, each decision a person makes during a day will determine what performative act is accepted, which is denied, and which are accidentally given/received, based on interpersonal interactions.

Performativity is not only an offline act, but can be seen online in social networking sites. Much like clothing choice is an offline act of performativity, choosing a perfect profile picture is an online performativity act. People seek social acceptance online and gather a sense of acceptance with accumulating “likes” or “shares.” These likes and shares act as a cue that a person’s performative acts are being accepted. Additionally, social networking sites have features which helps outside viewers to show their acceptance of what they see by adding functions like the “like button,” or emojis. According to Cover (2012), social networking sites, “can thus be understood as one tool or mechanism for attempting to be effective in articulating a coherent and recognizable self, much as diaries, journals, conversations or other communications ‘justifications’ have been” (pp. 180-181). This idea of the “recognizable self” leaves out the idea of performativity and presenting the ideal self, but the site is a way for people to test out their boundaries of what is acceptable and not. Thus, by posting a profile picture, or a status update, people perform identity management. Thus, posting performativity is a form of identity management.

Online identity formation and articulation.

Online communities and interactions help shape a person’s identity in the digital age. However, the discussion of how identity is formed is developed in an offline setting. One way people solidify their identity is by using social networking sites to test out pieces of their acquired identity to see if they will be accepted in a social way. According to Xindaris (2016),

“identity is established, by being recognized in and through such contexts; thus, such recognitions carry performative power, as they themselves are engaged in the complex exchange of information leading to a set of identifications which result in the composition and establishment of individuality” (p. 59). Performing, as explained earlier, is essential to understand identity formation online; putting posts, phrases, or joining groups online is one part personal, but also a way for others to see what an individual is doing, furthering their cultivated identity online. If their online expression is not treated with recognition or in a positive light, there is a better chance that person will drop that piece of identity they were trying to get acknowledged; distancing oneself from further harm or cognitive dissonance. For example, if a male posts two pictures, one with a blue blanket on, and one with a pink blanket on, the one which receives more positive recognition will more likely be adopted and displayed in further postings. In theory, the blue blanket photo is most likely the photo positively received, and therefore the person is more likely to adhere to a potential façade of hegemonic masculinity. This idea ties in performativity, identity management, and social acceptance. The idea of presentation follows the ideas of hegemonic masculinity and is reminiscent of the enactment and relationship frames from Communication Theory of Identity (CTI). A man performs certain actions or thoughts online with regard to how others will potentially view them.

In a digital age, it is not enough to know you identify as something, but it must be known to become real to the self. Xandaris (2016) recognizes identity as a dialogue with the self in tandem with others and “the materialization of such identities is subject to one’s self-representations in a variety of social networks, as well as one’s participation in the sphere of online and offline communication” (p. 59). Communication is key because without communication, if a piece of potential identity is not recognized, it can disappear, or at least

become private to the individual. CTI states that identity is shaped through communication with others and the concept of self-representation online follow the same sentiment. An individual communicates pieces of their identity for others to either accept or reject, shaping their off and online identity. While participation with social networks can be seen in a positive light because it recognizes people and their accomplishments, Xandarís (2016) warns of the dangers:

“participation in social media is the result of a complex system of surveillance and sousveillance – being watched from above, by a higher authority, or from below, by ordinary people, often one’s peers” (p. 61). Therefore, solely focusing on social media recognition is a trap because while identity is formed through recognition, the constant awareness of people viewing one’s online presence can result in negative outcomes. A male could feel obligated to keep posting about their lives, or feel the need to have every single decision they make acknowledged online. The dialogue with the self falls to the wayside because online recognition becomes more important than accepting oneself as they are. Instead of accepting a personal definition and view of one’s masculinity, a male might specifically post pictures which show his adherence to a hegemonic ideal to seek recognition of their masculinity.

The trap of participation results in a new construction of the self-online. Instead of just participating in social networks to gain confidence and boost personal (potentially masculine) confirmation, it becomes an unreal representation of the self. No longer is the identity online about one’s true self, but rather what they want people to see. By doing this, offline and online identity starts to separate. Participation in an, “individuals’ self-identification online (e.g. their participation in Facebook groups or attendance of events online) become an identity order in itself, one that not only contributes to the creation of an online identity but which allows both the individual and its audience, to construct a representation of one’s offline affiliations and

identifications” (Xandarís, 2016, p. 62). Representation, or rather the construction of an image of the self, is one way online identity expression differs from offline identity expression. While offline a male can craft a false masculine identity for others, they are still viewed in real-time with actual image representation. However, online a person can create a false-self much more easily and effectively; in this instance, a person can appear more hegemonic masculine to others online, than how they truly identify or perform offline.

With the emergence of internet technology, the conversation about identity expression can no longer remain offline. Before devices became so integral with everyday life among many people, teasing out one’s identity was supported and shaped by personal and community involvement. However, screens have surpassed the need for in-person validation because faceless “likes,” posts, and comments from anonymous users have become the new way, or rather a supplementary way, to form one’s identity. This online environment makes for a place where identity is both formed and also falsely constructed. According to Davis (2017), “the work of self-presentation entails complex decisions about documentation, sharing, privacy, and publicity” (p. 770). Apart from knowing internally how one identifies, the social network platform acts as a megaphone so those pieces of identity which are posted can be validated, acknowledged and therefore solidified as a portion of a person’s identity. Social networks therefore become social structures which shape identity, as articulated by identity theory. A male can manage his online identity with the platforms in mind, knowing how each part works and behaves according to the rules and regulations of the social structure. Once again, masculine identity formation and expression online does not differ very far from how identity formation offline is understood. Nevertheless, Davis (2017) articulates that these fragments of information about a person are one part true, and one part an act of performativity also known as reputation

management. The male who posts a picture of himself wearing a sports-team shirt might be one part a true fan, and one part adhering to a hegemonic masculine ideal to maintain a manly status.

Davis (2017) further distinguishes how people manipulate how they are viewed through productive and consumptive curation. Productive curation is more active in the sense that it requires the user to be cognizant and specific when interacting online or through social networks. Furthermore, productive curation “refers to what people document, make, share, and with who,” and “therefore resides at the intersection of self-presentation and privacy maintenance” (Davis, 2017, p. 722). A person who engages in social media has a limited, but essential role in what they see and what they decide to post. In relation to productive curation, the person is cognizant of what pieces they are willing to share and with whom, which dictates their presence online. If a person thinks themselves as a sports lover, their identity online is curated by posting specific information or opinions about a team with an online audience (most of the time with those who are similar to them). Therefore, their acquired identity is tested and reaffirmed by curation the information they are willing to share. Some people “curate content with the most sensitive members of their networks in mind, limiting what they share across any and all platforms,” while there are others “who do wish to share intimate content but remain concerned about reputation management employ a host of curatorial strategies” (Davis, 2016, p. 773). Identity expression online is a game of what to share, with who, and for specific purposes. Online masculine identity expression is not simply being who one is, but rather a carefully constructed version of one’s self; sometimes without even the knowledge of the user. Questions such as audience, posted information, and status are considered instead of acting out their pieces of identity in a more immediate, offline way.

Apart from productive curation, consumptive curation is also employed, which is a different kind of active maintenance than the other active aforementioned counterpart. Consumptive curation “is an active practice of looking and engagement through which networked individuals navigate pools of data in discriminating ways” (Davis, 2017, p. 773). Instead of thinking about what to post and to whom, an individual sifts through their friends, community posts, and pages they associate with the intention to sculpt their media experience. From limiting what they see and alleviating cognitive dissonance by deleting or blocking information presented, a person curates a bubble of online safety. Their views, thoughts, and opinions are validated and kept within a realm of self-identity; there is not much pushback or pressure to look at dissenting viewpoints. According to Davis, “people do not just go online to learn, campaign, or protest, but largely, to socialize” (Davis, 2016, p. 774). In relation to identity, it is formed by social interactions and testing out pieces of identity for others to either accept or reject. With social networks being a place for community engagement over a vast amount of time and space, the platform becomes an online way to form identity. However, with consumptive curation, a person shelters themselves from a wide array of opinions and finds safety within a small niche. Essentially, a person feels more comfortable testing out pieces of identity for recognition after they have crafted their networks to tailor to their liking. Identity is reinforced more easily when consumptive curation is employed. Both types of identity formation follow the same logic of the communal frame as articulated by the CTI. Whether one posts or shapes their newsfeed is based on how they fit into the community. Even though this community is more vague and less defined, decisions about how to present one’s identity stems from community consideration. Curation then falls in line with CTI frames and is again are examples of similar off and online identity formation.

Regardless which curation strategy is employed, identity online is very much an act of performativity. Social networks contribute to this as they are the catalyst in which identity is shaped through interactions online. According to Hogan (2010), “an exhibition is still a form of presentation of self,” (p. 377) which happens online through posting statuses, pictures, and memories. This exhibition is essentially another way to phrase performativity online; it is exhibiting one’s identity through online engagement. Hogan (2010) further articulates that different social network platforms act as exhibition sites and can “be defined as a site (typically online) where people submit reproducible artifact” or pieces of their identity such as posts or pictures of beloved sports teams indicating the individual is a sports fan (p. 381). Artifacts are shared, posted, and presented online by an individual so that they can test out pieces of themselves for acceptance or rejection. Social network platforms allow artifacts to be exhibited for a curated audience in an effort to better define oneself. Once again, choosing which artifacts to present in an exhibition space is carefully considered because rejection is a deterrent to any post. However, audience, especially on social network sites, needs to be fully considered. According to Hogan (2010), “sharing artifacts online is often done through ‘friends.’ As such, people add many friends to their online profile in order to participate in these sites [exhibition locations] fully” (p. 382). Yet, as previously discussed, these lists of sometimes faceless friends are curated to form a basis of people one posts to and gets recognition from. Therefore, identity presentation and preservation is both reinforced positively and negatively (due to selective exposure and curation of audience). Additionally, “if we consider online friends not as a means for signifying those with whom we have close relations but those with whom we want to manage access to content,” then a picture of how identity is formed and preserved online becomes more clear (Hogan, 2010, p. 383). Identity through participation is only one aspect, albeit the largest,

in the conversation on online identity formation. Nevertheless, passive participation should also be considered. Hence, this type of online identity formation comes shows similarities from both Identity Theory and CTI; a person shapes themselves personally and in relation to their enacted and relational frames of identity. Even though formation of identity was once only an offline concept, the value of online interactions become vital. To exist online is to be understood offline. With choices and decisions about how to be viewed, what to post, the considerations of others, identity formation is not different whether one is participating in a local or virtual community.

Instagram

Instagram is a social networking site using primarily pictures as their posts. Just like its contemporaries (Facebook and Twitter), the site is a way for individuals to share their content with others while also “following” them as well. Following others in the site is the act of essentially subscribing to someone else’s posting patterns; for example, if a friend is following me on Instagram and I post a picture, said picture will show on my friend’s recent post feed. Instagram started on October 2010 and by December of the same year, the site had over one million users (Desreumaux, 2014). The attraction of the site comes with all the pictures users can posts. Users can range from celebrities to puppies with their own accounts; following these accounts can help inspire gift ideas, or show another side of reality a person isn’t previously exposed to. By the end of 2011, Instagram had over ten million users; this attracted the interest of Facebook who bought out Instagram in 2012 (Desreumaux, 2014). Even though the site has become hugely popular, it is primarily used by a younger audience. According to Pew Research (2016), many of the users are female and the number of users is still growing. Instagram’s popularity skyrocketed with the help of Facebook and is now a staple for sharing content. With the buy-out from Facebook, the site has added filters, launched on various operating systems, a tagging element, and other small features which has increased its popularity. Instagram has over

150 million users, 16 billion photos shared, 1.2 billion “likes” every day, and 55 million photos posted per day (Desreumaux, 2014). The rise of Instagram has been steep and the future is bright for the company.

Chapter 3 - Methods

Instaman: A case study of male identity expression on Instagram has been approved by the CSU IRB and has been completed in its entirety. I am very passionate about this project because I believe people should be allowed to be themselves regardless of societal pressures. From my childhood until now I have not had idealized hegemonic masculine traits or tendencies, but I have outwardly been seen as a hegemonic masculine man. I wanted to see the differences from outside perspectives in relation to personal identity and masculine expressions. Instagram, a place whose primary user base is female, was an ideal to explore perceptions versus reality for a population of college students who are in transition periods (i.e. freshmen and senior males). My thesis focused on how participants express themselves on social media and how they personally define their own masculinity.

The study revolved around how men use Instagram and how they express their identity on Instagram. I conducted a qualitative case study comprising two data collection techniques: photo elicitation artifact analysis and in-depth interviews. Photo elicitation is the act of allowing participants to choose artifacts, in this case Instagram posts, to be used for analysis purposes (Hutchinson, 2016). The reason for using a photo elicitation technique was to ensure the participants had memory and knowledge of the artifacts they were interviewed about; this was coupled with in-depth interviews. Two data collection techniques were necessary because they helped triangulate participants reasoning and using only one technique would not provide robust data about men's use and identity expression. Instead, using two techniques allowed me to triangulate more specific reasons men use Instagram for analysis (Creswell, 2009). The reason behind a case study was that according to Creswell (2009), a "case study research involves the study of an issues explored through one or more cases within a bounded system" (p. 73) In this

study, the cases were men's use and identity expression on Instagram. I attempted to find out and explain how male students are using Instagram to express their identity. Moreover, according to Baxter & Jack (2008), "(a) the focus of the study is to answer "how" and "why" questions; (b) you cannot manipulate the behaviour of those involved in the study; (c) you want to cover contextual conditions because you believe they are relevant to the phenomenon under study" (545). I asked why men post specific images on Instagram without trying to manipulate their behavior, while also addressing themes of identity and masculinity. All of these reasons align with Baxter & Jack's (2008) description of why a researcher should choose a case study. Because identity is an ever-changing conversation with the self in relation to communities one engages with, a quantitative analysis would not have been advantageous to answer the questions I posed. Instead, a case study would help better explain how male students use Instagram to express their identity with "in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, 2009, p. 73).

Case Studies

A case study is a qualitative approach to explain a phenomenon using a set of specific cases for analysis. According to Creswell (2009), "case study research involves the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e., a setting, a context)" (p. 73). For this thesis, the issue was male identity expression on Instagram with each participant being a single case. Since I used multiple participants, I had multiple cases to examine and analyze. Methodologists such as Baxter & Jack (2008), and Yin (1994) consider a case study is based on a constructivist claim, which means that truth depends on an individual's perspective; therefore, I used an in-depth look at both the images presented, along with the truths participants express to gather evidence. Through two different data collection techniques, I was better able to

triangulate identity expression reasons using in-depth interviews and photo elicitation artifact analysis (Creswell, 2009). Photo elicitation artifact analysis is the act of letting the participant choose artifacts for the researcher to analyze; the reason being was the chosen artifacts would be remembered better if they were chosen by the participant. Otherwise, if all the artifacts were chosen by the researcher, the chances of the photos being remembered are diminished (Hutchinson, 2016). A case study was the best choice for my research questions because I wanted to explore identity and reasons behind posting habits which will be best illuminated through discussion and interpretation. According to Yin (1994), a case study requires the researcher to look at a particular case which “represents somehow the interesting topic of the study empirically (e.g. the role of the United States in the world economy)” (p. 2). For this study, I examined male identity expression on Instagram. Yin (1994) continues to explain that a case study could comprise either a single case, or multiple cases. I analyzed two different groups of males (freshmen and seniors), and I used two different cases and compared them with one another to find similarities and differences, which constituted a full case study.

There are different styles of case studies such as intrinsic, instrumental and collective case studies. My study was a collective case study because “one issue or content is again selected, but the inquirer selected multiple cases studies to illustrate the issue” (Creswell, 2009, p. 74). Since my participants were each a single case, a collective case study was the correct choice. However, there are challenges which exist with case studies. There is a lack of specific steps a researcher must take when creating a case study, and how many cases to analyze, which can be difficult; moreover, a research must choose whether they will explore a bounded system, or one which is more fluid, and the correct methods to try and answer research questions (Creswell, 2009). I took careful considerations for all the shortcomings of case studies (i.e.

multiple transcriptions of the same document, keeping records of all my interactions, and making sure to circle back to my research questions). Moreover, I crafted a way to explore male identity expression on Instagram to triangulate the reasons and motivations behind posting pictures.

Population

Traditional-aged college students were my population. However, for my purposeful sample, I used four traditional aged freshmen and four traditionally aged senior men. Four participants yielded significant results while also allowing proper response time for all involved. According to Creswell (2009), “There is not a set number of cases. Typically, however, the researcher chooses no more than four or five cases” (p. 76). Because I looked at two groups, I chose four cases per group for analysis. Traditional college freshman and senior students were explored because those two levels are debatably extremely formative periods in students’ lives. Arnett (2000) articulates that emerging adults, comprising those between the ages of 18 and 25, include men who “have left the dependency of childhood and adolescence, and having not yet entered the enduring responsibilities that are normative in adulthood” (p. 469). Therefore, the college environment was a place where identity conversations are being formed. While identity is a continual conversation with the self, spanning an individual’s life, a younger population usually have these vigorous conversations during high school and college.

Sample Selection

As mentioned, I used a purposeful sample of traditional-aged freshmen and seniors because only men were analyzed, and each male could potentially give different perspectives on their experience at different times of age and growth while at university (Creswell, 2009). Moreover, I used a traditional-aged student, which “is one who enrolls in college immediately after graduation from high school, pursues college studies on a continuous full-time basis” and

“completes a bachelor’s degree program in four or five years at the young age of 22 or 23” (Center for Institutional Effectiveness, 2004). For the freshmen group, an introductory class from outside the communication field was selected to find participants. In the communication field and program, a vast amount about media effects, including social media, is taught to all levels of students. Therefore, finding students who use Instagram with little or no formal academic focus (i.e., a declared major) and knowledge about the motivations behind media use were selected. Students who have had prior media effects knowledge could have skewed my data because they might have used Instagram differently; perhaps more methodically. For seniors, I sampled from Senior Capstone classes; presumably, at this stage, students were thinking about and preparing for life outside of a collegiate realm. If they were not in a Capstone class, students might still be in the collegiate mentality and not ready to move on, which will also have potentially skewed my data. As with the freshman, students not enrolled in a communication class were eligible.

Recruitment

I recruited from both freshmen and senior courses which included a KEY Academic Community course, a course specifically meant for freshmen who all attend the same classes together. Moreover, I went to introductory and capstone classes and distributed a survey to assess who were viable candidates for inclusion (see Appendix A). The questionnaire determined eligibility and consisted of questions asking about if they have an Instagram account, for how long, and their general posting frequency. Many were eligible, but I chose the most applicable based on answers provided. Once I determined which respondents could be considered candidates, I randomly selected four surveys from each group (freshmen and seniors) to act as my sample. Then, they were contacted about participating; if they ultimately said no, I randomly

selected another survey from the left over groups. After the participants agreed, I discarded all surveys to eliminate identifiers; the students not chosen were notified.

Platform

For this study, I chose Instagram for my platform of analysis. Instagram was chosen because its population is primarily female users and I wanted to look at male identity expression in a potentially female-centric environment (Pew, 2016). An environment where masculinity could be seen in diverse ways was the rationale behind choosing a particular social networking site. Anderson and McGuire (2010) articulate that men act differently depending on the situation, especially in a feminized terrain. After analyzing my collected data, I might find different ways males express their identity, which could be counter-culture or against the idealized hegemonic masculinity. Nevertheless, I also chose Instagram because there are almost 55 million posts per day, which is rich for data collection (Desreumaux, 2014). Because my population fits within the younger crowd as alluded to by Pew (2016), Instagram was the proper choice to see pictorial evidence of identity expression.

Transferability/Dependability – Pilot Test

Due to the qualitative nature of this study, validity and reliability were difficult because the researcher was the instrument of investigation and the study was not generalizable. However, instead I addressed transferability and dependability. I needed to make sure I minimized any errors such as those found in the researcher, participants, the situation the participants were placed, and the methods of data collection (Brink, 1993). In the following paragraphs I outlined these issues for both of my data collection techniques: photo elicitation artifact analysis and in-depth interview.

Transferability.

Transferability relates to the findings ability to transfer to other settings. Moreover, it is a way to semi-generalize the findings. While not completely generalizable due to the subjectivity of qualitative analyses, the findings could possibly guide further studies. This study is looking at traditionally aged freshmen and senior males; a future study could potentially look at first-time fathers posting on Instagram because they are in a transition period as well and are ripe for analysis. Some evaluation methods to ensure transferability involve: “providing details of the study participants to enable readers to evaluate for which target groups the study provides valuable information, providing contextual background information, demographics, [and] the provision of thick description about both the sending and the receiving context” (Noyse et al., 2011, p. 4). In my results and discussion sections I included information on the participant’s background and posting habits, while keeping anonymity.

Dependability.

Dependability refers to the study’s ability to be replicated in future research. This means that my methods need to be clear, precise, and explicitly stated. According to Krefting (1990), “dependability can also be enhanced through triangulation to ensure that the weaknesses of one method of data collection are compensated by the use of alternative data-gathering methods” (p. 221). Since I used two data collection methods, and am explicitly outlining my steps, dependability is being addressed. All of my interview questions, filtering survey and artifact collection techniques are outlined in this methods section and in the appendix.

Pilot test.

One male students from JTC 300 was selected for my pilot test because most students in this class range from sophomores to seniors. Since my final sample is freshmen and senior

males, a matching grade level can help to make my questions and the process much more efficient. I recruited during my recitation (the class section I currently teach) and asked for volunteers. I had only one volunteer from my class and it was clear to the participant that there would be no compensation of any kind, monetary or extra credit. Moreover, I asked all my students (male and female) to participate to be fair, but was transparent that no extra credit, preference, or monetary compensation would be given. After talking to my students, only one male volunteered with the knowledge that the process would be for clarifying my study and finding any errors.

Once attained, a follow-up time to discuss interview appointments was made. After gathering five posts from the participants, and collecting five posts myself from their Instagram page, I interviewed him, as if they were a part of the final study. Once completed, I debriefed the participants and asked questions pertaining to their experience such as: was the process too long; did you feel any discomfort or confusion throughout; were the photographs hard to remember; and were the questions too vague. After completion, there were no errors in the participant's opinion and he left the session with my gratitude, nothing else.

Measurements and Themes

Once I recruited all my participants and completed my pilot test, I conducted my study, starting with compiling and analyzing each participant's posts (artifacts). I analyzed ten artifacts per individual recruited for this thesis study: all ten were from their most recently completed college semester, and compared potential identity expression themes throughout posting history. Five artifacts were selected by the participant and five from the researcher for reasons mentioned earlier. Once collected, I reviewed the artifacts and assigned themes I see, while also marking reoccurring themes throughout. The pre-ordained themes I worked with are those laid out by

Hecht (1993): personal, enacted, relational, and communal. Other than the pre-ordained themes, recurrent or emergent themes were also noted. For example, a picture of a man flexing in a gym mirror, posing for a self-administered picture, could be assigned a personal theme, along with athletics or masculinity by body formation.

Once I assigned themes based on my own observations, I conducted in-depth interviews with each individual about the artifacts analyzed. The interviews helped find and supplement the assigned/emergent themes. Moreover, the participants provided additional themes which did not emerge from analysis of the pictures themselves. Alternate answers, reoccurring themes, and other frequent patterns were recorded and documented. During the interviews, I asked specific questions, as seen in Appendix B, about each Instagram post. These were my concurrent questions. Then, after I have reached a saturation point in terms of content for the posts, I asked retrospective questions about their interpretation of their manhood. Both sets of questions helped determine how men use Instagram and express their identity on said platform.

Collection of Data and Procedures

Photo elicitation artifact analysis.

Five Instagram posts were chosen by the participant while five were chosen by myself. I randomly chose five Instagram posts with no criteria so I could use raw pictures instead of specific exemplars, using a systematic random sample. By using a systematic random sample, I was able to obtain a variety of artifacts without trying to tailor the results for my own benefit. The reasoning behind five posts was because I looked at the past six months and even if a person just posts one picture per week, that's conceivably 26 posts within a six-month period. By allowing them to choose only five, there were enough posts for them to choose from. Many internet social media self-help sites urge a person to post multiple times a day to maintain an

active profile. According to Patel (2016), a contributor to *Forbes* magazine, “If you want to maximize engagement and generate followers, you can start posting on Instagram 10, 15, even 20 times a day.” Therefore, with this foundational rule in mind, five posts from the past six months was not unreasonable. In relation to those chosen by me, I randomly selected five posts from the last six months as to minimize bias. Once the posts were gathered, they were stored on a secure flash-drive (which was approved by CSU IRB) and only contained collected materials. All of the steps are outlined in the methods section and can be used for replication efforts by future studies..

Artifacts.

Instagram was used because the platform is mainly picture based coupled with textual labels. These pictures could potentially show identity expression in a concrete way. I analyzed these pictorial artifacts using five themes based on the CTI previously mentioned as articulated by Hecht (1993; 2009): personal, enacted, relational, communal, and identity gaps as an “other” or emergent theme category.

For my artifact selection, I used a photo elicitation method which is the act of allowing the participant to choose their favorite photos coupled with five randomly selected photos the researcher selects (Hutchinson, 2016). The rationale behind this decision was based on potential memory factors. Moreover, I wanted to find posts pertaining to my thesis, but did not want to have my participants straining their brains trying to remember a potentially obscure picture. Instead, photo elicitation combined my needs with the help of the participant themselves. By allowing them to select five out of ten posts for analysis, they were more motivated to discuss the posts in question. Moreover, Hutchinson (2016) states that photographs can be analyzed in terms of “the respondents’ meanings to the researcher’s interpretations of the same material” (p. 144).

Therefore, my artifact analysis in tandem with in-depth interviews was the best method to elucidate discrepancies, similarities, and emergent themes.

To capture the photo artifacts, I used the Snipping Tool program, which allows users to screen-shot internet pages. Following the approved protocol of CSU-IRB, I asked the participants to allow me to see their Instagram and randomly chose five posts. In turn, the participants sent me their posts via email; all the photos were stored on a secure flash-drive. I made sure to delete the emails as well, in accordance to keeping anonymity through CSU-IRB.

In-depth interviews.

The questions asked were recall probes in which I asked about the photos retrospectively. An example of a question I asked is as follows: who is in this picture, and what is the context? Each question can be seen in Appendix B. The interview lasted about an hour, giving enough time to ask questions about their chosen posts without exhausting the participant. If I still did not have enough information from the session, I asked the participant if they would be willing to stay longer to answer a few follow-up questions; no session lasted longer than the approved hour. During the session, I asked questions about participants' posts and masculinity until I reached a saturation point where no new information is given. While the interview was in session, the responses to my inquiries were recorded using a hand-held recorder. The files were then saved to a material only flash-drive. The interviews were subsequently transcribed verbatim and stored in the aforementioned flash-drive. By doing so, the question line can be replicated. In regard to transcribing the interviews, I took approximately 32 hours to fully transcribe all participant interviews. For each participant, I took four hours to transcribe one interview. During this time, I listened to the interview once, writing down all that I heard. Next, I listened to the interview again, adding more words I missed previously. After the first two times, I listened a third time to

make sure I had every word written down verbatim. Finally, I listened to the interview again for a fourth time and cross referenced my transcription with the participant's own words. I did this for each of the eight participants, totaling to approximately 32 hours for solely transcription purposes.

Hypothesis testing/analysis.

To properly analyze the data collected, I ensured my research questions were answered to the best extent possible. For the first research question "How are traditional freshman and senior males using social media to express their identity?" the themes I assigned to specific posts were compared with the interviews about the posts themselves. Drawing connections and gaps between the two helped triangulate how males use Instagram to express their identity. Then, to address my second research question "How has an individual's male identity expression changed over time?", I compared the data of the two groups of participants with one another. By doing so, I was able to show similarities and dissimilarities between each group analyzed. An in-depth discussion and connections made with literature support were explicated. After both questions were examined, I discussed the implications of the findings, along with recommendations for future studies.

Chapter 4 - Results

Freshmen Section

Perception versus reality tends to guide people's thoughts on online images. A person who seems to have a hegemonic masculine Instagram account on the surface can differ from the intentions of the person posting. In this section, the freshmen participant group will be analyzed and shown what their thoughts were about their own identity. Moreover, the perceived identity of the participants also differs from the poster's intentions. Each participant was given a researcher-assigned, randomly selected name starting with A to H, with the freshmen group having names starting with A, B, C, and D. First, my perceptions and analysis of their posts is presented, then the testaments of the participants themselves. For the most part, my perceptions contrasted what the participants said in their interviews. Many of the freshmen have a focus on themselves, and establishing their own identity, but not in the way I originally anticipated. Below is the analysis of their identity in relation to the Instagram posts, concluding with a combined section about how each participant thinks about their own masculinity, and the masculinity as dictated by society. All pictures referenced can be found in Appendix sections G through N.

