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Facebook and Its Users: Using Grounded Theory to Understand Perceived Interactivity as a Constraint in the Rhetorical Situation

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FACEBOOK AND ITS USERS: USING GROUNDED THEORY TO UNDERSTAND
PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY AS A CONSTRAINT IN THE RHETORICAL
SITUATION

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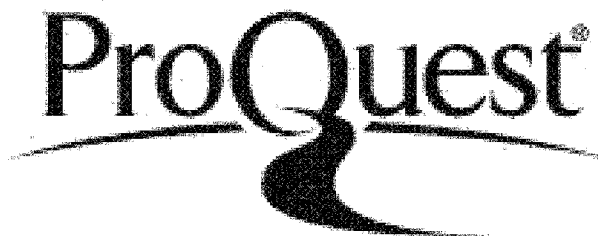


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ABSTRACT

FACEBOOK AND ITS USERS: USING GROUNDED THEORY TO UNDERSTAND PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY AS A CONSTRAINT IN THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

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Old Dominion University, 2012
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The general term *interactivity* has been used in a variety of disciplines to describe phenomena that occur in website interfaces; however, definitions and explanations about what constitutes interactivity and how it functions do not consider the specific ways in which interactivity can function and be perceived by users in specific rhetorical situations. In this study, I address the problems with the literature about general interactivity in writing studies and in other disciplines such as computer science, advertising, marketing, and communication studies by distinguishing between two types of interactivity—functional and perceived. I situate the different types of interactivity rhetorically, which can enable interface designers to create potential interfaces to be more rhetorically appropriate for end users based on their purposes or reasons for engaging with an interface.

In this study, I investigated the ways that perceived interactivity appears as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. I also was interested in the ways a user's purpose determines which features of an interface are perceived as interactive. In order to answer my research questions, I used the social networking website Facebook as the site of study. I used grounded theory as a framework to guide my interpretation of the data I collected. I triangulated my data using surveys, case study interviews, and genre analysis to answer my research questions. Grounded theory enabled

me to develop theory from the data I collected in order to draw conclusions from my data sets, which I then evaluated further to confirm the results I reported.

My results indicate that perceived interactivity functions as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface enabling users to determine which tasks they can and cannot accomplish through the interface. My research has implications for writing studies—particularly technical/professional communication, rhetoric and composition, and new media. Research that further investigates the ways perceived interactivity functions within specific types of rhetorical situations can enable interface designers to create texts that support users to achieve a variety of purposes for engaging with a website.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION—INTRODUCING PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY TO WRITING STUDIES

GENERAL INTERACTIVITY, INTERFACES, AND METAPHORS

The term *general interactivity* emerged from the sociology and computer science disciplines and has been addressed and debated among scholars in a variety of disciplines since the late 1980s and early 1990s (Quiring & Schweiger, 2008). In sociology, the term was used to refer to face-to-face communication between people within specific social environments, while in computer science, the term referred to ways people use computers (Quiring & Schweiger, 2008). In order for people to accomplish specific tasks with computers, software developers created interfaces to facilitate ways people use computers, and researchers developed interactivity models from descriptions of ways people use computers (Johnson-Eilola, 2005). Software developers also created graphical user interfaces (GUIs) in the 1980s to enable users to complete specific tasks by using objects in an interface such as specific buttons and icons that act as representations of specific tasks (Johnson-Eilola, 2005; Kirschenbaum, 2004; Laurel, 1991; Skjulstad & Morrison, 2005). The general term *interactivity* has emerged in discussions regarding interfaces because it represents an important component of the success of an interface in enabling users to complete desired tasks; however, little agreement has been reached about how to define interactivity as a component of website interfaces—one issue I address in this chapter as well as in this study as a whole.

In order to understand the ways interfaces work, scholars have developed models and metaphors describing interactivity to conceptualize the transmission of information

from a sender to a receiver. Metaphors help scholars define interactivity and ways it can be understood by comparing it to more common concepts, but metaphors used to describe interfaces and general interactivity within interfaces as conversations must be supplemented with knowledge of users' needs and purposes for engaging with an interface (Eubanks, 2011). Metaphors are helpful for explaining how interactivity works in interfaces because as Lakoff and Johnson (1982) noted, "our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphorical in nature" (p. 3). A person's conceptual system is composed of many metaphors that work together to help that person understand and make sense of the world and his or her perceptions of the world, but individual metaphors cannot be considered independently of the larger situation they are meant to describe and must be supplemented with additional insight into that larger situation in which they are meant to describe (Eubanks, 2011).

Some of the most significant models and metaphors that have been proposed to describe interactivity include the transmission model (Slack, Miller, & Doak, 1993), the mathematical theory of communication (Shannon & Weaver, 1949), the windowpane theory of communication (Miller, 1979), and the conduit metaphor (Reddy, 1979). These models and metaphors have come to influence the ways in which scholars in a variety of fields understand and define general interactivity as an element of interfaces. For purposes of clarity throughout, I refer to these models and metaphors as *conversational metaphors* because they illustrate a traditional model of communication that is similar to a face-to-face conversation where a sender sends a message and a receiver receives the message. Using a traditional model of communication such as the transmission model does not illustrate the digital properties that influence users' abilities to achieve specific

outcomes in an interface. Later in this chapter and in Chapter II, I describe in more detail the reasons why traditional communication models are not always adequate for describing interactivity and specific aspects of interactivity.

Conversational metaphors provide a starting point for understanding interactivity; however in this study, I argue that relying heavily upon conversational metaphors and communication models simplistically illustrates the variety of influences that can bear upon a person's ability to use, interpret, and respond to content in an interface and complete specific tasks. Instead, an interface must be understood as a site of struggle where users bring knowledge that may or may not enable them to understand representation of specific aspects of an interface in order for them to achieve tasks. Selfe and Selfe (1994) investigated this assumption when they critiqued the desktop metaphor of the Macintosh interface, and they asserted the desktop metaphor reinforces corporate culture structures—particularly corporate hierarchies prevalent in white middle to upper class corporate cultures. Their critique illustrates ways metaphors are based in culture, and how users who are not members of corporate culture may struggle to understand and to navigate the interface if their cultural background does not reflect the same ideologies of the corporate culture. Further, Laurel (1991) noted that, “what is represented in the interface is not only the task's environment and tools but also the process of interaction—the contributions made by both parties and the evidence of the task's evolution” (p. 7). In order to consider the representational aspects of interfaces as providing users with different types of interactivity, one purpose of my study was to consider the rhetorical situation and users' purposes or reasons for engaging with an interface in order to investigate ways different types of interactivity operate to provide users with a specific

experience based on their goals and needs. Aware that the results I obtained also were a representation, I argue that they establish a starting point for further investigation.

In addition to moving the discussion about general interactivity away from conversational metaphors to define interactivity, my purpose in this project was to differentiate between different types of interactivity in order to better understand the ways interactivity functions in rhetorical situations. To illustrate different types of interactivity within interfaces and the dynamic ways different types of interactivity can function in interfaces, in Chapter II, I describe and provide a continuum based on the work of Downes and McMillan (2000), Jensen (1998), Laurel (1991), Porter (2009), and Quiring and Schweiger (2008). The continuum works under the assumption that different levels of interactivity exist in a website's interface and different types of interactivity work dynamically along a continuum to provide users with a specific experience (Downes & McMillan, 2000; Jensen, 1998; Laurel, 1991; Porter, 2009; Quiring & Schweiger, 2008). Specifically, I use functional and perceived interactivity as two specific types of interactivity that extend the general interactivity definition. To explain functional and perceived interactivity, I draw upon scholarship from computer science, advertising, marketing, and communications. I also supplement functional and perceived interactivity scholarship with a rhetorical framework because situating both terms in rhetoric is outside of the disciplinary perspective of scholars outside of writing studies, and their work can benefit from a rhetorical framework that is used in writing studies scholarship. In particular, I am working under the assumptions that the rhetorical situation and the user's purpose impact how a text is used and understood by users (see Bitzer, 1968/1992; Flower, 1988; Hunsaker & Smith, 1976; Miller, 1984). I am also

working under the assumption that an interface, as a digital text, is a representation that enables users to complete specific tasks but that it is also a site of struggle where features as represented in an interface may not enable users to accomplish tasks in interfaces (see Laurel, 1991; Selfe & Selfe, 1994). While an interface traditionally is not referred to as a text, referring to it as a text takes into account its materialities—the physical and aesthetic properties through which it is composed. Later in this chapter, I discuss ways an interface can be defined as a text according to its materialities. In order to test my assumptions, I analyzed the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface as my artifact for study.

I chose Facebook as the site of study to investigate (a) whether or not different types of interactivity occur given its rise since its launch in 2004 and (b) whether specific features such as the News Feed and user Profile provide users with specific types of representations that can appear to provide different types of interactivity. I chose the Facebook interface as the artifact for study because of claims to provide an interactive experience to users that is different from other types of digital forms of communication. While Bolter and Grusin (2000) noted that any new form of communication is often celebrated and functions to critique that which came before it, Stengel (2010) stated, “Mark Zuckerberg and Facebook are changing how we interact—and what we know about each other” (p. 43). Although Stengel used the term *interact* in a general way, he implied that people are able to connect socially in new ways. However, it is unclear as to the ways people can interact with each other.

The Facebook interface, when studied as a digital text, is embedded within different types of rhetorical situations, and specific features within the Facebook interface are assumed to provide different types of interactivity for users. Stengel (2010) implied

aspects of interpersonal interactions given the general purpose of Facebook as a business and product, but it is not clear if other types of interactivity exist and how those different types of interactivity enable a specific user experience. My research explored the ways different types of interactivity function within the Facebook interface in order to better understand interactivity and its facets in more detail.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, I used a rhetorical framework to address the problems of defining general interactivity as conversational metaphors. In particular, I situated the Facebook interface rhetorically. I defined the rhetorical situation based on Bitzer's (1968/1992) work and the scholarship that has since followed (see Consigny, 1974; Grant-Davie, 1997; Vatz, 1973). Bitzer originally defined the concept as

people, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence (p. 6).

Bitzer defined exigence as the need or problem that needs to be addressed through discourse. While Bitzer did not acknowledge that there can be multiple exigencies and constraints embedded within a rhetorical situation, Grant-Davie (1997) noted that understanding the exigence in a rhetorical situation should revolve around three questions: (a) What is the discourse about?; (b) Why is the discourse needed?; and (c) What is the discourse trying to accomplish? (p. 266). I used these three questions to identify the designer's intentions with the interface design and to ask my participants about their own purposes for using the Facebook interface. Using the Facebook interface as the site of study, I initially identified the rhetorical situation to include (a) the

designers, (b) the users, (c) the users' purposes, and (d) constraints that help to determine ways users interpret content on the interface and the ways designers create an interface.

In some scholarship outside of writing studies, the term context is used instead of rhetorical situation. I used the term rhetorical situation instead because definitions of context in fields outside of writing studies are generally too narrow in their scope for determining ways texts are created and understood by designers and users. Generally, definitions of context in other fields such as human computer interaction (HCI) ignore the larger situation in which a text is embedded. For example, Dey (2001) defined context as "information that can be used to characterize the situation of an entity. An entity is a person, place, or object that is considered relevant to the interaction between a user and an application, including the user and application themselves" (p. 5). In his definition, he defined the context as a situation, but I used the term contextual element to define specific aspects of context that are contained in rhetorical situations. Vatz (1973) noted that the context of a communication situation is composed of facts and that "one never runs out of facts to describe a situation" (p. 156). The facts used to describe a context become choices rhetors make for what to address in discourse and what to disregard. While rhetors may not be aware of all choices available to them in specific contexts, their choices can signal the ways they accommodate and acknowledge the needs of members of audiences. Specific contextual elements are situated in rhetorical situations, which are constrained by time, place, people, events, and other situational influences (Grant-Davie, 1997). These influences may or may not impact the ways users engage with an interface or impact the way designers create an interface, but they must be considered. Designers must acknowledge the rhetorical situations and the contexts embedded within rhetorical

situations to design interfaces that most appropriately serve both their needs and users' needs. Thus, in this study, I used the term contextual elements to acknowledge different contexts that occur in rhetorical situations.

One way to visualize the rhetorical situation is through a post-modern map. Post-modern maps enable the researcher to be critically reflexive of their position within the research and to be critically reflexive of the relationships of the elements represented in the maps they create (Barton & Barton, 1993; Sullivan & Porter, 1997). A postmodern map illustrates the rhetorical situation because it is created under the assumption that each symbolic element in the map is not fixed and changes according to the ways the situation changes (Barton & Barton, 1993; Sullivan & Porter, 1997). The rhetorical situation may emerge differently in another analysis given a different set of participants or based on the changing exigence of the designers. I discuss my use of postmodern maps further in Chapter III by describing how I position myself as the researcher within the research. The postmodern map of the rhetorical situation I created representing the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface is located in Chapter IV, and I incorporated the most pertinent aspects of the rhetorical situation that emerged from my study in my postmodern map. I include (a) the rhetor, (b) the exigence, (c) the purpose, and (d) constraints such as social, ethical, textual, and economic in the postmodern map in Figure 5 in Chapter IV.

Using Bitzer's (1968/1992) definition of the rhetorical situation as a starting point to analyze the rhetorical situation in my study, I identified the rhetor, the audience, and the constraints that influenced potential ways the Facebook interface was created as a representation to respond to a variety of potential and actual exigencies in a variety of

contexts as embedded within a rhetorical situation. While varying definitions and understandings of the term rhetor exist, Grant-Davie (1997) defines the rhetor as a person or people who make choices to shape the discourse conveyed in a rhetorical situation. The rhetor(s) is aware of his or her identity for shaping the discourse within the situation, and the rhetor is in charge of choosing what he or she thinks are the most important points to consider when communicating in a rhetorical situation (Vatz, 1973). While a rhetor may only respond to one rhetorical situation with discourse, there can be multiple rhetorical situations that need to be addressed, and it is up to the rhetor to make specific discourse and design decisions appropriate for the audience being addressed.

When analyzing the Facebook interface, I needed to identify the rhetor(s) because doing so moved the analysis away from asserting that the system makes decisions for users when it is the designer (a rhetor) who makes choices that determine the design and content of the interface. While the rhetors (designers) make design choices, users (an audience) and rhetors in their own moment of decision making must interpret those choices based on their perceptions, which are based on cultural and social conventions. Vatz (1973) asserted, “no situation can have a nature independent of the perception of its interpreter or independent of the rhetoric with which he chooses to characterize it” (p. 155). Applied to the Facebook interface, this means that Facebook’s designers constructed the interface in a specific way, and users contribute information to the interface. Users must interpret the content they generate in accordance with different rhetorical situations and based on constraints presented to them through the interface. They must also interpret the features provided to them by Facebook’s designers in order to complete specific tasks. Thus, identifying the specific relationships between designers

and users begins to determine functions and perceptions in the interface that shape the rhetorical situation.

