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Because Facebook usually shares your posts with close friends, family, and coworkers, it is necessary to keep up a certain image in front of them, one that is well put together and successful. On Tumblr, one's audience is almost completely anonymous, which means a user can post their true feelings without familial or financial repercussions. I will prove that because of the anonymity of Tumblr, one can post more explicit or "ugly" details of their life there than they can on Facebook, a much less impersonal social media outlet. By looking at my personal posts on Tumblr during December of 2016, as well as my shared posts on Facebook during the same time, we can clearly see a stark contrast between the openness and truthfulness of my cultivated self.

I chose this particular time period because during this time, I was suffering from a negative reaction to my medication, trying to decide my college plans, as well as suffering through an emotionally abusive relationship. This difficult time provides a plethora of negative experiences for me to express -- or not express -- on social media. I have decided to look at two specific instances where what I revealed on Tumblr was almost completely different from what I revealed on Facebook. The first was on December 16th, when I was to receive my admission decision from Princeton, and the second was on December 23rd, two days after I discovered I was reacting poorly to my medicine.

I will begin with December 16th. After receiving my deferment notification from Princeton, I immediately went to Facebook and posted the status in Figure 2.1.



Figure 2.1

This post is a clear example of the curated self. While it was an announcement of bad news, it was still a projection of the “superior Emma”, one who was applying to, and being considered for, an Ivy League School. It also portrayed my impatience, which showed my eagerness to hear my full results. Thirdly, it was a clear attempt to incite my family to write positive and encouraging comments on the posts, thereby furthering the idea that I had a group of loving, supporting family members. From comments like “They made a big mistake not accepting you right away,” to “you are a great one Miss Emma”, I was bombarded with positive

feedback on my life, and people supporting me through this bad news. My use of the common and positive phrase “the results are in”, as well as the exclamation point also invoke feelings of positivity and excitement, further strengthening the overall idea of happiness and success.

My posts on Tumblr on the same day, however, tell a completely different story. While I did make a post announcing my deferment from Princeton, I also reblogged a few other posts to reflect how I was truly feeling that day. The first can be seen in figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1

This post is just one example of negativity that I felt free to express that day. While it does not relate directly to my deferment from Princeton, it demonstrates that I felt negative and distrustful on this day. This was something I did not -- and would never -- post on Facebook, because there it likely would have been viewed as “too pessimistic” or “a warning sign” by my family members. To the anonymous audience on Tumblr, however, especially to the group of my followers that know of and sympathize with my mental illness and negative emotions, this was a completely understandable and normal post, although it did serve to notify them that I was in a poor mood.

In the same way, Figure 3.2 invokes feelings of negativity.



Figure 3.2

This post has clear ties to my Princeton deferment, specifically in the quote, “*is second choice for everything*.” (Figure 3.2) I was given an in-person interview during my application process to the university, and I am the kind of person who is constantly worried about my appearance. I remember specifically thinking on this day that my appearance and demeanor was the reason I had not been immediately accepted. This is yet another thought that I never would have posted on Facebook, but felt completely fine posting on Tumblr, knowing that my audience would simply read it, understand and empathize with my pain, and then move on, allowing me to reflect on my negative feelings without consequences, as I would have on Facebook.

Later that year, on the 23rd of December, two days after I went to my psychiatrist and we came to the conclusion that a lot of my negative thoughts and actions were a direct result of a poor reaction to the medication I was taking at the time. In Figure 4.1 I describe the event to my followers.

so it turns out that like. 95% of my issues with my mom stem from a poor reaction to my meds, and now my doctor took me off them and two days later i already feel less on guard and i trust ppl more, but im back to feeling anxious about stupid things, which is ok cause i have lorazepam to take when im rllly anxious but im so worried that like. it wont help All the Time? and plus im rllly worried about a lot of my friendships/relationships turning sour bc im no longer the person who i was on the meds, ill be a lot less chill, and what if that added a lot of appeal? like im mostly worried about my bf, what if he just becomes? not interested, cause there was some lowkey appeal in my chill, edgy personality???? ugH

December 23rd, 2015 at 11:14pm
#dnr

Figure 4.1

Before I delve into analyzing this post, however, I will present the “alternate self”, the cultivated self, I presented on Facebook the same day, as seen in Figure 5.1.



Figure 5.1

This post was a video about the modeling industry in France, and how it is now illegal to not disclose that photos of models were edited if they were edited. This was the only post I shared/made that day, and not an unusual one for me to make. I often post photos, videos, and links about social justice and feminism while on Facebook, as this is something I feel comfortable sharing on this platform. By sharing this video, I was letting everyone who was friends with me know that it was just “business as usual” in my life, that there was nothing interesting going on. Thus, the cultivated self remained intact, and my online reputation among my family members and colleagues as well.

However, as can be seen in Figure 4.1, this was clearly not the case. I included personal feelings as well as personal medical information. This is something that I would and should never post on Facebook, and thus proves my willingness -- especially during this time of emotional turmoil -- to reveal extremely personal and negative details about my life. At this time I treated Tumblr as my own personal counseling session, with hundreds of silent onlookers serving as my mental health professionals.

By and large, while Tumblr served as an outlet for negative and personal information, therefore presenting my “true” self at this time, Facebook was a place where I displayed the cultivated self, the best version of myself that I could make. Tumblr was a place to vent, while Facebook was a place to lift myself up. These two opposing mediums, one that heals and one that allows me to expel my negativity, were vital to my mental health after the winter during which all these events occurred. To be able to first go to Tumblr and voice all my negative feelings, and then have them accepted and normalized, was just as important as being able to go to Facebook afterwards and focus on the positive aspects of my life and the life of others, to pretend for just a moment that it was possible for everyone to be completely happy and perfect.

While this idea of perfection is incorrect, and sometimes harmful, I was in such a place of mental disrepair that it was helpful to have hope. Thus, in a sense, using Tumblr was my way of expelling negative energy during this time, and Facebook was my way of getting self-care. Furthermore, sometimes the cultivated self is helpful. While it can encourage a negative self-image, it can also force people to focus on the positive aspects of their lives, even for a short time, and then receive positive feedback (likes, comments), which encourages them to do this

behavior again. I wouldn't recommend it one hundred percent of the time, but I believe it can sometimes be a form of self-care.

Original Word Count: 1049

Revised Word Count: 1311

Revised Reflection:

This paper, surprisingly, was more difficult for me to revise than the researched rhetorical analysis. I expected this paper to have a lot more flaws, which it did, but they were flaws that could be fixed with two or three words, not 250. I drew on the feedback from my final essay to revise this work. Most of my issues with this paper were in my transitions, which were weak, if existent. After fixing those, I tried to focus on my analysis of the different social media posts. I was able to expand a bit on each of these, but the meat of my revision was in my conclusion. My conclusion, to me, was the weakest part of my paper, so I tried to focus on it. I drew on my experiences in my Introduction to Counseling class to draw newer, stronger conclusions about why I used the cultivated self, and even tried to present the cultivated self in a slightly positive light, as a method of self-care. I believe strengthening my conclusion like this increased my paper's effect on the reader, making it stronger overall (since I believe the effect a work has on a reader is where most of its strength lies).