Adam Participant

Post-theme notes.

Adam, a freshman at a midwestern university, shared with me his favorite pictures from his Instagram account. I subsequently randomly selected five more posts. Each post selected was of an illustration Adam had made. The overall set of pictures was fascinating because Adam himself was not in any of them, nor were they self-portraits; rather, they were self-illustrated artworks. Instead, Adam seems to use his Instagram to show his artistic side and display his works. By just showing his artwork, three themes were assigned: personal, enacted, and art-centric (Appendix G: Apic1-Apic10). First, the personal, was due to him showing his personal

artwork for others to enjoy. Art can be considered a deeply personal activity, and by allowing others online to view his work, he is showing his personal characteristics of being an artist. With the same line of reasoning, by purposely only choosing his artwork to post, he is enacting his personal identity of a developing artist. His passion for illustrations shows that he enacts his identity through posting his own pictures, instead of others' photographs. Moreover, since all are past examples of his work, they are all art-centric. Regarding my hypothesis, this freshman was showing more personal and enacted themes. A clear passion for personal artistry is apparent, but also as a freshman he is showing who he personally is to the world to interpret.

Post-interview analysis.

The analysis above occurred after I received Adam's posts and before I interviewed him. The post-theme notes are my personal interpretation of his Instagram posts, but after the interview it became clear that my perceptions, while mostly correct, differed from the reality of his own accounting of personal identity. All of Adam's pictures were illustrations he personally made. The reason behind him posting most of his pictures is to show his progression and pride for his work. As a freshman coming to a new environment, Adam wanted to establish his identity as an artist. For all of his pictures he posts, they are his drawings, paintings or sketches, without any photographs of himself. Throughout his interview, it became clear that the four main reasons for him posting on Instagram was to show his pride in his own work, show his connection to family, establish his identity as an artist, and to make a connection with a larger community.

Pride in his work.

As mentioned, pride is the leading motivation for his posting. In Apic1 (see Appendix G), Adam shows his pride for his work:

Researcher: Why did you decide to post this picture on your Instagram?

Adam: So initially this photo or this drawing, painting or whatever, ha, at first, I was just really proud of it, the initial response was a lot greater than I had anticipated.

The reason for posting Apic1 was to show that he is proud of his work, and that his work should be shared to all. His pride shows that his identity as an artist is further solidified and reinforced with the great amount of response that he received. Positive reinforcement can not only reinforce a persona identity, but can also dictate what photographs will be posted in the future. Moreover, in Apic2 (see Appendix G), Adam uses his art to establish himself in a new environment:

Researcher: So tell me the story behind this picture.

Adam: So for this one it was a series of small whiteboard drawings I had done the first I think week of school and I posted them just because I didn't have time to two normally draw how I normally do, so these are just quick ones. It kind of made me bond a lot with my hall just because they would, like, send me a picture recommendations or I would draw a few people that would live in my hall so it was a nice bonding experience to bond with people over a talent I have.

Apart from just being proud of his own work, his pride is taken a step further because he uses his Instagram as a digital portfolio for others to share in his pride, and establish a future career. Adam wants to show off his skill, and is proud of the illustrations he posts, but he also tends to only post pictures that meet his standard, which can be seen as a curation technique (Davis, 2017). In Apic6 (see Appendix G), Adam describes his series of illustrations in the month of October:

Adam: So for this I think it was a series still, um, in the series it's called Inktober it's where you draw every day of the month of October. This is me trying to get through the month. I eventually didn't make it all the 31 days because of midterms. Even though I didn't succeed I still tried to get all the drawings done, trying to manage time throughout College, something I'm not fully used to yet, but still attempting.

Researcher: So for the whole month of October you tried to make one drawing per day

Adam: I only got through about fourteen.

Researcher: It's really tough. So why the choice to post this one in particular? Or did you end up posting all fourteen?

Adam: No I didn't post all fourteen, I think I only posted twelve because the last two weren't of the quality that I'm used to putting up.

Researcher: So when you post on Instagram, quality becomes key for you?

Adam: I use it [Instagram] as a portfolio kind of, just to get my work out there, to kind of draw attention to people who want to commission, or people who land on my profile so I just kind of wanted it to be the best that I can.

Adam is proud of his work and his identity as an artist. Even though he did not finish all the illustrations he wanted to in October, his actions show that he is dedicated to art, as well as trying to further his career. Moreover, in Apic9 (see Appendix G), Adam posts pictures of particular accomplishments in his own artistic journey:

Adam: I think this is my first, yeah, my first portrait with no reference. Although it's not up to standards from what I'm used to posting, it was kind of an accomplishment for me just because I posted something that I didn't use reference for the first time.

Researcher: That's huge. Is this a self-portrait, or?

Adam: I think it just came from my imagination. It's kind of weird just because people tell me that a lot of the portraits that I make, without reference, look like me. It's kind of weird, but yeah I get that a lot.

Researcher: That makes sense. So I assume the decision behind posting this is because of no reference point?

Adam: Yeah, I think so yes.

Even though Adam didn't intend to draw a self-portrait, his personal identity as an artist shows because he inevitably drew himself. This outcome can also be seen as an enacted identity, even if it was unintentional. Apart from pride, Adam uses his Instagram to connect with a larger community, both his new cohorts and potential followers.

Connection with a larger community.

Adam wanted to not only express his identity as an artist, but also create a bond with a new set of people. By posting his whiteboard drawing on his Instagram, he not only further reinforced that he is a budding artist, but also invites people to enjoy his art with him, forming a connection. When asked why he decided to post these whiteboard pictures instead of letting them be erased, he mentions pride and connections:

Researcher: So why decide to post this picture in particular instead of just letting it exist on the Whiteboard?

Adam: I think this is one of the first ones, just like the initial one, um, just cause, I, um, I did it without anybody knowing so it was anonymous and the whole hall didn't know who did it so I think just putting it up there letting people know it was me.

Adam could have kept the drawing anonymous, but making sure people recognized his art, as well as creating a way for people to connect is important for him as a freshman. Coming from high school, or the equivalent, people find different ways to establish their identity as a college student. Adam wanted to make sure his personal and enacted identity as an artist was established, while also sharing his pride and accomplishment? in his own art. While prideful in his own art, he also uses his Instagram to show that he is a varied artist.

Establish identity as an artist.

The pictures he decides to post, while all illustrations, range from whiteboard drawing, to pencils and graphite. Showing his range matters to him because it shows that is personal identity as a multifaceted artist. In Apic4 (see Appendix G), Adam describes the rendering he used to get into college, which he later posted on his Instagram:

Researcher: All right, so this is the fourth photo that you sent me and this one's a little different from the other ones because it was the only one that wasn't a portrait so what's the story behind this picture?

Adam: So at the time I did this...I think senior year and I didn't know what I was going to do in college, so I looked into a lot of majors and the one that stuck out to me was industrial design and over here it's called Product Development, so I started to render digitally and I wanted to go into, and this is when I figured out what I wanted to do for my career, to go into athletic wear, so this is one I rendered for my portfolio to get into the design program here, which I ended up getting into.

Researcher: Fantastic, congratulations. So why post this if it relates to getting into your major?

Adam: Just 'cause it was such a landmark to me, I have never done anything digital like this before, so stepping out of my comfort zone and letting people know that I had been successful, just like, letting people know that I was proud of what I did.

Researcher: And it is important to you to show off that you can do various different types of art?

Adam: I think that's what I'm trying to get out with this account just that I'm not a one-trick pony but I can do multiple things and this is one of them.

Pride and showing his range, “not a one-trick pony,” is important to him, and to his Instagram. His identity as an artist is further solidified by showing his work that he used to enter college. Not only is it a personal accomplishment, but it is also personal and communal because he wants his audience to know that he is proud of his range and that he is a great overall artist, not a “one-trick pony” as he mentioned. Showing his range is an important part of his Instagram; showing his connection to family is equally as important to him.

Connection to family.

Adam uses his Instagram to also make sure he expresses his identity as a family-centric person. Most of his illustrations are portraits and the most important to him is one he composed of his grandmother. In Apic3 (see Appendix G), Adam describes his thoughts on why he posted the portrait he did of his grandmother:

Adam: This is a portrait I did of my grandmother, that I did for school, I think, yeah.

Researcher: Why did you decide to draw your grandmother?

Adam: I think, I don't know exactly why I did this, but I think I did it, I didn't post it originally when I did it, but I posted it a lot later just cause I think this was after she had passed and I wanted to show people that this is kind of, more of like when someone passes away you kind of post about it, like this is what they look like, but I was proud of this one because I had captured her so well and I kind of missed her at the time so that's why I posted it.

Keeping family in his memories is a large part of his Instagram. Family is a part of his identity and he uses this particular post to show others that not only is he proud of his work, but also of his grandmother. A lasting tribute to a deceased family member, which demonstrates that he has a strong connection to his family.

Ben Participant

Post-theme notes.

Ben, a freshman at a midwestern University, seems to be using his Instagram to show off himself as the main subject to the pictures. For four out of ten of the pictures analyzed (Appendix H: BPic1, BPic2, BPic3, BPic7), the subject was either nature, or an artistic scene. In three of those four (BPic1, BPic2, BPic7), nature is centric, while an image of the back of a dollar is the other outlier (BPic3). He does not make himself appear in these pictures, but for six out of ten (BPic4, BPic5, BPic6, BPic8, BPic9, BPic10), Ben is either the main subject or with a group of friends/family. Even in the pictures with others (BPic9, BPic10), he still makes a major appearance. For most of his pictures, Ben tends to exhibit the personal theme in terms of posting selfies. These selfies feature him only in the picture, showing that in the majority of the pictures, he is focused on showing himself, or highlighting certain aspects of his personal appearance. Ben tends to follow suit with my hypothesis that freshmen post more about personal and enacted themes. While he does exhibit a variety of images with nature and art, he is still the main subject in most of the pictures presented. Ben seems to be focused on himself, but makes sure that he shows off his interests as well, making for a varied Instagram feed. Nevertheless, since most of

the posts revolve around his image, he seems to be intentionally showing himself instead of trying to fit into a larger group.

Post-Interview Analysis.

The above is the analysis of the posts from Ben. Upon first glance, his Instagram posts had more semblance of hegemonic masculinity with pictures of himself without any expression of emotions. However, after the interview it was evident that he uses his Instagram to express his changing identity since high school. All pictures referenced can be found in Appendix H. Ben uses his identity to show his followers that he is changing since high school; moreover, he feels more open to express certain parts of his identity on Instagram instead of on other social media sites. The reason behind his comfortability could be because he can express different parts of his identity in a feminized terrain aside from hegemonic masculine ridicule (Anderson, 2005). There were four common themes that emerged from his interview: expressing his identity as a nature enthusiast, expressing his personal identity as a motivated person, expressing his visual/other? change of identity over time, and his duality of identity.

Express identity as a nature enthusiast.

One of the first themes to emerge from the interviews is Ben's enthusiasm for nature. He enjoys nature and uses his Instagram to express that he identifies as a nature lover. This can be seen as both personal and communal in terms of CTI themes of identity. Not only does he use them to express his alignment with nature, but also as a memory device. In Bpic1 (see Appendix H), Ben discusses the first photograph from his Instagram:

Researcher: So this is the first photo [Bpic1] that you sent me, so what's happening in this photo?

Ben: So this was last week, approximately a week ago, I went with a couple of friends up to [location stated] and we were having a really good time and usually we just climb and

we don't really, like, stop, we keep on going and then we go back 'cause we usually have a lot to do, but that day we kinda took a moment to relax and sit down and I just admired the view and I just wanted to take a picture of it and, uh, I just thought, like, other people would want to see it and then usually my friends ask me like, 'oh so what are you doing,' from people back in town, what are you doing, what's going on, and sometimes they're like, 'oh I like that place, we should go sometime,' whenever they come up here.

While Ben states that he uses his posts to keep in touch with friends, enjoying nature and showing his identity as a nature enthusiast is important. Nature is a large part of his life, but he does not always get to show that side of him because of his personal perceived social pressures. According to Ben, posting pictures about nature isn't manly to him, but he still uses Instagram to show a different side of him that he wouldn't otherwise be able to express:

Ben: I have pictures of nature which isn't really manly if you think about it, it's like men are supposed to be like working on cars doing this or doing that, and I have like three cars but i'm never posting anything about my car is because it's something more personal to me and I mean, I have nice cars but I don't care to post stuff like that.

Being a nature lover, while normalized in society, can be interpreted as not a hegemonic masculine aspect, and Ben is aware of this read/point/stereotype. However, he can use Instagram to express different pieces of his masculine identity in a space where he feels more comfortable. Another way Ben uses his posts is to relay that he is a motivated individual and his personal identity is one of a driven person.

Express personal identity as a motivated person.

Some of Ben's posts are more focused on either nature, or various images he finds on the internet. The images he finds usually have a specific quote attached which relates to his life. Yet, these quotes are meant to show his followers that he is a specific type of person. In this instance for Bpic3 (see Appendix H), he found a particular quote to express his identity as a motivated individual. Many times, a freshman in college tries to establish their identity early on to set

themselves for future classification; in this instance, Ben wants to reinforce his motivated identity:

Researcher: All right, photo number three [Bpic3].

Ben: Uh, so that was actually a photo that I was messing around with some friends and it was like, three in the morning and I was just on Facebook and I saw this thing that said that if you lower the resolution and the lighting, then you can see a picture of an alien, and I never saw the alien, but I ended up seeing that it was a good picture, and caption, “needs can make you do things you don’t want, need what you want as much as you want what you need,” so basically that was a theme within me because a lot of times I’m always doing what I want and then at another day I’m like, I didn’t finish this on time, I didn’t do my homework, and then, so basically the picture was just of a dollar and I thought it looked nice, but what had more meaning to it was the quote and it was just something I was going through

Ben is showing both personal and enacted themes in this post because he wants to make sure people in his new environment know what kind of person he is. He uses his Instagram to shape a certain identity to his followers, which might be different from what he had in high school. Expressing his changed identity over time thusly becomes a key facet to his Instagram use.

Express his change of identity over time.

According to Ben, after high school he started to lose contact with friends and distanced himself from his high school self. Most of the posts he sent had him as the focus. One in particular was taken because he wanted to show a selfie, to solidify his personal identity as a current college student, while also showing that he has changed over time. In Bpic5 (see Appendix H), Ben explains why he posted a selfie shortly after coming to college:

Researcher: All right, photo number 5.

Ben: So that was essentially the first photo I took when I was on here on campus, so I posted it a couple of weeks late, and uh, I don’t know, I just thought I looked good in it and I hadn’t posted a picture on Instagram in a couple of months, if not years, so I was

just like yeah, I'm gonna post this picture. It was one of the first times like, it was the third day, second day I was here and I don't know I mean like I rarely ever take pictures of myself but I was talking to one of my friends and they're like, so how you feeling, I was like, doing good; do you got that [college noted] pride? I was like yeah, and then I had my hat on with the [college noted], with the [mascot noted], I just thought it was a decent picture.

Researcher: I think so too, okay. So um, you already touched on it, but I'll just ask again, so why the decision to post this? Was it more specifically to show off your [college noted] pride, as you mentioned?

Ben: Uh, I mean after I finished high school, I didn't really tell a lot people what I was doing, cause I was still unsure what I was doing and uh, it was just a little recap of here I am, I'm at [college noted], I went to college, so that like...I lost contact with a lot of friends over the summer. I was just going through the motions and like, I don't like, need my friends, I'm going off, it's going to be different, and then I was like, I feel bad, and this is like a way whenever you post something, a way for like people to reach out to you and like hey how you doing, I didn't know you were going to [college noted] and stuff like that.

Connecting with past friends is a piece to Ben's Instagram use, but the more important aspect is highlighting his change of identity over time. No longer is he the high school student who is not motivated to go to school; rather, he is solidifying his identity as a college student for his current and past followers. Showing others he has changed and is continually changing is important for Ben to express so he can etch a new identity for himself in a new atmosphere. Moreover, Ben uses his Instagram to show that while his identity is changing, he still is connected with his past friends, even if the relationship has changed. Since Ben is an emerging adult (Arnett, 2000) coming into College, he has to find where he fits, while also trying to keep contact with his past. In Bpic9 (see Appendix H), Ben shows him and his friends he made in College with a few friends from his hometown. The relationship between him and his hometown friends has changed, and he wants this post to express his current identity, as well as making a renewed? connection with past identities:

Ben: Yeah this was actually at a volleyball game. uh, so this one was actually a lot of pictures this was 10 pictures but this one specifically was of my friends Juan Angel Luis and Jack. And actually this is a really special picture to me because three out of four of the people except for me were friends from high school, and then the last guy was a new friend that I made, but uh, I haven't really like, the guy right next to me over to the left was my best friend in high school and in college he really changed and he, uh, kind of got whitewashed, and then he changed everything he wanted to do and I rarely hung out with him, but that was like a special picture to me because I never really had that many moments with him in college, and it kind of just felt nice having him there, and then the other two guys I hang out with them a bit more but they just, uh, they weren't, they not as close as they were in high school and that guy over there at the end he's one of my closest friends now.

By explaining his relationship to his hometown friends, he is showing how important his identity change is to him, while also expressing his emotions about his friendships. I asked a follow-up question about his changes and his change of relationship with his friends since he entered college:

Researcher: Okay, you mentioned that your friend changed in college. Why do you think, or I guess why do you think that is?

Ben: I mean it's a hard adjustment for everybody and I feel like I've also changed. I asked my friends constantly, 'have I changed,' 'cause I don't want to be like, I feel bad about our friendship being worse than it used to be, like he used to be my best friend in high school and uh, I'm always asking people if I've changed and they're like you're just a little bit smarter with your words and I don't know he probably changed because he lived in a different environment, I mean I live here in B----- and he lives in C-----, which isn't that far but I don't know apparently College changes distance. It used to be like we used to live 20 minutes away Driving, now it's 5 minutes away walking and we can't see each other and it's just like after a while of not seeing each other hanging out with different people when you come back together it's like this guy is acting different, and I'm sure he thinks the same thing about me.

Ben clearly has an understanding of how he has changed and his posts are indicative of such. He is able to use Instagram as a venue to express different parts of his identity which he was not able to in many other instances of his life. Showing emotion through his posts and being

able to express his emotions is important to him because he feels comfortable on Instagram to show a different side of himself:

Ben: Essentially men have to be more angry and aggressive than females, they have to think on the Fly, instead of like having rationale. They have to be spontaneous they have to do crazy things.

Being able to use Instagram as a place of comfortability, Ben can express different pieces of his identity without fear of societal ridicule. While being cognizant of his change of identity and Instagram's role in this process, he still uses some posts to show a duality of his identity, one from his past and one from his current life.

Duality of identity.

Going from one environment to another, especially when the new environment comes with relatively more independence, a person has the opportunity to reinvent themselves. This can be seen as a change or shift in what identity is expressed. Ben has taken the opportunity to show that he has multiple identities, which was different from high school. Instagram has given him a place to express different sides of himself. In Bpic6 (see Appendix H), he took a selfie of himself with no smile. Not showing your emotions is a sign of hegemonic masculinity, and when I originally analyzed this post, I interpreted it as such. However, his testimonial said different:

Researcher: All right, so what's happening in photo number six here?

Ben: So this one, the caption says I stay muggin', but I'm usually really happy and that's cause, uh, I was actually talking to a friend of mine, J---- I made in college, and he's this guy that's like, really dumbed down, like he dumbs himself down so that people think he's cool or whatever, which is weird because most people don't do that anymore. He does that and we were having really deep conversations and uh, we were talking about how usually people who come from like, harder places to live in, like I come from [city noted] which isn't, like a super hard place to live in, but nobody usually gets out of there everybody never gets out of there so I had this thing where I always had to look angry, like I always had to look angry so that people around me, like you can't be happy around there cause everyone would be like, what the hell's wrong with this guy, everybody

always has to look pissed off, it's just like so that people, like cause I made a lot of friends over here and there's a couple of girls I was talking to, they're like, you always look so angry, like every time you look at me, and then so I could clarify without directly being like, it's not you it's just like so that people know like that I'm not angry, that's just the way I am, I'm usually happy.

Researcher: Yeah, no absolutely. Sometimes you have to put on a different type of face to get through the day in certain places.

Ben: Yeah I mean you can't always have a smile, I mean those people are awesome but like depending on where you come from you have a certain mindset that you can't be looking nice because sometimes whenever we'd go out at night there was a decent amount of people there who weren't good people so you'd always have to have a mean streak so that they wouldn't approach you in a weird way.

Ben understands the difference between perception and reality. He uses his Instagram to show his followers his duality of identity, the more hegemonic masculine and the more subordinate masculine side of himself. Moreover, he is able to express himself in more ways through the use of Instagram. Ben grounds himself in his past experiences, but also uses his posts to show others that he is more than just a mean identity, but that he is changing and college has been a place to finally show more about himself. He rides a line between what society sees as masculine, and how he wants to present himself. Instagram, for him, becomes the place to show his followers that he identifies as a college student, and as a happy individual. This what? shows personal, enacted, and communal themes from CTI since he feels more open to explore his different expressed identities.

Cam Participant

Post-theme notes.

Cam, a freshman at a midwestern University, seems to be using his Instagram to show off his personal life. Most of the pictures that were randomly selected were primarily focused on himself as the main subject. In four of the pictures (Appendix I: CPic2, CPic3, CPic5, CPic9; see Appendix I), Cam is taking a self-portrait, or selfie, and makes sure his clothes and facial expressions are the center of attention. With these selfies, they are taken with a mirror, instead of a flipped camera where the subject does not use a mirror. Nevertheless, the selfies indicate that his focus is on himself and presenting himself in the best light possible. Moreover, these selfies do not take his environment into account; he is more important than where he is situated. Selfies are indicative of the personal theme because the subject takes his looks and outward appearance into account when expressing his identity on Instagram. With three pictures (CPic4, CPic8, CPic10), Cam is either with a soccer team, or engaging in soccer as a sport. These are considered both highlighting his enacted and relational identities because he is still in the pictures as a primary focus, but also showing his commitment with a team. The communal theme cannot be put on these posts because he is not trying to show how he fits within a larger community, but rather his engagement with a sport and his outward appearance as a sports player. With this in mind, he is still focused on showing personal themes. Furthermore, the other two pictures not aforementioned was presenting a puppy (CPic1), and a neon sign with no description (CPic6). These two pictures show both enacted and relational themes. CPic1 with the puppy shows his relationship with an animal, while also highlighting his happiness with said animal. CPic6 with the neon sign is an expression of his enacted identity as expressing his mood. He is enacting the identity of a tired individual in a non-personal centric way. Even these two pictures are still

focused on himself and his relationships. There is no indication throughout his pictures showing how relates with a larger group, but rather stays focused on himself. The pictures align with my thoughts that freshmen will focus more on personal and relational themes, trying to establish a self-image their first year in a new, independent environment.

Post-Interview Analysis.

The post-theme notes above was my interpretation of his Instagram posts before I interviewed him. The images (see Appendix I) paint a picture of Cam as a person who focuses on himself and establishing his identity. Most of his pictures feature him as the central figure, showing him either being active, or highlighting his outward appearance. After transcribing the interview, it became apparent that my assessment was accurate; Cam uses his Instagram to focus on himself, and showing others that he wants to show his personal and enacted identity to a large audience. Based on the interview, two themes emerged: establishing a certain image of himself and showing he is a multi-faceted individual. Even though most of his images have him as the center, he also posts pictures of online images (Appendix I: Cpic6 and Cpic7) to show that he is not just focused on himself, but that he is aware of others interests. In general, Cam posts much like I had expected for freshmen, he wants to establish his identity to a new environment while also making sure he is still the focus.

Establishing an image.

The first out of two major themes for Cam is focused on making sure that an image of himself is crafted. Instead of using his Instagram to show his interests, he tends to post pictures where he is the central subject. However, this can be broken down into two categories: him as a being proud of his looks and him as an athlete. Showing pride in his looks comprised four out of ten of his posts (Cpic2, Cpic3, Cpic5, Cpic9). In Cpic2 (see Appendix I), he occupies three fourths of the image with a nature scene as the backdrop. Cam could have had the nature scene

be the center and point of the picture, but instead he wanted to show that he is a nature-enthusiast and that he is active:

Researcher: Ok, so photo number two. Who's in this, and where is this?

Cam: Um, so that's me. I mean it was at the incline down in [city noted]. It was during spring break last week, on Wednesday. I went with a couple of friends, and my friend was like, 'here, let me take a photo of you,' and I was just like, all right.

Researcher: So why the decision to post this after your friend took the picture?

Cam: I decided to post it because I mean the incline is challenging and like, a thing to accomplish and as soon as I got up there I felt like I should, like, show everyone like Okay, I made it up here and I did it, so, yeah.

Showing others his accomplishments is secondary to him establishing a crafted image of himself. There is a curation aspect (Davis, 2017) because he decided to post a picture of himself as the subject, rather than focusing on the nature scene. By having himself as the main part of the picture, he reinforces how he wants to be seen by his new freshmen environment. In a sense, the relative independence of college may dictate how one expresses their identity on Instagram. Clearly, Cam is attentive to how his image and social identity is constructed. Moreover, Cam's other posts are evident of him establishing his image, which shows personal and enacted themes. In Cpic3 (see Appendix I), he posts an image of himself feeling and looking dapper:

Cam: I think this was on Christmas. I mean I decided to take a picture, um, basically I had, like, gotten the outfit ready you know, and I was just feeling good and I was like ok I am going to post this picture of myself because...to show off Christmas basically.

Researcher: Ok, were you going anywhere in particular?

Cam: No, we like my family was coming to the house so I decided to get ready for the occasion.

Even though Cam was not going to any special occasion, he wanted to highlight his personal appearance, his "outfit." The act of posting a selfie shows that he wants to emphasize

his looks, which is both personal and enacted in terms of CTI themes (Hecht, 1993). He feels confident in his image and therefore makes sure his Instagram followers can get a sense of himself as taking pride in his image. Perhaps not egotistical, his continual selfie posting surely gains enough recognition for him to keep posting image-focused posts. In Cpic5 (see Appendix I), he once again feels self-assured in his outward appearance and supports his crafted image of himself further:

Researcher: Photo number five, what's happening here?

Cam: Um, I think I just decided to take a selfie, before I think fall ball. Um, so we got ready and it was a formal event so I decided to take a picture right before leaving.

Researcher: Ok, so what's fall ball?

Cam: Fall ball is like, so it's a fraternity organized event by [fraternity noted], to raise awareness to suicide and all the funds they collect there they donate to a certain family or someone to pay for a certain family in order to pay for expenses for um like relatives who have just passed away due to suicide.

Researcher: Ok, that sounds good. What's the ace or spade mean?

Cam: Um, I don't know, I decided it was just an ace, not really much meaning behind it, kinda like a little caption.

Once again, he wants to show his followers that he cares about how he looks and wants to ensure that others know he is a certain type of person. Cam wants to strengthen his image of a handsome man and to establish his identity as an aesthetic man. He could have posted a picture of the event, or even himself at the event, but he wanted the main point to be about himself. Moreover, in Cpic9 (see Appendix I), he wants to focus recognition for his looks, while also updating his followers on himself:

Researcher: Okay, photo number nine. If you can recall, what's happening here?

Cam: That was a pretty long time ago, not gonna lie, cause that shirt doesn't fit me anymore. (laughing). I think I was at H&M, I had just tried on cloth[e]s and taken them

off and everything, so I had just decided to like, the lighting was good and I was just like, I don't know, maybe I should just take a picture, I don't know, to update people, basically.

Due to the environment Cam was in for the picture, he wanted to show off his looks once again. There is a bit of a masculinity aspect here as well because he appears emotionless and stoic. This further establishes a crafted image of himself. During the interview Cam would smile and laugh while we talked, but his posts tell a different story. By focusing on himself as the subject, he not only feels confident in his looks, but wants others to understand the image of himself he crafts; an image of a young, handsome man who is strong and composed. Being that he is a freshman, these posts are meant to show others his identity as a college student and as a man. Apart from focusing on his image and outward appearance, he uses his Instagram to show that he is an athlete. Cpic4, Cpic8, and Cpic10 are centralized around Cam as an athlete and his adherence to his team. In Cpic4 (see Appendix I), the first of his sport-centric pictures, he discusses why the picture was taken:

Researcher: Photo number four, what's happening here?