Further affecting the relationship between designers and users in an interface, constraints influence and shape the rhetorical situation in which discourse is being used (Grant-Davie, 1997). Constraints can include (a) physical limitations or abilities of the medium in which a text is delivered, (b) the social and cultural influences determined by both the rhetors and audiences, and (c) anything else that influences the creation and dissemination of discourse (Bitzer, 1968/1992). In terms of interfaces, Norman (1999) divided constraints into three categories: physical (perceived and actual affordances), logical (guide behavior), and cultural (conventions shared by a group). Ultimately, constraints are acknowledged by the rhetor(s), and it is their choice to address the constraints in their discourse choices and design. While Bitzer's (1968/1992) initial use of the term *constraints* in his definition of the rhetorical situation seemed to imply a negative connotation by limiting the rhetor, constraints help to limit and define discourse choices based on audiences, contexts, and needs of situations that may change as a rhetor is composing discourse (Grant-Davie, 1997). I defined the ways both Facebook's designers and Facebook's users are constrained by specific aspects of the rhetorical situation in order to understand the discourse choices both designers and users make.

One specific way texts can be constrained in rhetorical situations is through genre conventions that shape and influence the discourse choices the rhetor(s) makes when constructing a text. Interface designers are reliant not only on textual conventions shaped by the rhetorical situation, but also on design conventions that shape how the text is structured in an electronic communication environment. Consigny (1974) noted that "the

rhetor discloses issues and brings them to resolution by interacting with the situation, revealing and working through the phenomena, selecting appropriate material and arranging it into a coherent form” (p. 179). Genres enable readers or users to find information easily based on pre-established generic conventions that are determined by discourse communities (Swales, 1990). While website interfaces have some established design conventions, Facebook’s designers relied upon pre-established conventions. They had to design the interface knowing that their users had to be introduced to new features because social-networking websites were a relatively new genre with features that were not well-established. Devitt (1993) noted that genres respond to recurring situations, and a text’s reflection of a genre reflects situations. Devitt also described genres as dynamic, such that they change and shift according to different social groups according to the needs of specific situations. In the case of Facebook users, they must have previous knowledge of how to use the Facebook interface as a type of generic text, but they also have the option to use the features provided to them in ways that meet their needs. Users can create workarounds or hack into interfaces to meet their own needs when the design of the interface does not enable them to complete specific types of task.

Rhetors arrange information according to a rhetorical situation based on the rhetor’s perceptions of what is necessary for the situation. Hall-Jamieson (1973) noted, “perception of the proper response to an unprecedented rhetorical situation grows not *merely from the situation* [author’s emphasis] but also from antecedent rhetorical forms” (p. 163). Ultimately, rhetors are faced with discourse and design choices in rhetorical situations, and their choices are based on how they perceive the needs of members of audiences. Perception is not the only factor that enables both rhetors and audiences to

understand the rhetorical situation. Instead, rhetorical situations should be understood as “social constructs that are the result, not of ‘perception’ but of ‘definition.’ Because human action is based on and guided by meaning, not by material causes, at the center of action is a process of interpretation” (Miller, 1984, p. 156). Facebook users, as Miller (1984) described, must rely on knowledge from previous experience, culture, and social cues to help them interpret the content of the Facebook interface. Thus, perception is only one component of users’ interpretive strategies when engaging with an interface, and their perceptions may be different from the intentions Facebook’s designers intended when creating the interface. When Facebook users find ways to customize the interface based on their needs and use of it, they are addressing their purposes for engaging with discourse.

Purpose also must be considered with exigence. Exigence is defined as a social construct determined by rhetors. Miller (1984) defined exigence as “a form of social knowledge—a mutual construing of objects, events, interests, and purposes that not only links them but also makes them what they are: an objectified social need” (p. 157). Purpose, on the other hand, is the rhetor’s intended outcome with chosen discourse. Both exigence and purposes influence a rhetor’s choices in a rhetorical situation. Purpose is not always explicitly discussed in scholarship regarding the rhetorical situation. Kinneavy (1971) called the purpose the aims of discourse, and he stated that, “the purpose in discourse is all important” (p. 48). Purpose or aim can be further understood as what the rhetor meant to accomplish, which emerges from the situation, but the motive to achieve a specific purpose resides in both the rhetor and the audience (Gorrell, 1997). Ultimately, designers can have a purpose to compose discourse in rhetorical situations based on an

exigence to engage users in an interface, and users also can have specific reasons or purposes to engage in discourse in website interfaces as well; however, the outcomes designers and users achieve are based on the discourse being used.

Scholars who defined purpose often focused on the rhetor's reasons for engaging in discourse to communicate to a specific audience, but members of an audience also have reasons to use a text. Flower (1988) observed that in addition to a writer's need for writing a text, a reader has a specific purpose for reading a text. In my study, I defined purpose as the user's needs to accomplish specific tasks within an interface using available discourse and informed by the designers' exigence for creating and designing the interface. To determine the user's purpose, I used the data I collected from participants and understood it as a representation of the user's intended purposes. Because (a) users' purposes can change and (b) purposes can be abstract, making it difficult for people to articulate given purposes in communication situations, I understood the sampled participants' statements regarding purpose as representations that may be more nuanced than what they are able to articulate to me. Their statements regarding how they use the Facebook interface and the tasks the user completes can be pre-determined by the user or enabled by the designer based on the exigence of the rhetorical situation. A variety of factors—that they are unable to articulate to me—may also have influenced the ways the participants used the interface. Purpose in discourse is also determined by the genre in which discourse is used.

In terms of understanding perceived interactivity within an interface, designers must understand (a) generic conventions when designing an interface and (b) the purposes genres have for achieving specific discourse needs. Genres and purpose have

been tied together because different types of genres achieve specific purposes, and genres arise from purposes (Miller, 1984; Walzer, 1991). Genres have been defined as texts that contain specific features; however, texts classified as specific types of genres should not be rigidly defined according to specific features. Using Swales's (1990) and Miller's (1984) approaches, I defined genres as the ways members of discourse communities use the available means of discourse to achieve certain goals. The term *discourse community* has a variety of definitions and is a contested term. Based on Swales's definition, I defined the discourse community as a group of people that (a) has a generally agreed upon common set of goals, (b) has communication practices known to its members, (c) uses communication practices to provide information and to gain feedback from members, and (d) uses genres to further its communicative practices. While generic conventions influence the ways rhetors compose and structure texts, members of specific audiences interpret generic conventions according to their social and cultural influences, which are embedded in discourse communities. Members of the discourse communities use specific genres, and they create and shape the genre according to the specific uses defined by the community (Askehave & Swales, 2001; Swales, 1990). In the next section, I describe in more detail my working definitions and the ways they inform my research questions.

WORKING DEFINITIONS

As briefly described at the beginning of this chapter, I differentiated between different types of interactivity in order to investigate the ways they function rhetorically and according to designers' exigencies and users' purposes. In particular, I used the term general interactivity, and I defined general interactivity as ways people engage with texts,

including (a) their physical manipulations of content, (b) the actions they take to use a text, (c) their perceptions of content, and (d) their relationships and engagement with other people when using an interface. I broke general interactivity into two additional terms: functional and perceived interactivity. Based on descriptions from McMillan (2006) and Rafaeli (1988), my definition of general interactivity is the back and forth engagement a user has with an interface, with other users, and with available content. This general definition reinforces previous definitions that rely on conversational metaphors, but it provides me with a starting point for challenging the term.

Functional and perceived interactivity delineate specific ways interactivity functions and is understood by users in a specific rhetorical situation. I defined functional interactivity as features that enable the occurrence of an interaction, such as clicking on a link, filling out a form, or clicking on a button to complete a specific task. Functional interactivity is the physical manipulation of features on interfaces, and it is not concerned with users' perceptions or abilities to understand how they are able to physically manipulate the interface. In general, functional approaches to studying interactivity have relied upon identifying and examining which specific features in computer interfaces enable users to complete tasks using buttons, hyperlinks, form fields, and navigational tools (Kioussis, 2002; McMillan, 2002; McMillan, Hwang, & Lee, 2003; Vanderdonck, 2003). Scholars, however, have questioned studies of functional interactivity that focused on features limited to the assumed importance of interactivity. They found that additional phenomena like control, time, speediness, and reciprocity seemed to impact the interactive message, and those phenomena were eventually included as aspects of perceived interactivity (Liu & Shrum, 2002; McMillan, 2002; Rafaeli, 1988).

I defined perceived interactivity as what the user perceives as interactive in an interface as mediated by the functional features of interactivity. Song and Zinkhan (2008) cite Newhagen, Cordes, and Levy as the first scholars to identify perceived interactivity as a separate type of interactivity that analyzes users' psychological comprehension of their interactions in an interface. The psychological comprehension initially studied by Newhagen, Cordes, and Levy (1995) became the primary focus of study in subsequent research regarding perceived interactivity in which users determine what is or is not understood as interactive within an interface. Since the initial Newhagen et al. study, additional scholarship has identified specific elements of perceived interactivity to define what it is. I relied upon (a) control (users' perceptions of available choices); (b) time/speed of response (users' perceptions of the speediness or timing of actions); and (c) direction of communication (users' perceptions of who/what they are interacting with including users, a system, or documents) as three elements of perceived interactivity in my study. In the literature in Chapter II, I describe in more detail the ways functional and perceived interactivity—along with the perceived interactivity elements of control, time/speed of response, and direction of communication—influenced my study.

Conversational metaphors provide a starting point for defining and explaining ways interactivity works in mediated communication situations such as website interfaces, but they do not provide a clear explanation for ways that certain features function or users make sense of their capabilities in interfaces. In addition to supplementing general interactivity definitions with definitions of functional and perceived interactivity, determining the rhetorical situation in which different types of interactivity functions helps to further explain designers' choices in interface design and

the users' choices and reasons for engaging with the interfaces. In this study, I defined rhetorical situation as the designers, users, purposes, and constraints that help determine ways users interpret content on the interface and the ways designers create an interface.

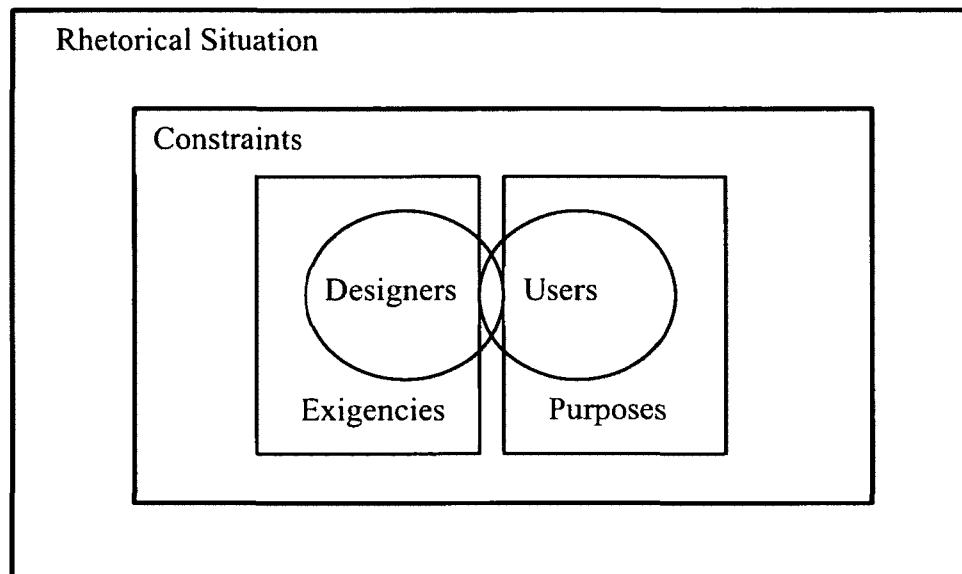


Figure 1. Diagram of the rhetorical situation.

In Figure 1, each box included within the rhetorical situation box is a specific aspect of the rhetorical situation. The designers' and users' circles overlap because in some situations, designers also can be users and users also can be designers. This diagram is meant to serve as a general model based on my definition, but it can change (a) depending on the ways different types of texts are situated in rhetorical situations or (b) based on the ways a text may function to construct the rhetorical situation. In Chapter IV, I provide a postmodern map of the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. My definition of the rhetorical situation comes from Bitzer's work (1968/1992) and the

subsequent scholarship that followed his seminal article (see Consigny, 1974; Grant-Davie, 1997; Hall-Jamieson, 1973; Leroux, 1998; Vatz, 1973). The scholarship outside of writing studies does not directly address the rhetorical situation, and scholars instead use the term *context*. Definitions of context, particularly in HCI research, are generally limited to determining influences in the immediate situation, and they do not consider outside influences that also shape the situations in which interfaces are used. Definitions of context are too narrow in their scope for explaining both the designers' choices for creating and the user's reasons for using an interface. While context is significant, I included context as one aspect of the rhetorical situation as a whole, and it should not be considered separate from the larger situation in which a text is used.

Another component of the rhetorical situation I assessed is user's purposes. I defined user's purposes as the reasons a user completes specific tasks within the interface, and users can have multiple purposes or reasons for using an interface. The user's purpose is part of the rhetorical situation because it is assumed to shape perceptions for what a user can and cannot accomplish in an interface. Kinneavy (1971) described the purpose as determining everything else in the process of writing or communication situation. Purpose and exigence are closely linked, but exigence is the rhetors' reaction to discourse needs in rhetorical situations (Bitzer, 1968/1992; Grant-Davie, 1997), and purpose is the users' objectives for engaging with discourse in rhetorical situations. In my study, determining the reasons why users use an interface supplements the previous scholarship that investigated ways functional and perceived interactivity defined a text as interactive. The data I collected only can serve as a representation given that the participants I surveyed and interviewed only were able to

articulate and state their purposes for engaging with an interface and may have had other motivations and purposes they were unable to articulate to me. Given this limitation, this research is meant to serve as a starting point for future studies that investigate similar research questions and concerns.

GAPS IN THE RESEARCH IN AND OUTSIDE OF WRITING STUDIES

My research expanded upon the previous definitions of functional and perceived interactivity by supplementing previous research from outside of writing studies with a stronger rhetorical perspective. I identified two problems in the previous research in and outside of writing studies, and I designed my study to begin to address those problems. The first problem I addressed was the way the definitions of general interactivity (a) inadequately differentiate between different types of interactivity and (b) perpetuate conversational metaphors that conflate specific ways functional and perceived interactivity can occur in specific types of interfaces. I identified functional and perceived interactivity from the scholarship I consulted, and both types of interactivity enable designers to create interfaces that are based on users' needs and purposes for using an interface. In writing studies, scholars describe general interactivity as a rhetorical component of digital texts, but their research does not clearly determine texts' functional and perceptual properties and the implications of these properties in rhetorical situations.

For example, Wysocki (2004) noted that general interactivity needs to be thought of not as an isolated property of digital texts but instead as the way the relationship between designers and users is negotiated through the text. Her definition begins to situate interactivity in rhetorical situations, but her work does not distinguish between the different types of functional and perceived properties that categorize a text as interactive.