Cam: Um, so, during the winter we started a tournament, indoor soccer, um, during November to December and it was indoor soccer and that was my team. We had just won the championship, so that's why we decided to take the picture, so that's basically the reasoning behind it.

Researcher: Congratulations that's huge! So who all is in this picture?

Cam: Um, so, on the left we call him B---, that's B---, G-----, L-----, E-----, I-----, and that's me.

Researcher: Ok, so you kinda already mentioned it, but why the decision to post this?

Cam: Um, I felt like just to show off my team and the accomplishment we had just made. Because we grew together, and like we got together closer during the tournament so it was like we worked hard for it so we might as well show off our accomplishment.

Cam is proud of his team and himself, wanting to express his athleticism and adherence to his team. He uses this picture, and in part his Instagram, to reinforce his identity as a sports player and hard-worker. Cam is showing personal, enacted and relational themes from the CTI while showing his followers he is athletic. Instead of posting a picture of his team logo, he wanted his followers to know that he himself is physical. Showing physicality is a sign of supporting his image of being a man. Therefore, his sport-centric pictures are to establish his identity as a manly person, and as an athlete. In Cpic8 (see Appendix I), he remembers when, where, and why he posted another picture of him and his team:

Researcher: All right, this is photo number eight, it looks like another soccer photo, so what's happening here?

Cam: So this is our last, um, well my club before we separated basically because we were all older. Um, it was the last tournament we played and it was for a kid that had passed away at the indoor. So it was kinda a memorial to him. And the people in the white and me wearing the black shirt, that's my team and we participated in the tournament and the team in the red are a lot of people we know, are like that we have grown close to, they play in another club, but we were together for the whole tournament basically, like we talked, we'd hang out, and in this picture, we had just played the final against them and we had won, and we're like, instead of taking a picture of just us, we decided to take a picture together kinda to symbolize the hard work we put in and we all deserve credit for reaching the final.

Researcher: So that's the reason why you decided to post it?

Cam: Yeah.

In this post, Cam reinforces his identity as an athlete, as well as a team player. Focusing on his team's accomplishment and the meaning behind the aforementioned tournament strengthens Cam's image to his followers. He wants to relay that he is proud of his team, their accomplishments, his commitment and his comradery. Even though he is not the center, the image conveys the fact that he is athletic and a team player. In a new environment where a person must make a mark for themselves and stand out, Cam uses his Instagram to express

different pieces of his identity. Although most of his sports pictures are based around a team, Cpic10 (see Appendix I), shows just him on the soccer field:

Cam: Ok. This picture was taken by, I forgot her name, but she went to one of our games, and she took pictures of us, like our team, during the game for one of her projects and this picture came out, and that's me and the play was going like, more ahead of me, and the one in front of me is B----, I'm not sure what he's doing, but we're playing a soccer game against Real, so that's what I recall from the photo.

Researcher: Ok, so did she post this first, or did you decide to post this?

Cam: She sent the pictures to the group and then from there we picked out the ones we were in and yeah.

Out of all the pictures he could have posted from the game, he makes a specific point to focus on himself. In this action shot, Cam wanted to buttress the fact that he is athletic and proud of his image as a sport-player. This shows personal and enacted themes because he is mid-game and wants to express a certain image for himself and his followers. Moreover, in relation to crafting a certain image of himself, Cpic1 is meant to support his established image of an athletic, aesthetic focused person. His identity as such is complimented by Cpic1:

Cam: This is our, this is our puppy we got a few weeks ago, his name is S-----, um, so we got him so I mean, kinda show him off to the world and my friends that we had just got a puppy.

Researcher: You've kind of touched on this, but why the decision to post this on your Instagram feed?

Cam: Um, I just, I don't know, it was kinda a cute picture, I kinda just wanted to show it off to my friends, like, hey guys, basically I got a new puppy and this is what he looks like. That's basically the whole reason.

Keeping his followers informed is important to Cam, but this image goes deeper. Cam wants to show that he is an animal lover, and that he is a person friendly to pets. Showing his dog reinforces his identity as a caring person. While this image is more communal and meant to be

recognized by his followers, he uses it to convey himself as a certain type of person. Based on most of his posts, he wants to express his identity as a person who cares about his looks, his love for animals, and his love for his athletics. Because most of his aesthetic pictures are emotionless, and his sports pictures are athletic, he shows signs of adhering to a hegemonic idealized image of manly, even if he doesn't intend to do so.

Establish his multi-faceted image.

Apart from being proud of his athleticism and looks, Cam uses his Instagram to post images he finds online. Cpic6 and Cpic7 (see Appendix I) are posts focused on art he finds while scrolling through the internet. He specifically chooses certain pictures to post to try and reach a larger audience. The act of doing so is one part to show that he enjoys art, and one part to express pieces of his identity. Cam wants to establish the fact that while he is focused on himself, he is multi-faceted in his identity; he can show emotion and art-enthusiasm through Instagram without fear of backlash. In Cpic6 (see Appendix I), Cam discusses why he posts images he finds online:

Researcher: All right, photo number six. What's this all about?

Cam: Um, so, it really doesn't have any meaning to it, it's just kinda like I found it really interesting when I came across it on the internet, I was just like, wow, that's like a really good picture, like, it depicts maybe like, certain people can depict like oh you're tired, you're like drained out by like school and work, stuff like that, not really much of a meaning to me, I just found it really interesting because it could have a lot of meaning to someone else, and I just decided to post it because of that.

Researcher: Ok yeah, that's exactly why. So did you find this while you were walking around, or on the internet?

Cam: Um, I was just scrolling, I'm pretty sure twitter and I was like wow, I'm saving this picture, you know.

Cam wants to express that he is not just focused on himself, but that he wants to connect with others; wanting to express his social identity. He mentions that the images he finds online

and posts are not really about him, rather they are a way for others to find his profile. However, it appears that he also posts these pictures to support his own crafted identity. Cam wants to show that he is deeper than just posts about himself, but perhaps also that he is an art-enthusiast. Establishing that he is multi-faceted is important to Cam and that is apparent in Cpic7 (see Appendix I):

Researcher: Ok, photo number seven. Who what where when and why.

Cam: Um, I'm not really sure, I came across this as well, and I kinda like, if you can tell, I kinda like art, media art. And I kinda found this picture really interesting, like, it's a couple and they are like holding each other close, um, kinda symbolizing like, togetherness, comforting each other. Not really much of a meaning to me, but it's kinda like, it depicts so much as well like to other people they can see it in a certain way, and I can see it in a certain way so that's kinda why I chose it.

Researcher: Ok, so when you are scrolling through and find artistic pictures and things, why do you decide to post those?

Cam: Um, I mean like maybe in the moment I'm like, I'm just scrolling through the photos and I'm like wow this picture like seems like could have a lot of interesting things to it, or I find it like really beautiful in a sense, so I that's why I kinda choose the pictures that I post when it comes down to art.

Researcher: Ok, that makes sense. So it seems both like a personal thing and also you want to share to everybody a beautiful image.

Cam: Basically yes.

Cam is comfortable on Instagram to express his likes and interests. This is clear for Cpic7 because he wants to show that he is more than just images of himself, but that he thinks deeper about pictures and their meaning. He wants to confirm his crafted identity with other pictures than just selfies or sports-centric posts. Cam uses online images he finds to try and reach others and show that he likes art. His art-loving identity can be expressed and he wants to connect with others who feel similar. This is a way for him to solidify himself in a new environment coming from high school.

Dan Participant

Post-theme notes.

Dan, a freshman at a midwestern University, uses his Instagram to mostly highlight himself, and himself in cohort with others. Almost every picture he is either at the center, or is positioned somewhere in the frame. Out of all ten pictures, nine pictures (Appendix J: DanPic1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 10) focus on himself as the main subject, or in close proximity to others. He is the center of the shots and the people he is with take auxiliary roles in comparison. His first two (DanPic1 and 2), have him with one other person while he is either smiling or showing a silly face, which can indicate he values having others around him, while still informing others of his personal presence. DanPic3 is the first picture to show his relation to friends and nature. Moreover, he and the other subjects are showing hand-signs while not smiling. Based on just looking at the picture, he is displaying a hegemonic masculine ideal of showing manliness by not showing emotions. The same sentiment about a lack of expressed emotion was also seen in DanPic4 and 5. Once again, DanPic4 and 5 have himself as a main subject, in conjunction to neutral faced-friends. DanPic6 features himself taking a selfie, sticking out his tongue, which indicates his value of presenting a certain image of himself, with a focus on nature as the backdrop. DanPic7 focuses on an outdoor football stadium, which is the only picture where he is not featured. However, this picture indicates his adherence and alignment with a sports team. DanPic8 and 10 are self-portraits taken by others in which he is focusing on how he looks, and how he appears. Once again, these two show no signs of smiles and are in-line with a hegemonic masculine ideal of emotionless manliness (Wood & Inman, 1993). DanPic9 is one of the only pictures (other than DanPic2) where he is smiling, but the focus is still him in relation to one other person. It appears that when he is showing himself with one other person, he is more apt to

smile, but when he is with a group of friends, or by himself, the smiles turn to serious, almost stoic expressions. This presentation of self could be because he is comfortable showing his emotions when only with one other person, but puts his image of himself as a group as a member of a masculine ideal of strength and toughness.

Post-Interview Analysis.

The assessment above was closely accurate to how Dan described himself in relation to his posts. For the most part, Dan realizes what his Instagram is used for, but takes time to ensure only certain pictures make it on his feed. As Dan discussed with me, he makes sure to curate (Davis, 2017) his own Instagram profile so followers only have a chance to see a small snippet of himself, instead of uploading every picture he has. Moreover, the specific pictures he does decide to upload have meaning not only to him, but as a way to craft an image for others to consume. Dan is similar to other freshmen in the sense that he posts pictures with him as the main subject, but does not see himself as egotistical or out of the ordinary. Much like Cam, Dan wants to express that he is a socialite and he is an outgoing person. In a new environment, freshmen tend to try and define themselves and Dan is no exception. By making certain decisions about what he posts, he wants others to recognize that he has a lot of friends and that he is an active person. There were three main themes which emerged from his interview: establishing his identity as family-centric, establishing his identity as a socialite and crafting a specific image of himself. All themes still revolve around himself as the main subject, strengthen his identity within the freshmen class and environment. Each picture can be seen in Appendix J.

Identity as family-centric.

Dan uses his Instagram to show that while he is focused on presenting himself in the best light, he also wants others to know that he loves his family. Dpic1 and 2 represent him in relation

to his family and pet. Before the interview, I was not aware that the other people in Dpic1 and 2 were his family, but after chatting, it became clear that he loves his family and wants others to know so. Dpic1 (see Appendix J) show him with his brother and pet:

Researcher: This is your first picture that you sent what's going on here?

Dan: This is after I returned home for Thanksgiving break so it was my first time coming back home and I live in [city noted]. Then I got a picture that's my dog C---- but she was a lot smaller last time I saw her, so she definitely grew so I wanted to take a picture definitely in my brother and my dog cause she was bigger. That's basically the reason why I posted it.

Researcher: To show that your dog is grown and?

Dan: Yeah and my brother and that I like my brother too.

Even though the picture is meant to show off his new puppy and younger brother, he still takes center. He could have, for example, taken and posted a picture with his brother holding the puppy, but instead he makes the conscious effort to put himself as the focus. This action shows that he is trying to craft an image of himself as a family-centric person. Dan wants others to see that he loves his family and that he has a new cute puppy, which can be a strategy to get more people to see his posts. While this cannot be fully confirmed, his family-centric identity can also be seen in Dpic2 (see Appendix J):

Researcher: Picture number 2 who, what, where, when, and why?

Dan: That's my sister, my sister goes to Colorado Mesa University down in Grand Junction, but she came up for the mile high Showdown, but she was with a bunch of friends from the Buffaloes, so that was... she wasn't sitting with me but we met up at half-time, and I took a picture, but she posted it first but then like after so long I decided I posted it, because I had the picture and I wanted to put a picture of my sister on Instagram. So that's the one I had.

Once again, Dan chooses to show his love for his family, while also making sure he is in the photograph. A stand-alone picture of his sister could have expressed his family-centric

identity, but instead he wants his followers to know that he is active and central. Dan highlights himself and his family-centric identity in one picture. Every picture, with the exception of Dpic7, has him as either the focus, or a main piece of the picture. Regardless, Dan is focused on establishing a certain identity with his Instagram. His first two photographs are him and family, but another majority is showing his identity as a socialite.

Identity as a socialite.

Dan wants to express with his Instagram that he is close to his friends, just like his family, and that he is a socialite. With Dpic3, 4, 5, and 9 (see Appendix J), Dan shows his relationship with his friend and friends. These four posts are centered around displaying his outgoing attitude. He is crafting his identity as a person who has a lot of friends and is active with them. Even though hegemonic masculinity articulates that men have trouble expressing closeness (Wood & Inman, 1993), Dan feels comfortable showing his closeness on his Instagram feed. Dpic3 and 5 show him with multiple friends in a nature environment. In Dpic3 (see Appendix J), Dan discusses what the photo meant for him:

Dan: So this is um, my first, my second camping trip with my friends. We went to [city noted], which I don't know if you know where that is, it's just Northeast of [city noted]. Um, the first one we did the same group but this one was different because we had a bigger group, and everyone came, but the people left because they said it was too cold, so it's just kind of us five left, while everyone else check it out. So this was on top of an abandoned cabin, that we climb to the top up and my friend sat down and took the picture and that's what it really was, and it also shows that we really like camping. That was like the whole point of the picture.

Researcher: So two questions, one, why did you decide to post this for everyone?

Dan: Because I like posting pictures of things that I did and going camping was like one thing I did, so I wanted to post one picture out of camping and this was the best picture that I found that had everyone in it, so that's why I chose it.

Researcher: Alright so the second question, in the first two you're pretty much smiling so aren't you smiling in this one?

Dan: My friend took dozens of photos so it was kind of like there were ones where someone's face was looking weird someone was doing this and this was honestly the best picture, but unfortunately it had me not smiling and like covering up my face but that was the best picture out of all of them. All the other what other ones had something else going on so that's why I chose this one.

Dan wants to express multiple aspects of his identity with this photograph. First, and most prominently, he wants to express his identity as a socialite. He presents himself as an integral member of his friends and is a main focus of Dpic3. Indeed, Dan is showing his identity as a person who surrounds himself with friends and nature. Nature is the second aspect expressed in these photographs. In Dpic5 (see Appendix J), even though he and his friends are the focus, the nature scene in the background is significant:

Dan: This was my third camping trip with my friends and this was spring break. Again we were supposed to have this big party and we were going down to the sand dunes, that's what this picture is, that's the sand dunes right there, we're on Zapata Falls, that's where we went camping, but um, but everyone else again bailed out on the spring break so it sucks, so it was literally us four out of a group of ten that was supposed to go, so it was kind of like, we thought it was going to suck but it turned out to be a really, really good, I had a really great time and it was one of my best spring breaks, and I just wanted to post again because just like I said I like to post things of things I'm doing, and this was a spring break trip so that's why I posted it, like to recognize my spring break trip.

Researcher: Okay and who all is in this photo?

Dan: That's my friend C-----, he lives in the hall across from me. That's my friend Isaiah he's a close friend to me, that's also my close friend. They all three live in the same Hall but I live in a different hall.

Updating his followers on his activities plays an important role when he decides what gets posted, but himself as a key figure is even more important. Dan shows that he is active in both activities as well as with his friends. Express his identity as a socialite is further supported with Dpic5. However, Dpic3 and 5 feature him not smiling, which is an indication of displaying tendencies toward hegemonic masculinity. It appears that when he is with multiple male friends,

he does not smile, instead he shows stoic solidarity. Nevertheless, his identity as a socialite is further solidified with Dpic4 and 9 (see Appendix J); both of these pictures show him with one other friend. In Dpic4 (see Appendix J), Dan talks about why he posted a photograph with him, his friend, and his car:

Researcher: All right, four.

Dan: This is a week or two weeks, I mean obviously, just a couple weeks before. It was the last time I was hanging out with all my friends, and that's my friend Nick. We took a bunch of pictures of all of our cars and stuff like that. My friend had his Jeep, he had his truck, so this was just a picture of me and my friend Nick outside of my car. So that's like... Cause then he posted one too, so I posted one too but it was different poses. So that's why I really posted this one, also because he's my best friend, so I also posted it for him.

Dan wants to show his followers that he is close to his friends and that he cares about them. Instead of posting this photograph for himself, he claims he does so because he wanted to highlight his friendship and their cars. Even though they are not smiling, Dan is expressing his openness with his friend and that having his friend there meant a lot to him. Showing he alignment with friends, especially with particular friends is important for Dan. In Dpic9 (see Appendix J), Dan reminisces about his first photograph he took with his best friend:

Researcher: Alright photo number 9.

Dan: Okay so this is my friend N---- that I talked about in the photo earlier, that's my best friend, then in, so in the, there's [site noted] and then there is [location noted], I don't know if you've heard of it, in [location noted] there's a place called, well I forgot what the place is called, but we're on this place called [location noted] and it's like this rock formation that you climb to, you have to kind of rock climb it up there, at the top you get a hold of you of [city noted]. So it's very beautiful and it's really nice to go out there but it's kind of hard. So me and a bunch of my friends climbed up there, then we got a bunch of photos but then all of them, we took like 5 photos, but I had like 5 friends with me so everyone got their own photos so I just took one photo and I was just with N----.

Expressing his identity as a person who is open to friends and is active with them is a main part of Dan's Instagram. He crafts an image of himself as a socialite through interactions with friends and engaging in activities with them. Coming into College, Dan is trying to set himself apart from other freshmen by showing that he identifies as an outgoing person, which shows relational and communal themes according to CIT (Hecht, 1993). However, showing his identity as a socialite is just one part to his Instagram; he also focuses on crafting an image of himself through a series of selfies.

Craft a personal image.

Using selfies, Dan crafts an image of himself for his followers so they get an idea of who Dan is as a person. Selfies are more personal, and can be meant to express a certain aspect of one's identity. For Dan in Dpic6, and 8 he wants to show his alignment with specific communities and that he dresses for the occasion. His identity is supported through these selfies, which vary in location. In Dpic6 (see Appendix J), Dan is the main focus with a mountainous background:

Researcher: Okay photo number six.

Dan: This was, umm, this was I came back home for one weekend, I believe I went to go hunting to go hunting with my father in [state noted] so it came back for a couple of weekends, and then un, I forgot why I got all like dressed up but I dressed up really nice. It was a pretty clear day, and the weather was nice and I saw that is a pretty good picture like, with [location noted], because that's one good thing of living in [city noted] so that's why I really took the picture, it's because I see a lot of people taking pictures of the mountains and it's very basic so I thought I would take a selfie with it and it would be like better, but that's the reason why I posted it is to show I'm back in [city noted] for like the weekend and that was like kind of the whole point of it, and people should guess that that's the [site noted] and I'm home. So that's a whole reason why I posted it.

Keeping his followers updated on his whereabouts is a piece to this picture, but the core of this photograph is highlighting himself. He wants to show that he is a handsome person who

lives with a beautiful view from his house. Dan claims he enhances pictures of mountains alone with him as the center, which can be seen as him expressing his personal identity. Even though it is a limitation, Dpic8 and 10 are also selfies, but are before the timeframe of my study and therefore cannot be used. However, the selfies also help express his identity to a new freshmen audience. In the interview about Dpic8, Dan talks about his old Instagram he used in high school and how he changed when he went to college. He started to curate his Instagram so only a specific set of photographs are displayed:

Researcher: All right, eight.

Dan: So this was my senior year and I just got, uh, my favorite rap group is the Flatbush Zombies, if you've heard of them. Before I had a bunch of money I couldn't afford their merch, so I bought a fake zombie shirt it was just from this other third party retailer, and I got a bunch of hand me down um, clothes and stuff like that and I wanted to take a picture of myself because like I said my old Instagram used to be like, pictures of the [sports team noted] games, pictures of nature, it wasn't necessarily pictures of me so that's why I took this photo, was to put a picture of me on it. I used to have a lot more photos, and this was one of the only pictures I liked.

Dan has changed his Instagram since high school to feature more photographs about himself, which indicated he is trying to establish a certain identity for himself transitioning to a new environment. The act of only having photographs on his Instagram to transition to College is an act of crafting an image for himself. Out of all the posts he sent, only one didn't have him featured. As alluded to in the interview of Dpic8, Dan also posts about his environment. Dpic7 (see Appendix J) shows that Dan is an active Broncos fan and aligns himself with the larger community:

Researcher: Seven.

Dan: Okay so um, my dad has season tickets to the [sports team noted] game, so we go every season, we've been going for about five seasons now, but on the whole I used to have a bunch of pictures of all the games I went to, but then I don't know why, I don't like

having a lot of photos on my Instagram so I try to keep a max of 20, I don't like going above that. So I was at like 53, and a lot of them were the Broncos game pictures, so I wanted to choose one so then when I went to, I only went to one game I think this year because of school I was like really busy and I didn't really get the time to, so this was that one game that I went to so of course I took the picture of it but um, it was the only game I went to so it kind of did suck but, I forgot, but yeah that's the only reason why posted it, to show I went to the game.

Dan further solidifies his identity as an active, outgoing person with this photograph. Not only is his Instagram focused on presenting himself in the best light, but it also shows that he aligns with others as well. Connecting with the football community can be seen as an attempt to connect with the freshmen community as well. Moreover, Dan makes a point to only allow certain photographs to be on his Instagram, which is an attempt to form an image of himself he wants others to take as fact.

Freshmen Masculinity Section.

After each interview, I wanted to inquire further about their thoughts on masculinity with regard to the participants' own mentalities, their Instagram, and their own personal perception of their masculinity. Fascinatingly, each participant had an enlightened view on the difference between societies view of masculinity (hegemonic masculinity) and their personal definition of manliness. I was surprised by their answers because I had thought they would only think of hegemonic examples of masculinity, but instead they were well-aware of the discrepancy between society and their personal perception. Adam, being an artist, knew that his definition of masculinity differed from others:

Researcher: What do you think makes a man, a man? I know it seems kind of contrast to these photos but I'll bring it back. So what makes a man, a man?

Adam: I think it's a lot of things, but I think the biggest thing is being in control of your own emotions and not cracking under pressure, like putting not necessarily masculinity but definitely that's the most common way of seeing it, but like men don't really show

their emotions and that's kind of what people want to see when they're related things to masculinity, so people don't want to see him a man cry because that's not masculine, or they don't want them to show happiness directly, it's kind of like neutral, a hollow body. So that's what I kind of think what people referred to as masculinity.

Researcher: What do you personally think makes a man a man?

Adam: I guess my manner of depicting somebody as a man is a little bit unorthodox, and um, I don't see or direct someone as masculine if they are super muscular or anything. I feel like if your masculine you have the capability of taking care of yourself and others kind of like in that matter just because my father was that way. Even though he would fall under the category of being masculine in regards to all the other societal perspectives of it, but yeah just can take care of himself really well. She doesn't care if you see him broken down just because that's how I learn to show my emotions, like not take them in all the time and let them out, otherwise you crack under pressure.

Adam in the first question was describing society's view of masculinity, while the second contrasts with his own thoughts. He shows a good understanding of the different perceptions of masculinity. I asked further about Adam's thoughts on his own manliness:

Researcher: So with that in mind, do you think you are manly?

Adam: To myself, I'm not quite there I don't think just because I don't have control my emotions sadly, I'm trying to get there I feel like we're all trying to develop ourselves. In regards to society, I don't think so at all, just because I'm short and scrawny and I'm not into sports or Athletics; I'm more into the art side, so yeah I don't think I'm masculine in regards to myself or society.

Even though Adam has a knowledge of different masculinities, he still is trying to fit a hegemonic ideal with his emotions. This is fascinating because he does not think of himself as manly in relation to society, but still has tendencies toward wanting to show more hegemonic masculine features. However, he also does not use his Instagram to perform his masculinity, but rather to inform others of pieces of his identity. Ben, likewise, had a similar enlightened view on masculinity. His personal thoughts on the subject stem from his upbringing and the lessons his

father taught him; however, because of his upbringing, he feels the need to express hypermasculinity while in the company of other males:

Researcher: Alright so the next couple questions I have are going to be more of questions you might have to think about more and about your personal life. But the first one, and they might seem kind of out of nowhere but I'll bring them back. So, what do you think makes a man a man? Just in general.

Ben: So, you can't say what makes a man a man without thinking about what Society thinks makes a man a man. So regardless of what anybody says you always have to look back on what society is because no one wants to be out casted. So essentially what a man is, is they have to be a man that's strong a man that can provide for his family a man that can do everything by himself without needing the help of anybody else, but can help anybody that needs to, that he needs to help. He has to be good with cars, he has to be knowledgeable, he has to have like a more, like I just recently watched 'Inside Out,' and it, it showed how anger was in charge of the dad, or whatever, but essentially men have to be more angry and aggressive than females, they have to think on the fly, instead of like having rationale. They have to be spontaneous they have to do crazy things. Personally my dad has taught me something different, which is I just have to be sure of what I'm doing at all times and that's what he's taught me, so personally that's more of what I go off of but sometimes whenever I'm around more people that's not what I'm going off of, since sometimes I just have to go off of well these guys are here and especially when you're meeting new people. You have to put on this Macho persona, like, you like have to be like an alpha male, and you like always have to establish that.

Once again, like Adam, Ben knows his views on masculinity differ from society, but he still exhibits hegemonic tendencies. I asked him if he thought he was manly and he had to think about what that meant for him:

Researcher: Okay so the next question is, do you consider yourself manly, in whatever sense you want to define it as.

Ben: Based on what my dad made me believe manly was, no. Because I'm not sure of what I'm doing, like college has been so weird to me and at the beginning of the semester last semester I wanted to go into the medical sciences and then quickly after that I was like no I don't want to do that I want to do computer science and then after that I wanted to do, uh, it was.... I don't remember what it was but I kept switching, and then lately I've been wanting to do communications and law, so I can go into maybe, setting up something like a civil rights movement, and it's uh, it's hard because that's why I have

lately been going to the gym too because I wanted to set this persona, coming back here in high school used to be really skinny as have a six-pack and I use I have like this thing about me I feel proud of, and then lately like last year I had two surgeries, one of my arm and one on my leg cause I got burnt at work, and I've really let myself go I stopped working out I stopped doing all of that. And I don't know, coming into here I felt scrawny and fat at the same time, and I just felt like, I don't know, I mean at this point at this point I don't feel like I'm the definition of manly that everyone has but I'm working toward it.

Ben is trying to express his different pieces of identity, while still trying to fit a hegemonic ideal. Both Adam and Ben can distinguish between their views and society's view of masculinity, but still adhere to society's standards. When asked about his Instagram, Ben didn't think his displayed manliness; which was different from my own perception. Before the interview, while analyzing his pictures, I thought he displayed tendencies toward a hegemonic ideal, but he had other ideas completely. Instagram seems to be the place where Ben feels most comfortable showing his subordinate masculinity inclinations. He does not have to fit an ideal and can show others that he is more than just a grimace-faced male; instead, he can post pictures that mean more for him. Cam follows the other freshmen in the sense that he too has an enlightened view on masculinity:

Researcher: When you hear the terms, that person's a man, or that person is manly, what do you think makes a man, a man?

Cam: Um, I feel like the stereotype of like a man, is kinda like, oh, he's kinda like confident, like he has strength, he's tall, you know. You can kinda like, see how they kinda portray men, but I feel like now in like the twenty first century it's kinda shifting and it's not really putting it like oh that's a man, like or like manly, it's kinda like, ok, there's different types of people, different types of man, we shouldn't just stereotype the whole gender in one person.

Researcher: And where does that come from? Where does that mentality come from in your own personal life?

Cam: Um, I mean, in my own personal life I've met a lot of people, like a lot of basically like men, and they are all different, like no one is the exact same, no one is the macho, alpha person, um, so that's kinda like, from seeing that I don't portray men as like, the

stereotype as society sees it as, but like, try to open it up to different people and different perspectives.

Cam's views stem from his interactions with males in his life. Instead of being influenced by one particular person, Cam has pieced together an overall picture of masculinity, which is different from hegemonic society. He has thought about what makes a man, a man and articulates thusly. When asked about his own masculinity and that of his Instagram, Cam discusses what manliness means to him:

Researcher: Ok then, the next questions kinda follows suit then, do you consider yourself manly? And in your opinion, what does that mean?

Cam: Um, I consider myself a man, but not manly manly, because if you look at a man, he's tough, like, and everything, but personally I'm not so I kinda like, stand out to the side of what a manly man would be, but I would consider myself a man regardless.

Cam knows his own opinions on masculinity are different from society, but still sees himself as manly, which is interesting. He does not think his Instagram is manly in a traditional sense, and he uses it to craft an image of himself for his freshmen cohort to acknowledge.

Similar to Adam, Ben, and Cam, Dan also can articulate between societal and personal masculinity:

Researcher: So the next few questions I got a kind of seem out of nowhere but I'll bring him back in. The first one is what do you personally believe makes a man a man?

Dan: Mmmm, I think.... That's a good question specially in today's society because masculinities always question and there's like so many topics that can be generated off of that. For me, I think it's the characteristics that you have to be qualified as a man. You don't have to be like big and strong, but I think if you, I think a man, I think it's family oriented, to achieve manhood or fatherhood you have to have a kid which means you have to have like not necessarily wife, but a girl and start a family with her and it takes responsibility, because in the end we're here to reproduce and that's what we can do, like like with a man that's what we're made for, so I think that's what we have to fill in, to be a good father and like, I don't think you have to be manly or do manly things I think as

long as you take care of your family and those around you that's what makes you a man, like taking others responsibilities other than your own too.

Even though these freshmen are not using academic terms like hegemonic masculinity, they are describing the topic in detail. They know that society has a unique view on what is acceptable when it comes to manliness and these freshmen are pushing back this set standard. Moreover, they are all working toward becoming more masculine in their own definition and Instagram seems to be the platform for exploring their multiple masculinities.

Researcher: Okay then with that definition of mind, with your thoughts on masculinity you consider yourself manly?

Dan: I would say yes because I feel like if I were to have a child at this point I would feel like I could take care of it as well as take care of many other things as well as my family right now. I think that's what makes me a man.

The most interesting aspect to come out of the questions about participant's masculinity is that each claim that they consider themselves a man, but that their Instagram is not manly. There is a disconnect between their own perceptions and what they post on Instagram. Each participant talked about their perceptions of masculinity in contrast to how society sees masculinity. Moreover, each use their Instagram to explore their masculinity, as well as keep others updated on their lives. It is apparent that the freshmen are similar to one another in how they use Instagram and how they think about masculinity. Perhaps this is due to the fact that they are Instagram users and can explore more about themselves.

Senior Section

Once again, perception versus reality will be examined in this section focusing on how Senior males express themselves on Instagram. As a whole, the thought, from my own research standpoint, is that seniors will post more about their surroundings and in large audiences to show their alignment with a larger group. Since these traditional seniors are leaving college and

preparing themselves for life outside of academia, they might be using their Instagram to show others that they are less fixated on establishing their identity within a college context, but rather establishing their identity to their cities and the world. No longer should they be trying to establish a personal identity, but rather reinforce a social identity. After the interviews with the seniors, there was not one who was thinking about going on to graduate school; therefore, all interview responses and posts are based on people who are leaving college for jobs or internships. Overall, seniors differed in comparison to freshmen because?, but many were still trying to fit in their college context. However, most used their Instagram to fit in a larger community, and have less of a focus on themselves; some even use theirs as a portfolio to supplement their resumes. In this section, each of the four seniors will be explicated, with a following discussion about how they each think and talk about masculinity. Finally, the section will conclude with conversing about the similarities between all seniors.

Eric Participant

Post-theme notes.

Eric, a senior at a midwestern university, uses his Instagram to focus more on his life in reference to a larger community. In only one of his photos is he featured; instead, the pictures depicted his engagement with nature, music, and food. He is showing that his focus is not on a personal or enacted focus, but rather how he fits into a larger community. The communal aspects come in part when an individual is trying to establish themselves as fitting into a larger group, and his pictures are “with the community as the locus rather than the individual” (Hecht, 1993, p. 80). The nature-centric pictures show that he not only has a relationship with his environment, but also that he engages in that environment as well. Since these nature photos are not his personal drawings, it is not so much personal because he didn’t personally create a scene for his

own sake; rather, he is involved with his surroundings. His music-centric photos were also communal because he was expressing his interest in certain bands and music formats, which aligns with a larger group. If his photos were about him making music, or art for albums, then they would be considered personal and enacted. However, since they are about showing his alignment with other music fans, they are communal. Overall, his photos were about how he fits into a community, not about him showing off his personal opinions, or showing others his personal and enacted identities.

Post-interview analysis.

My assessment in the post-theme notes described Eric as being more focused on communal identity expression rather than personal and enacted. After transcribing and analyzing the interview, the assessment seems largely accurate. Eric's posts are meant to show how he aligns and identifies with a larger community, showing that he is ready to leave the college atmosphere. However, while his images show more communal themes (Hecht, 1993), the images themselves have a personal story to them. Most of his posts are of vinyl records and album covers, demonstrating his strive for aligning with a larger community, but all the musical albums are personal. Nevertheless, Eric uses his Instagram as a professional portfolio to show that he is not focused on establishing his identity, but rather fitting with other groups, which can be seen as fitting into a social identity outside of a purely college environment. Throughout his interview, Eric reiterated that his posts are not about him; they are about reaching out to others who show the same interest in the hopes of one day finding a career in public relations or marketing. Therefore, his Instagram use is focused on expressing how he contributes to a larger public. There were three main identity expression themes which emerged from his interviews: him as a music enthusiast, him as a beer enthusiast, and him as a nature lover. All three themes from the

interview matches my pre-interview theme analysis of the photo posts. His pictures can be seen in Appendix K.

Identity as a music-enthusiast.

The most apparent theme was Eric's identity expression as a music-enthusiast. Eric has found his niche interest in collecting vinyl records and uses his Instagram to connect with other niche audiences. In Epic4 (see Appendix K), Eric talks about how he uses his Instagram to connect and promote others:

Researcher: Okay, your fourth photo, a bunch of these are similar to this one, so I'm curious the who what where when and why?

Eric: Right, so I don't have a lot of followers or engagement on social media really, but in all my classes recently we've been talking about the importance of regularly using your social media if at some point you are going to use it to promote anything, if you want someone to listen to something that you have to say you have to use it like a regular person, you can't just have an account that's just marketing and media posts. I love records and I have a turntable and it's a really easy way to get followers, and then I instantly have something in common with them, so as long as I put the artist name, or sometimes I'll do something like #vinyl on it I get engagement from people that don't even follow me because people are always searching for these types of photos.

Eric's identity as a music lover is expressed by vinyl pictures and attempting to connect with others who feel the same way. He found that trying to fit with a larger audience does indeed increase his followers, which is a larger audience he can express his identity toward. I inquired further as to why vinyl:

Researcher: Why the focus on vinyl more than other types of musical mediums?

Eric: I actually don't really know why I got into it I was just looking for a hobby i guess, something to do, but music has always been a big part of my life, you know I was in the band when I was little and stuff, and I'm not so much of a big fan of playing music now, but I probably go to probably 25 to 30 shows a year live performances of all different types of people, I driven 8 hours and blowing across the continents to go see people and music festivals and I get to meet some of these people and they don't, it's hard today

because everything is digital they don't have anything to interact with and vinyl is coming back, and it's really cool to be able to hold your music and realize that someone put a lot of work into this.

Going to performances and promoting band's music is Eric's passion, and his identity is reinforced on Instagram by posting these vinyl albums. By posting only about the albums, and not of himself, he is showing more communal themes (Hecht, 1993) in an attempt to show his alignment with a larger community. In Epic7 (see Appendix K), Eric talks about how why being a fan to him matters and why he promotes other bands:

Researcher: We can move on to the next one then who what where when and why?

Eric: So this one is similar to The Joe Jackson record, um, this is a small doom metal band from Europe, and they came out here and the ticket to the show was 8 bucks or something and it was one of the greatest shows I've ever been to. They started really small, almost underground over there, and then they have their own community that people were passing around burnt CDs from shows and things like that, eventually this awesome record label called Rise Above they've got a ton of great artists on their heard it and they flew out there immediately and they were like we want you so they had them sign papers, and then they got a US and they were making a lot of money and just all their albums are fantastic, and this is a really hard album to get, I think it's one of the more expensive ones I have its closer to \$85 or \$90, but um, yeah, so I just wanted to, I just the same thing, I tagged the band and I've got hashtag vinyl and there and I think the record label and the band actually engaged with this photo.

Researcher: So the decision behind posting this is to show that you're a fan of this?

Eric: Yeah, uhuh.

Researcher: What other reasons, other than I'm just a fan and here's their music?

Eric: It's also because they're really not well known, and so the people that hang out with me I have a similar music tastes music taste, kind of a niche taste, cuz that runs into rap or whatever, but yeah if someone sees it and get into it, it's really to promote them.

Making sure that his followers know his identity as a music-enthusiast is vital for Eric because not only does he love the bands themselves, but also wants the world to know of their existence. He expresses his identity offline with his friends, but also online with posting vinyl

records. Instagram is the place where he can connect with other audiences and find connections outside of a college environment. This shows he is thinking about life after college. Epic8 (see Appendix K) is another album he posted. Apart from just the music, Eric likes how the album cover looks:

Researcher: Alright so this is another vinyl photo, would presumably different band.

Eric: Yeah it is a different than that my music taste is like so weird it's like heavy metal, and classic rock, and everything that sounds like 80s synth-pop I love it, I really don't listen to a lot of new music I would say, but there's this artist that has been around for a while her name is Sky Ferreira, and I just heard it a couple weeks ago and when I heard this album I had to have it. And it's also harder to get, but as soon as I got it I played it and listen to it twice, and then I posted it just because it's aesthetic, the cover.

Due to the unavailability of some of the albums he posts, he is further showing his adherence to niche audiences. When it comes to audience, Eric know exactly who he caters to and takes the time to make his Instagram reaches certain populations. In Epic9 (see Appendix K), Eric discusses his knowledge of audience:

Researcher: Let's move on to photo number 9, what's the story behind this?

Eric: So this was kind of the same thing, this is a jam band called Humphreys McGee, and they're super popular in [state noted] as well, there's a lot of sold-out show I usually play back-to-back show shows at [location noted] over the summer, and the first time I saw them was four or 5 years ago and tickets were like 40 bucks, and now they're sold out every single show and tickets are \$150, so I haven't actually seen them in a while because it's a big purchase to go see them, but this is their new album that they released and I actually drove down to [city noted] on the day that this came out to the big record store down in downtown to pick us up. So it's kind of the same thing, I know there's a big crowd for this and a lot of people were probably going to be listening to it since it was brand new and so, same drill.

As previously mentioned, he posts to align himself with a larger community, but he also knows who to cater to. Since the band he posted about is popular and the album was new, he bolstered his music-enthusiast identity by posting the new album cover. All of his album/vinyl

posts are specifically meant to promote the bands, while also showing that he is more than just a college student. Moreover, Eric is a music-enthusiast for niche bands and he markets for them and himself at the same time. Once again, in Epic10 (see Appendix K), Eric talks about the reasoning behind posting about vinyl's and album covers:

Researcher: Let's move on then, this is for albums, so it looks like they're all from the same band.

Eric: So this is Uncle Acid again and this top left red album was the first record that they made and you couldn't buy it or stream it actually, the lead singer and guitarist basically said I can make better music than people are making today, and he was trying to get an endorsement time in a booth and nobody would listen to him in the UK where they are from. And so his family had an old barn on some property and he spent a couple of years getting a bunch of vintage 70s recording equipment, and he set up his own studio in that barn, and they created this Uncle acid, it's called volume 1, and after they recorded the three other Studio albums, which is the other three that you can see, they went back and they took the really rough cut recording and they spent two years digitally remastered in it and then they pressed it, and so I was finally able to have all of them.

Researcher: So these are all four of their albums right now?

Eric: Yep this is their whole discography, and so I've got all of that and so when I finally went and picked up volume one, that was my day, I just listened to it all front to back.

Eric shows pride in his albums and knows which audiences he is reaching. Showing all the discography of the band only supports his music-enthusiast identity. Moreover, in this interview response, I inquired further as to why he posted four album covers instead of each individually:

Researcher: So why the decision to post all four of these albums instead of just one or one post each?

Eric: I decided to do it like this because everything on Instagram is a square so I thought it'd be cool if I put together this way, and then also their albums are not easy to find and they are expensive, except for the top left one because they just pressed it and it's digitally remastered, so having one is, if you listen to them and a fan is crazy but if you have all four it's pretty ridiculous.

Researcher: Okay, do you think this photo on particular would speak to their fan base pretty well?

Eric: Yeah, definitely. If there was someone who was scrolling through Instagram, scrolling through the uncle acid posts on the hashtag, if they saw that that would definitely be something that they would have that little freak out over, be like wow that's awesome.

Researcher: Then I guess my question is, is it more important to you to post bands that you like or bands are underground or what's your thoughts behind posting about bands like this?

Eric: Um, I guess that's a good question, I mean this post I kind of had that in mind because I know they don't have a big fan base in the US so I just thought it would be cool to posted but generally I just post whatever I'm listening to, when I have time and if I think of it.

Music is a large part of Eric's life, and he expresses his identity as a music-lover through his Instagram account. Moreover, he does not put himself as the main subject of his photographs, but instead tends to focus on connecting and aligning himself with a larger community. Music, however, is not the only identity Eric expresses on his Instagram.

Identity as a beer and nature-enthusiast.

Apart from music, Eric also likes beer. In two of his posts, he puts a full beer glass in the center of the shot. As with his music pictures, he does not include himself; rather, he wants the beer to be the focus, once again showing more communal themes (Hecht, 1993). In Epic2 (see Appendix K), Eric discusses why he chose to post about beer:

Researcher: I'll move on to the second one, what's happening in this?

Eric: So I do some freelance marketing for a local restaurant Music City Hot Chicken and I had just finished talking and he poured me a new beer they had on tap that's brewed in [city noted], it's called true beer, and so I just thought it'd be cool to take a picture and get it out there and I had just done a tour of that Brewery last week so I thought I'd be good to share with him and tag them and get them some publicity because I really like their brand, and they actually liked it and reposted it, so it was pretty cool.

Researcher: Why is the decision to post this again?

Eric: Just because I'm doing some freelance for the restaurant and I'm a big fan of the brewery and their brand so I decided to post it just to give them some publicity.

Researcher: So why the decision to post this with your job in mind? Sometimes Instagram seems more of a personal thing, than a promotional thing.

Eric: So, um, I don't know how familiar you are with social media Analytics, but Facebook just changed their algorithm and so it's very difficult for businesses to do any kind of advertising, or just marketing or really interacting in general they changed it so even if you follow their page, it will be very difficult for their posts to reach you, you just won't see them on your feed unless you search for them and Instagram hasn't done that yet, so if I post something either as the account or I post something tagging them people will see them, so I'm just exploring what tagging two kind of local not well-known places in the food industry would do, and I don't have like a ton of followers on my account so this is like 10% of people I guess that follow me that liked it.

Eric understands that his Instagram is not necessarily about himself in the sense of showing off his personal appearance; he instead chooses to use his Instagram to align his identity with others as a promotional tool. Moreover, Eric realizes that his identity as a beer-enthusiast will attract like-minded individuals. Therefore, he uses these beer photographs to express his identity as a beer-enthusiast in order to reach a certain population. Once again, Eric is showing that his interests are communal and not necessarily focused on himself. In Epic6 (see Appendix K), he talks about another time where he decided to post about beer instead a selfie of him drinking:

Researcher: Next photo, so this is another drink-centric photo, what's the story behind this one?

Eric: So that was the first time I went to [a bar] with a couple of my roommates, and um, I'm just trying to start to posting more so I can use my account later and have an impact on people, so you know [city noted] is a huge beer community so anytime that I'm out doing something like that I try to make a post.

Researcher: Kind of a mini way to market yourself?

Eric: Yes.

Using his Instagram as a marketing tool, Eric decides to post about what is happening in his life which could reach a bigger audience. He sees Instagram as a jumping board for a future career while still being able to see what he has done in the past. He is much different from the freshmen group who tended to focus on establishing their identity for their immediate college community. Eric, on the other hand, focuses on how he fits into a larger community outside of academia. This can be further illustrated by his last post Epic1 (see Appendix K). Here, Eric talks about the beauty of scenery:

Researcher: So this is your first photo that you sent me, can you tell me what this photo is about?

Eric: Yeah so I was out covering an event for Source our online publication at [college], and this cloud just passed in front of the sun when I was out and everyone kind of dropped what they were doing to look at it just because that's something you don't see too often with a kind of rainbow effect there so I just thought it was cool.

Researcher: And then why the decision to post this photo on Instagram?

Eric: I guess it just looked cool and I've never seen a cloud like that before, so I thought I'd share it with the people that follow me.

While Eric primarily focuses on music and beer as his main identity expressions, here he expresses his nature-enthusiast identity. Even though this is more personal than promotional, unlike his others, he still does not want to be the main focus. Instead, he wants to show his followers the post and express his identity with others who might also like clouds. Yet, this photograph is an anomaly comparatively to the others; Eric mainly uses Instagram to promote others and himself.

Frank Participant

Post-theme notes.

Frank, a senior at a midwestern university, uses his Instagram to mostly show himself and those with whom he engages. The first two pictures he sent were pictures of himself, showing that he wants himself to be the main focus. The other photos are focused around him in relation to either an environment he was in, or with friends and family. There was not one picture that did not have him in it; however, most of the photographs had at least one other person, showing that he values highlighting his friends and connections with others. In each photograph, he was either smiling, or posing in a silly way expressing his happiness and overall exerted positivity. These photos are a mix of both personal and relational themes, which is mostly in line with hypothesis one which states seniors will show more aspects from relational and communal themes to show that they are trying to situate themselves within a larger community, rather than focusing on personal, or enacted themes. In the relational theme, “the focus is on the mutual or relational aspects” (Hecht, 1993, p. 80). Frank clearly values relationships, as evident in his Instagram posts. Because Frank does show more personal theme with his posts, it runs contrary to my hypothesis as well. There seems to be a mix of themes, which could be interpreted as him not quite ready to leave college since he is still fixated on expressing his personal identities.

Post-interview analysis.

After reading through and transcribing Frank’s interview, Frank’s fixation on not only himself, but the aesthetics of a composed picture, became clear. As mentioned in the post-theme notes, Frank values relationships and presenting the best version of himself for others to consume, which shows more personal, enacted, and relational themes (Hecht, 1993). By doing so, he also runs contrary to my thoughts on how seniors post about their identity. Seniors, in my

assessment, were supposed to post more about how they fit into a larger community, aligning with their transition away from establishing a personal identity for a college environment. Instead, Frank chooses to focus his Instagram on himself, his relationships, and the composition of pictures. In every single one of the pictures analyzed, Frank was the main subject, with an exception where his full family is featured. Nevertheless, he does not seem to attempt to connect with a larger group in his posts, but focuses on personal aspects. Three themes of identity expression emerged from the interview: identity as a socialite, identity as a picturesque person, and identity as family-centric. Frank's identity as a picturesque person relates to his choices of composition of the picture and the aspects highlighted. All of these themes overlap with one another, especially his identity as a socialite and a picturesque person. Due to this overlap, the following sections will be combined: his identity as a socialite and picturesque person, and his identity as a socialite and family-centric person.

Identity as a socialite and picturesque person.

Frank expresses his socialite identity most prominently on Instagram. Relationships and showing his activeness with friends is an important piece to Frank's identity performance. He wants others to know not only that he has a multitude of friends, but also that the friends he poses with are significant in his life. In Fpic8 (see Appendix L), Frank talks about who was featured in the picture with him, as well as explaining who makes the cut when posting on Instagram:

Researcher: Alright photo number 8, what's happening here?

Frank: All right well this was, I think if I'm correct, this was at [bar noted]and I think it was a Thursday, my friend H----, um, my roommate J---- who's also in my fraternity, he's much closer to H----, um, but over the years we've developed somewhat of a friendship, not as close as they have obviously but we're pretty good friends, I think we were both feeling ourselves to say the least...Um, part of the reason why I really like this photo, and I'm not sure if there's a filter on it, but both of our eyes look really good, I have

mentioned in the past that I am very proud of my blue eyes and I'm really thankful for them. Um, I think she could probably say the same thing. Um, let's see. I'm also sporting a top that I got for Christmas. In the past I haven't had the best fashion sense or the most quality clothing, so this is definitely something that I spent my money on that I got for myself that's quite a bit more quality, um, so I felt really comfortable wearing that and getting a picture taken in it, letting everyone know how I'm really going places in life finally. Let's see.

Researcher: So why the decision to post this?

Frank: Um, I think it shows that I have Variety in my friends, because I think that a lot of my friends that I posted in my pictures are all the same. I have probably about a hundred and fifty posts on Instagram and almost all of them are either me, me and C-----, me and R----, 'cause R----- was in one of the first couple photos. Um, and I think that this really shows that even though I have really close friends I also have other friends that are more than acquaintances but perhaps not as close to me as to call them close, close best friends, but she still means a lot to me and we look really good, and I think that it kind of just shows I can still enjoy the times that I have and experience that I have with people that may not be as close to me, that are still good friends and good people, and can allow myself to feel proud of the friends that I've made and the people that have chosen to influence me in my life.

Highlighting his socialite identity and the composition is the main point of this post. He wants to express that not only is he outgoing, but that he is proud of his aesthetics as well. Instead of posting a picture with a friend, he could have posted about the bar itself, to align with a larger crowd. Instead, he wants to show that he has many friends, and looks good regardless of where he goes. There are elements of curation (Davis, 2017) because he chose this picture to post, instead of just posting randomly. In *Fpic2* (see Appendix L), Frank discusses why the aesthetics of a picture matter to him:

Researcher: So the next one is another outdoor picture. Tell me the story of this one.

Frank: So this one I actually went it's of me but it went with my friend K---- who is a family friend. Her mom and my mom went to elementary school together so we've, through their friendship have become quite good friends, but she's a freshman this year and she finally came to [college], and I shared my love I'm going on photo shoots with her, because I know she loves to take pictures as well. The reason we decided to go

during this time is because it was fall and we saw there was a lot of really pretty leaves and trees and colors outside so we decided that was a good place to go, so we decided to walk around campus...I really, really like the colors and I do kind of stand out, which is nice, and although it's just kind of also a bland gray, I think in comparison to the trees and the grass and the leaves on the ground I really kind of stand out which is nice, but then again I also don't take all of the attention away from the trees, which was also another intention I'm taking the picture which was nice. And then I really like that you can see a little bit of my blue shirt, because although it's tough to see because my eyes are squinted another reason why I like to take pictures especially when it's really bright outside is because my eyes tend to pop. And the fact that there's a little bit of that blue sticking out, kind of encompasses my favorite colors as well so that's why I really wanted to post it.

Frank wants to show that he looks good on campus, which shows more personal themes.

He is exhibiting his picturesque identity, while being a socialite, going on a photo-shoot.

Expressing his outward appearance reinforces his identity as a picturesque person where composition and beauty, his “eyes tend to pop,” matter more than anything else. He is less focused on fitting in a larger community, but rather focused on solidifying his current college identity. Perhaps this could transfer over to a larger community, yet this is not the case for this one, and many other of his posts. Frank, in discussing Fpic3 (see Appendix L), talks about the importance of friendships, his friends, and how everyone curates their own posts:

Researcher: So this is the third one. This is different from the first two you sent, what's happening in this one?

Frank: So this one was a picture that me and the two next to me on my two best friends R---- and C---- and we were at the new stadium. I don't think it was any specific game I think we just decided it would be a good day to go to the football game. I really like that she's in the middle kind of, she doesn't make the picture but she's really how me and C----, if you want to say we're like the Three Musketeers, we're really good together we all are very obsessive over at Instagram's so whenever we can take a picture of the three of us and I'll post it together that's definitely a really good experience for all three of us. I really like how far away it is because you can really tell that not only our faces are showing, our whole bodies are together and showing how close we are and what a great friendship we have together. I really like you can also see the field in the background because you can kind of at least tell where we are even if I didn't tag the geolocation, you can tell that

we're in front of the football field and we're enjoying a day at the football game together. I'm really proud of where I go to school so I kind of really think the fact that C---- is wearing a [college] sweatshirt is a key component in the photo as well because Rachel and me are wearing just black and grey so that doesn't give off much, but you can still align with what he's wearing with what we're all kind of there for and at the location where at as well, again of course because my friends and I when we post pictures we all need to look as best as possible we all came to an agreement that we all look good together in this picture and that it was adequate enough to post so that's probably why I decided to post it because it was of me and my friends and it really kind of encompassed our friendship together.

Researcher: So it sounds like you value friendship a lot.

Frank: Yeah I think I tend to make friends pretty quickly, and I tend to make bonds with those friends quite easily, I haven't been hurt very much in my friendships very often, so I think that right now I'm quite trusting with my friendships and the people that I make my close friends. Friendship is a big thing that I care about and a big component also is family. My sister and my mom happen to also be my best friend's irrelevant if they're my family. And my friends are the ones who I spend the most time with on a day-to-day basis, so I think that's why I chose to post about them because I care a lot about them and I know they care a lot about me so yeah.

As mentioned in the interview, the location is less important than the composition of the picture. Frank and his friends are fixated on making sure each one looks perfect and that they all appear outgoing. This supports his identities as a socialite and picturesque person. He specifically chose this picture to post, out of many they took because it highlights the overall aesthetics and expresses his sociable nature. Friends and family are vital to Frank, but making sure his Instagram features them and himself in the best way is even more vital. Along the same lines, Fpic6 (see Appendix L) shows Frank and another gentleman. In the interview, he reminisces about the reason behind posting and what that person means to him:

Researcher: These next photos are the ones that I randomly chose so this is photo number 6. Who what where when and why.

Frank: So who is in the photo this is me and at the time it was just a guy I was seeing we met on Tinder while he was in [state noted] for a four-day week but he's actually in the

Army based out of [city noted]. This was a weekend he decided to surprise me, it was quite surprising and it was a fun weekend. This was taken right before he had to leave. Let's see, where, it was right outside of my apartment building which I think really hits close to home because even though I had just met him I cared about him enough to have him in my home and bring him to where I'm closest and where I live, and it was taken by my best friend C---- his friend K---- was there too. And I think it meant a lot that I was able to introduce him to my closest friends and bring him to where I live and show him around and have a fun weekend. I really like the background that it's brick because it looks really good and especially with us in front of it we really stand out. Again I really like it when I look tan and I don't look tan in this picture but with the lighting and how bright the picture is in the background, we stand out enough that it actually kind of works. What's also really cool is that he happens to be wearing a [specific college] jacket, which was where he went to college and I'm wearing my [college] jacket because that's where I go to college. I think we are both really proud of where we both go to colleges and we both go to colleges in the state we live in. He lives in [city noted] and went to [college] and I live in [a Midwest state] and go to [a different college]. He didn't like college and neither do I frankly, and so I think that's another thing we have in common and something that we can share together which is cool. Upon looking at it now it means quite a bit different although back then we were just seeing each other, since then we have become official and are seeing each other. So it's a bit different to look at now knowing that then we basically we're just kind of acquaintances are friends and now we have gone a long way in just a few weeks which is super cool.

Frank is proud of how both of the subjects look in the picture, reinforcing his picturesque identity, but also is showing others his relationship as well. Being a socialite is apparent, but because they are both wearing their college attire, Frank is still solidifying his college identity. He is not trying to fit with a larger crowd; rather, he seems content with expressing his current identity. Even though he claims to not enjoy college, he still fixates on the environment. Apart from still being in a college mindset, he still is focused on the composition of pictures more than anything else. In Fpic1 (see Appendix L), Frank talks about the importance of picture arrangement:

Researcher: This is the first photo you sent me so tell me who's in it, where it was taken and why.

Frank: So who is in it, it's me by myself. It was taken I think it was called [location noted], it's a park that me and my friends actually took our senior prom pictures at so we thought it would be a good location to kind of go back to because it was the three friends I was best friends with in high school and we haven't hung out in a long time so we figured it would be one of the best places to have a reunion. Why, that kind of goes along with the same thing I really enjoyed going on photo shoots especially with my friends because it's a good pastime and it really kind of brings out everyone's personalities.

Researcher: Why is the decision to post this on Instagram?

Frank: I really like the lighting that day and we did find a good place to get good lighting so we captured all the color. I'm sometimes quite picky at my smile and this happened to be one in which I thought I had a good smile, I looked quite, all of me including my face in my outfit and everything, that was all intentional and it looked really good in the lighting. Usually when I think about what I'm gonna post on Instagram, it has to do with how the lighting is, kind of the background where I'm at, why I'm there, I just think all those components went well enough together that I decided it was worth the post.