Further situating general interactivity rhetorically, Porter (2009) used the term *interaction* as a rhetorical quality included within the canon of delivery. The canon of delivery classically refers to concerns regarding an orator's performance of a speech including tone and body movements. More current definitions of delivery include textual conventions associated with print and digital texts such as design choices and the transmission of a text to audiences (Prior et al., 2007). As an element of delivery, Porter defined interactivity/interaction as the ways users use interfaces and engage with each other in digital environments. For him, interactivity is rhetorical because it pertains to the ways people use computer interfaces in order to complete specific tasks and in order for people to communicate with others through computer mediated spaces. Porter's work has begun to situate interactivity in rhetorical situations, but his definition of general interactivity does not further differentiate between different types of interactivity that influence users' engagement with interfaces.

While Porter (2009) was concerned with the canon of delivery as it relates to interactivity, Carnegie (2009) described the interface as the exordium (in traditional rhetoric, the beginning of a speech or piece of writing) and defined it as engaging audiences not only to act but also to interact. She described specific modes of interactivity, which function as rhetorical modes of the interface. Those rhetorical modes include (a) multi-directionality (interconnections between users, the system, or information); (b) manipulability (users ability to manipulate form and content within the text); and (c) presence (user's perceptions for feeling as a part of the system). Carnegie asserted that the interface as an exordium accounts for the importance of general interactivity and specific interactive modes within digital texts. Carnegie also claimed

that the higher the levels of interactivity, the greater the exordium's success in achieving its purpose. The assumption that the higher the level of interactivity within the interface, the more effective the text, is a limited assumption because users can perceive interactivity differently and textual features that are considered highly interactive in one situation may not be considered interactive in another situation (McMillan, 2002; McMillan & Hwang, 2002; McMillan et al., 2003; Song & Zinkhan, 2008; Wu, 2005).

The second problem my research addressed was the way scholars situate users in their studies. In previous studies from scholars outside of writing studies, researchers did not situate users and designers rhetorically according to exigencies and purposes for creating and using an interface because those scholars either ignored users' purposes for engaging with an interface or did not consider the designers' exigencies and reasons for including specific types of interactivity. Using a rhetorical framework was outside of the disciplinary perspective of researchers outside of writing studies, and their methods reflected their disciplinary perspectives. Employing a rhetorical framework in my research supplements the work that has already been done because it considers users more explicitly. For example, Warnick (2007) described interactivity in a rhetorical analysis of two political campaign websites from the 2004 election. Warnick defined interactivity in these websites as features enabling users to contribute to the websites, and she found that many features acted interactively but enabled limited user contributions to content. Warnick situated the websites rhetorically, but her analysis did not ask actual users about what their perceptions were of the messages and features being conveyed on the interfaces of her sampled websites.

Outside of writing studies, scholars tested aspects of perceived interactivity with participants, but they did not recruit participants who were actual users of the websites being tested. In Johnson, Bruner, and Kumar's (2006) study, the researchers designed a website specifically for the study, but it was not clear if the content was something the participants would browse on their own. This was a problem because if the participants were not the target audience for the website or did not need or have a specific purpose for the content on the website, their perceptions of interactivity could have been different from others who were the target audience. In Yun's (2007) study, Yun developed a website based on information from the Comprehensive Health Enhancement Support System describing help for people with drinking problems. Because drinking is considered a problem on college campuses, Yun recruited his participants from a college, and he assumed that the website would be meaningful to his participants; however, he did not ask his participants if the content was meaningful to them. Similar to the Johnson et al. study, it was not known if the participants had a need or purpose for the content presented to them, and Yun's results may not have accurately reflected the perceived interactivity of the participants. These studies would benefit from situating both designers' and users' needs rhetorically in order to understand the ways different types of interactivity influence the ways designers design an interface and the ways users need to engage with an interface based on their purposes.

Some researchers have found inconclusive results in their studies. This may have been because users have not been situated rhetorically so that the researchers did not know the users' purposes for using a website interface. If the participants in the studies were actual users of the websites being tested and if the content presented on the interface

was relevant to them, the results may have been more conclusive. For example, McMillan (2002) could not conclusively connect the relationship between users' perceived interactivity and website features. This may have been the result of her model, which illustrates both functional and perceived interactivity as separate entities (both can work together). She was trying to explore the applicability of a model she created to apply to health-related websites, but she did not ask participants if the content on the tested websites was relevant to them or if they were websites they regularly used. If the participants were not regular users of the websites and if the content on the websites was not applicable to them, the ways they used specific features, their perceptions of those features, and their abilities to use the features would likely be different than if they had a need for the content. Ultimately, McMillan's (2002) study did not examine if the users had a purpose for engaging with her tested websites, and subsequent studies have recommended that the users' purposes or goals be assessed in order to understand in more depth how perceived interactivity facilitates use (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; McMillan et al., 2003; Song & Zinkhan, 2008). In order to address the previous discussed problems, I situated users rhetorically in order to obtain a more nuanced understanding of the ways interactivity functions and is perceived.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

In order to address the previously discussed problems in the literature describing perceived interactivity from disciplines outside of writing studies and to provide a more nuanced account of interactivity as a general term within writing studies, I developed two guiding research questions:

- In what ways does perceived interactivity appear as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of a digital text, and
- In particular, how does a user's purpose determine what is and is not perceived as interactive?

I focused on addressing ways specific features are used and perceived by users based on the specific features they identified in a survey and interview using grounded theory as a data collection and analysis method. Perception can be a difficult concept to measure and assess, but I analyzed my data for aspects of perception as emergent categories that can be evaluated further with more rigorous empirical measures. I also acknowledge that my data are a representation of what respondents thought or felt were appropriate responses to the questions I posed to them, and that they may not have been able to accurately articulate their actual intentions for using and engaging with the Facebook interface.

I defined perceived interactivity as a constraint in the interface because constraints include influences that are relevant to the situation and that shape the situation in which discourse is being used (Grant-Davie, 1997). Perceived interactivity functions as a constraint because it may or may not influence the ways users are able to achieve their purposes and goals in interfaces, and I tested my assumptions in my analysis. The features I assessed on the Facebook interface worked synchronously and asynchronously, which included commenting and chat features, buttons, links, and image features. I defined asynchronous features as not occurring in real time because a lag occurs between when a user completes an action and when another user engages with the content (see Kalman & Rafaeli, 2007). I defined synchronous features as those occurring in real time,

which can mimic face-to-face communication but which are mediated through an electronic environment (Kalman & Rafaeli, 2007). In the Facebook interface, the features enable perceptions of personal relationships to be created and maintained, and these perceptions enable users to engage with and interpret content other users provide in the interface. I was interested in the ways users' purposes influence their perceptions of features in the interface as enabling them or not enabling them to complete specific and desired tasks. Facebook is a social networking website that can be used to create and maintain interpersonal relationships, and I was not interested in the ways users negotiated interpersonal interactions and relationships through the interface because it was beyond the scope of this study.

I also defined the Facebook interface as a text, specifically as a digital text because members of discourse communities use it to convey and interpret information, and the materialities of a text help to foster discourse practices and information flow within the text. Hayles (2002) described the materialities of texts as the ways people engage with the physical and aesthetic properties of a text. People must also interpret the physical and aesthetic properties of texts according to their physical and conceptual interactions with it. Initially, interfaces were not textual in the ways they are today because they were meant to bridge two pieces of hardware together with wires. Today, GUIs often are seen as surfaces to support the work done by users in individual programs on a computer screen that is powered by interconnected pieces of computer hardware (Johson-Eilola, 2005). GUIs are composed of images and texts that act as representations for tasks and actions users can complete within the interface, which allows for interfaces to be understood as texts.

GUIs, as texts, must also be understood rhetorically because designers make specific choices that may or may not enable users to complete different types of tasks, and the designers' choices position themselves and users in specific ways in interfaces that can suggest different types of designer/user relationships. The materialities of the Facebook interface are the cultural and social forces that influence Facebook's designers to produce the interface as a text, and the physical properties of the interface enable users to obtain meaning from it (Hayles, 2002; Wysocki, 2004). Facebook's designers created it with specific intentions; but because users have to interpret and use it, the materialities that emerge are based not only on designers' intentions, but also on ways users engage with it. Thus, when assessing the Facebook interface as a text, I acknowledged Facebook's designers' intentions for creating the interface in specific ways and I asked users about ways they engage with and use the Facebook interface in order to answer my research questions. However, determining the designers' intentions can be a challenging task because the ways they choose to represent themselves publicly may not be the ways they operate privately. Thus, when I describe Facebook's designers' exigence in Chapter IV, my discussion of their exigence as intentions is a representation of the available materials I found in the popular press, scholarly articles, and resources available on their website. It was not possible for me to know all of Facebook's designers' intentions, which likely influenced their design choices.

Facebook users negotiate social and cultural materialities of the text that shape their purposes for using the interface rhetorically. Wysocki and Jasken (2004) noted that rhetorically, "interfaces are about the relations we construct with each other—how we perceive and try to shape each other—through the artifacts we make for each other" (p.

33). The relations that are constructed with interfaces can be seen as a performance on a stage in which different types of actors communicate with each other to achieve some sort of goal. Laurel (1991) noted that an interface does not simply provide the means by which a person and a computer as created by designers represent themselves to each other. Instead, both users and designers have the opportunity to engage in actions within a shared space—and in specific ways—both engage in specific types of actions. Because users and designers are sharing the space within an interface, interactivity—as an element seen to enable communication within an interface—must be understood as a component of the materialities of the interface and it must be explored through the relationships the designer attempted to build with users through the interface (Wysocki, 2004).

The interface also can be seen as a stage where a performance takes place (Laurel, 1991). Using the stage as a metaphor for the interface takes into account ways that both designers and users function as actors on the stage where users are not passive members of the audience that sit back and take in a performance. In many instances, particularly in the Facebook interface, users are actively creating content used to represent themselves in a public space. The ways users represent themselves with content they post on the Facebook interface can be seen as their *personal front*. Goffman (1959) described specific aspects of a personal front as the appearance and manner that indicate specific cultural or social information that can represent a person. People manage different types of fronts according to different types of situations. The Facebook interface can be seen as a stage where people are managing different types of personal fronts that convey specific aspects of who they are based on cultural and social needs. In Chapter IV, I analyze in more depth the aspects of Facebook users' performances in the interface.

In order to study functional and perceived interactivity from a rhetorical perspective, I used grounded theory as a framework that enabled me to develop theory from data. Because measuring and making specific assertions about designers' and users' purposes and intentions is challenging and cannot be completely known, using grounded theory enabled me to obtain some preliminary data and results that can be assessed and tested in additional studies for the development of more nuanced meanings. As a social constructivist, grounded theory allowed me to account for my own bias and to distance myself from my own Facebook use in order to understand ways my participants used the Facebook interface. In order to understand the user's purposes for using Facebook, I collected data from participants who were Facebook users. I collected data using surveys and case study interviews in order to develop initial theories about their purposes and intentions, which I could use to answer my research questions.

To answer my research questions, I began my data analysis by open-coding¹ the data rather than forcing or applying pre-determined categories to the data. I analyzed the surveys and case study interviews for specific phenomena that enabled me to understand as much as possible about the rhetorical situation, such as users' purposes and aspects of functional and perceived interactivity. In order to organize my thoughts and the data from the open-coding process, I used grounded theory memo writing techniques, which enabled me to further develop and understand the concepts that emerged from my data in relation to my research questions (Corbin, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Grounded theory memo writing is an informal note-taking process, which does not produce formal

¹Described in more detail in Chapter III, open-coding is the process of developing and understanding concepts taken from the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

documents one would find in business writing. In Chapter III, I discuss in more detail the grounded theory memo writing techniques I used in this study.

At the end of the data collection process, I used genre analysis to confirm my results from the survey, interviews, and memos in order to understand ways the functionality of features in the interface contributed to the communication practices of the sampled participants and according to the purpose of Facebook's designers. I also used the genre analysis to confirm the rhetorical situation I identified based on my sampled users. Because I did not interview or survey Facebook's designers to understand their purposes with Facebook's interface design, I obtained information about Facebook's designers' exigencies from the Facebook business page, publically available news articles and interviews, and peer-reviewed scholarship. Using a survey, interviews, and genre analysis allowed me to triangulate my data. I understood all of the information I collected about Facebook's designers and from my sampled users as representations. Given the representational nature of the data available to me and the data I collected, additional motivations, intentions, and exigencies likely existed that I was unable to identify or investigate in detail. However, my results are meant to be a preliminary and exploratory investigation that can be investigated further with additional rigor.

Triangulating my data within a grounded theory framework not only allowed me to reduce my bias as the researcher but it also allowed me to obtain a more complete portrait of the sampled users I surveyed and interviewed as well as the discourse communities they belonged to in order to understand as many details as possible about the rhetorical situations in which they communicated (see Denzin, 1970). Because each piece of data that I collected and analyzed only provided a small glimpse of the sampled

population, each form of data enabled me to more deeply understand the sampled population in relation to the rhetorical situations of the Facebook interface. Determining the rhetorical situations of my participants allowed me to keep my analysis focused on the ways recruited participants in my study actually used Facebook. The data I collected can only serve as a representation of what my participants said and what was available to me about Facebook's designers' exigencies and motivations to create the interface. Additional studies would need to investigate further the theories I develop from my data, thus compensating for my inability to draw absolute conclusions from my data.

THE VALUE OF THE RESEARCH

For writing studies, this research will help further usability and design practices that shape ways interfaces are constructed to address specific exigencies and to achieve specific user purposes according to rhetorical situations. As Andrisani, Gaal, Gillette, and Steward (2001) noted, "it is essential to understand the complex physical and cognitive events' that inform interactivity to ensure our online creations are accurate, effective, and truly interactive" (p. 309). This research will allow scholars to understand which types of interactivity are necessary for specific rhetorical situations and offer designers insight they might use to create more appropriate interfaces for intended audiences in various rhetorical situations. In particular, this research also may contribute to the field of interaction design in general.

Because of the emerging presence of the interaction designer within industrial workplaces today, interaction designers should be given the ability to delineate between different types of interactivity that can be incorporated into different types of documents, especially because not all documents achieve the same purposes. The Interaction Design

Association defined interaction design as “the structure and behavior of interactive systems. Interaction designers strive to create meaningful relationships between people and the products and services they use” (Interaction Design Association, 2010). Leonard-Wilkinson (2003) further noted that an interaction designer is concerned with identifying “the behaviors of an application to help drive the design and development” (p. 52). Further, she noted that the job of an interaction designer is “to worry about task flow, behavior, and business process and make sure that the user interaction reflects these considerations” (Leonard-Wilkinson, 2004, p.39). Textual practices are constantly changing as new ways to communicate emerge or are remediated from previous text types, and this research can provide insight into specific types of relationships users have with texts.

In addition to providing additional insight for best practices for interaction designers, this research has implications for multimodal composition practices that inform writing pedagogy. Distinguishing between different types of interactivity and the ways different types of interactivity can be used to create texts with multiple modes can enable students to understand specific ways types of interactivity work in rhetorical situations for specific types of users. Knowing how to incorporate interactivity effectively into different types of texts is a literate practice that can supplement writing studies pedagogy.

Historically, general interactivity has not been a term that writing studies has included in discussions of the rhetorical situation. However, given the rise in digital communication practices that inform not only writing pedagogy but also professional writing practices, investigating ways general interactivity functions rhetorically may

advance scholars' knowledge of the ways one aspect of digital texts can shape communication practices. In Chapter II, I explore ways that situating the term general interactivity in the rhetorical situation is similar to the historical period in which Bitzer's (1968/1992) work regarding the rhetorical situation was published. At the time Bitzer wrote his article concerning the rhetorical situation, rhetoric was not seen as an important area of study, and many scholars were justifying the need for the study of rhetoric. Through my work, I attempted to advance the study of rhetoric using scholarship from disciplines in which rhetoric is beyond the scope of their disciplinary concerns despite clear rhetorical value in their scholarly claims—particularly about general interactivity, functional interactivity, and perceived interactivity.

DISSERTATION OVERVIEW

As introduced in this chapter, conversational metaphors used to define and describe general interactivity have inadequately explained phenomena that occur in larger communication situations with specific groups of users and their purposes for engaging with interfaces. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to move beyond limiting the general interactivity conversation to conversational metaphors by differentiating between different types of interactivity in order to determine ways interfaces function rhetorically. To achieve my purpose, I differentiated between functional and perceived interactivity. Current research in writing studies broadly addresses the term interactivity, but current scholarship in and outside of writing studies does not always consider the ways different types of interactivity function according to designers' exigencies and users' needs.

In Chapter II, I discuss in more detail aspects of conversational metaphors that influenced my use of a continuum to describe ways different types of interactivity can

work dynamically in interfaces. I also describe other continua that influenced the continuum that I created. I then describe in detail definitions of functional and perceived interactivity from computer science, marketing, advertising, and communications that shaped the ways I looked for specific aspects of both types of interactivity to emerge from my results. In particular, I describe control, time/speed of response, and direction of communication that function as elements of perceived interactivity. I also describe specific studies that did not situate designers and users rhetorically and the problems with those studies. To end the chapter, I describe in detail the historical situation in which Bitzer's (1968/1992) work regarding the rhetorical situation is similar to my work applying the rhetorical situation to an area of study in which little rhetorical work has been done.

In Chapter III, I describe the grounded theory framework and how it enabled me to (a) situate myself as the researcher, (b) use note taking as a data analysis tool to analyze and understand my data, and (c) develop theory from data. I also describe my data collection instruments—surveys and case study interviews—and how I triangulated my three data sets (surveys, case studies, and genre analysis). I also discuss the limitations of each data set and the study as a whole.

In Chapter IV, I describe the results from each data set I collected as a rich, thick description to illustrate the ways perceived interactivity functions as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. I describe (a) Facebook's designers' exigencies for creating and developing the Facebook interface; (b) my study participants as a very small sample of Facebook users; (c) the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface based on both the designers and users; (d) the ways functional and perceived

interactivity work as constraints within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface; (e) the ways control and time/speed of response emerged as elements of perceived interactivity based on the previous literature; and (f) two new perceived interactivity elements—movement and motivations—that emerged from my results and the implications of those elements. I conclude the chapter with a description of the way perceived interactivity functions in the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface that emerged from my results.

In Chapter V, I provide a summary of my research. I also provide a working definition of both perceived and general interactivity that relies upon a rhetorical framework. My working definition is meant to function as a starting point for future studies to further investigate ways different types of interactivity function rhetorically given specific aspects of the rhetorical situation. I also describe implications of my study and directions for future research regarding interactivity and rhetoric.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW—PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY AND THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

In the introduction, I described interfaces and conversational metaphors that have been used to illustrate the ways interactivity works. Until recently, studies did not always differentiate between specific types of interactivity. I argued that differentiating between different types of interactivity can reconcile the disconnect between what users do in an interface and how users perceive their actions in the interface based on their purposes. Differentiating between different types of interactivity allows researchers to begin to acknowledge aspects of the rhetorical situation of an interface and the ways users' needs and purposes for engaging with an interface influence their perceptions of the interactivity in the interface (McMillan, 2002; McMillan & Hwang, 2002; McMillan et al., 2003; Yun, 2007).

In this chapter, I describe a continuum as an alternate model for conversational metaphors to illustrate the ways general interactivity works in specific rhetorical situations. Because different types of interactivity have been identified as occurring in interfaces to enable users to achieve specific tasks, I further define functional and perceived interactivity. In particular, I describe the elements of perceived interactivity that guided my research, including control, time/speed of response, and direction of communication. The scholarship I used to define functional and perceived interactivity came from a variety of disciplines, including computer science, communications, advertising, and marketing. Some scholarship did come from writing studies, but writing studies scholars have not addressed specific aspects of functional and perceived

interactivity in as much depth as scholars outside of writing studies. Differentiating between different types of interactivity allows researcher to begin to acknowledge different roles interactivity can have in specific types of communication situations. To end this chapter, I describe in more depth Bitzer's (1968/1992) concept of the rhetorical situation, ways his concept is situated historically in the study of rhetoric, and ways his seminal article regarding the rhetorical situation provided me with a starting point for defining the rhetorical situation within the conceptual context of general interactivity.

A CONTINUUM AS A STARTING POINT TO ILLUSTRATE GENERAL INTERACTIVITY

The transmission model provided a starting point for understanding information flow, and it has functioned as a framework for more recent communication models to describe interactivity (Slack et al., 1993). The transmission model illustrates ways communication functions in face-to-face settings (Eubanks, 2011; Slack et al., 1993). The transmission model is used in research outside of writing studies to describe general interactivity and is found in Rafaeli's (1988) definition of interactivity: "*interactivity* [author's emphasis] is an expression of the extent that in a given series of communication exchanges, any third (or later) transmission (or message) is related to the degree to which previous exchanges referred to even earlier transmissions" (p. 111). Rafaeli's definition evokes and extends Shannon and Weaver's (1949) mathematical theory of communication in which a sender sends a message, a receiver receives the message, and action is taken based on the message. Noise may or may not interrupt the message exchange in Shannon and Weaver's model. Rafaeli's definition moves the Shannon and Weaver model forward by addressing the receiver's role in interpreting the message, but

it also seems to imply interactivity is a conversation. Rafaeli rejected notions of interactivity as a conversation because it is “subjective and simplistic” (p. 117) and because the idea of a conversation is not reliable across time and culture.

However, the transmission model and similar models are often criticized for not adequately addressing the position of the receiver and ways the sender is positioned as having the primary responsibility for the ways miscommunication can occur (Slack et al., 1993). While Rafaeli (1988) rejected the idea of general interactivity as a conversation, his definition has been used by others who did not address the problems with defining general interactivity as a conversation, including Downes and McMillan (2000), Jensen (1998), Johnson et al. (2006), Kioussis (2002), McMillan (2002), McMillan and Hwang (2002), Newhagen (2004), Quiring (2009), Rafaeli and Sudweeks (1998), Richards (2006), Song and Zinkhan (2008), Wu (2005), and Yun (2007). Because these scholars did not address the problems with using conversational metaphors to define interactivity, their definitions are not reliable across time and culture (Rafaeli, 1988).

In order to supplement and further identify aspects of general interactivity according to the way different types of interfaces are structured, McMillan (2006) proposed three models that rely on face-to-face conversation as a metaphor. Her models extend the metaphor by describing specific ways users interact with content on website interfaces: user-to-user, user-to-documents, and user-to-system (McMillan, 2006). McMillan described the user-to-user model as ways that the design of the interface mediates forms of communication between users that mimic face-to-face communication. Users can communicate with each other in a mediated environment either synchronously or asynchronously through chat features, message boards, or other similar features in

which messages are sent between users. In the case of user-to-user interactivity, users are exchanging messages with each other, but an interface mediates the interactions that occur. The interactions that occur rely on social conventions for conversations and additional conventions that enable users to interpret messages in a mediated environment. While I did not explore social conventions in discourse in mediated environments in this study, users can and do communicate with each other depending upon the functions provided to them in website interfaces.

In the user-to-documents model, general interactivity involves users interacting with a document or with both a document and other users to create content (McMillan, 2006). Examples of user-to-document interaction include comment areas, multi-user dungeons (MUDs), object oriented MUDs (MOOs), fan fiction, wikis, and blogs. According to McMillan (2006), user-to-documents interactivity can also be understood as parasocial interaction in which people think they are interacting with others but their interactions are with an interface and are perceived. McMillan (2006) did not explore users' perceptions in her 2006 work, but she implied that perception has implications for the user-to-documents model. In some instances, the boundaries between user-to-user and user-to-documents interactivity can be blurred or users can oscillate between the two types of interactivity depending on the ways they are engaging with either other users or with content included on the interface.

In the user-to-system model, who or what is in control of the interaction in the interface becomes ambiguous since both users and the computer can be perceived to be in control (McMillan, 2006). Users are negotiating the features available to them in the interface to complete specific tasks such as using databases or desktop publishing

software. Interfaces also adapt to users in specific games or educational systems based on the users' skill level. Users' perceptions play a vital role in the user-to-system model because users' perceptions enable them to negotiate their purposes with available features.

While McMillan's (2006) models extended conversational metaphors by providing more specificity for different types of interactions that can occur in website interfaces, her models provide website designers with general models of interactivity that can help them determine the interface design based on the designers' and users' needs and purposes. However, her models do not completely illustrate the rhetorical situation in which an interface is embedded or specific situational influences such as users' purposes and discourse constraints and conventions. Scholars, including Atkinson (2008), Quiring and Schweiger (2008), and Warnick (2007), have used these models in their studies as a framework for understanding interactivity as a general term, but the descriptions of the models also tend to be technologically deterministic because the system and document in the models are seen as determining the outcome of an interaction. In actuality, designers provide users choices—not the system or the document.

The interface should be understood as a dynamic text that is situated within specific rhetorical situations to enable different types of communicative practices. As Laurel (1991) described, the interface can be viewed as a stage in which both designers and users are seen as actors that take on and perform different roles that may or may not be in agreement with each other. Users' and designers' performances are representations that convey meaning given the constraints present in the rhetorical situation.

Conceptualizing the interface as a stage that represents ways interactivity can function in

an interface moves the general interactivity discussion away from conversational metaphors and towards a continuum as a model for rhetorically situating different types of interactivity. Actors on a stage in a play move in many different directions across a stage, and they enter and exit according to the actions scripted in a play. Users using an interface can move in and out of an interface in a similar manner to actors on a stage, and a continuum illustrates this movement more fluidly than conversational metaphors. Conversational metaphors begin to illustrate the back and forth movements between actors, but conversational metaphors as described by previous scholars do not always consider the entrances and exits from interfaces and the ways other movements within interfaces enable specific types of communication.

Previous researchers who studied functional interactivity, perceived interactivity, or both found that various levels of interactivity exist and that a continuum works to illustrate how the various levels work within an interface (Downes & McMillan, 2000; Jensen, 1998; Laurel, 1991; Porter, 2009; Quiring & Schweiger, 2008). In her continuum, Laurel (1991) characterized interactivity with three variables: frequency (how often users are able to interact); range (the number of available choices); and significance (how the available choices affect use; p. 20). Laurel implicitly relied upon ideas of perceived interactivity to describe her continuum and noted that users either feel as if they are participating in the actions that are represented on screen or users do not feel that they are participating in the actions on screen. Further supporting the idea that various levels of interactivity can occur in interfaces, Downes and McMillan (2000) described message dimensions (direction, time, place) and participant dimensions (control, responsiveness, perceived goals) as the elements that are placed along an interactivity continuum. Each of

the elements is understood according to the ways in which users perceive how they are participating within the communication situation. The Downes and McMillan continuum was created based on interviews they conducted with experts who work with computer technologies.

Porter's (2009) interactivity continuum emphasizes *interaction potential*, which he defined as a user determining how interactive a feature is based on his/her perception of the feature. Quiring and Schweiger's (2008) definition of interaction potential included its division into specific categories such as levels of action, levels for evaluating the system, and levels for exchange of meaning. Each of these levels was based on their assessment of the previous literature for interactivity and how dimensions and characteristics of each level contribute to the interactivity of a document. Porter (2009) described specific ways features are placed along an interactivity continuum. A feature considered least interactive, such as access and usability, is placed at one end, and features considered most interactive, such as critical engagement and co-production, are located at the other end of the continuum.

One problem with the continua proposed by Downes and McMillan (2000), Laurel (1991), and Porter (2009) is their proposed continua have not been tested empirically in a specific research site. Testing their continua empirically would determine if a continuum is a stronger model for describing interactivity. Instead, their continua act as models that provide an initial starting point for defining and describing aspects of interactivity and a model from which I can position both users and designers. Lanham (1993), who described one way of positioning users and the ways they use interfaces, suggested that looking at a text must be understood as taking it for its face value while

looking through a text must be understood as unpacking the meaning and ways for using it. Looking through a text also involves understanding its stylistic qualities based on the author's intentions and the reader's/user's own position reading/using a text (Lanham, 1993). Looking at/through a text is an oscillation, and this oscillation is based on perception. Good designs oscillate between at/through distinctions along a continuum (Brooke, 2009). However, as Brooke (2009) also noted, it is not enough to assess the at/through distinctions within interfaces; instead, researchers must acknowledge their positions and the users' positions within the interface along a continuum. Thus, I cannot take the interface at face value; I must examine and interpret ways users look at and through an interface as people positioned within a rhetorical situation.

As a starting point for illustrating general interactivity, the continuum I created in Figure 2 is based on the models proposed by Porter (2009) and Quiring and Schweiger (2008). Each feature from an interface that is evaluated along my continuum is situated according to the users' perceptions based on cultural influences and the discourse communities in which users are members. For example, a link located in an interface that quickly takes a user to a new page may be perceived to have high levels of interactivity, but the same link may be perceived to have low levels of interactivity if it loads too slowly or if it does not take the user to the desired content. The continuum in Figure 2 illustrates both low and high interactivity at each end of the continuum, and the arrows that circle around the continuum illustrate the cyclical movement of a user's perceptions of specific features on the interface. In the previous example of various user perceptions of a link, the perceptions can be dependent on the functionality of the internet connection, the computer hardware, or other situational influences that shape users' perceptions of the

interactivity of the link based on their expectations of an interface. Thus, the arrows that circle around the continuum illustrate the dynamism of interactivity of a single feature in an interface.