Making sure the pictures are perfect before posting them is crucial to Frank. He takes the time to set up photographs to make them as he wants them to appear. By doing so, he supports his picturesque identity. Moreover, Frank mentions he likes to go on photo shoots with friends, also supporting his identity as a socialite. Even though the most apparent identity expression for Frank is showing his identity as a socialite and picturesque person, he also identifies as a family-centric man.

Identity as family-centric.

Frank, when not posting about being social and taking consideration for the composition of photographs, tends to focus on his family. In Fpic7 (see Appendix L), Frank discusses how much family truly means to him:

Researcher: Alright this is photo number 7 and it seems a little bit more family-centric here. So what's the story?

Frank: So, we, my extended family always comes over to my grandparents house to open presents have a meal and enjoy our time together. That day it happened to be nice enough that my mom wanted to, one use her new phone that had a really good camera,

and two take family pictures of everybody, because every year she makes calendars and the pictures that she puts on the calendars come from the family pictures that she takes.

Even though Frank primarily focused on highlighting his family, he still holds his identity as a picturesque person close. In the same interview response, Frank talks about his attention to colors:

Frank: I'm a big person on lighting in pictures and I think the lighting in this picture is really great, it kind of compliments all the colors we were wearing the red, my purple shirt, our hair, colors my sisters blonde hair, the green in the background you can see so you can tell we are kind of around nature and experiencing that together. The red really pops out, which is really important because my grandma is the most important to all of us and if it wasn't for her none of us would be here, so I think that's kind of what's cool about the red is that it really stands out that she is the focal point in the picture and the purpose of all of us. I really care a lot about my family like I said, I think I am really lucky to have the family that I do, and have a family that all live close enough that we are all able to get together and see each other as often as we do and see each other and have as good of a relationship as we do. Cuz my closest friend C---- doesn't have a good relationship with his family, and he doesn't see them super often and his parents they don't get along very well so it really makes me thankful for them, for what I have and who I have, and I think posting it on Instagram especially because of the reason I post pictures tends to be because I care about health and I think you can really tell in this picture we are all really healthy and I think that's another thing to be thankful for is our health, and don't take for granted the things that we have that other people don't, so I think that's probably one of the main reasons why I posted it, is because it's of me and my family and a lot of other things that I care about.

Many of Frank's identity expression overlaps and coincide with one another. With all of his posts, he makes sure that they look perfect before posting, taking special attention to lighting and colors. His identity as a family-centric person can also be seen in Fpic9 (see Appendix L). In the aforementioned picture, Frank is situated to the right of his sister and father. Family means the world to him, as he explains:

Researcher: I just have a few more this is photo number 9, what's Happening Here?

Frank: So this was on Thanksgiving, so over the years when my sister and I were young enough that we still followed the whole divorce, um, time span with my dad and my mom the way that it always worked is in the mornings we'd always have a meal with my dad then halfway through the day we would leave and go back to her mom's house or actually my grandma's house to have another meal with my mom's side of the family. So this was the beginning of Thanksgiving Day, that's my dad on the left my sister in the middle and me. My sister and I are very close we've been through a lot obviously, we've been through my parents divorce, and I think especially when you're super young like we were, a divorce can really create a bond between siblings that can never be replaced. So I think that's part of the reason why my sister and I are so close as we are. That's our dad over the years I've gotten a lot closer with my dad, but when we are growing up it wasn't the best I never wanted to go over to his house, just because I think I had a closer relationship with my mom so I favored her. I really think that that has disappeared over the years, so I really think that um, I really think that it was really important for me to post this picture of me with my dad and my sister showing the world who they are, since they don't frequent my Instagram very often to show that I care about them to show the world that I'm proud to be with them in this picture and I'm proud to be with them on this day specifically of thanks.

Researcher: You're proud of your family regardless of which side.

Frank: Correct. Yeah. I really think it's, I really like that my sisters in the middle as well because I really think it shows that my dad and I really put her in a play honor because historically women always got in the middle of the right-hand side as protection and I definitely care about my sister's safety and my dad does too, so I think that's really great that we put her in the middle kinda to show that, and also because you really care about how people see her also, so I think we put her in the middle so she again could be the focal point of the photo, um, and I think that the color she was wearing really made her stand out as well. um, so yeah.

Even though family is the central theme of this picture, he still takes the time to arrange everyone. Doing so and discussing this aspect reinforces his identity as both a family-centric person, as well as a picturesque person. He wants to express to his followers his identity, while still curating the picture composition. In the last post, Epic10 (see Appendix L), Frank overlaps his identity as a socialite and family-centric person:

Researcher: Alright this is photo number 10 the last photo that I chose, what's Happening Here?

Frank: Man, some of these pictures I like look back, and I'm like why did I, what was I thinking? So this is on Halloween, well I don't know if it was on Halloween or not because of course during Halloween season you go out every single night on the weekend so my sister came up for Halloween weekend and um, I'm not positive, I think she was dressing up as a schoolgirl so that's who's on the left and I'm in the middle wearing a SpongeBob pullover, and my friend C---- had a shirt that said 'twas lit', and he really wanted to be as lit as possible, so we wrapped around Christmas lights around him, um, this was taken at our apartment right before we were leaving to go out. I really wanted to post this picture because, I think again the focal point of the picture is SpongeBob, it's not even me it's SpongeBob it's a fact that I'm wearing SpongeBob, which I think I obviously I laughed when I looked at it, so have you, so I think that really shows that I have a sense of humor in my personality, and I really want to show that to other people and to see if I can get their humor out also and I really want to make them laugh and smile, because I really enjoy doing that. Obviously the other person in this picture is C---- and he's wearing a shirt that says 'twas lit' and a irrelevant of where he's wearing lights are not, I think even reading that showed people would laugh and smile even more so knowing that he's got lights wrapped around him. In my life these are two of the closest people that I have that's my two best friends, my sister who happens to be one of my best friends, and my best friend who is also my roommate. Everyone always knows that whenever I go out I'm right next to C----, he and I are kind of like two peas in a pod when we go out, when we are together, um, and then my sister happen to come for the weekend, but obviously she came out with us and we had a really good time so I think I chose to post a lot of different reasons, the humor of it to make people laugh and smile and also to kind of to show that I really appreciate the people that are really close to me and other than probably my mom these two people are the two closest people have in my life so yeah.

Frank cares deeply for his friends, family, and picture composition. He uses Instagram to reinforce his personal identities, without necessarily focusing on fitting in a larger community.

The people closest to him matter, and he takes the time to make sure they are properly highlighted in all of his posts. It appears that Frank is still fixated on his college life, rather than life after academia.

Grant Participant

Post-theme notes.

Grant, a senior at a midwestern university, uses his Instagram to show his engagement more with a larger community, whether that be in relation to sports or vehicles. Based on the 10

pictures analyzed, each had either a communal, or relational aspect, barring two. The two that did not have communal, or relational themes, still showed his enacted identity as a sports player and car enthusiast. Even though some pictures demonstrated a personal theme, they were situated with regard to communal aspects as previously mentioned. For the pictures where Grant was not featured, he posted pictures showing his engagement with vehicles and environments he visited. It seems that Grant is more focused on how he fits into a larger community, rather than just highlighting his personal identity. If he was more focused on personal identity expression, there might be more pictures of just him playing sports, or driving in cars, for example, but instead he was usually with either teammates, or showing the cars by themselves. Grant seems to be more socially driven, while demonstrating his alignment with different groups. He falls in line with my thinking that as a senior he shows more communal and relational themes than others. Perhaps he is ready to become a part of a different community other than his involvement of expressing his individuality.

Post-interview analysis.

There seems to be a pattern within Grant's transcribed interview where he has a combination of both personal and communal themes in his pictures. Being that he is a senior, Grant still grounds most of his pictures with himself as the main subject, but has other supplementary photographs to align him with a larger community. When thought about it in this way, his Instagram is also in a transition period itself; he shows his alignment to others in a larger sense, while also showing himself in action. By doing so, he expresses his identity as both someone who fits into a bigger community and an individual. Grant was still a senior at the time of the interview, so he was getting ready to leave the college atmosphere. His Instagram is a reflection of that since he shows his personal identity, as well as his social identity through images of him, or his environment. After reading through the interview, three themes of identity

expression emerged: him as a sports-enthusiast, him as a car enthusiast, and him as a lover of scenery. These three identities were most apparent; however, the most interesting fact was that each theme had a mix of himself as the center, and the picture devoid of personal involvement. There seems to be a mix between personal, enacted, and communal themes (Hecht, 1993), which show that Grant is potentially still coping with moving from a college atmosphere to a bigger community.

Identity as an athlete.

The first most frequent theme which arose from the interview is Grant's identity as an athlete. All of the sports-centric photographs he posts (Gpic1, 3, 5, and 8; see Appendix M) feature him as the main subject. Grants wants to emphasize his identity as an athlete, but not necessarily just a college athlete. Sports seems to be a large part in Grant's life and he uses his Instagram to highlight himself, which is more personal than communal. In Gpic1 (see Appendix M), Grant talks about his experience with a team he won a championship:

Researcher: Tell me what's happening in the first picture.

Grant: In this first picture, it's I guess what you would call a collage, maybe? It's a picture of essentially two pictures. On the top you have what was my previous soccer team in [city noted], it was my college team. We were doing preseason, we were doing the beep test, which is probably one of my least favorite fitness activities, it's actually a fitness test, and it's not fun whatsoever. So that was the beginning of the season, the top picture. And the bottom is that same season, we won that conference for the college and played in the NCAA tournament right after that. It was just me kind of putting all the work my teammates and I put together for that season in one picture and I posted it on Instagram.

Grant, even though he was at the cusp of graduating still wants his sports-centric posts to be about himself as the subject. He is showing that he identifies as an athlete and aligns himself with soccer in particular. By doing so, he is still in the mentality of establishing his identity for those around him. If he would have posted about a particular team, or a future team he wanted to

be apart of, then he might be showing more communal themes, but instead ensures he is the center. In Gpic3 (see Appendix M), Grant talks about his time with a team in New York:

Researcher: So what's happening in this third photo? This one looks like another New York photo.

Grant: It was another [city noted] photo, it was also another preseason match, preseason training session. I posted it because I really like our field. It's right next to [city noted], it was in [city noted], but it was right next to [city noted], it was on the Waterway that would be the [location noted]. I thought it was a nice picture, it has myself in it, kind of right there.

In this instance, Grant wants to show his identity as an athlete and as a scenery-enthusiast. He clearly states that the backdrop is the main focus of the picture, but he still wants to be in the picture, which expresses his need to support his identity to others. Instead of having the picture focus on the team and the backdrop, he posts the picture because he is in it as well. Therefore, contrary to my thoughts, he is still supplementing his personal identity expression instead of focusing on trying to fit into a larger community. Gpic5 (see Appendix M) shows him in an action shot with a soccer ball, once again supporting his identity as an athlete. Even Grant was not sure on why he posted the picture:

Researcher: So this is photo number five, so tell me what's happening.

Grant: I actually posted this, what was it, last Monday? Same thing, soccer. I wouldn't consider it one of my favorites, I thought I sent another one, but it's still a top favorite of mine. Like I told you before all the pictures I have I really like. I don't know why I posted this, I'm playing soccer again and I'm going to [city noted], that was the picture I took when I was playing on that team, so I don't know. I just like that I'm in action, I don't know.

Grant's lack of thought when it came to posting this picture indicates that he is still establishing his identity for others to consume. Once again, his sports-centric posts are focused on him, and not on other teams, or other organizations. While not on record, Grant did tell me

after the interview that he was trying to start a new soccer team in his hometown, who would ideally compete on a higher level. Perhaps, then, his posts are meant to show his alignment with soccer, and support his identity as an athlete so that he has credibility when making his new team. However, since it is not on record, the assertion can only be speculative. Unfortunately, Gpic8 (see Appendix M) was outside the scope of the study and cannot be included, but he is also featured in a sports-centric post. Based purely on his posts and interview, the personal nature of the sports-centric posts shows his establishing and supporting his identity as an athlete. Apart from expressing his identity as an athlete, he also shows his support and engagement with vehicles.

Identity as a vehicle-enthusiast.

Grant's identity expression as an athlete is more focused on himself, rather than on aligning himself with other teams. He is more personal when it comes to establishing himself as an athlete, but shows more of a mix of personal and communal themes (Hecht, 1993) when expression his identity as a vehicle-enthusiast. Gpic4, 6, and 9 (see Appendix M) all show cars as the feature, with only Gpic4 (see Appendix M) showing himself. Therefore, he is more focused on showing his alignment with a larger audience with his vehicle-centric posts rather than his sports-centric posts. In Gpic4, Grant discusses why he posts about cars, and why he is in this post in particular:

Researcher: All right this is your 4th photo, the first photo without either a family member or soccer. So what's happening here?

Grant: I'm a passionate guy and I have different sorts of passions, would have to be family, soccer, cars, friends, city, travel, which you can kind of see throughout my Instagram. In this picture it was a car I during the summer, it was a C55 MG, a very rare car I mean just looking at it you wouldn't think how fast it actually is, but it's a really fast car. It was a little trip I took with my buddy, we went up to the canyon and drove and it was a really fun time.

Researcher: So why did you post this?

Grant: Like I said I like cars, I really like the car I had over the summer, which was the C55. I think whoever took the picture of me, I think it was my buddy, I'm walking out of the car I look kind of cool yeah, the mountains are in the background so yeah.

Even though he is featured, he is not the main focus of the post. As mentioned in the interview, Grant has a passion for cars and he uses his Instagram to show that aspect of his identity. By having himself in the picture, he is expressing his engagement with cars, rather than just his interest in them. Grant wants to ensure that he is seen as a vehicle-enthusiast. Gpic4 is the only vehicle-centric post where he is in the frame; his others (Gpic6 and 9) are more focused on showing the car as the main subject. In Gpic6 (see Appendix M), Grant talks about his love for cars:

Researcher: The photos here on out are the ones that I chose from your Instagram. So this is photo number 6, what's happening here?

Grant: So this was a car show in [city noted] that they do every summer, so it's like the nicest car show you could probably go to in [city noted], it's open to the public but it's like 10 bucks to get in. They had a 635 cSI and a 850 right next to each other, and I took the picture right next to each other because I like the roof of one, I mean the hood, sorry, of one car open one way and the other is open the other way. I posted it because of photography looks nice and to continue to show my passion for cars.

Grant's passion for cars is clear from his frequent posts and how he talks about them. Showing his alignment with a larger vehicle-enthusiast community is shown with his posts focusing on the cars rather than himself. While he likes the composition of the photograph, his identity expression comes with post a communal themed post about the cars, rather than just the event. Grant is expressing his identity to fit with a larger community, which is also evident in Gpic9 (see Appendix M). Gpic9 shows a red-highlighted sports car with a monochrome filter on the background. When asked about this decision, Grant reminisces about when he first saw the vehicle:

Researcher: Photo number nine, this is a cool one too.

Grant: Yeah, I was in [city noted], um, and it was a 458 Italian Ferrari. I use some sort of weird photo editing just on my phone and it turned out really nice, like it makes a Ferrari pop out with the old French architecture in the background, it just looks nice.

Researcher: Did you get to see a lot of supercars?

Grant: Exotic cars? In Monaco yes. In Bordeaux not really, you see nicer cars out here. People out there just drive little cars.

Researcher: You mentioned about the filters and everything, but why the decision to post this?

Grant: A lot of times it's because I've haven't posted something in a while, and I have a lot of cool photography and I haven't posted anything in awhile so I thought this was cool.

By making the red of the vehicle stand out, and not himself next to it, he is focusing on supporting his identity as a vehicle-enthusiast. Vehicles and athletics are the two most apparent themes which are on his Instagram, but he also is interested in the scenery around him.

Identity a lover of scenery.

Sports and cars are what Grant is most passionate about, based on his posts and interviews. However, he uses his Instagram to show that he also pays attention to the environment around him. Gpic7 and 10 (see Appendix M) show a specific environment which stuck out to him. Again, like with the vehicle-centric pictures, he shows both sides of himself: one that is more personal, and one that is more communal. The mix between the two spans his Instagram posts, with sports being more personal. Nevertheless, in Gpic7 (see Appendix M), Grant discusses about the view and why he was featured:

Researcher: Photo number seven.

Grant: This is when I was in Italy just traveling I went to [city noted] and during that trip someone took this picture of me, a nice DSLR camera, I was just looking out and it came

out nicely and it was one of the most beautiful cities I've ever been to and yeah I just like it.

Grant still wants to show his engagement with his surroundings, while also showing the beauty of the moment. Even though it is focused on the view, by him being in the photo, he is showing his personal connection to it; he shows that he identifies as a traveler and lover of scenery. His identity expression is both personal and communal because he highlights that he is there, but also that the view is the focus. Once again, this is almost a transition from his college life, to the working world because he is still focused on himself, but he does not dominate the entirety of the image. However, in Gpic10 (see Appendix M), he makes sure that the scenery is central:

Researcher: All right in this last photo what are you doing here?

Grant: I was just trying to be a little creative, this was when I first arrived to Europe, I did a layover in [city noted] for like 12 hours so I just walked around and there is this really cool outdoor soccer to the public park. There was crazy graffiti around it, and I don't know, there was this hole and I wanted to take a picture through this hole. You can see like the soccer goal, and then a basketball, yeah.

Researcher: Turned out to be a cool photo.

Grant: Thank you.

Researcher: So why the decision to post this one then?

Grant: It shows my creativity, I like street art, and I like soccer, so I was like, bam.

Showing a vast majority of his passions is the point of the picture, while supporting his identity as a lover of scenery. He wants the image to speak for itself, rather than showing himself as the subject. This is more of a communal photograph due to its lack of human subject and potential attempt to fit into a larger community who have either been there before, or also love scenery.

Additional identity expression.

While not frequent, and only apparent in one post, Grant sees himself as a family-centric person. He mentions earlier in his interview that he has a love for his family and Gpic2 demonstrates this assessment. In Gpic2 (see Appendix M), he talks about why posting a picture with his father matters to him:

Researcher: So what's happening in this second photo?

Grant: What is happening would be this is right before I left to France my father and I my mom went to [city noted] to watch my little sister and her soccer tournament. It was her first soccer tournament. It was right before I left to France so I would say it's kind of special because I took it right before I left for France and it was with my dad so yeah.

Researcher: You posted this because it was special to you?

Grant: I would say so, well it was really my father's birthday. I didn't post it because I was going to France or my sister's tournament, it was just a picture of him and I for his birthday, really just congratulating him.

Grant's love for his family is highlighted in this photograph. He expresses his identity as a family person by showing himself with his father. Once again, this is more personal than communal, which further illustrates his mix of identity expression.

Hank Participant

Post-theme notes.

Hank, a senior at a midwestern university, uses his Instagram to show his engagement with nature mostly. There was a nature scene throughout all of his pictures, with only a few with him in them at all. It appears that Hank is more focused on expressing his interest with the environment around him, rather than focusing on himself. There were only three pictures where he was personally featured. The first (Hpic2; see Appendix N) was of him and a female sitting on a bench in the middle of a wooded area. Even though he was featured, the nature aspect was

almost more central, comprising more than half of the photo. The second picture in which he was featured, only showed his feet, while a nature scene extended out past his appendages. In this photo (Hpic8; see Appendix N), his appearance is not shown, only his shoes, with nature taking center stage. The third photograph with him featured was a posed picture (Hpic3; see Appendix N) where he stands in the middle with a nature scene behind him as a beautiful backdrop. While considered personal because he is in the center, it is also relational because he is showing his relationship with the environment. Other than the three pictures mentioned, Hank made it a point to explicitly keep himself out of the nature shots. His decisions behind posting just nature photos could indicate that he aligns with not only nature, but his appeal to a larger community. Nature itself is supposed to be enjoyed, but instead of making it personal, he lets the scene speak for itself. These nature-centric photos without him in them are examples of relational and communal themes. Hank both wants to show that he has a relationship with nature, while also showing his expressed interests fit with other nature lovers. Again, the fact that he is not featured in most nature photos shows that he potentially values nature to exist on its own, rather than highlighting himself at the centric subject. Hank fits my thoughts on senior behavior because he is showing himself as a part of a larger community, rather than focusing on himself, or enacted identities (e.g., wearing brand-name hiking attire and showing his brand alliance).

Post-interview analysis.

As mentioned in the post-theme notes, Hank is less focused on himself, and more focused on showing his surroundings. He expresses his identity as a nature-lover/enthusiast with each post focusing on scenery. By doing so, he is aligning himself with other like-minded individuals, showing his identity through his posts. After transcribing the interview, it became clear that although Hank does show more communal and relational (Hecht, 1993) themes in his posts, his

reasoning behind his posts are more personal. Once more, the question of perception versus reality comes into play. While showing his identity as a nature lover is apparent, he actually uses his Instagram to show off his extroverted side, which usually stays hidden in his offline interactions. Instagram has become a place for him to be social, while still keeping his pictures personal. Therefore, he is showing off his personal identities in a communal way. The two themes which came across were his expressing his nature enthusiasm, and his identity as a social person.

Identity as a nature-lover and introverted extrovert.

Hank loves being outside. Whether he is hiking, climbing, or just sitting in the sunshine, his true love is for nature. All of his posts feature a nature-centric background, specifically showing his alignment with natural settings. However, his posts are deeper than just showing his adherence to a larger community. In Hpic1 (see Appendix N), Hank talks about his peaceful thoughts when he's in nature:

Researcher: This is your first one that you sent me, what's happening in this photo?

Hank: Ok, so, the story behind this one is, I worked at that camp, this is a summer camp, I worked at that camp over the summer. Ok, so I met my girlfriend at that camp and she was invited to a wedding that also took at that camp. She was a bridesmaid, so I wandered all around this lake taking photos because I had about 12 hours to kill while she did bridesmaid things. So essentially I was just trying to take, I got a new phone and I was trying to see what the camera could do.

Researcher: And where is this camp?

Hank: It's a Macon Mississippi. Yeah so it's a little bit of a trek from [city noted].

Researcher: What do you like about this photo?

Hank: Um, it really... I don't know.... It's just seems peaceful. It just reminds me of everything I like about that lake. There's... Sitting right there standing right there, it's warm you feel the trees and you can see the lake and that's pretty much what my summer was. It reminds me of my summer. Also I like the colors and the composition.

The gorgeous scenery and the peaceful feelings stuck out to Hank so he wanted to share his photograph with more people. On one hand, Hank is establishing his identity as a nature-lover; this is due to the fact that the picture is only of nature, and he is not in the frame. Moreover, he is aligning himself with others who also enjoy being in nature, a communal act. Nevertheless, I inquired further about why he posted the picture instead of keeping it for himself:

Researcher: So why the decision to post this on your feed?

Hank: It had been a little while since I posted anything and I enjoyed the photo. It was my favorite photo at the time and I felt like I needed to keep... To make it look like I was actually a heavy user.

Keeping up appearances to seem like a heavy user is a fascinating admission from Hank. Even though he admits to being a quieter person in an offline setting (i.e., interpersonal interactions), he still wants to appear extroverted. Hank wants to express his identity as a nature-lover, photographer, and socialite online. This performance is a contradiction to his offline personality, but he feels comfortable showing his social side on Instagram. The platform, then, becomes a playground for expressing his identity and interests without having face-to-face interpersonal interactions. Yet, he still does not want to necessarily be in the spotlight. In Hpic2 (see Appendix N), Hank discusses his hike with his sister and why he was featured in the picture:

Researcher: All right number three where's this, and what's happening in this one?

Hank: So this is Vedauwoo, Wyoming. I really like hiking. So that day we went with some family friends, we had gone hiking up this little disaster hike, wasn't very pretty I didn't really enjoy that, and then we went rappelling off this this rock, and now I don't enjoy repelling but I really, really enjoy hiking. And so this, I don't know I took a lot of photos of these rocks because they are so weird, they are some of the weirdest looking rocks, I haven't seen anything like them.

Researcher: What makes them so weird?

Hank: Just the, just the unique formations really. I mean it's kind of rounded but also stacked on top of each other really weird, which is something you don't really get here. Cuz I grew up here in town, so I was always looking at the foothills, and there's nothing like that in that direction, so I don't know it kind of struck me is something beautiful and so I took a lot of photos there and then my sister was with us said okay you always post landscapes so just go stand over by that rock.

Researcher: So the only reason you're in this photo is because your sister wanted you to be?

Hank: Yeah.

Even though Hank is using Instagram to show his extroverted side, he still wants the nature to be the focus of his posts. He does not want to be the subject of his photographs (which can be seen as staying away from personal themes), but because of his sister, he is an integral piece to the post. Supporting his identity as a nature-lover, he makes sure the picture is mainly about the background, and not himself. Showing his interest in hiking is also shown in this, and many of his posts. I inquired further about why he usually posts about landscapes rather than of himself:

Researcher: So, why the decision to post more about landscapes than you personally?

Hank: I fancy myself an amateur photographer and I really, really struggle with live subjects. Additionally, I am also wicked introverted, so stuff that I see on my feed that's like the blurry party shot, with a crazy amount of lights, I've never enjoyed that and I don't like seeing that on my feed, and I don't want to put that on anyone else's feed. I do really enjoy mountains so I show everyone mountains.

As mentioned, his introverted self can still be extroverted on Instagram. He is able to show more of his passions such as hiking and the mountains while still being social. Moreover, since most of his pictures are focused more on nature, it is an anomaly when he posts a picture with live subjects. Clearly, his relationship with nature is what is most important to him, but people in his pictures also hold a special meaning as well. Hpic2 (see Appendix N) shows him

and his significant other together; Hank converses about what that post meant to him and to his audience:

Researcher: Alright so this is the second photo What's Happening Here?

Hank: This is me and my girlfriend at said Camp. I like this one for the colors also. This is the first time.... I should probably note, she lives in [city noted], [state noted]. So this was the first time she came up to visit and visited me, so I don't know, I just like how happy it is. Again it reminds me of the summer and all that. I also like the colors.

Researcher: So why the decision to post this one?

Hank: This was immediately after she left in this was the first big I'm dating this person, so I don't know, kind of a weird announcement photo, and I don't know, seem to be a pretty good one to start off. This is the first time people saw us together like that, not just being good friends.

Hank wants to show others what's happening in his life, while also relaying that this person is as important to him as his love for nature. The interview also indicates that he is trying to show his commitment and his companionship. His relationship is both with nature and his significant other. Hank's identity as a social person is shown in this photograph and supported by him wanting others to know that he is committed and fits with a long-term communal audience. Hpic2 (see Appendix N) shows relational and nature-centric themes, which show his expression as a nature-lover and introverted extrovert. In addition, when Hank gets an opportunity to share scenery he finds beautiful, he makes strides to ensure he snaps a picture. In Hpic4 (see Appendix N), he talks about why he posts nature related pictures:

Hank: I don't know, he was just a really pretty sunset. It was in the dead middle of the summer and we just got our phones back for a week. They usually have us surrender our phones in the beginning for liability stuff. And this is the first time we got our phones back. This was a very first night, the very first sunset. And the sunsets on this Lake are some of the prettiest I've ever seen in my whole life, as you can see here. Yeah...yeah, it's something I saw every night in June and I finally got to share two months into summer and I thought that was really cool, I really love this.

Researcher: You kind of touched on this, but why the decision to post this?

Hank: It was the first time I was out, I could actually post something during the summer and it was the prettiest thing I took. It was the prettiest thing I had.

Expressing his identities as a nature-lover and social media extrovert is once again seen in this interview response, and carries across for many of his photographs. Hpic5 and Hpic10 had similar reasonings behind posting; Hank thought that these two pictures (Hpic4, 5, and 10; see Appendix N), were pretty and he had a lapse in his posting time. Both were posted much later than when they were taken, but he decides to post them because he wants to be seen as a heavy user. When he gets the perfect picture, he wants to make sure they are posted to seem frequent. Moreover, showing different aspects of nature is important to Hank. Finding places to take pictures which have odd color combinations, or reminds him of other locations shows that he wants to fit into a larger community. Instead of focusing on himself, he uses his Instagram to show how he aligns with other people's interest. Therefore, his Instagram is partly personal because he can express his extroverted side, but also communal because he is showing locations of places he visited/frequents instead of highlighting himself. Hank talks about his daily commute in Hpic6 (see Appendix N):

Researcher: These next five are the ones that I chose, that I randomly chose so essentially went I did the first one and then I went every 5 and I pick those out. So what's happening here?

Hank: Okay, I don't know how familiar you are with [city noted], but there's like [location noted] and a set of three lakes up north of town on the way to [location noted]. Every morning I drive to school I have to drive past those lakes and they're always the prettiest things I've ever seen but the way they're set up is you can't really take anything of them. There's nothing, there's no way you can get a pretty photo out of these lakes, actually showing the lake. And so, they've got the mountains right behind them, and so every morning during the sunrise they are bathed in pink and like waters are all reflective, but no nothing. And so I was riding back on my bike that day, in the fall, and like I saw the weird what the light was doing which looked really Orange on the hill, and I don't

know, I went across the street and took a photo of it, because it was weirdly Orange. And I liked it, because I don't know it was one of the, I'm fascinated by pictures of Iceland and it reminded me of Iceland for some reason. Just a weird, weird nature colors that end up in there.

Finding pictures which not only fascinate him, but also others, is vital to Hank's Instagram. He wants to establish his identity as a nature-lover and outdoors enthusiast by posting on Instagram. Focusing on nature rather than himself shows that he is trying to fit into a larger community, instead of establishing himself in a singular context (much like freshmen do). Unfortunately, Hpic7, 8 and 9 (see Appendix N) are all out of the scope of this study because they were posted before the start of his Senior year. Nevertheless, those pictures also were focused around nature and a lack of himself as the subject.

Senior Masculinity Section

Once each senior was interviewed about their posts, I wanted to inquire as to their thoughts on their own masculinity and expressed masculinity on Instagram. I wanted to know if they thought they were manly, what that means to them, and their perceptions of masculinity based on their Instagram profile. Much like the freshmen, the seniors also had an enlightened view on masculinity. Many knew the difference between hegemonic masculinity, and what they considered masculine. Eric, who focuses more on uses Instagram as a marketing tool, has his own thoughts on masculinity and his own masculine self:

Researcher: I have a few more questions. So my study is focused on how guys are using Instagram so these next few questions are going to be about that. So if they get too uncomfortable or something just let me know. The first is what in your opinion makes a man a man? And take your time.

Eric: Um, I would say probably the ability to know what's right and be able to affect that, in whatever sense that that has, to be able to do the right thing and also, have some follow-through, being reliable is a huge point to me, like if you don't have your word you

don't have anything, you need to be able to be trusted and respectable, I said was probably the biggest points for me.

Researcher: Do you think much about your own masculinity or do you think it's off to the side for the most part?

Eric: Yeah I know I never really think about it.

Researcher: Why do you think that is?

Eric: I don't know actually that's a good question; it's just something I've never really been concerned about.

Eric does not take too much time thinking or considering his own masculinity, especially on Instagram. He sees Instagram as a tool rather than a way to express masculinity, only further solidifying the fact of his focus on fitting into a larger audience. I asked further as to whether or not he considered himself manly:

Researcher: Next is a personal thing and it goes along with the others, do you consider yourself manly? And what does that mean to you in particular?

Eric: That's a weird question and I'm just trying to think. I mean I don't really know. I don't see myself as a manly man, I don't really do hard labor and I'm not super concerned with being able to lift weights, and things like that. Um, I think I'm a lot more mature just because of going out and getting this freelance position, I've had two internships on campus, so I mean kind of. I guess manly in the sense of an authority figure over my peers if that makes sense just because of the experience that I have a lot of people don't.

Researcher: Sounds like you're more professionally driven than aesthetically driven like some people post gym selfies all the time.

Eric: I mean I guess if you can think of being a manly man I don't consider myself, I'm not like Macho, not a bodybuilder or wrestler, but I guess more of like a professional like Don Draper or Jordan Belfort, or something like that, like when you think of them you think of a man because they are professional and successful, so I would say that's more where I would lean toward.

Eric understands there are different types of masculinity and knows he does not fit the hegemonic sense of being a bulky person. Instead, he relates himself to other hegemonic examples of popular cultural breadwinners and chauvinists like Don Draper. Therefore, while he

does not use the academic language of hegemonic, his knowledge of the difference is apparent. However, his Instagram does not appear to follow this same hegemonic tendency. Much like my assertion, Eric does not use his Instagram to express his masculinity necessarily, but he does indeed use it to reach a niche audience. His Instagram does not appear hegemonic masculine, and Eric does not want it to be. He keeps, as he mentions, neutral to better fit with a larger crowd rather than limiting himself because of his masculine expression choices. Frank seems to have a similar mindset for his Instagram. As an outwardly expressed homosexual male, his thoughts on masculinity were insightful:

Researcher: The next few questions I have are going to be kind of, it'll seem off topic, but I will tie them back in, so with these next questions if you ever feel uncomfortable or anything just let me know. The first one is, well since my study is about Instagram and I'm asking guys specifically how and why they are posting on Instagram, the first question is what do you think makes a man a man?

Frank: Uhhhh, I think, probably expressing the qualities that biologically make you a man, so short hair, I mean I would say clothes that make you look like more physically fit and like muscular than women. It's weird that I'm looking at this picture, because I can't really focus because I'm looking at SpongeBob, but the other photos that I have, I think that not really proving to the world, but just showing off to the world that you are more masculine than your feminine female counterparts. So kind of like I said, having short hair, wearing clothing that is what men would wear, yeah I think yeah.

Frank focuses on biology when it comes to masculinity. He sees outward appearance as more important when expressing masculinity, which is similar to his mindset on posting. Since Frank is such an aesthetically driven person, it makes sense he sees masculinity in the same way. In fact, he does not distinguish between sexual preferences, instead focusing on how a man can look masculine by their features. When asked whether he thought he was manly, his answer still hinged on aesthetics:

Researcher: Then do you think you're manly and what does that mean to you?

Frank: I would say in terms of appearance and how I look on Instagram, I do come across quite manly. I'd say the parts of my life that I'm not manly, would probably be my voice, my mannerisms and obviously the fact that I'm gay, but I don't really think it's super obvious and any of the pictures that I've chosen or you've chosen that I'm not manly so I think that in a lot of the pictures I do come across that I am manly, and that I do represent someone that identifies as a male and as a man, so I think the only way that you would be able to tell any of the parts that aren't manly of me would be irrelevant of Instagram, or of the pictures that I'm posting.

Instagram, then is a place where Frank can focus on aesthetics and not necessarily worry about sexual orientation. He sees himself as outwardly manly, which can be seen as aligning with a hegemonic ideal of masculinity/beauty. Therefore, he does not focus on expressing his masculinity on Instagram because to him, his outward appearance tells the whole story.

Instagram for Frank is a place to relish in his aesthetics without thinking about his masculinity because he appears manly to himself.

Frank considers and sees himself as masculine and outwardly appears so throughout his posts. It is interesting that he thinks of his behavior as not following a hegemonic ideal, but the fact is his Instagram is focused on showing himself aesthetically. Frank is less concerned about specifically expressing his masculinity on Instagram because to him he already is, just not his behind-the-camera activities. While Frank thinks of masculinity in terms of outward biology, Grant thinks of masculinity on terms of reproductive biology. I asked Grant to tell me his thoughts on what makes a man, a man:

Researcher: Alright so I just have a few more questions. This is related to the second part of my thesis, which I'll explain after. Still seem a bit roundabout but I'll bring it back. What do you think makes a man, a man?

Grant: I would say, if they decide to have children to be a good father. And to be a good father you need to follow basic principles, I think I live by, which are to be honest, if you're doing business don't be a dirty business person, be an honest business person and I would say treat people like you would like to be treated.

Grant relates masculinity to not only having children, but raising them correctly. This mean emphasizing honesty and compassion. He does not even mention outward appearance or other characteristics like being a breadwinner or aggression; instead, he sees a man as being able to pass on knowledge and a sense of caring. This point is fascinating because some of Grant's posts appear to be hegemonic masculine showing him alongside, or in proximity to cars (which is considered hegemonic masculine in the United States). With his interpretation in mind, and his outward appearance of being hegemonic masculine, I asked him whether he thought of himself as manly:

Researcher: Then, this is more of an introspective question, do you consider yourself manly?

Grant: Yeah.

Researcher: And why is that?

Grant: I've lived through some things that I think in my life have allowed me to be independent from anyone else, to a certain degree. I still see my family for support. But, if I had to be alone in this world I would not mind, just kind of doing it on my own. Would it be easy? No, but I can handle it. You don't have to be a man to be independent, or independent to be a man, I don't think so at least, it's just kind of my attitude, how I am.

More than just teaching positive values, Grant sees independence as being manly. Even though he understands that anyone can be independent, he still considers independence as masculine in his life. Being in solidarity can be interpreted as hegemonic masculine because a person does not make connections with others. Even though he considers himself manly, and some of his posts reflect this value, he has different thoughts on his overall Instagram account:

Researcher: Do you consider your Instagram account as manly? In whatever definition you think.

Grant: Not necessarily no.

Researcher: And why is that?

Grant: Well that's a tough one. Why not. The reason I would say no is because I've never posted a picture and thought about, 'do I look manly in this or is this manly'. So, for that reason I don't think it's manly, it's just what I like and what I post on Instagram.

Once again, appearance versus reality can differ tremendously. Even though he does not put mental effort into appearing masculine on Instagram, a few of his posts do indeed come off as hegemonic masculine. Therefore, Grant's masculinity identity expression is not intentional, but still can be interpreted as being masculine. Hank, a person who can express his extroverted self on Instagram, had much different thoughts on masculinity:

Researcher: These next three questions are going to seem out of nowhere but Ill loop back around. What do you think makes a man a man?

Hank: Me personally?

Researcher: Yes.

Hank: Um, I don't know. What's that famous quote, like, I can't give you a good definition of porn but I know it when I see it, that's kind of it... It's just... I don't know... It's just intangible, not female. I don't know, at the very least it's separated by...um, I'm trying to figure out a good way to phrase this. It's something in the way you present yourself. There's something in the presentation where you just go ahh yes, that person is male. I don't know what that is or the intangibles there.

Hank is more similar to Frank in the sense that he sees outward appearance as the main component of masculinity. A man is a man by the way they walk, talk, and act, according to Hank. Once again, he is talking about hegemonic masculinity without knowing the nomenclature. However, when asked about his own thoughts on his personally outward masculinity, Hank knows how he appears to others:

Researcher: Then when you thinking about your own life you consider yourself manly? In your opinion what does that mean?

Hank: No, I don't know, kind of the opposite, I dropped a lot about airing towards being effeminate, just because I've never understood exactly, I've never understood the aesthetic. There's like... For example, no mean to offend, if you're into cars per say, but I'm going to use cars because that's something that I've associated with guys who are into cars that's how they define who they were and it was a manly thing to be into cars and I just never was. It's just a lot of stuff like that. I don't remember your original question. I've talked my way out of it, can you remind me?

Researcher: Just in general. Do you consider yourself manly?

Hank: So no, because I was never into that because I was never any of the stuff that a lot of people to find as manly.

Realizing his deviance away from hegemonic masculinity, Hank has accepted the fact that his actions and appearance are not hegemonic. Even though there are different interpretations of masculinity, he considers the hegemonic ideal as the standard; he benchmarks his own masculinity against this standard. Unlike Frank, he does not focus on aesthetics, and unlike Grant, Hank does not engage in hegemonic masculine interests like cars in his posts. However, he is comfortable in his own skin. Hank's Instagram is largely devoid of himself as the main subject, so he does not focus on his own masculinity identity expression, but more on being able to be extroverted.

Much like Frank, Hank takes time and effort to compose the perfect picture. He cares about the aesthetics of a picture, rather than the subjects. However, he also realizes that he himself does not fit a hegemonic ideal. Hank's Instagram, as per his thoughts, also does not fit a hegemonic ideal because he posts more about environment instead of himself, or showing off his body. All the seniors, much like the freshmen, understand the difference between society's definition of masculinity and their own definitions. All of them do consider themselves men, but also do not want to be associated with the hegemonic ideal because they do not see themselves as fitting the standard. Moreover, most, if not all do not see their Instagram as manly, but having manly aspects. It appears that the participants are more attentive to individual identity

expressions such being a car-enthusiast, or a vinyl-enthusiast rather than how manly they appear.
Each uses Instagram in a different way, with no one form of masculinity emerging.

Chapter 5 - Discussion Section

The main focus of this thesis is to see how males are expressing themselves on Instagram. By looking at their posts, and interviewing the participants about their own profiles, the hope was to gain perspective on freshmen and senior experience. Moreover, I wanted to explore identity, masculinity, and current trends of the average college student. I used Hecht's (1993) communicated theory of identity to assign themes to each post (personal, enacted, relational, and communal). In addition to these themes, I also assigned other themes that emerged such as nature-centric and art-centric, among others. Since both populations (freshmen and seniors) were in a transition period, going to college for the first time and about to leave college, I wanted to see if their posting habits differed from one another. Originally, I had thought that freshmen would be more inclined to post about their personal identity, while seniors would post about their relational and communal identity in an attempt to align with a larger population other than their college environment (see Figure 1). While this line of thinking was confirmed, there were some surprising results after analyzing the posts and interview. In relation to masculinity, I had thought that the participants would express more hegemonic masculine ideals which "refers to an idealized form of masculine character" (Wailing, 2016, p. 428); in this Context, the Western ideal can be seen as aggressive, heterosexual, confident, and a bread-winner (Wailing, 2016; Donaldson, 1993). Contrasting the hegemonic ideals, the participants did not pay much attention to their own masculinity, nor did they post specifically to emphasize their manliness. Much like Anderson's (2005) participants in his study of men in a feminized terrain, the men in my study felt more freedom to express different aspects of their identity on Instagram. The platform became a safe environment to express pieces of themselves they might not be able to in person.

Research Questions

RQ 1: How are traditional freshman and senior males using Instagram to express their identity?

Freshmen.

The first group analyzed were the freshmen participants. For them, it was anticipated that they would post more personal and enacted themes because it was presumed that they would be more focused on establishing themselves in a new college environment. After looking through all the posts, I assigned themes to all freshmen posts and the following are the most frequent themes in order of most to least: Personal (27), Enacted (20), Relational (14), Communal (7), Art-centric (11), Nature-centric (6), Friend-centric (3), Team-centric (2), Family-centric (1), Sports-centric (1), Environment-centric (1), Vehicle-centric (1). While most overlapped with one another because multiple themes were assigned to individual posts, it is apparent that freshmen do indeed post more personal and enacted themes.

Adam, who posts mostly pictures of his art, focused his Instagram on expressing his identity as an artist. All of his posts had personal meaning to them, while additionally trying to show his classmates a bit about himself. He was definitely different from the other freshmen because he posted only his art, nothing outside of his own work. After the interview about his posts, I asked about his posting habits. As mentioned earlier, perception versus reality can become two totally different pictures. While I originally thought his Instagram was used just to show off his artwork, his rationale was much deeper:

Researcher: While I was going through your Instagram and picking out these photos, I noticed ninety percent, if not all, were your sketches instead of personal photos. So why the decision to do that on your Instagram?

Adam: I think my posts are for different purposes, it's not like a personal account; well I mean it is, but like in a different manner. When people post they kind of post about the real life and what's going on with them at the time, and in a sense that's what I'm doing, I post and I remember what happened at that time, but it's more posting or drawing what I

was initially thinking about my artwork process, what was happening at the time in the political climate, or my grandmother, just like little moments, and then translating that in my own manor, instead of just posting about it.

In a sense Adam's Instagram is an artistic interpretation of a timeline where he can see his progression, show his current self, and express pride in his work. The three main themes after analyzing the interview seem to be personal (in terms of pride and progression), enacted (in terms of establishing his identity as an artist) and communal (in terms of connecting with family, friends, and followers). These themes closely mirrored my analysis of his posts pre-interview. While my perception of his posts, and the reality behind them are different, Adam seems to be using his Instagram to establish a personal identity within a College environment, and setting himself up for future success.

Ben, who comes from a hegemonic masculine hometown, tends to use his Instagram to not only highlight himself, but also distance himself from the hegemonic ideal. He does not want people to see him as a mean, aggressive, and hostile person; instead, he feels safe on Instagram to show the different sides of himself. When I first looked at Ben's Instagram posts, I thought he displayed more hegemonic masculine aspects. After the interview, it became apparent that while there are some pieces of hegemony, he is starting to explore more about himself. I asked him about what goes through his mind when posting a picture on his Instagram:

Researcher: Well those are all the questions I had for your photos in particular. I just have a few more questions to ask. The first one is when you're deciding to post a picture, what's going through your mind, just in general?

Ben: Uh, it's depending on what I'm going through. Sometimes I just want to post a picture to show people what I'm up to and then sometimes like, I'll be talking to someone and it's just like, I don't like to tell people how I feel, I don't really like expressing myself sometimes, and sometimes I just put like indirect thing so they understand it. I don't like telling them directly, and then they're like, was this for me? And I'm like yeah. It's just easier for me to do that.

Ben's posting habits stem from an inability to express his emotions in person. His Instagram is a safe place to be open and communicative about his emotions. Contrary to my original analysis, his Instagram is deeper than just showing pieces of his hegemonic masculine self; he wants to establish and reinforce a certain image of himself that he was not able to before. By being able to post about his emotions and true interests, Ben can feel comfortable showing the world that he is changing, and that his identity is not central to how he acted in high school. He is more focused on making an identity for himself as a motivated, hard-working, sensitive student in an environment where he does not have to restrict his emotions.

Cam, who mainly posted selfies and sports-team photographs, wants to establish his identity as an athlete and handsome man. He chooses to focus specifically on putting himself at the center of the photographs, or engaged with his various teams. Crafting an image for others to consume is the main aspect to Cam's posts. Expressing different aspects of his personal identity is important and the main theme to his Instagram account. In the following transcript, he was asked to describe what goes through his mind when he posts:

Researcher: I have a few more questions, when you're deciding to post things in general, what's going through your mind?

Cam: Um, I feel like when I post something, it's because I feel good about the picture, like if it's a selfie, it's like, ok, do I feel like this picture represents me, or, like, do I like how I look in the picture. Um if it's a picture of art, I'm just trying to find ways that it could like, if it's beautiful then I'll post it, or if it has meaning to other people then I'll post it as well because it could give different emotions to everyone. It kinda depends on how I'm feeling and if the picture represents or has a feeling to it in the moment, that's basically how I choose the pictures that I post.

Cam wants to represent how he sees himself to others. Posting pictures to supplement his own thoughts about his identity seem to be his posting habits. Coming into an atmosphere where a person is relatively unknown, certain strategies are used to show others their identity.

Instagram seems to be the place where Cam wants to express different pieces of his identity in

order for others to know a full picture of who he is. He is focused on himself, and connecting with others; therefore, his Instagram is mostly personal, but also social so that others can see the images that he seems in himself. However, even though some of his posts show aspects of hegemonic masculinity, he does not see his Instagram as such:

Researcher: Do you consider your Instagram account manly?

Cam: Um, I don't think so. I don't portray my pictures as like, being 'manly manly,' I try to portray my pictures as like, open for everyone to see, like I don't try and post pictures to define something, but like, to open it up to different perspectives basically.

The focus of his Instagram is primarily himself. He wants others to see him as a varied person, and that his identity is deeply personal. Cam follows suit with the other freshmen analyzed. They don't see themselves or their Instagram accounts as manly, but they all are focused on establishing themselves in a new environment and crafting an image for others to interpret.

Dan, who also posted mainly selfies, or him as the main subject, is the best example of trying to establish his identity for a college. He shows himself with friends, but mainly he is the center of the photographs. After discussing all his posts, I asked Dan about his posting habits. I was curious to hear about why he posts what he does and the decisions behind which pictures he decides to post:

Researcher: In general what goes through your head when you're deciding to post a picture on Instagram?

Dan: What's actually going inside my head is not a lot about like what I'm posting, what kind of think about how my photo would fit like, uh, a social cue. Cause everyone now, everyone uses Instagram it's like at this point everyone who's posting a picture right now has probably a similar idea to what I'm thinking right now like I'm posting for my followers, I'm posting for this, they have their own reasons but it's like it's kind of weird because there are so many people in this world who are all using social media but at the same time everybody could be doing something exactly like you, and you wouldn't even know who they are. It's just like, it's just like crazy when whenever I post, and that's why

I don't like posting too much either because I don't want to be one of those people who use social media too much, but I mean, that's basically it.

Clearly, Dan is cognizant of the decision-making process people go through in relation to social media, but does not necessarily understand the image he presents when he posts himself. His Instagram seems to be a place where he feels comfortable showing himself in different situations to express his multiple identities; however, he does not see himself as a social media user. I inquired further about this aspect:

Researcher: So why don't you want to use social media too much?

Dan: So, social media was never like a big part of my life when I was younger versus my other friends, like I never got an Xbox until I was in high school and I didn't get a phone until I was in high school so everyone else all my friends grew up with all those things and it was just his kind of different, because they would have I forgot what kind of apps they would have, I think it was Myspace cause Facebook wasn't out back then, but I didn't really have any of that until high school so it was very weird for on the friends I have it in me not have it, like not communicate to them. But then once I got it I noticed their habits, but that was in eighth grade so it didn't really matter, but then once I got into High School, you thought, well if this is what high school is like, but then he found out what high school is actually like, but then you start seeing these social cues like the popular girls posting this and it was like a pattern and I realized I didn't like scrolling down my feed and seeing a picture from someone that they posted an hour ago and then another one from five minutes ago, and it kind of gets kind of annoying, cause you only want to see them every once in a while and now I see them on my feed unless they are important to me, but most of my followers there just acquaintances really so I want to see what they're up to and I know that people feel the same way about me I'm their acquaintance, so I won't be like buzzing them, and then also I like to be low-key, I don't like telling people what I'm doing with my life, I keep it a mystery, so that's why I like don't post what I'm doing every day, I post kind of like a significant event kind of like happens.

Dan tries to make it a point to use Instagram sparingly, but as mentioned in the beginning of this section, perception versus reality often do not mix. His reality is that he wants to present himself in the best light. The perception of his posts makes it seem like he is very active, outgoing, and a socialite. Dan appears to be in all of these, but does not see himself as the typical

Instagram user. Based on his Instagram and interview, he is very much like the other freshmen in the study. Dan wants to establish himself in a new environment; his crafted image is that of a hegemonic masculine man who is a social being. In his mind he is an average Instagram user, but it has become apparent that his Instagram is meant to establish his identity, and not necessarily to fit into a larger community outside of a college realm.

Freshmen commonalities.

Based on the transcribed interviews, each freshman has their own way they express their identities and masculine identities on Instagram. Adam chooses to focus on expressing himself through his artwork, establishing his identity as an artist. Ben, on the other hand, is more similar to Cam and Dan in the sense that he is trying to show others who he identifies as, which has changed since high school. He focuses on showing his new freshmen class that he is a nature and art enthusiast while balancing between hegemonic masculinity and subordinate masculinity (Anderson, 2009). Some of the pictures of himself having him dressing up and smiling, while others are stoic and straight faced. According to him, his home town did not tolerate subordinate displays of masculinity such as being outwardly friendly, but he can express different pieces of himself on Instagram; he feels comfortable showing his more silly side, rather than just stoicism. Cam is alike to Ben in the sense that he also has a mix of different masculine identity expressions. Most of his pictures revolve around himself as the main subject, trying to establish his identity as a social person and an athlete. He too is using Instagram to show that his identity is multi-faceted, while also keeping the emphasis on him. All freshmen participants use more personal and relational themes (Hecht, 1993) on their Instagram, choosing to present a certain image of themselves for others to recognize. Dan is no different; he uses his Instagram to show he is a socialite and craft an image he wants others to take as true. Interestingly, each claim to

use Instagram for different reasons including to keep up with old friends, staying in touch with family, showing their followers their skills and abilities, and as a personal memory timeline. Nevertheless, each participant is still focused on themselves and informing the audience of who they want to be seen as. Some want to express different pieces of their masculine identity, while others want to express their closeness with friends, all culminating to the fact that each in their own way crafts an image for their freshmen cohorts to consume. They are establishing themselves as first-year students in a large class; standing out and showing others different sides of themselves seems to be their overall use of Instagram.

Seniors.

The seniors interviewed were in their last semester before graduation. They all were set to graduate on time; each was starting to look forward to life after college. Their posts, however, seem to be more varied. While the seniors showed more relational and communal themes, some were still focused on establishing their identity for their immediate audience. Two seniors in particular (Eric and Hank) only had one picture respectively with themselves as the subject. The following are the most frequent themes which emerged from most frequent to least: Relational (23), Communal (23), Personal (12), Nature-centric (12), Music-centric (5), Vehicle-centric (3), Enacted (2), City-centric (2), Architecture-centric (2), Food/Drink Centric (2), Animal-centric (2), Family-centric (2), Friend-centric (1), Sports-centric (1), Art-centric (1). As originally thought, seniors posted more relational and communal themes.

Eric, who was ready and anxious to leave college, posted mainly music related photographs. From vinyl records, to album covers, Eric attempts to align himself with a larger community. A communal theme, according to Hecht (1993) “locates identity in the group not the individual” (p. 80). Clearly, Eric locates his identity with a larger group outside of academia.

Moreover, he is not like the freshmen interviewed and has had less activity on his account than others in this study. What he does different is that he focuses on promoting himself and connecting with a larger audience. I was curious about his posting habit and inquired further into why he uses his Instagram to focus on others rather than himself:

Researcher: I'll ask some questions in general about your Instagram use. You kind of mentioned that you started Instagram your freshman year, but you haven't really engaged until recently, why is that?

Eric: So, I usually use social media to just kind of see everybody else's, almost like flipping through a magazine I guess, I never really posted just because I never really been interested in it, but as I take these PR courses and things, and they are the importance of building your own brand and things like that, and showing that you know how to connect with an audience even if it's a niche market or a small audience that you can make a post that has engagement on it. After discussing that I decided that I should get on that a little bit.

Researcher: So as you've gone through college, Instagram has started to become a professional place in anything else that sounds like.

Eric: Yes definitely.

Researcher: What do you hope is the outcome?

Eric: Well I would say that one day if there's ever something I wanted to promote, I would love to work at a firm and do PR for them for so long, and then once I have the skills I need and a good reputation and maybe a clientele base that would like to work with me, I would be able to switch to freelancing and it would be very important to me to have an audience and not to say that the people who are listening to this are looking for that in 30 years, but the fact is you know that somebody is going to see it and somebody's going to know somebody who needs it and I'm just hoping that eventually that's going to be the outcome, that I can use this the kind of brand myself and Market to people.

Eric clearly realizes the potential social media can have in his professional career. As such, he has adapted his Instagram to be a place where he can explore his identity and plan for the future. This shows that Eric is more focused on communal themes (Hecht, 1993) in order to reach a bigger audience, attempting to fit into a larger community. He is very different from the freshmen group who focused on establishing themselves in college. Throughout his interview,

Eric reiterated his usage as promotional and marketing practice, which shows he is thinking beyond his college environment, and his readiness to move on from academia. Once again Eric will be a small fish in a big pond, but he uses his Instagram to show the big pond how he can fit in. Eric, however, seems to be much different from participant Frank.

Frank, who posted a lot of selfies and himself as the main subject, differed greatly from Eric. He was focused on reinforcing his identity, rather than aligning himself with a larger community. Frank's aesthetics and connections are most important to him and his Instagram. After discussing each post, I inquired further into Frank's posting habits. In general, he follows suit with my thoughts on him focusing on himself, rather than trying to fit into a larger community. When asked, Frank realized his own habits tended to be more personal:

Researcher: Then my last question is more of a general one and you kind of already touched on it when we were outside but, in general why do you use Instagram and post on Instagram?

Frank: I would say because of the way that I was brought into Instagram um, and kind of societally and generationally the reason why people post on Instagram is to get likes and to get attention, um, I do think that is partially the reason why, but as I kind of said the other reasons why I post is cause I really like to show the world who I am, and I think it's quite an authentic way to see who I am, some of the pictures I post are candid, are actually real, I wouldn't see they are as a authentic, or as real as Snapchat because you can put a filter on them, um, and you can change the appearance of them, um, but kind of irrelevant of that kind of think the reason why I post on Instagram, is to share my life with people whether they are 5 feet from me, or whether they are geographically located in other places, I have friends in Canada, I have friends that are studying abroad in Spain or Japan that I know care about me and really want to see where my life is at and what's happening in my life so this is a great way to share with them as well and allow them to interact and still see what I'm doing and kind of still keep up with and see what's happening in my life so. I would say although I post on Instagram to be similar to society that's around me that's posting for the purpose of likes and attention, although that does play a part in the pictures I post, um, I think that there are other reasons and factors that go into why I post that are just as important.

Through his own reflection, Frank understands that he is more personally focused when it comes to his posting habits. He wants to let people know how he currently identifies in his present situation without caring as much to fitting in with a larger community. It is apparent that he is still engrossed with reinforcing his identity, which is different from other senior participants. While an outlier, Frank is similar to how Grant expresses his identity.