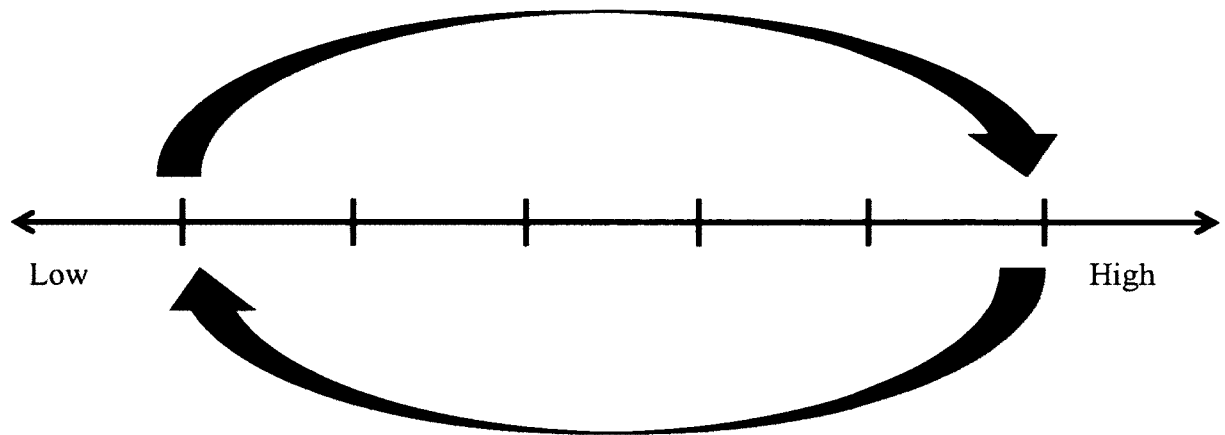


Figure 2. Perceived interactivity continuum.

Users' perceptions shape their abilities to understand and move through the interface, and interactivity can be one mechanism by which their movement through the interface is possible. Users are positioned in interfaces perceptually, and users can have different experiences in them based on their own cultural and social needs (Brooke, 2009). Because interfaces serve various rhetorical purposes, interfaces must be understood according to the exigencies designers have for them and according to the ways users use them to achieve specific purposes. A user's perception can render an interface transparent to him/her in certain situations, and researchers and designers can examine the user's experiences in an interface based on the transparency of the interface and the needs and purposes of the user.

The concept of transparency is evident when researchers assume the more transparent or navigable the interface is, the more effective the interface is considered (Brooke, 2009; Lanham, 1993). Transparency is achieved when users look through an interface, and their interactions with it are perceived as invisible. However, assumptions regarding transparency can mask aspects of an interface that function as sites of struggle. For example, users must come to an interface knowing how to navigate and use the structures made available to them. Users know how to navigate an interface as a form of critical technology literacy that must be negotiated by them (Selber, 2004). If users do not have the critical technology literacy required to use the basic functions of a website, their interactions are not invisible and the understood transparency of the website may fail.

DIFFERENTIATING BETWEEN FUNCTIONAL AND PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY

As previously described in the introduction, the general term interactivity comes from the sociology and computer science disciplines, and it has been used to define a variety of phenomena in a variety of communication situations (Quiring & Schweiger, 2008). Because different types of interfaces achieve specific purposes, features can have different functions and be perceived differently by users based on the rhetorical situation of an interface. One problem I identified in the literature on general interactivity was the vague use of the term general interactivity. The meaning of the term can become clearer when different types of interactivity are identified and explained according to the situation and purpose in which it is used. In this study, I differentiated between functional and perceived interactivity because both types appeared in the previous literature and both types illustrate specific characteristics of interactivity in interfaces.

FUNCTIONAL INTERACTIVITY

I defined functional interactivity as the features that serve as representations in an interface that enable users to accomplish specific tasks that provide specific outcomes for users in a mediated communication environment. The tasks users complete in interfaces are digital, and the objects in an interface function as representations of material tasks (Johnson-Eilola, 2005; Norman, 1999; Selfe & Selfe, 1994). Features in interfaces have been described as physical aspects that enable users to complete specific tasks (Ha & James, 1998; Jensen, 1998). However, the features included in interfaces are metaphorical representations of physical actions or tasks. For example, as explained by Selfe and Selfe (1994), portraying the computer interface as a desktop is a metaphor to describe the interface as a whole, and specific icons, like folders and files, represent different types of data and metaphorically mimic physical objects that occur in a physical space.

While many features in interfaces are representations, scholars who study interactivity from a functional perspective have assumed that including more features in computer interfaces—particularly websites—the more interactive the website is (Ha & James, 1998; McMillan, 2002). These scholars also have tended to view features as the physical aspects of interfaces even though the features are digital. For example, Vanderdonckt (2003) categorized specific types of material objects that can be included in an interface. He described interaction objects (widgets or controls that can be either static or dynamic) and interactive objects (objects an interface displays including icons, drawings, pictures, and other visual imagery) as features of an interface. He provided specific recommendations for ways to incorporate both interaction and interactive objects

into interfaces through five techniques: physical, composition, association and dissociation, ordering, and photographic. Each of these techniques enables specific aims or goals to be achieved from the designer's perspective, but Vanderdonckt did not discuss the rhetorical outcome of these techniques. Each of his techniques serve a specific purpose in conveying content to users, but the ways content is interpreted by users is dependent on their needs and cultural frameworks for interpreting and perceiving content. Thus, adding features does not always achieve an intended outcome for users if the features are not appropriate for the rhetorical situations. Features also can be associated with genres, and analyzing the rhetorical purposes of features can be one component of a genre analysis.

Determining ways features function rhetorically is one aspect of a genre analysis; however, authors of interactivity studies have not analyzed interfaces and their features in order to categorize them as genres. The process of analyzing texts as genres focuses on the rhetorical situation and its influences for shaping a text as a genre (Foss, 2004; Miller, 1984). Conducting a genre analysis enabled me to begin to understand (a) which specific features are present in the Facebook interface and (b) the ways specific features, as identified by the sampled participants, function rhetorically. In Chapter III, I address how I situated features rhetorically using genre analysis as a method to confirm my results. Defining which features enable a text to be considered interactive is a starting point for categorizing the functions of different types of interfaces as genres, but only considering the interface's features does not take into account the rhetorical situation and a user's purpose for engaging with an interface.

Scholars have found that only defining general interactivity based on features does not adequately explain designers' defined goals: that users achieve their intended tasks using the features the designers provide. In reaction to assumptions that adding a large quantity of features to interfaces is necessary for good interface design, Liu and Shrum (2002) noted, "the rush to implement interactivity features into a marketing situation must be tempered, or at least mediated, by consideration and understanding of precisely what interactivity is, what it can do, and just as important, what it cannot do" (p. 63). Thus, features alone do not make an interface interactive; the designers' purposes for creating an interface and the users' needs for engaging with an interface can influence users' perceptions of features defined as interactive. While Liu and Shrum did not discuss the rhetorical situation in which features are incorporated into an interface, further analysis of the ways features function rhetorically may have indicated why some features are more appropriate than others in specific types of interfaces.

Later studies found that other influences, such as users' perceptions and needs, can indicate what is or is not considered interactive in an interface. As Coyle and Thorson (2001) noted, getting the right consumers to a company's website and having them stop their search for something is the goal of marketers, and that goal can be achieved by integrating the correct features into a website's interface. Users have specific purposes for using a website, and users will engage with a website if they are able to achieve their purposes. Marketers can find ways to appeal rhetorically to users to persuade them to use a website's interface, but those marketers must acknowledge or develop a need that meets a user's purpose to engage with a website. Even if marketers incorporate appropriate features into an interface, users may not use a website if they do not have a need or

purpose to use the content provided to them; thus, features alone do not always determine if a user will spend time engaging with a website.

Further reinforcing the idea that features alone do not determine if a user will engage with a website, McMillan et al. (2003) found that it was more critical to get the right user to the website instead of adding additional features to make a website's interface interactive. Although determining an intended target audience and its needs is one way designers can choose appropriate features to include in an interface, McMillan et al. did not give suggestions for ways to get an intended user to the website. Supporting the idea of determining and understanding who the target users are for an interface and their needs in the interface, Sundar (2004) noted that understanding interactivity according to features and then understanding the features in relation to attitudes and behaviors of users can allow designers to understand how interactivity affects users instead of relying on the designer's assumptions for interactivity effects. In a study by Song and Zinkhan (2008), the researchers found that adding features does not necessarily cause a website to be perceived as more interactive. They came to this conclusion after creating a scenario for their participants and testing whether or not adding specific types of features caused the website to be perceived as more or less interactive. Their findings implicitly suggested the need for specific types of communication situations to be explored in more depth, and scholars using a rhetorical framework can supplement the general interactivity discussions by exploring in more depth the rhetorical situations in which users are communicating. Song and Zinkhan explained that (a) designers should understand which features users actually use and (b) adding additional features for the sake of adding them does not make a website more interactive because interactivity

“resides in the consumers’ eyes, not in the system itself” (p. 109). Thus, functional features do not necessarily determine what is or is not interactive in a website’s interface; the designers’ exigence and the users’ needs and purposes influence what should and should not be included in an interface.

The studies regarding functional interactivity that I described in this section provided scholars with an initial understanding of functional features considered interactive in a website’s interface, and those studies paved the way for definitions of perceived interactivity. Scholars who initially investigated functional interactivity discovered aspects of perceived interactivity in their studies, including aspects of control, direction of communication, and speed of response, but they initially did not understand how those factors contributed to interactivity (Rafaeli, 1988). I discuss next how perceived interactivity and its elements eventually were investigated further.

PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY

Definitions of functional interactivity only considered ways features enable users to complete tasks and thus only provided a starting point for describing what interactivity is in website interfaces. Scholars could not account for all the facets of general interactivity through a functional approach; for example, the reasons users found some features of an interface more interactive than others. In particular, Rafaeli (1988) discovered specific phenomena in his study that he could not explain based on functional features alone, and those phenomena, such as control, speed of response, and directions of communication, came to be aspects of perceived interactivity. Drawing from the literature, I defined perceived interactivity as users’ psychological impressions of the ways specific features included in a website’s interface enable them to complete specific

tasks. Functional features provide users with specific types of tasks they can complete, but it is up to the users themselves to decide which features to use based on their perceptions and purposes. When users make choices for which tasks to accomplish in an interface, they are acting as rhetors because they are responding to an exigence which then gives them a purpose to engage in discourse.

Measuring perception can be a challenging practice because it can be impossible to know exactly people's perceptions and the reasons behind their perceptions.² In the computer science field, Davis (1989) and Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989) developed models and instruments to measure specifically perceived usefulness in order to determine ways users perceive computer interfaces to be useful. Hasan and Ahmed (2007) and other scholars have used Davis' (1989) and Davis et al.'s (1989) models to study users' behavioral intentions and perceptions when using interfaces. These scholars briefly mentioned the problems with measuring intention and perception as potentially unreliable when participants self-report their answers to the measures used to study perception and intention. Many of the studies I drew upon describing perceived interactivity did not address the problems with measuring perception (see Kioussis, 2002; Liu & Shrum, 2002; McMillan, 2002; McMillan & Hwang, 2002; Newhagen et al., 2005; Wu, 2005). Any sampling and measurement apparatus of perception is fraught with problems in terms of the validity of the results obtained from perception studies. I chose grounded theory as a research method because its developers have acknowledged that the data serves as a representation based on a relativist epistemology. Using grounded theory

² Light (2006) noted that measuring peoples' feelings, perceptions, and intentions has become common in user experience research. User experience research has been developed and described by Garrett (2011), Norman (2004), and Shedroff (2001).

allowed me to take into account the representational nature of the data I collected, and I discuss it as the framework for my data collection methods in Chapter III. With the problems of measuring perception in mind, in my study, I relied on the ideas of Gibson (1950, 1977, 1986) and his extension of the work of Gestalt psychologists to explore perception.

The perceived interactivity literature I drew upon did not define perception explicitly, and I define it here in order to provide my perspective of the term and to acknowledge the scholars who influenced my definition of the term and the ways I frame my discussion. I based my use of the term *perception* on the work of perceptual psychologist J. J. Gibson and user experience/usability expert Donald Norman to understand ways people perceive visual objects. I used their research and definitions of the term perception to take into account situational factors that a considerable amount of the scholarship used here from scholars in computer science, communications, marketing, and advertising did not consider.

Gibson's (1950) early scholarship built upon work by Gestalt psychologists, such as Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Köhler, and Kurt Koffka. Early Gestalt theory was based on the observation that people experience and see things as a whole instead of individual aspects of objects (Kimball & Hawkins, 2008). Gestaltists created laws to explain ways people perceive and make sense of different aspects of objects. These laws included figure-ground discrimination, laws of grouping, and good figure.³ These laws more

³ Figure-Ground discrimination refers to ways someone distinguishes the difference between figure (what is perceived as an object) and ground (what is perceived as the object's context). Laws of grouping include proximity (distance between grouped objects), similarity (perceptions of similar figures belonging together), continuation (assumed connection between lined up figures also known as alignment), and common region (ways objects are aligned in spaces, also known as enclosure). For further information

recently have been used in interface design to provide designers with specific ways to arrange objects in interfaces based on perception (Kimball & Hawkins, 2008; Williams, 2008).

Gibson (1950) further extended the work of the early Gestalt theorists by defining perception as a stimuli in physical environments that fosters specific types of sensations: “the visual world is an unlearned experience, that it is meaningless when seen for the first time, and that what one learns is to see the meanings of things” (p. 200). Similar to the Gestalt theorists, perception for Gibson was based on visual sensations that he assumed are the same for everyone; but people’s interpretations of visual sensations in physical environments that vary from person to person are based on culture and other social influences that enable people to interpret visual information. While Gibson’s early work regarding perception was concerned with physical environments, his concepts of affordances and perceived affordances have been applied to computer systems and interfaces.

Gibson (1977) described physical environments as having affordances, which he defined as physical properties an environment provides for the benefit or detriment of a person, and it is up to the person to perceive how the affordances can or cannot benefit him or her in a physical environment. Affordances are not a fixed set of things that help to classify an object or an environment. Instead, affordances (a) are dependent on the perception of the person who wants to use the object and (b) do not have to be visible, known, or desirable to a person. Affordances in computers, based on Gibson’s research, are the hardware which enables specific computer functions to occur. For example, a hard

regarding these principles, refer to Gibson (1979), Kimball & Hawkins (2008), Köhler (1929), Koffka (1935).

drive enables file storage, and a mouse enables a user to point and click with a cursor on a screen.

In order to test specific aspects of affordances in an ecological interface design based on Gibson and other scholars' assertions regarding affordances in interfaces, Stoffregen, Bardy, and Mantel (2006) asked users to judge if an object that appeared on screen was in reach and they measured aspects of users' physical movement to determine their perceptions. While this study measured the physical manipulations of affordances, my study was concerned with the perceptual aspects of affordances, which are harder to gauge.