Grant, who is similar to Frank, tends to use his Instagram to focus on himself and his current activities. Apart from him showing more personal pictures, he also tries to align himself with a non-college community. He seems to be a mixture of both Eric and Frank, but still deviates somewhat from the expectations about senior posting habits. Grant uses his Instagram to update his followers on his life happenings. I asked more specifically about his posting habits, Grant reflected on why he posts what he does:

Researcher: So, this leads to the final question, why do you post on Instagram in general? What is the average thing that's going through your mind when you decide to post something?

Grant: There's definitely a social media and communication and networking aspect to it I would say, so in general if something cool happens in my life and I took a really cool picture and I like it I would like to share it to people that follow me, so as a means of communication to me and the people that follow me.

Grant claims to use his Instagram to update his followers. However, “not all messages are about identity, but identity is in all messages” (Hecht, 1993, p.79). Even though identity expression is not behind the reason why he posts, he is still telling a lot about himself through his posts. Grant expresses his identity as an athlete, as a vehicle-enthusiast, and a lover of scenery, with one post about his identity as a family-centric person. All of these themes are a mix of personal and communal because most have him in them, but many are focused on other subjects. Since he was a senior at the moment of the interview, he was still transitioning from one environment to another. Trying to establish your identity to a larger community can be hard;

Grant, however, tries to establish his personal identity while also trying to fit in a larger community. This finding contrasts with my thoughts on how Seniors would post. I imagined that Seniors would focus more on transitioning from the world of academia, to the working world. Perhaps Instagram for Grant is the place to ground himself in both realms. Regardless, Grant's posts are much different from the next interviewee, Hank.

Hank, a nature-enthusiast, uses his Instagram to show his extroverted side, even though in person he is introverted. Instagram becomes a place where he is free to not only express himself, but also show his love for nature. After asking about his posts, I questioned further about why he posts on Instagram in general. I was curious about his habits and the fact that he was a self-proclaimed introvert eager to post in an extroverted way. The fact that he wants to be seen as a heavy user, while also specifically taking nature-centric pictures, was captivating:

Researcher: Why do you use Instagram just in general?

Hank: When I got on it, it was cleaner than Facebook was, and I wasn't really a fan of Facebook, but this had enough people on it that I could do what Facebook did except with my friends. So, like a minimalist Facebook.

Researcher: That makes sense then. So when you're deciding [what photograph to post], what's the decision process going through your mind?

Hank: Like how long has it been since I last posted something, what was the thing that I posted, and I'm trying to figure out a good way to phrase this, I've read in some studies about what these types of services do, and how they get stuff in your brain fire. And so when I feel like I'm not connected, specifically, is when I post something, because it's fun to see....it's fun to see people even just nominally go, 'that's cool.'

Hank's introspective answers supports the idea that Instagram is a place where Hank can be extroverted and social. Finding a clean social media environment was a surprise to hear, but fits Hank's ideal of what he wants out of a social media platform. Moreover, Hank enjoys the interactions he gets from posting, which is a reason why he wants to be a heavy user. Perhaps he does not get/receive as much recognition of his identities and interests offline, so finding support

for himself on Instagram finds him comfort. Even though the reasoning behind him posting is more personal, and communal in the sense of interactions, his pictures paint an image of himself as a hiker, nature-lover and photographer. His identity as an outdoor person shines through on his Instagram profile. In relation to CTI themes, he is showing more relational and communal (Hecht, 1993) themes, which follows with my thought on how seniors post on Instagram. The introverted Hank finds solace showing himself as an outdoors extrovert on a platform where he feels comfortable and safe. Perhaps Instagram is indeed a place for unadulterated self-expression; a setting where expressing identities is accepted.

Senior commonalities.

The seniors in this study have some distinct similarities and differences, which I did not anticipate. Originally, I thought the seniors would focus more on aligning themselves with a larger whole. Only Eric and Hank decided to do so, while Frank and Grant still focused on emphasizing their current identity for an immediate audience. Eric tends to post pictures about vinyl's and album covers in an attempt to reach a niche audience. He is able to express his true passion for music on Instagram. Hank, who is a self-proclaimed introvert, uses Instagram to also reach a larger audience. Most of his pictures are nature scenes and outdoor activities with the intention to show his alignment with a nature-centric community. Both Eric and Hank choose not to fixate on themselves as subjects and instead explore/express their identities in an outgoing way on Instagram. Frank and Grant, on the other hand, are more similar to one another. The vast majority of Frank's posts are either centralized around him, or him in proximity to people he feels close to. By doing so, he is less about aligning with a larger whole. Grant tends to post similarly to Frank because he is the main subject of his photographs too. Moreover, he posts many pictures with him in proximity with people he is close to as well. Therefore, he and Frank

want to show their relational identities to inform their audience. Family and friends become most important in their identity expressions. While the senior group seems to be divided in half as to how they post, all of them have an enlightened view on masculinity. None of them want their Instagram to be seen as hegemonic masculine because of the stereotypes surrounding current western masculinity. Nevertheless, they all see themselves as men. Frank and Grant see masculinity as more biological, while Eric and Hank see masculinity as more of a presentation. Unlike my predictions, the seniors varied in their identity expression, while still leaning toward more communal and relational themes (Hecht, 1993).

RQ 2: How has an individual's male identity expression changed between freshmen and senior years?

When it comes to changes in masculine identity expression on Instagram, both the freshmen and seniors tended to think of masculinity as societal and personally situated. I asked each participant if they thought their Instagram was manly, and many thought it was not manly in a stereotypical sense, but rather it was manly in a personal sense. No one person reported focusing on specifically emphasizing their masculinity; it became an afterthought. Instagram, then, became a place where these men could express themselves in a non-judgmental way and could explore their own different identities. I asked each participant if they thought their Instagram was manly, or if they considered it so:

Researcher: So do you think your posts and Instagram would be considered manly?

Adam: I don't think when someone looks at my profile, they probably wouldn't think it was a male doing it, they probably think it was a female just because our tends to be done by more females.

Researcher: Does that frustrate you or anything?

Adam: I don't think so, it just kind of separates me, even in my major I'm one of the only males and it kind of brings attention to me because I'm kind of unique in that manner.

Freshman participant Adam realizes that his Instagram will be interpreted as feminine because of the content, but he does not let this perception change his posting habits. His Instagram is full of self-made illustrations and he is not concerned about his masculinity expression; rather, he wants to show his immediate community his work as an artist. Senior participant Eric, thinks similarly to Adam:

Researcher: Then the last question that I have, do you consider your Instagram manly?

Eric: I would say not particularly, more neutral. You don't have to be a guy to like music, or vinyl I guess, and I would say are more aesthetic than leaning more toward one way, just because I don't really have events on there but I guess I have beer on there, and I guess beers considered manly comparatively, but then again you don't have to be a guy to drink beer.

Senior participant Eric also does not think about masculinity when he posts about vinyl's or album covers. He does not take into consideration which genre the music is, but rather how he can connect with a larger audience. Freshmen Ben, who comes from a hegemonic masculine hometown, also does not think his Instagram is manly:

Researcher: Okay fantastic, and then my last question so kind of bring it all back, do you consider your Instagram manly?

Ben: Mmmm, no I honestly don't, at all. I mean like there's like the I'm always staying muggin' one, which is like oh yes, me I'm hard, or whatever, but at the same time I have pictures like this [Appendix ?: Bpic10], and then I have pictures of nature which isn't really manly if you think about it, it's like men are supposed to be like working on cars doing this or doing that, and I have like three cars but I'm never posting anything about my car is because it's something more personal to me and I mean, I have nice cars but I don't care to post stuff like that because I mean after a while I stopped caring what people thought and like I don't always have to be this person everyone always wants me to be, I can just be who I really am like, I like going outside, I like going in the mountains I like going exploring. I mean it's different than what people think, but I'm secure with who I am.

Expressing different aspects of his identity in a safe space is important to Ben. Even though he does not feel comfortable showing his more sensitive side in person, online he can really show his vast interests. Instagram for him becomes a place where he does not have to think about his outward masculine expression, and can focus on showing other parts of himself. Senior Hank, the introvert, also thinks similarly to Ben:

Researcher: Okay then the last question do you consider your Instagram or your Instagram posts manly?

Hank: No, I don't think so, in a stereotypical sense no. Trying to figure out another good way to phrase this. There's something about...oh boy...wow, we're about to go down a rabbit hole... there's something about art that I've never, that has never quite seemed like it, so it's like me paying attention to the color or the composition, it never struck me as particularly manly, in fact kind of the opposite, it's like do you know who pays attention to that? Girls. It's kind of a, it's not the most macho thing, is probably the best word, and that's probably the best description I have of it when you say manly I associated it with macho. And this isn't a macho Instagram by any stretch of the imagination, so no.

Instead of thinking about how masculine his posts are, he considers the aesthetics of a picture and the overall composition. Much like Ben, the focus is not on expressing his outward masculinity, but instead showing his other interests. Freshmen and seniors seem to be on the same page when it comes to expressing their masculinity, not much deviation over the years. Freshmen Cam, who tends to post more selfies and personally fixated pictures, also does not consider his Instagram as manly:

Researcher: Okay, the last question to bring it all around, do you consider your Instagram account manly?

Cam: Um, I don't think so. I don't portray my pictures as like, being manly manly, I try to portray my pictures as like, open for everyone to see, like I don't try and post pictures to define something, but like, to open it up to different perspectives basically.

Freshmen Cam wants his Instagram to focus on his image he is creating, without emphasizing his masculine identity. He wants to show himself as a socialite and extrovert, not a stereotypical hegemonic male. Senior Grant had similar thoughts about his posts on Instagram:

Researcher: Do you consider your Instagram account as manly? In whatever definition you think.

Grant: Not necessarily no.

Researcher: And why is that?

Grant: Well that's a tough one. Why not. The reason I would say no is because I've never posted a picture and thought about, 'do I look manly in this or is this manly'. So, for that reason I don't think it's manly, it's just what I like and what I post on Instagram.

Senior Grant is one of the senior participants who focuses more on reinforcing his current identity, rather than trying to align with a larger community. Most of his posts have him as the main subject, much like freshman Cam. By doing so, the prominence of him as central to his posts is vital to his identity expression. Freshmen Dan tends to just post pictures he likes or finds interesting, rather than trying to express a masculine identity:

Researcher: Ok, great. And then my last question to tie it all in, do you consider your Instagram manly?

Dan: I would...mmm.... Well the thing for me when I see a manly Instagram, personally for me when I'm on it, what I think is a man the Instagram is like, if it's like when you're working out or you're shooting guns or, not really selfies about you, nothing really about your life, but it's just like those manly things people think of like big trucks, fast cars, what people think is manly, that's what I kind of see as a man the Instagram. I would say underneath the idea what I think is a man, I don't think mine is manly at all. But then again my Instagram isn't really serious I'm not trying to get famous or anything, it's just I've, it's a way to stay connected with all my friends and that's why I really use it. I don't try to aim for it to be manly at all, I just take a picture and then if I think it looks good then I post it. I don't think anything other than that.

Freshman Dan finds pictures he likes and posts them regardless of the degree of masculine expression. Much like senior Frank, masculinity tends to be an afterthought. Senior

Frank is like the freshmen participants because he posts more personal themed (Hecht, 1993) pictures and focuses on the aesthetics of a photographs before anything else:

Researcher: Then to kind of tie it back in, kind of already touched on it a little with the last answer, do you think your photos and your posts on Instagram is manly? Or your interpretation of it? What are your thoughts?

Frank: um, I think the part that strays probably the most from being manly, um, is that I think a lot of stereotypes of men is that they don't enjoy taking pictures of themselves or don't like posting them, or they don't show, really care about the aspects of photos and I think that when I post these photos I definitely take into account lighting, who's with me, what's surrounding me how I look and I think that those things that most guys or men don't really think about typically when they post pictures if they post pictures at all. So, I would say that although the pictures that I do post do reflect that I am a man and that I'm manly, but I think the difference is that it's just behavior that's foreign or not stereotypical of what most men do.

The main focus of Frank's posts is showing himself, and his friends/family in the best light. He understands that his photographs might not be hegemonic masculine, but he still considers himself a man. Therefore, throughout all the participants, pure masculine identity expression was secondary. All instead wanted to focus on showing pieces of their identity which they might not have the opportunity to in person. Instagram, for these men, is not a place to highlight their masculinity, but rather their individuality. Even though some focused more on reinforcing their personal identity and other focused on aligning with a larger community, masculinity was not a major factor in their posting decisions and habits. To answer the RQ2: "How has an individual's male identity expression changed between freshmen and senior years," the answers seems to be that masculine identity expression over the years did not change. What changed was their posting habits and intentions with more freshmen posting personal and enacted themes while seniors posting relational and communal themes (Hecht, 1993). Instagram, therefore, appears to be a platform where these men can express different sides and identities of

themselves without having to fixate on their masculinity. Hegemonic and subordinate masculinity was seen in some of the participants posts; however, being able to articulate themselves in a safe environment was the ultimate connection between all participants, regardless of age or year in school.

Limitations and Recommendations

Due to the qualitative nature of my study, there were limitations to generalizability, the writing process, and artifact collection, to name a few. First, while I cannot generalize the results, I was able to make them detailed enough so they can potentially be applied to other studies. For example, a future study could potentially look at first-time fathers posting on Instagram because they are in a transition period as well and are ripe for analysis. Even though the population is not randomized, but rather a purposeful sample, there was an issue with replicability. I addressed these concerns with careful consideration to decisions and explicit details highlighting how I gathered my data and analyzed what was found. Second, the writing process was difficult due to the vast amount of information gathered. Not only did I combine posts, but also I recorded long interview sessions. Keeping these in separate folders with labels for each participant will help keep organizational completeness. Moreover, correctly transcribing the interviews took a long time; for future studies, if the investigator had monetary resources I would suggest outsourcing the transcriptions. Every piece of gathered information was stored on a secure flash-drive which was exclusively used for this study only. Third, since my purposeful sample was of male college students, I had to make sure my interviews helped them feel comfortable and safe. By doing so, their responses to my inquiries yielded better results because their self-disclosure enhanced if they felt comfortable. It took a few minutes to get my participants to open up, but when they did their responses were highly engaged. I would suggest having a ten minute chat before the

interview to establish comfortability between researcher and participant. Moreover, the writing process of this qualitative case studies was laborious and long. Nevertheless, I took months to compile, analyze and interpret all my data, which ended up being sufficient time to fully explore the potential answers to my research questions. If this study is replicated, I would recommend having a long time-table for completion; gathering participants, scheduling interviews and transcribing took much longer than I had originally anticipated. Overall, my study hinged on myself as the instrument and with precise steps to completing the study, limitations were lessened.

Regarding masculinity, a limitation is that I only looked at a western lens of hegemonic masculinity. In every culture in the world, there is a standard of manliness as expressed both verbally and implicitly. The meaning of being a man differs from country to country. By only looking at a western perspective, I only gained insight into a small subset of overall masculinity. However, since the study was based exclusively at a western university, the choice to focus on western hegemonic masculinity was warranted. While different countries have different forms for hegemonic masculinity, so too do racial groups. What it means to be a white man is a different set of assumptions than what it means to be a black man, for example. Gender orientation and sexual preference also influence different concepts of masculinity. While these were taken into consideration with recruiting (i.e., gaining a diverse sample and not excluding any one type of male), doing a meta-analysis of these subgroups would be beyond the scope. In a future study, a more specific sect of masculinity could be examined; how black men, or transmen express themselves on Instagram could be a potential study. This study focused on men in schooling transition for the foci of analysis. A future study could follow the same procedures, but instead of Instagram, analyze Twitter or Facebook. On those platforms, perhaps young men do

not have as enlightened view of masculinity. Or maybe the younger generations are starting to think outside the box of hegemonic masculinity, even if they are not using the same terms.

Conclusion

The purpose of the study is to explore male identity expression in a digital environment. Identity is a conversation which happens both individually and socially every day. Some people tend to derive their identity solely on their own perceptions while others look to social context to give their lives a sense of identity. Using Hecht's (1993) Communication Theory of Identity as one of the leading theories to explore male identity expression on Instagram, I conducted a case study comprising an artifact analysis, coupled with in-depth interviews. Instagram was chosen because according to Pew research (2016), the primary users are female and I wanted to see how males expressed their identity in a feminized terrain.

Originally, it was thought that freshmen would focus more on their personal and enacted identities while seniors would focus on their relational and communal identities. The results indicate that while this hypothesis was generally accurate, there seemed to be a good variation throughout all participants. Only a few seniors exclusively fixated on aligning with a larger community. Nevertheless, the most fascinating aspect of the study was to hear how the participants thought about their own masculinity. Every participant understood the difference between societal perceptions and their own mentalities, which translated to their posting habits. Not a single participant engrossed themselves in expressing hegemonic masculine ideals, but rather wanted to show facets of their identity that they do not normally get to express when they are not online. Therefore, it appears that Instagram is a place where men feel comfortable expressing all parts of themselves. Some want their image to be the main point of their profile, while others want their profile to align with bigger audiences. Since none of the participants are

extremely active on their Instagram, meaning they use it as a social tool rather than a career builder, they have the room to investigate who they are in a social way. How do men express themselves on Instagram? According to the posts and interviews, Instagram is a platform of personal exploration for these men rather than a place to brag or bolster their own sense of hegemonic masculinity.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Sample Survey

The following is a survey to determine your eligibility to participate in the study. Please be as accurate as possible in your answers.

Do you use Instagram? Please select one.

Yes

No

About how often do post on Instagram in a given week?

_____ times

If selected, would you be willing to send my five of your favorite Instagram posts from the past six months?

Yes

No

Maybe (still deciding)

If selected, would you be willing to be interviewed for about an hour? Please select one

Yes

No

Maybe (still deciding)

What is your email address? I will email you with whether or not you are eligible to participate in my study.

Keep in mind, after you are contacted, all of your information will be discarded to maintain confidentiality.

Appendix B: In-Depth Interview Questions

The following are my concurrent set of questions asked for each Instagram post until a saturation point is reached.

1. Who is in this picture? (can be just the participant or with others)
 - a. Did someone else take the picture or is this a selfie?
2. What is the context of this picture?
 - a. What is happening?
3. Where was this picture taken?
 - a. Where was the event (or situation)?
4. When was this picture taken?
 - a. Was this taken during school?
5. Why did you take this picture?
 - a. Why was this picture taken, was it special?
 - b. Why did you choose this as your favorite photo? (for the posts the participant chooses)
 - c. Why did you decide this was a picture you wanted to post?

The following are my retrospective questions asked after the set of concurrent questions. These will happen once the concurrent questions are asked to ensure there is thought about their posting habits.

Now I'm going to ask some questions about being a man.

1. What do you think makes a man, a man?
2. Do you think you're manly?
 - a. What does that mean to you?
3. Do you think your photos are 'manly'?
 - o Allow for follow up questions in each category.

Appendix C: Recruitment Materials

Briefing Script

Researcher: Thank you for taking the time to be our participants today. My name is Thomas Gallegos and I am looking for participants for my study on how males use Instagram. If you self-identify as a man and post on Instagram at least once a week, then you are potentially eligible. I'm looking for a male perspective on why guys post on Instagram. However, there are a few things to cover before starting:

- First and foremost, please go ahead and read through the informed consent form and sign or initial when asked. Please let us know if you have any questions or concerns.
- Just a reminder that we will keep all of your answers private so that you are never identified.
- Your answers will be combined with information from other participants taking part in the study.
- When we write about the study to share with other researchers, we will write about the combined information that has been gathered, and your name will not appear on any recorded results.
- We may publish the results of this study; however, we will keep your name and other identifying information private.
- If you have questions about the study, you can contact the co-investigators: Thomas Gallegos
- If you have any questions about your rights as a volunteer in this research, contact Janell Barker, Human Research Administrator. You can refer back to the consent form for all contact information.
- Once completed, please hand in your copies. You will also receive a copy for your records.
- Once I have received your consent form, I will be handing out a quick survey to determine your eligibility. If you are eligible, you will be contacted about following up with participating. If you are not, you will be informed promptly.

(Gather informed consent forms from participants)

Researcher: We will now distribute the materials to direct you to our survey. Please read the beginning message before continuing on the survey. Once you understand the instructions, you may begin.

- We appreciate your time today and look forward to your responses to help with our study.

Appendix D: Timeline

Step 1: Go to classes and brief potential participants about the study. Explain that I will be asking permission to view potential participant's Instagram account.

Step 2: Acquire completed informed consent forms from potential participants.

Step 3: Randomly choose eight forms (four from a freshmen class, and four from a senior class) from the compiled forms.

Step 4: Reach out to chosen participants, and remind them that they will give me permission to view their Instagram account and that a follow-up interview is required.

Step 6: After confirming participants, I will have them send me five of their favorite posts from their last completed semester. I will also randomly choose five from the past six months.

Step 7: Once all artifacts are acquired, I will analyze and assign themes to the artifacts gathered.

Step 8: Once I have finished analyzing and assigning themes, I will then schedule a follow-up interview that will last approximately one hour.

Step 9: Once the interviews are scheduled, I will interview the participants.

Step 9a: During the interview, I will show them one post at a time, starting with their favorite posts and ask concurrent questions (See Appendix B) for each.

Step 9b: After the concurrent questions have reached a saturation point, I will ask retrospective questions (See Appendix B) about their interpretation on their manhood.

Step 10: After the interviews are completed, I will transcribe them all onto interview documents.

Step 11: After transcription, I will look for themes and pull those out as emergent themes and compare them with the artifact themes I assigned.

Step 12: I will compare all analyzed material between the two groups (freshmen and seniors).

Step 13: At this point, I will start writing my results sections with my interpretation.

Appendix E: Acceptance Email

Hello,

Thank you for filling out my eligibility survey in your class. Your participation means a great deal to me and to my study. Due to your responses, you have been selected to be participant. If you are still interested, please reply back to me and we can set up a time to meet to discuss details of what is expected next.

Just as a reminder, participation involves sending me five of your favorite Instagram posts from the past six months and allowing me to choose five random posts from your account also. Then, once I have all ten posts, a follow-up one hour interview will take place. This interview will take place in a quiet room in the library. If you would like to meet elsewhere, please let me know. Once the interview is complete, you will receive a ten dollar Amazon gift card. As always, your identity will be kept confidential. Your email will also be deleted to keep anonymity.

If you are still interested and are willing to share your posts and have a follow-up interview, reply back as soon as you can. My email is Thomas.Gallegos@colostate.edu, or you can text/call at 218-940-5964. Thank you for agreeing to help me and I look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,

Thomas Gallegos

Appendix F: CTI Themes

Personal Theme: The personal theme is such that identity is personally formed through a dialogue with the self. According to Hecht (2003) the personal theme “is an individual's self-concepts or self-images. It exists at the individual level of analysis as a characteristic of individuals” (p. 266).

Enacted Theme: This theme posits that roles of identity are enacted in social arenas and communicated while also being interpreted through messages outputted (Hecht, 1993).

Relational Theme: Relationships are either how two or more people define their connection with one another, or an individual's relationship to their environment as a certain moment in time. Conversation with the self and with those around an individual define relationships and become a jointly negotiated construction of reality (Hecht, 1993). While enactment is the act of doing, relational is knowing and choosing which role of identity is appropriate for a particular instance.

Communal Theme: In communities, roles and expectations are established which dictates action and belonging. The rules are not quite known, or the intricacies are not known to an outsider because roles and rules are jointly held, remembered, and taught to new members (Hecht, 1993). According to Jung & Hecht (2003) the communal theme “transcends individuals and is a characteristic of the group or collectivity” (p. 267).

Identity Gaps: According to Jung & Hecht (2003) identity gaps are “discrepancies between or among the four frames of identity” (p. 268). For example, there could be a discrepancy between how one personally identifies and how they enact their identity; a person who identifies as a “cat-lover” but wears a shirt with an exploding kitty.

Appendix G: Adam Participant



Kintsugi Show
 wounded;
 #instaartwork #instadrawing
 #drawingoftheday #dibujo
 #sketch_daily #sketchbook
 #watercolor #winstonandme
 #gouache #coloredpencil /
 #art_collective #art_collect
 #art_realistiqe #art_empir
 #denverartist #denverart #
 #blue #tattoo #ink #porcel
 So fragile and so
 lovely!
 Thank you for the description, it's a lovely piece!
 I hope you like it!
 Love!
 78 likes
 AUGUST 8, 2016
 Add a comment...

APic1



College is
 but time to draw stuff is
 However, thanks to my
 their white board, I can
 small drawings. More to
 #drawingoftheday #dra
 #dailydrawing #sketch
 #sketchbook #sketch
 #artistsdrop #art_spot
 #artistdrop #art_empir
 #denverart #youngartis
 #multimedia #illustratio
 #illustration #whiteboar
 #dryerase #dryeraseart
 #coloradostateuniversit
 I like this s
 cool to see your art app
 way! I hope to see you t
 ink (no pencil) pieces lik
 85 likes
 SEPTEMBER 10, 2017
 Add a comment...

APic2



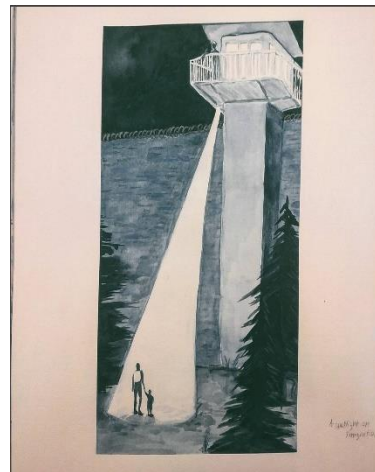
Drawing my grandma's
 portrait for summer homework. I haven't
 tried doing this amount of realism since
 middle school. Not my thing but it's getting
 there slowly.
 #instaartwork #instadrawing
 #drawingoftheday #drawings #dibujo
 #sketch #sketchbooks #sketchbook
 #sketch_daily #art_we_inspire #art_#art
 #artist #art_spotlight #art_help #art_#art
 #realism #portraits #blending #denverartist
 #denverart #blackandwhite #pencildrawing
 #pencilart #youngartist #bvisualarts
 It's amazing, you are so
 good at art!!!
 I hope you like it so. I thank you very much
 awe,
 70 likes
 JULY 6, 2016
 Add a comment...

APic3



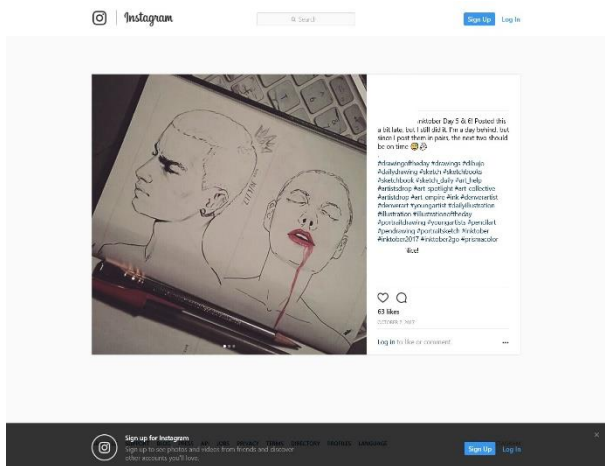
Here is my first official digital
 rendered shoe design. Can't wait for college
 next year though!
 #instaartwork #instadrawing
 #drawingoftheday #drawings #dibujo
 #dailydrawing #sketch #sketchbook
 #sketchbooks #sketch_daily
 #artist_4_shoutout #art_help #art
 #art_empire #art_we_inspire #digitalartwork
 #digitalartist #krita #shoes
 #industrialdesign #shoedesign #dsketching
 #digitalpainting #youngartist
 95 likes
 NOVEMBER 23, 2016
 Add a comment...

APic4

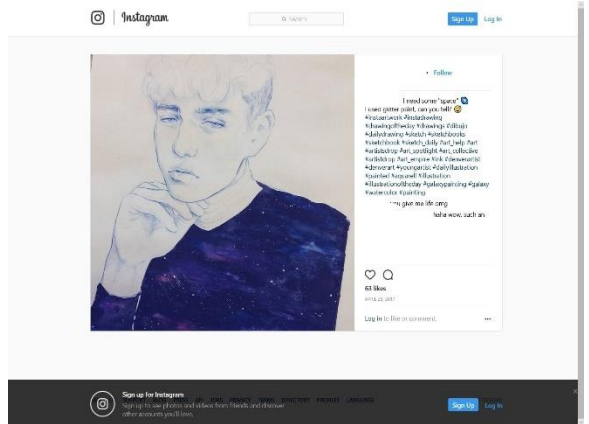


A "spotlight" on immigration.
 Morally, I still stand. Doesn't mean you have
 to agree with me.
 #instaartwork #instadrawing
 #drawingoftheday #drawings #dibujo
 #dailydrawing #sketch #sketchbooks
 #sketchbook #sketch_daily #art_help #art
 #artistdrop #art_spotlight #art_collective
 #artistdrop #art_empire #pencilart
 #denverartist #denverart #youngartist
 #dailyillustration #landscapeart #squarell
 #illustration #illustrationoftheday #gouache
 #watercolor
 Wow, I really enjoy your art!
 Such an inspiration!
 99 likes
 FEBRUARY 22, 2017
 Add a comment...