While physical properties of computers like a hard drive and mouse afford users specific capabilities with computers, objects like buttons and links located on computer interfaces are not affordances because they rely on users' perceptions for their functionality, and they are not physically available to users because they appear on a screen. Norman (1999) applied the term perceived affordance to computer interfaces, which he defined as the user's ability to understand whether or not he or she can complete a task or do something within an interface through the use of content and features that are provided by designers on the interface. Because perceptual properties are harder to measure, my study was designed to elicit responses from participants who describe their perceptions of the interface and their choices for certain actions within an interface. The responses I gathered from participants must be understood as representations of their knowledge of their actions. Participants may have told me what they thought I wanted to hear; however, the data I collected will be used as a starting point for future studies that can measure aspects of perception more precisely.

Because I was interested in studying the perceptual properties of interfaces, I developed my research questions under the assumption that users must perceive a button or link's function in an interface and then decide to use the available features provided by designers. I also assumed in my research questions that users choose which tasks to accomplish based on their purpose or reasons for using an interface. As a starting point for identifying specific aspects of perceived interactivity to study in detail, I used specific elements of perceived interactivity identified in scholarship from the fields of computer science, marketing, advertising, and communications. I discuss these elements next.

ELEMENTS OF PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY

Perceived affordances enable users to determine ways they can and cannot use functional features to complete specific tasks within an interface. In addition to perceived affordances and functional features that enable users to complete specific tasks, scholars have identified additional elements to define perceived interactivity and differentiate it from functional interactivity based on the features present within an interface. These elements include control, time/speed of response, and direction of communication. I assessed the Facebook interface for elements of control and time/speed of response because they enabled me to observe ways specific features were perceived. I decided not to include direction of communication in my data collection methods and analysis because it perpetuated conversational metaphors that do not consider users' needs and purposes in interfaces. While I did not include direction of communication in my data collection methods, it emerged as movement in my analysis. I chose to use the term *movement* instead of the term direction of communication because the term movement

implies that users can move through an interface in many different directions. I discuss movement in relation to direction of communication in my analysis in Chapter IV.

CONTROL

I defined *control* as users' perceptions of their abilities to choose or manage the content provided on a website, the site navigation, and the features provided on a website's interface as suggested by Ha and James (1998), Liu and Shrum (2002), McMillan (2002), McMillan and Hwang (2002), and Wu (2005). Control as an element of perceived interactivity in this study enabled me to understand how users perceive their abilities to manipulate information in the Facebook interface. Facebook's designers provide users with specific features that enable control over their information and control for the information they can access from other users within the interface, but control can be perceived.

Control has not always been classified as an element of perceived interactivity. For example, in a study that attempted to define functional interactivity, Downes and McMillan (2000) interviewed individuals considered experts of communication technologies about how they understood and defined interactivity. The concept of control emerged as the ways individuals made response choices. For example, control in their interviews was described as the sender having control over a message being sent, and a receiver having control over providing a response to the sender or ignoring the message. However, the control described in the Downes and McMillan (2000) interviews was perceived because users do not always have control over content and their abilities to complete specific types of tasks in interfaces.

Control can provide users with a false sense of empowerment because they can perceive to have more control in interfaces than they actually have. For example, Ha and James (1998) defined choice as the availability of options and the ability to navigate cyberspace unrestrained. From their analysis, they concluded that choice in business websites can be a false sense of empowerment because users' choices are still defined by the company who created and maintained the website. Users may perceive to have control over their navigational choices in an interface, and designers can take advantage of users' perceived control by providing users with features that makes them feel in control of content or their abilities to complete specific tasks. In another study, Yun (2007) found that a user has control over how he/she navigates through a website. However, the user does not necessarily control the content of a website; some websites do enable users to build content in specific features such as forums or discussion boards, but some interfaces depend on users taking control and building content—such as with a wiki. Control in features such as forums and discussion boards and websites like wikis have specific rhetorical purposes that result from an identified exigence. This control can enable users' needs or purposes to be fulfilled.

Later studies defined control as an element perceived by users and described it as active (Jensen, 2008; Liu & Shrum, 2002, McMillan, 2002; Richards, 2006). Researchers have defined *active control* as a condition where users are presented with options and the users choose to act on the options presented to them. For example, users who need high levels of control will perceive and use websites differently than users who prefer low levels of control. As Liu and Shrum (2002) noted, users may not want control over specific types of content or actions within an interface, and the types of control users

want or need is dependent on the purposes they have when using an interface. By defining and describing control as active, Liu and Shrum (2002) did not directly consider ways control also can be defined as passive. This is problematic because it creates a binary that is not explored in depth. Instead, control must be understood according to the needs of users within a rhetorical situation because users may not want or need specific types of control in an interface and the types and amount of control needed by users is dependent on the rhetorical situations of the interface.

TIME/SPEED OF RESPONSE

Identifying time/speed of response as an element of perceived interactivity enabled me to understand how aspects of time influence users' perceptions of interactivity based on the tasks they chose to complete in the interface. *Time/speed of response* as an element of perceived interactivity has been defined as how long it takes for a response from the interface to occur after a user has completed a specific action (click on a link, navigate to a new page, or another action that is perceived as interactive). Scholars have explored time/speed of response as separate elements of perceived interactivity, but I have combined both as one element because both terms generally relate to the same phenomena as it occurs in website interfaces. Time, as described by McMillan and Hwang (2002) and Yun (2007), characterizes the period that occurs between the moment a user clicks on a link or performs an action in an interface and the moment the computer system provides a response. Speed of response, as described by Johnson et al. (2006), Kiouisis (2002), and Liu and Shrum (2002), characterizes the same phenomena as the idea of time proposed by McMillan and Hwang (2002) and Yun (2007), where speed of response is the time between when a user clicks on link and when

that user receives an action. Previous scholars have investigated users' perceptions for the speediness of a website based on how long it takes a button or a link to take a user to a new page or how long an action takes to be completed (Johnson et al., 2006; Yun, 2007). When Johnson et al. tested specific facets of interactivity in order to develop a more specific definition of the term, they found users perceived a text to be more interactive the faster it was. Johnson et al. used a website for a fictitious wine retailer as their site of study, and participants were asked to act as recently graduated advertising executive trainees who were requested to host a Christmas party. The participants' task was to assess information about three different brands of wine and select the brand they deemed most appropriate for the party. The researchers tested additional elements of interactivity, but they found that users' perceptions were influenced by nonverbal information in an exchange, responsiveness, and the speed of response—the faster a response was received the more interactive it was perceived to be. Johnson et al.'s study illustrates (a) that a variety of influences can indicate perceived interactivity, including non-verbal information in an exchange in an interface, responsiveness, and speed of response and (b) that users can have individual perceptions of perceived interactivity elements.

While researchers, like Johnson et al. (2006), found conclusive results for the influence of response times in interfaces, other researchers found a wider variety of results for perceptions of response times in interfaces. For example, Yun (2007) found that differing response times from clicking on website links affected participants' perceptions of the interactivity of the website as well. His results showed that a faster response time was seen as more interactive than a slower response time when a participant clicked on a website link. Yet, Yun also found that even if a website had a

slow response time (9 seconds), participants were still willing to wait for the webpage to load. This finding can be interpreted to mean that users had a specific purpose for using the website and their need to use the website outweighed the potential inconvenience of a slow response time. Yun's (2007) findings regarding speed of response illustrate that users' perceptions can depend on their own needs when engaging with a website's interface because users were willing to wait for a webpage to load. It was not clear in either study if the types of websites users tested were ones they would normally use. While both the Johnson et al. (2006) and the Yun (2007) studies asked users to assess websites in order to understand perceived interactivity, the participants' responses were collected in conditions removed from the situation of use and the users' purposes were not clear. This is a problem because it removes from consideration the situational factors that can influence users' perceptions of the interactivity of the interface.

Users perceive features in interfaces based on their purposes; and because users can have different perceptions of specific features, those differences can illustrate different opinions of the ways interactivity can be perceived. For example, Downes and McMillan (2000) found their interview respondents had somewhat differing opinions as to whether or not time mattered in interactive forms of communication. Some participants indicated that the closer to real time they perceived an exchange to be, the more interactive they perceived the exchange. However, others described real time as not important or dependent on the type of communication being completed. Downes and McMillan concluded from these responses that it was more important for participants to have some control over the timing of messages. The variety of responses from the Downes and McMillan interviews illustrate the variety of ways users can perceive

time/speed of response in an interface, and the differences of participant opinion regarding time further illustrate that time/speed of response is dependent on users' communication situation. Participant responses in interviews also revealed the way messages are conveyed between users, which Downes and McMillan termed *nature* and *direction*. In additional scholarship, nature and direction were broadly called *direction of communication*, which I discuss next as another influential perceived interactivity element.

DIRECTION OF COMMUNICATION

While control and time/speed of response illustrate user's perceived abilities with content and features in an interface, direction of communication illustrates users perceived abilities to communicate with others or with a system. The scholarship I drew from that described direction of communication described it as different types of back and forth movements that imply conversational metaphors (Downes & McMillan, 2000; Johnson et al., 2006; McMillan & Hwang, 2002; Quiring & Schweiger, 2008). The conversational metaphors used to describe and define general, functional, and perceived interactivity do not adequately describe situational factors that can influence the ways users interpret discourse in communication situations. While specific types of website interfaces enable users to communicate with others, their communication is mediated by the interface, and the affordances and perceived affordances of an interface can influence users' abilities to communicate with others based on available communicative actions in an interface.

Scholars have defined direction of communication as the way communication exchanges occur between users, between users and the interface, or between users and

other users. In many instances, multiple directions of communication can be present in the same interface depending upon the types of features provided to users and the purpose of the website. For example, Liu and Shrum (2002) described specific types of features that can facilitate two-way communication, including feedback forms, email, chat rooms, discussion boards, and other features that allow feedback and user satisfaction to be assessed and monitored. These features also were described by other scholars, including Downes and McMillan (2000), McMillan & Hwang (2002), and Quiring and Schweiger (2008).

Other terms have been used to describe direction of communication. Johnson et al. (2006) used the term *reciprocity* to describe it as “the extent to which communication is perceived to be reciprocal or to allow mutual action” (p. 41). They explained that their definition is situated in contexts, and reciprocity is dependent upon whether or not the text is mediated (situated in a communicative technology) or non-mediated (occurring in face-to-face communication situations). The purpose of their study was to create a general interactivity definition that could be used in a variety of communication contexts not necessarily mediated by technology. They used the term context instead of the term rhetorical situation, and they did not explicitly define context and aspects of it. Their use of the term context and their attempt at generalizing the term interactivity may be one reason they did not find statistical significance of reciprocity in their results and why reciprocity’s theoretical importance was not supported in their findings. They concluded that just having features or elements that allow for reciprocal communication does not necessarily allow users to perceive the website to be more or less interactive. While the aim of their study was to find a general interactivity definition that could apply to a

variety of contexts, their definition of context was not clear. Using the term rhetorical situation was beyond their disciplinary interests, but the term encompasses a larger variety of influences that indicate the ways general interactivity can function in different communication situations, and determining specific aspects of rhetorical situations may have alleviated their problem of not understanding ways reciprocity works as a facet of general interactivity. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter IV, I renamed direction of communication as movement, which I defined as an oscillation between looking at and through an interface (see Lanham, 1993).

SITUATING DIFFERENT TYPES OF INTERACTIVITY RHETORICALLY

The scholarship I drew upon to describe functional and perceived interactivity came from fields outside of writing studies (computer science, communications, advertising, and marketing), and many of the researchers whose studies I reviewed did not rhetorically situate users and interfaces in their work because the concept of rhetorical situation was beyond the scope of their disciplinary perspectives. Although scholars outside of writing studies do not use the term context to investigate the larger rhetorical situation in which an interface is embedded, they do use the term to describe aspects of the ways context influences users' engagement with an interface. I have argued that the term rhetorical situation should be used instead of the term context because (a) it is too narrow and does not include outside influences that may not be directly present within a context and (b) outside influences can affect discourse choices and actions in certain situations. I used the definition of rhetorical situation proposed by Bitzer (1968/1992) as a starting point for determining the designers' and users' influences on the Facebook interface and specific exigencies, purposes, and constraints that also influenced the

designers and users. Bitzer's work describing the rhetorical situation was significant in terms of the history of rhetoric because at the time he wrote his article "The Rhetorical Situation," there had been a resurgence in the study of rhetoric as a legitimate and important area of study after many years of dormancy and disregard. Describing the historical backdrop in which Bitzer's work was published illustrates my own positioning of rhetoric within fields in which rhetoric is beyond the scope of their work but in which rhetoric has significant implications for the work that they do. Because rhetoric is beyond the disciplinary scope of the fields from which I am drawing, I argue in this section that Bitzer's work and my work are similar in terms of their historical significance and that fields outside of writing studies should pay attention to the study of rhetoric in order to further their research agendas regarding general interactivity.

At the time Bitzer (1968/1992) wrote his article, he was responding to and extending work by rhetorical theorists Richards and Ogden (*Meaning in Meaning* [1923]) in which the researchers provided a theory for ways meaning can be assigned to signs and interpreted by readers. In their work, the researchers began to consider the ways people make sense of signs and sign systems instead of ignoring the issue meaning provides. Richards and Ogden were responding to Saussure's 1916 work—regarding signs, signifiers, and the signified—which did not adequately address ways meaning is assigned to signs and sign systems. Richards and Ogden's work can apply to interfaces because users have to assign meaning to objects in interfaces, but those objects in interfaces are embedded in specific types of situations. In their work, Richards and Ogden (1923/2001) acknowledged that signs occur in situations; they stated, "whenever we 'perceive' what we name 'a chair,' we are interpreting a certain group of data (modifications of the sense

organs), and treating them as signs of a referent” (p. 1280). While people make sense of objects or signs that they encounter, Richards and Ogden did not fully consider the ways audiences interpret texts that others construct for them for specific reasons.

According to Young (2001), in Bitzer’s work, he also was responding to the idea of moving away from only considering rhetors to considering audiences. Bitzer (1968/1992) defined the rhetorical situation as

people, events, objects, and relations presenting an actual or potential exigence which can be completely or partially removed if discourse, introduced into the situation, can so constrain human decision or action as to bring about the significant modification of the exigence. (p. 6)

Bitzer’s definition not only provided me with a starting point for my study, but it provided other scholars a starting point from which to refine and critique his claims regarding the rhetorical situation. For example, Vatz (1973) argued that situations are rhetorical and rhetors make choices for what is important to address in discourse. His stance is opposite of Bitzer’s (1968/1992) who suggested a situation does not make itself known to a rhetor but rather a rhetor chooses to expose and respond to a situation. Brinton (1981) further clarified the idea of the rhetorical situation by explaining that rhetorical acts should be evaluated according to the ways in which they fit the situation and that the situation is essential to the theory of rhetoric. Both Vatz’s and Brinton’s responses to Bitzer’s work refined Bitzer’s definition and description by explaining the relevance of the rhetorical situation in terms of what it is and who is involved. More current descriptions of the rhetorical situation have since also moved from emphasizing rhetors to emphasizing audiences. In particular, Grant-Davie (1997) stated that rhetors need to

acknowledge and understand (a) their position within a specific situation and the ways their identity changes from situation to situation as well as (b) their role in a single rhetorical situation can be dynamic. Audiences' roles in rhetorical situations or in individual situations can also be dynamic, and rhetors and those who study or communicate in rhetorical situations must acknowledge the dynamism that can create effective forms of communication. So like rhetoricians prior to Bitzer who did not always acknowledge audiences in rhetorical situations, HCI and user experience researchers also traditionally have failed to consider users' needs when designing interfaces. However, more current HCI and user experience researchers have begun to consider users more carefully according to the ways they use interfaces.

Researchers in the field of HCI have begun to show concern with identifying and assessing behavioral goals in work settings in which users evaluated interfaces and reported their design preferences to a usability tester (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). The shift from (a) computer designers assuming their products were easy and knowable for users to use to (b) designers asking users if their products were usable was an advancement in the field. Current advancements in HCI have moved past usability testing and toward creating a user experience. Researchers have studied users' subjective, emotional, and consequential reactions to computer systems to understand the experience that designers create for users (Hassenzahl & Tractinsky, 2006). Although Bitzer's (1968/1992) argument that discourse should be positioned in situations developed during a time when discourse was not considered in the digital realm, the recent change in perspectives in HCI research reflects Bitzer's underlying concern for user needs and

experiences. More recent rhetorical scholars including Grant-Davie (1997) have since modified and refined Bitzer's work for contemporary rhetorical scholars.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I described in more depth continua that have been used to define and explain different ways interactivity works. A continuum offers a means of illustrating ways interactivity works as a dynamic model and one that allows researchers to begin to solve some of the problems previous models and conversational metaphors have had with describing and defining general types of interactivity. I defined in-depth functional and perceived interactivity based on scholarship from outside of writing studies in order to illustrate how lumping different types of interactivity into a general definition does not adequately address the ways it can be used to aid in communication in digital communication environments. I also described the previously identified perceived interactivity elements that provided me with a starting point for my analysis and that shaped the way I conducted my study. Web communication continues to change due to advances in web design practices and conventions; therefore, definitions of interactivity must include different types of interactivity that enable designers to respond to different exigencies and that allow users to complete their purposes for engaging with interfaces. When designers rely solely on definitions and models of interactivity without considering the communication practices of users that influence and shape the functionality and perceptions of interactivity (i.e., the rhetorical situation), there is a potential for designers to create less effective documents. I designed my study not only to answer the research questions I introduced in Chapter I but also to refine scholars' and designers' knowledge of specific ways interactivity can function and be perceived in specific communication

situations. In the next chapter, I describe the methodology and methods I used to collect my data and the importance of my data for answering my research questions.

CHAPTER III

USING A GROUNDED THEORY FRAMEWORK TO INVESTIGATE PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY IN THE FACEBOOK INTERFACE

I designed my study to situate functional and perceived interactivity rhetorically based on the ways users report using the Facebook interface. To begin this chapter, I describe the grounded theory methodology and methods that guided my data collection and analysis, and I situate myself as the researcher within the study in order to bring to light my own knowledge claims and ways they came to influence the data analysis. I triangulated my data in order for each data set to build upon and complement the other data sets that I collected. The following is a brief description of each data set I collected:

- Paper surveys asking Old Dominion University (ODU) undergraduates from 100-level writing and literature courses questions about why they created a Facebook account(s) and how they use it. The surveys were anonymous, and I used them to establish a specific sample population of Facebook users in order to acknowledge specific discourse communities.
- Two case study interviews with participants who indicated on their surveys an interest in being contacted further to discuss how they use Facebook. The case study interviews provided me with more detailed information to illustrate and understand the ways perceived interactivity occurs in the Facebook interface as a constraint within the rhetorical situation.
- Genre analysis to understand the rhetorical situation in which the sampled Facebook users were embedded in order to understand how they perceived their use of the Facebook interface. This process also enabled me to

understand ways Facebook's designers envisioned how Facebook users should use the interface. The genre analysis confirmed the results from the paper surveys and the case study interviews.

Before I began collecting my data from human subjects, I obtained IRB approval (#09-042) through ODU's College of Arts and Letters, which served as a heuristic for how I should carry out my study (see Banks & Eble, 2007). As a heuristic, the IRB process enabled me to think about the specific ways I planned to conduct my study and maintain the privacy of my participants prior to collecting any data.

GROUNDING THEORY METHODOLOGY

In order to answer my research questions, I employed a grounded theory framework that relied upon a mixed methods approach for data collection and analysis. Scholars including Ha and James, (1998), Johnson et al. (2006), Kioussis (2002), Liu and Shrum (2002), McMillan (2002), McMillan and Hwang (2002), and Wu (2005) have described specific elements to define perceived interactivity, but it is not always clear from their research the ways users make sense of the interactivity that is available to them to complete specific outcomes they define for themselves. In order to understand perceived interactivity from a user's perspective in more depth, I chose to use grounded theory as a framework for my data collection and analysis because it enabled me to develop a theory from data, which also may be used in further studies to test claims that emerge from the data and analysis.

Sociologists Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss developed grounded theory to provide researchers with a data analysis method that enables them to develop theory from data systematically (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). They developed grounded theory to be

used in fieldwork research (especially in sociology and nursing) to generate interview and/or ethnographic data to analyze human action (Clarke, 2005). Clarke (2005) noted that based on the original work of Glaser and Strauss, good grounded theory is not just based on the collected data, but also on the researcher's commitment to represent "*all* (author's emphasis) understandings, all knowledge(s) and action(s) of those studied—as well as their own—as perspectival" (p. 3). Thus the theory that is developed from data is just a theory, but the representation of the data is just as important as the quality of the data collected by the researcher. In the research I present here, I made specific choices to represent my participants based only on the data they provided to me during the period in which I collected my data. Since I initially collected my data, the Facebook interface has been revised many times, and as a business, Facebook has undergone changes—including becoming a publicly traded company. In order to be true to the ways my sampled participants represented themselves to me when I collected my data, I only drew conclusions based on information I gathered during the period in which I collected my data.

Glaser and Strauss' original description of grounded theory methods as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) have more recently been revised from a social constructivist perspective. Social constructivist grounded theory works under the assumptions of a relativist epistemology in which (a) knowledge is socially produced, (b) multiple standpoints can occur from both the research participants and the researcher, (c) researchers are reflexive of their actions, situations, and participants in the field setting, and (d) the reported results from the data are analytic constructions of the participants, their actions, and situations (Charmaz, 2009). Data from grounded theory studies from a

social constructivist perspective are constructions based on what participants say, and the researchers' interpretation of the data is based on his/her knowledge of the participants and what they say. Traditional grounded theorists, who followed methods developed by Glaser and Strauss, were sensitive to the idea of accurately portraying the research site and participants, but constructivist grounded theorists have explicitly acknowledged that the data generated are socially constructed or based on social constructions. Social constructivists also have acknowledged postmodern concerns that were not available at the time Glaser and Strauss developed grounded theory.

A grounded theory study also was developed from "conglomerate data" (Stern, 2009, p. 57), including interviews, observations, literature, and statistics, and the results from each piece of data provided me with information to develop a theory about the data sampled. The data collected for a grounded theory study are not meant to be a heterogeneous sample of a large population. Instead, the data are meant to address theoretical concerns that are developed from the data, which can then be addressed and tested more rigorously and empirically in future studies. When conducting a grounded theory study, the researcher usually does not begin with a theory in mind; instead, he/she begins with data that represents phenomena that is then coded to develop categories to form a theory. As Strauss and Corbin (1998) noted, "theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the 'reality' than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation" (p. 12). The theory that develops from the conglomerate data cannot be used to generalize about a larger population beyond what is sampled, but it can provide a starting point from which

additional studies can be conducted to explore in further depth the concepts that emerge, which can then be tested empirically or with other methods.

GROUNDED THEORY METHODS AND TRIANGULATION

Grounded theory as a method for data collection and analysis allowed me to build theory from data, and using grounded theory supported my own theoretical assumptions and knowledge claims. Constructivist grounded theory assumes that concepts and theories are constructed by researchers and knowledge derived from those concepts and theories is based upon the researcher's own potential bias and world view (Charmaz, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Because I was working from a social constructivist position, I understand the likelihood that my data analysis was influenced by my worldview and bias. In order to counteract my bias, I did not force my data into pre-determined categories, and I triangulated my methods.

Building theory from my data using a grounded theory framework allowed me to theorize about perceived interactivity according to the rhetorical situation of my participants and according to the participants' purposes for creating and maintaining Facebook accounts. However, the theory developed from this study has limitations, which I discuss in depth at the end of this chapter. I cannot use my triangulated data to generalize all perceived interactions in social networking websites or digital texts. In order to build theory from data, I used memo writing as the mechanism for prompting the emergence of theory from the data. This process enabled me to explore the overarching concept of perceived interactivity.

Memo writing in grounded theory is not the formal practice of writing memos that is found in business and technical writing. Instead, it acts as an informal note-taking

process that allows a researcher to record and organize his/her thoughts during the data collection process. Other people are not meant to see the researcher's memos, and they act as a record to show the process the researcher went through to analyze and interpret the data. My memo writing overall was also based on the literature regarding perceived interactivity because some of the questions I asked in the case study interviews were based on the previously identified elements of perceived interactivity including control and time/speed of response as described by Johnson et al. (2006), Liu and Shrum (2002), McMillan and Hwang (2002), and Yun (2007). Using pre-determined categories or memo types when writing memos can be problematic because doing so can force data into specific categories when in fact the data may illustrate something previously unknown about the topic under study. I used the perceived interactivity categories as a starting point in my memo writing, but I also looked for new categories and concepts to emerge to describe perceived interactivity according to the rhetorical situation of the Facebook users sampled.

To begin the memo writing analysis process, I began with the survey data. I created a single memo for the survey data by describing what I found for each question and my thoughts about what I found for each question as they related to my research question. I wrote memos for the case study interviews according to the questions that I asked or according to the natural topic shifts that occurred during each interview as suggested by Corbin (2009) and Corbin and Strauss (2008). For a sample of the memos I wrote to understand my data, refer to Appendix A. These memos are memos I wrote to

describe my observations from the case study interview I conducted with Elmer,⁴ and the memos illustrate the themes and Facebook use patterns that emerged from my interview with her. Memos describing Facebook use patterns included (a) how each case study interview participant used Facebook, (b) what applications/games each participant used and how she used them, (c) what she included in her own Profile, and (d) her expectations when she used Facebook. I used the same themes and Facebook use pattern memo categories for the memos that I wrote for my second case study interview participant Profile

I wrote memos until I achieved saturation. Saturation in grounded theory traditionally is thought of as the point in which no new data emerges and the researcher finds that he/she cannot see other ways in which the data can fit into new categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Once I reached saturation in my memos, I compiled into one memo all the information I intended to include into the findings chapter, which then became a rough outline of how I wanted to present my findings in Chapter IV.

In addition to writing memos, I created a post-modern map to illustrate my intended goals and outcomes with my research as well as the ways I position myself, my assumptions, and my ideologies within the research as a scene as suggested by Sullivan and Porter (1997).⁵ I also created a postmodern map of the rhetorical situation as it emerged from my results, which I discuss in detail in Chapter IV. With regard to situational maps, Clarke (2005) noted that it is assumed “that everything in the situation *both constitutes and affects* (author’s emphasis) most everything else in the situation in

⁴ My case study participant Elmer is female. She chose a traditionally masculine name as her pseudonym. I describe Elmer in further detail in Chapter IV.

⁵ A research scene is where the researcher conducts and situates him/herself within the research space (Sullivan & Porter, 1997).

some way(s)” (p. 72). Thus, as noted in Chapter I, the postmodern maps enabled me to be reflexive (see Sullivan & Porter, 1997). In Figure 3, I illustrate the ways I triangulated my data in a postmodern map.

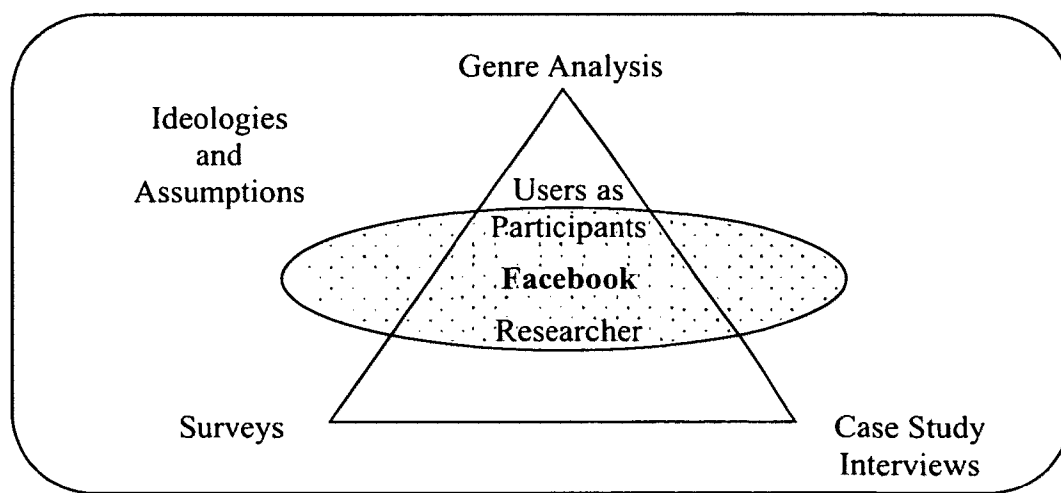


Figure 3. Post-modern map of triangulated research.

To further develop the theory and create visualizations to better understand the data, I also created diagrams based on the data. I used the diagrams to demonstrate how the interviewees moved through the Facebook interface so that I could understand how perceived interactivity influenced their use of the interface. The diagrams also showed how specific concepts that I developed illustrate the theory that emerged from the data (see Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These diagrams are located and described in further detail in the Movement Through Facebook section of Chapter IV.

I triangulated my research methods by distributing surveys, conducting interviews, and completing a genre analysis. Incorporating multiple methods allowed

layers of information to unfold so that I might understand more deeply the complexity of my site of study. Denzin (1970) advised that triangulation be used because “each research method reveals particular elements of symbolic reality” (p. 298). When methods are triangulated, the data complement and supplement each other by providing a more detailed account of the sampled participants—in this case the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface as represented by both the participating Facebook users and available documentation from Facebook’s designers and academic scholars describing the business practices and choices Facebook’s designers made regarding the design of the interface.