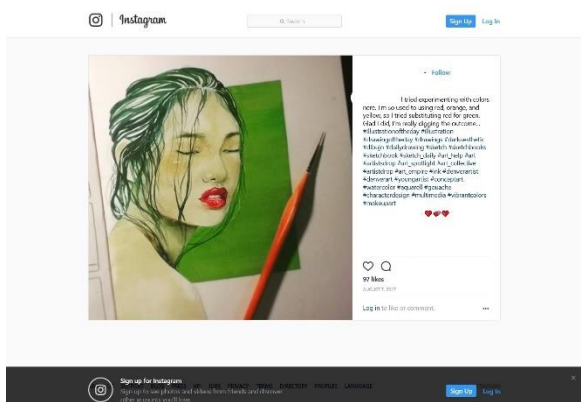
APic5



APic6



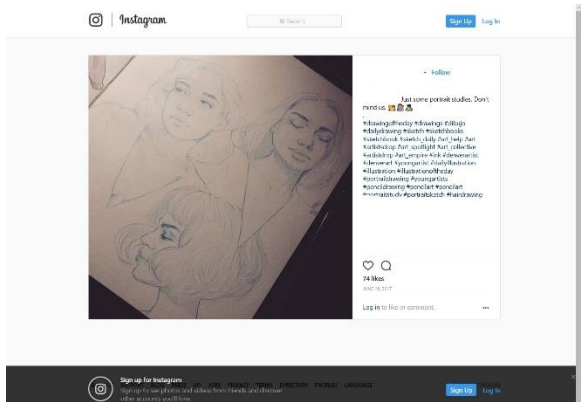
APic9



APic7



APic10



APic8

Appendix H: Ben Participant



BPic1



BPic2



BPic3



BPic4



BPic5



BPic6



Follow

Sometimes I just get mesmerized by how beautiful this campus is, especially in the sunset. #collegelife #sunset #stadium

13 likes
DECEMBER 12, 2017

Add a comment...



Follow

Bad Decisions. good memories #firstsemester #livinlikealady

26 likes

BPic9

BPic7



Follow

Photo creds to @mylifeasmayra
What a loser

29 likes



Follow

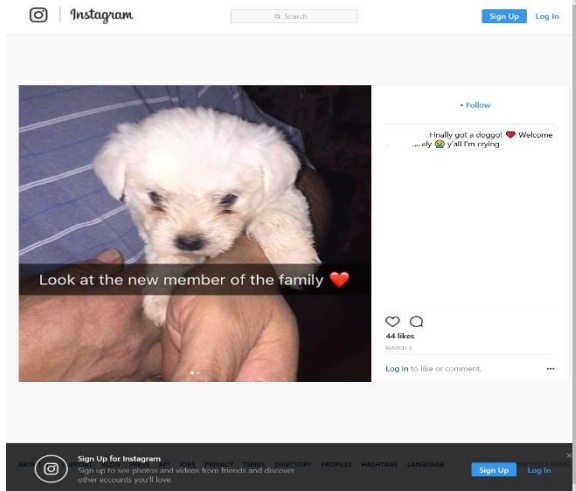
She's adorable c

20 likes
AUGUST 23, 2014

BPic10

BPic8

Appendix I: Cam Participant



CPic1



CPic2



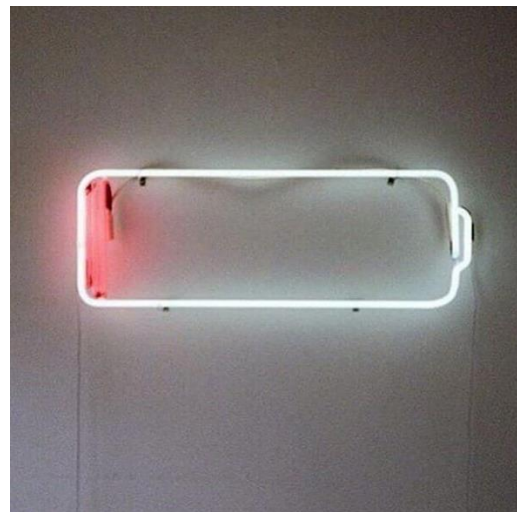
CPic3



CPic4



CPic5



CPic6



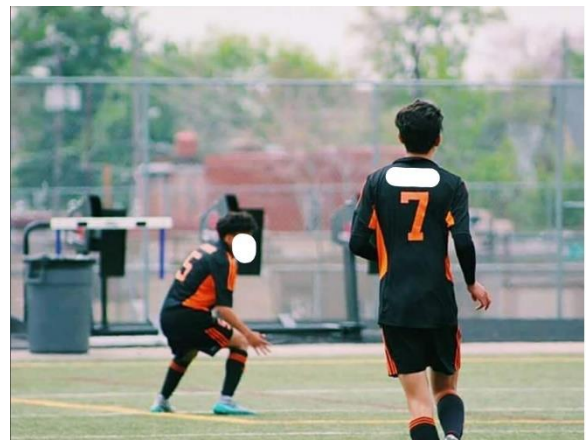
CPic7



CPic9



CPic8



CPic10

Appendix J: Dan Participant



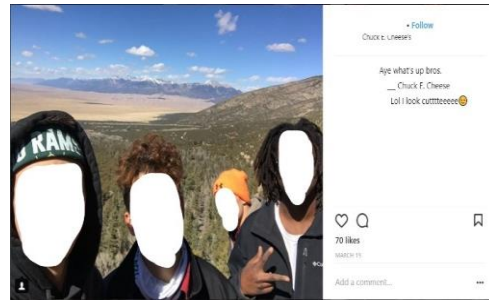
DPic1



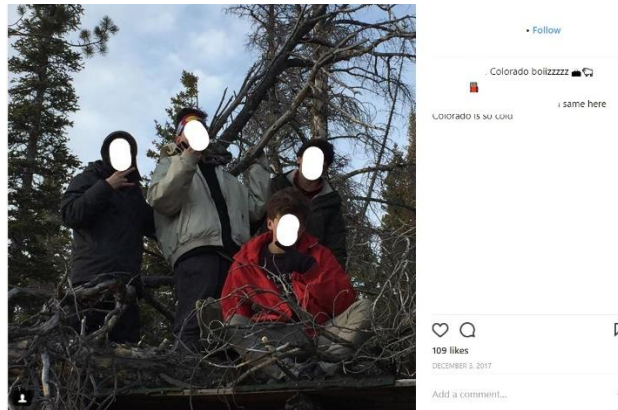
DPic4



DPic2



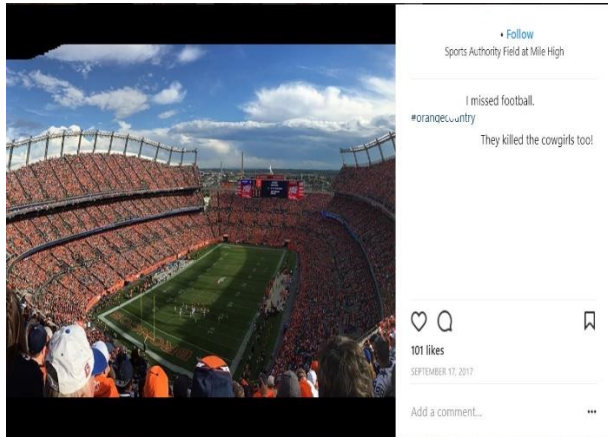
DPic5



DPic3



DPic6



DPic7



DPic9

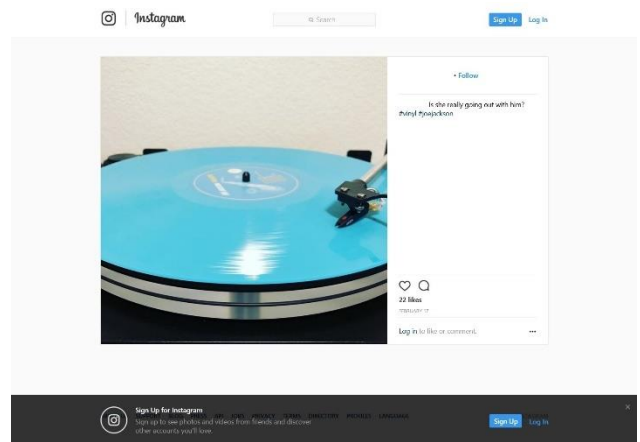
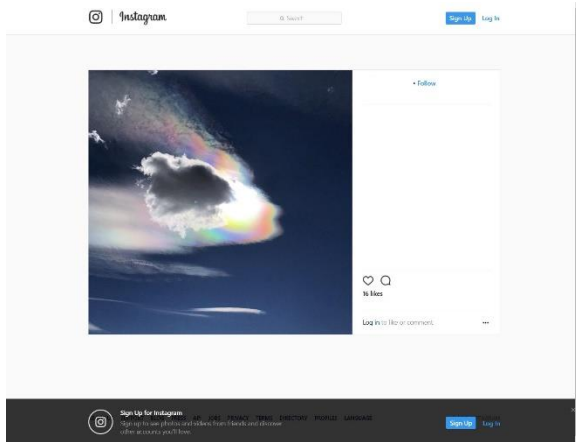


DPic8

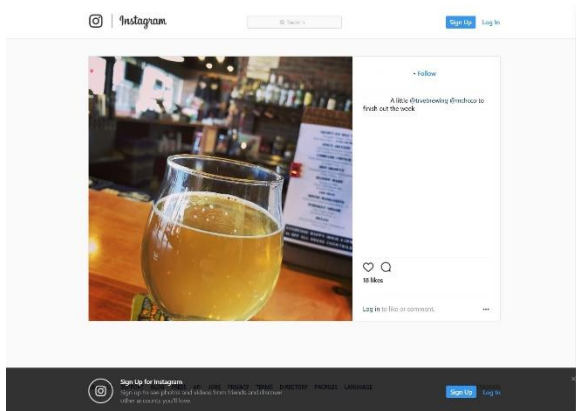


DPic10

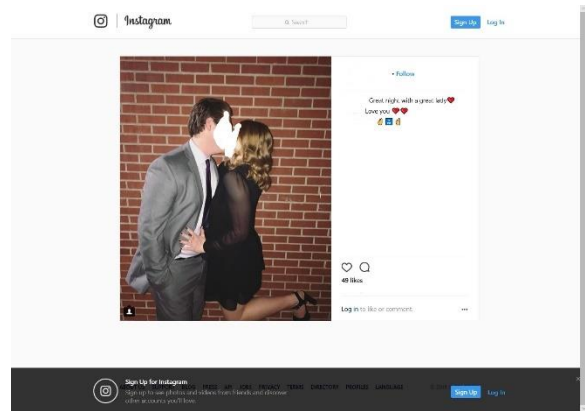
Appendix K: Eric Participant



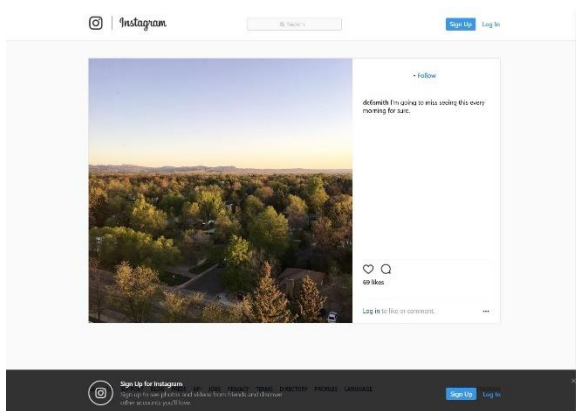
EPic1



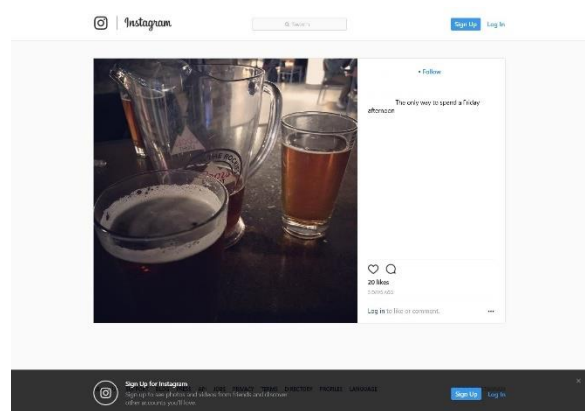
EPic4



EPic2

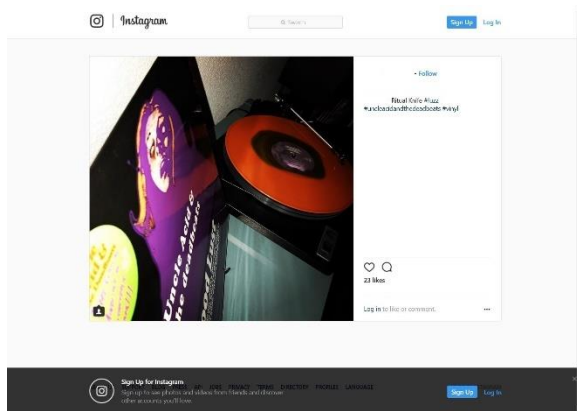


EPic5

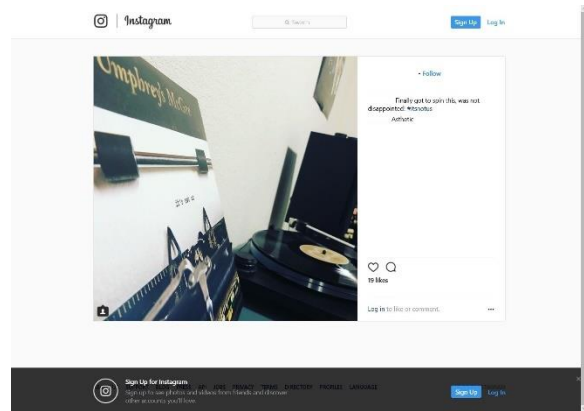


EPic3

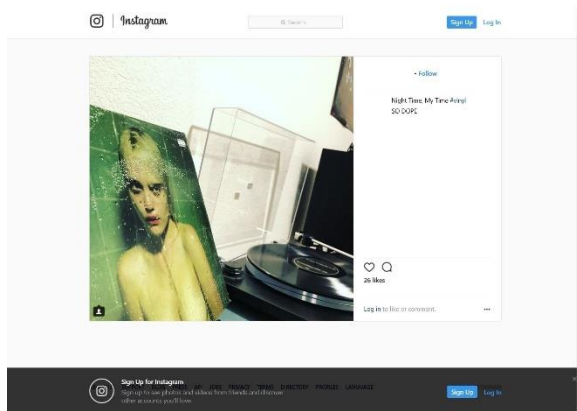
EPic6



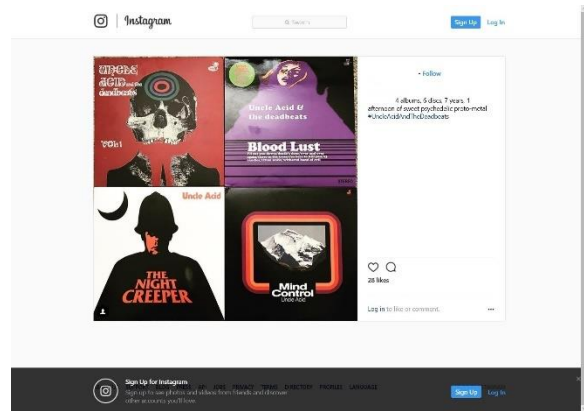
Epic7



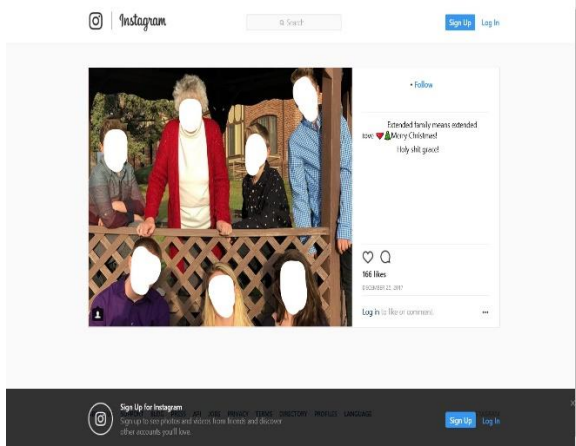
Epic9



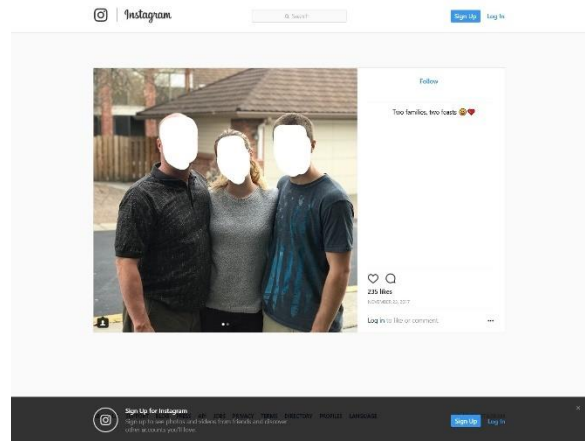
Epic8



Epic10



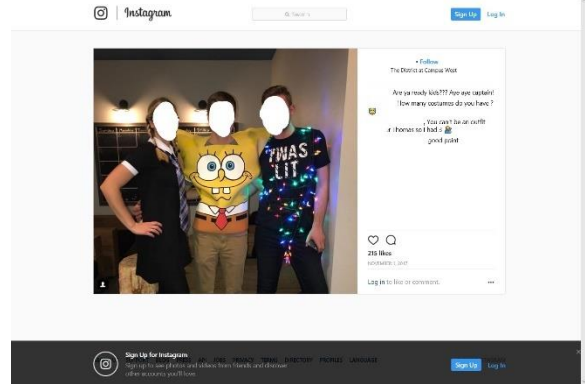
FPic7



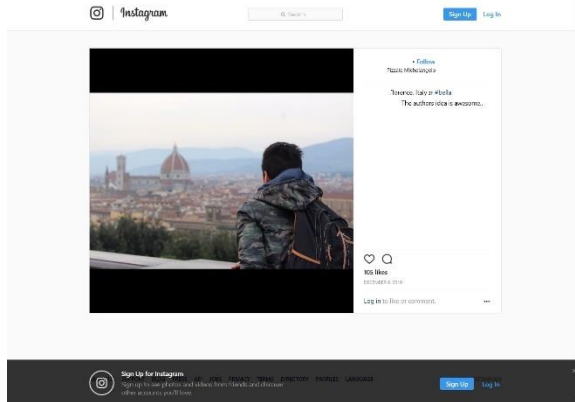
FPic9



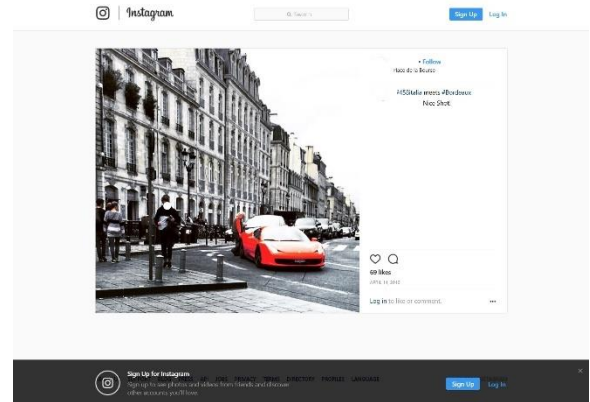
FPic8



FPic10



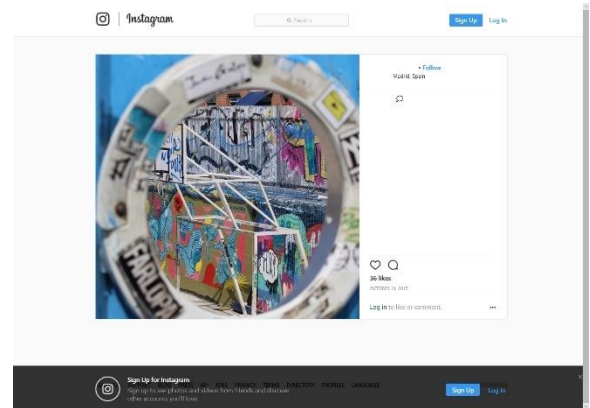
GPic7



GPic9

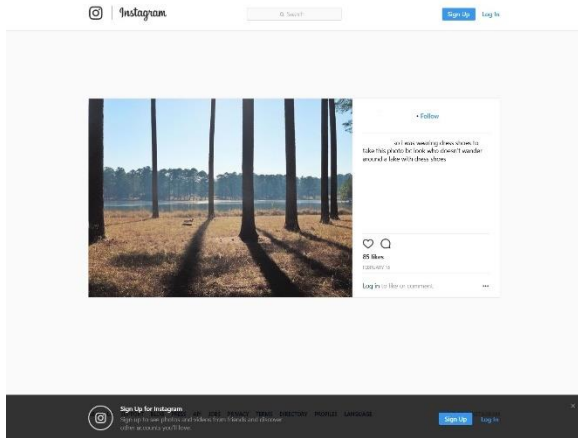


GPic8

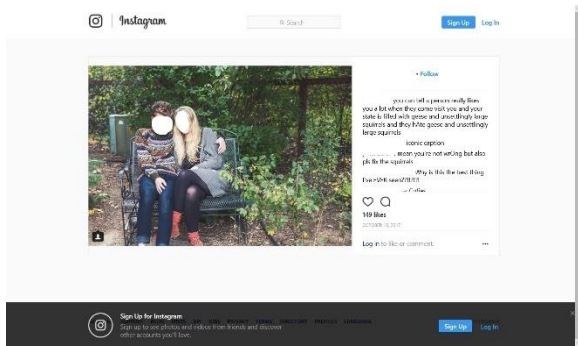


GPic10

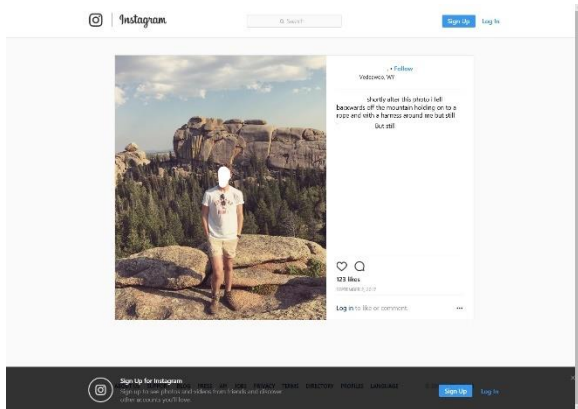
Appendix N: Hank Participant



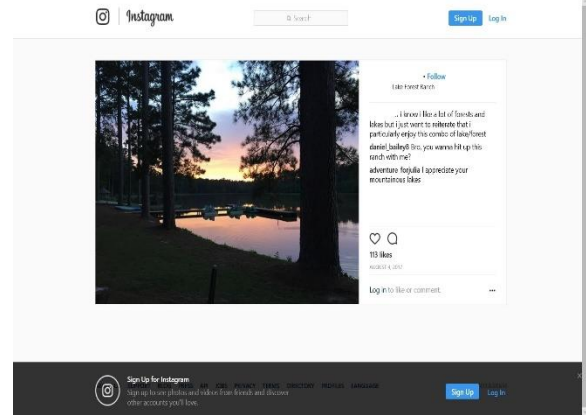
HPic1



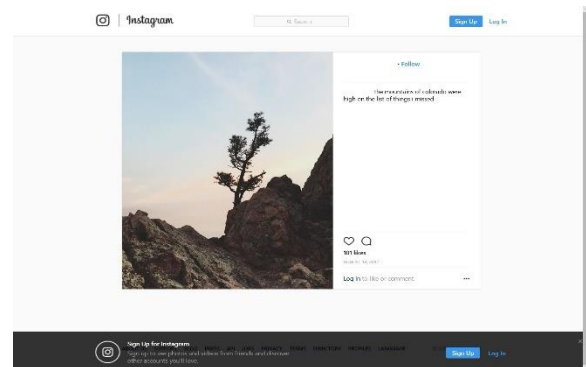
HPic2



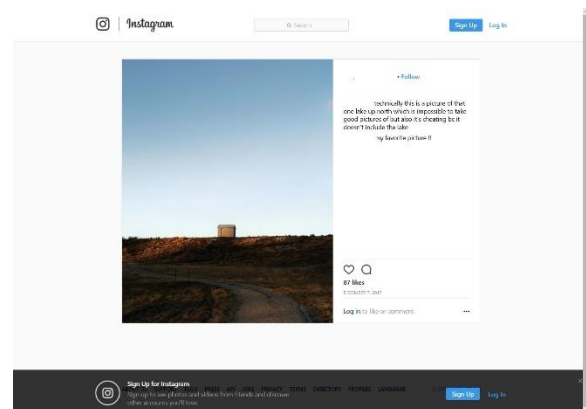
HPic3



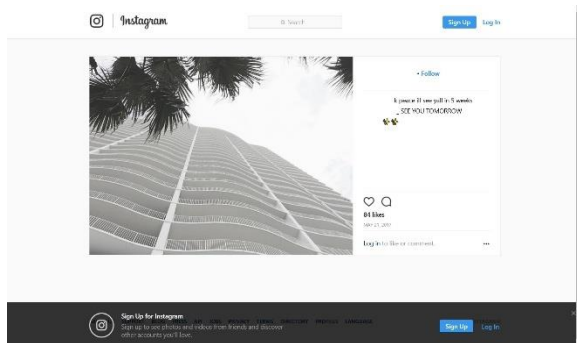
HPic4



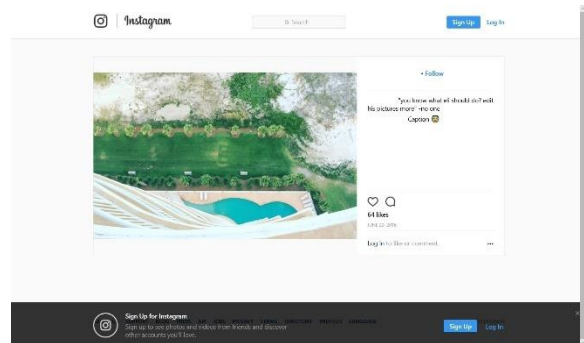
HPic5



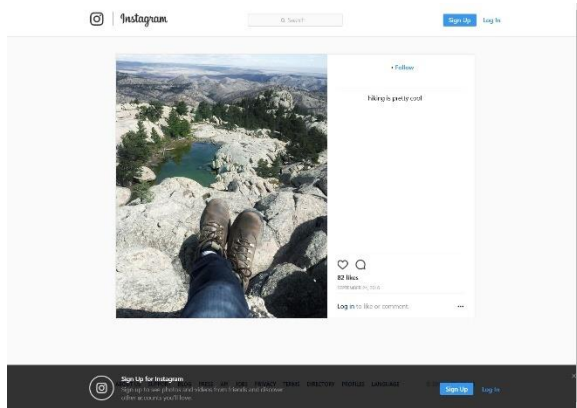
HPic6



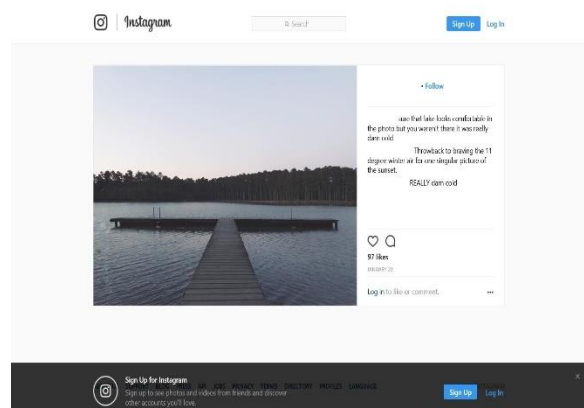
HPic7



HPic9



HPic8



HPic10