As the researcher of this study, I was positioned in the middle of the research, as indicated within the post-modern map (see Figure 3). While I was a Facebook user at the time of this study, I did not impose my subjectivities on the website as an artifact because I wanted to obtain data that accurately reflected the beliefs and actions of my participants. In particular, I only looked at features and use of the website as a whole based on my participants’ statements about how they used Facebook. While my own use of Facebook could have colored my interpretation of Facebook as an artifact, I avoided imposing my own purposes for using Facebook in my analysis. Positioning myself within the postmodern map as both a researcher and as a Facebook user, I acknowledged that I was not an outsider looking in at the phenomena I was studying; instead, I was positioned in relation to the people I was studying as both a participant and as a researcher. In addition, I made clear my choices for representing my participants based on the information they provide to me as suggested by Abu-Lughod (1991). Sapienza (2007) applied the concept of researcher ethos in virtual communities to the ways participants and researchers construct identities online. My position as a Facebook user increased my ethos as a

researcher because it provided me with (a) insider knowledge of the ways aspects of the interface were discussed by participants and (b) a framework from which to begin a deeper analysis of the interface I studied from a sample set of participants' perspectives.

Each object within the post-modern map acted as a filter through which I contextualized information within the scope of my research, and each object as a filter worked together to create the research scene. The filters embedded within the research scene illustrate my position within the research (see Sullivan & Porter, 1997). By positioning myself within the postmodern map, I recognized that I brought specific ideological perspectives to the research, and my perspective was not completely objective. As Abu-Lughod (1991) noted, the researcher stands in relation to the subject, who is situated within larger ideologies and assumptions that may influence a researcher's interpretation of the data. As the researcher, I acknowledged that the narrative I constructed from each data set was based on the ways participants' represented themselves as well as interpretive flexibility. Paccagnella (1997) described computer-mediated communication systems as exhibiting interpretive flexibility where the system can mean different things to different individuals or groups, and the groups' use of the system can continue to be interpreted and reinterpreted through time. In terms of the Facebook interface, users' motivations, reasons, and purposes for engaging with the interface constantly change based on their own communication needs and based on reactions to changes Facebook's designers make to the interface. Thus, my postmodern map must be understood as a dynamic illustration of my ideologies and assumptions that shape and are shaped by the data as a representation of a small group of specific Facebook users.

I located users as participants within the methods triangle because they also were positioned as working with the researcher to help achieve my goals within this project. I located users as participants within the Facebook oval because they functioned within Facebook as users, but I also placed the users outside of Facebook as an additional element of study. The triangulated data I collect acted as a representation of users' thoughts and actions (see Herndl, 1991). The shaded oval represents Facebook as the artifact, and it overlaps the triangle that represents my research methods. I situated each method at each point of the triangle to show how they work together triangularly to enable more nuanced answers to my research questions. The Facebook oval also overlaps outside of the methods triangle into the discourse community rectangle in order to visually account for how Facebook works within the discourse communities of my surveyed participants.

While the data I collected for this study was triangulated, the order in which I collected my data is not accurately reflected in the post-modern map in Figure 3. I first conducted my surveys; and from the surveys, I conducted my case study interviews. I conducted the genre analysis last. Because the methods I relied on for conducting the genre analysis required me to determine a broad idea of the discourse communities of my participants first, I needed to define who my participants were before I began the genre analysis. Conducting the genre analysis last allowed me to further organize and refine my conclusions about the data I collected using the surveys and interviews. As my results and analysis in Chapter IV will illustrate, the narrative of my participants and of my data comes from all three methods of data collection, and the boundaries for each piece of datum are blurred. Thus, while the methods described in this chapter are seen as three

separate entities on the points of the triangle illustrated on the post-modern map, the data worked together to form a rich, thick description that developed from the grounded theory framework.

UNDERSTANDING FACEBOOK AS A GENRE

Because grounded theory did not provide a specific method for textual analysis of an interface, I supplemented grounded theory methods with methods for a genre analysis. In general, drawing upon a pre-established set of conventions in a genre allows writers to convey information in a familiar way to members of a discourse community (Miller, 1984; Swales, 1990). Historically, the conventions that a writer draws upon are also the same set of conventions that a reader must rely upon to navigate a text—whether it is a digital or a print text (Flower, 1988). Because some of the previous interactivity research was concerned with how features contribute to interactivity, conducting a genre analysis provided me with a systematic way to code and interpret textual features according to the rhetorical situation of the text and based on responses from the survey and interview data with the sampled Facebook users. I did not analyze every feature on the Facebook interface because I was only interested in the features that the participants used and that I mentioned on the survey. Many new features and applications have been included in the Facebook interface since I collected my data; but in order to narrow the scope of my analysis and keep the focus on my sampled participants, I limited my genre analysis to features mentioned by the survey and interview participants.

The purpose of generic criticism as defined by Foss (2004) is “to understand rhetorical practices in different time periods and in different places by discerning the similarities in rhetorical situations and the rhetoric constructed in response to them” (p.

193). More specifically, Miller (1984) noted that genres can be used to accomplish specific actions that are based in social situations. She further stated that genres are not fixed—they change according to the needs of the situation—and they serve as tools for individuals who are members of different cultural communities or who want to gain membership into specific cultural communities. Rhetorical practices and design conventions for social networking sites continue to evolve, and the genre analysis allowed me (a) to examine specific features identified by the survey and case study interview participants for specific ways the participants used those features and (b) to explore potential ways the participants perceived they used those features based on the ways they indicated they constructed their use of the interface. I understood participants' statements as representations of specific tasks they identified completing in the interface. As I discuss in more detail in Chapter IV, specific features emerged as important to the sampled users, including the wall and commenting features.

In addition to the grounded theory methods that influenced the framework of this study as a whole, the post-modern grounded theory method of situational analysis informed the importance of identifying rhetorical situations rather than just the context in my genre analysis. As I described in Chapter I and based on definitions from Grant-Davie (1997) and Vatz (1973), I defined context as an element of the rhetorical situation that can include time, place, people, events, and other facts to describe the situation (rhetors choose which facts to address). Ultimately, the genre analysis, as influenced by grounded theory and situational analysis, allowed me to understand the social, cultural, ethical, and economic contexts that are embedded within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. Combining genre analysis with elements of grounded theory and situational

analysis narrowed the scope of my analysis of the Facebook interface. At the time of this study, Facebook provided users with a variety of features and resources. Because including them all in my analysis would have diluted my results, I limited my scope and only evaluated the features and other textual elements that my participants used.

To assess the Facebook interface as a textual genre, I relied on the definition proposed by Swales (1990) because it considers the rhetorical situations of genres rather than generic texts as separate from the people who use them:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choice of content and style. (p. 58)

This definition allowed me to consider the specific needs and purposes members of discourse communities apply to specific genres. Determining the communicative purposes users have for engaging with a text like the Facebook interface and assessing the purposes Facebook's designers have for creating and maintaining the Facebook interface narrows the scope of the genre analysis. Not narrowing the scope of the analysis would have resulted in bias because I would have imposed my assumptions about Facebook in the analysis. However, it is possible that there were hidden purposes the Facebook developers and creators did not publicize—especially concerning marketing and general design strategies. I acknowledged Facebook's designers' exigencies and purposes based on publicly available information from the Facebook website and popular press and scholarly articles. It was impossible for me to know exactly and all of the

reasons and motivations behind Facebook's designers' choices, and the information provided on Facebook's website is a representation of the corporate image they want to convey—not necessarily a representation of their actual business model or business practices.

Swales's (1990) definition of genre not only accounts for a user's purpose for communicating, but it also accounts for a user's communication within the constraints of a discourse community. I used Swales's definition of discourse community because it considered specific ways discourse is used in specific types of communication situations. I defined discourse community as a group of people that (a) has a generally agreed upon common set of goals, (b) has communication practices known to its members, (c) uses communication practices to provide information and to gain feedback from members, (d) and uses genres to further its communicative practices (Swales, 1990). In Swales's definition of discourse community, he acknowledges that communication does not take place within a vacuum of a homogenous group; instead, members of discourse communities are constantly shaping and modifying the constraints placed upon different types of discourse according to the needs and situations that call for communication among members to occur. However, the genre analysis could not conclusively define all of the discourse communities my participants belonged to because the boundaries of discourse communities are often fuzzy. As Porter (1992) noted, discourse communities can be seen as ecosystems that overlap and breakdown. While my genre analysis allowed me to understand some of the discourse communities of my participants, my understanding was limited to the survey and interview data; and as Porter (1992) further noted, the discourse communities “are *not* (author's emphasis) nice neat packages but . . .

are messy, ill-defined, and unstable” (p. 88). Thus, while the genre analysis can provide insight into the discourse communities of the participants, the data I collected were incomplete for conclusively defining specific and distinct discourse communities.

Because many traditional methods for conducting a genre analysis do not take web composition and design practices into account, I relied on and repurposed a two-dimensional model created by Askehave and Nielsen (2005) in which they acknowledged ways readers/users of web documents negotiate not only reading but also navigation of a digital text in order to obtain information from the text. In their model, Askehave and Nielsen took into account digital text features such as navigational tools that help a reader derive meaning from the text and placed arrows around the medium/text to demonstrate the movement the reader has from reading to navigating. In the model, Askehave and Nielsen showed how the movement from reading to navigating is further influenced by purpose, links/moves, and rhetorical strategies, which the researchers placed in the middle, surrounded by the reading/navigating arrows. This model influenced the model I created in Figure 4 to illustrate the stages of my genre analysis. When I conducted the genre analysis, I viewed each part of the model as a separate level that guided when each element would be collected and analyzed.

At the top of my model in Figure 4, the participants’ purposes, goals, and values, were the first level of information I collected in order to understand how the participants have the potential to use Facebook based on their discourse needs. I used the demographic information from the surveys I collected to obtain an initial portrait of who my participants were by open coding the data. After I completed the initial open coding of the data, I compared the demographic information I collected to demographic

information collected by ODU's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment (2010) in order to see how my participants compared to the university population as a whole.

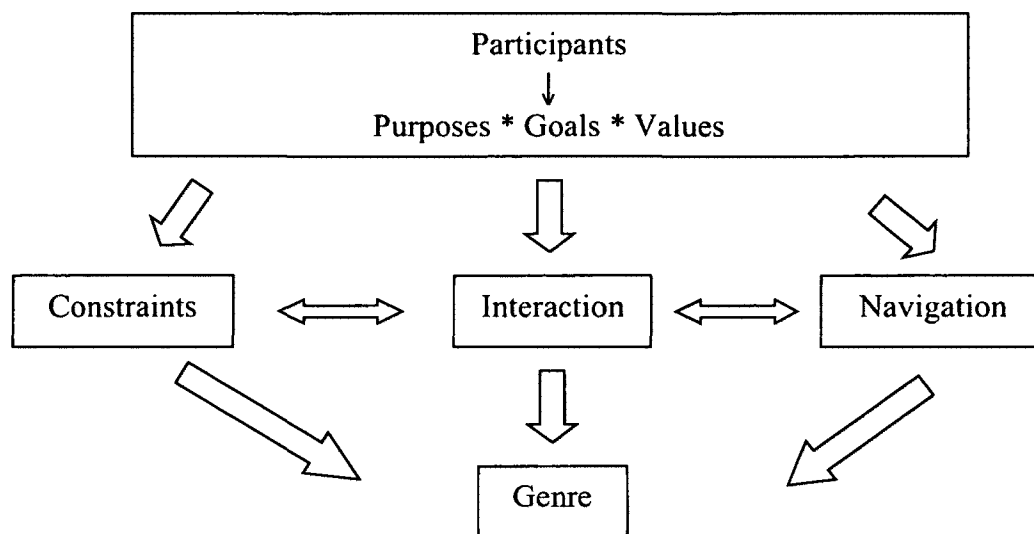


Figure 4. Genre analysis model for the Facebook interface.

After I open coded the data, I conducted each level of the genre analysis as illustrated in the model in Figure 4. To begin the Level 1 analysis, I input information in a spreadsheet I created (see Appendix B), and I identified the purpose, goals, and values of the survey and case study interview participants. I identified the purpose of the participants as their intentions and uncompleted actions. In my analysis, I also acknowledged Facebook's designer's influence on the participants' needs and uses of the interface because the features they include or do not include constrain users' abilities to complete different types of tasks in the Facebook interface. I identified the goals of the

participants as completed actions, and I coded the values of the participants as beliefs they held as indicated in the surveys.

In the Level 2 of the genre analysis, I identified elements of the interface that contributed to the navigation, interaction, and constraints located within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface in order to understand how they influenced the way the interface was used by the participants. I defined *navigation* as users' movement through the interface. I defined interaction in this part of the analysis as specific features users used and the ways they used those features to achieve a specific communicative purpose. I used interaction as a general term in the analysis by combining the understandings of functional and perceived interactivity that I described in my literature review in Chapter II. Interaction in the genre analysis works under the assumption that features on the interface and user perceptions shape how interactivity contributes to the genre of social networking as a whole. I viewed constraints in Level 2 of the genre analysis as cultural, social, economic, and ethical factors that shaped the rhetorical situation and that enabled or inhibited use in some way. I placed each of these elements on the same plane in this model because they work together and cannot be separated from each other. Each of these elements was assessed individually, and how these elements were assessed can be seen in the spreadsheet (see Appendix B). Then I drew conclusions about the genre in use from both sets of worksheets for each level of analysis.

SURVEYS

In order to find a sample population for study, I administered a survey to undergraduate students at ODU (see Appendix C). I chose the survey as the first method of data collection in order to obtain general information about Facebook use within the

ODU undergraduate student population. Surveys help researchers gather information about specific populations—information which then can be assessed for making generalizations about the population that is being studied (Creswell, 2003). Babbie (1973) noted that surveys are also conducted in order to obtain information about a specific population in order to make descriptive assertions about the population being surveyed. Surveys are advantageous because they ask real people in real situations questions about the phenomena being studied; however, they can be problematic because survey respondents state what they think is true, not necessarily what is true (Plumb & Spyridakis, 1992). In order to compensate for survey results that may or not be accurate, I used other data collection methods to confirm survey results and obtain additional insight from participants that could not be captured from the survey data. I understood that the responses I received from the survey participants were representations of the respondents that may or may not be true. Although I triangulated my data to address some of the problems surveys pose, subsequent research from the results I report here must be conducted in order to confirm my results.

Surveys asking questions about the ways a certain demographic actually uses Facebook allowed me to gather information about which features of Facebook are used, which then allowed me to determine which features to analyze in the genre analysis. Because my survey only asked undergraduate students at ODU how they use Facebook, I could not use the results to generalize about all Facebook users in the age range sampled or at other universities. Similarities between students at ODU and students at other colleges and universities likely exist, but it was not appropriate or ethical for me to make

sweeping generalizations. I also began my data collection with surveys to find participants who I could interview as case studies.

I began the survey with general demographic information to see how my participants fell into specific demographic categories, and then I included questions with specific options that asked users about their Facebook use. I did not collect the demographic data to analyze it for ways specific types of users used and made sense of Facebook based on age, gender, race, or socio-economic status. Instead, that data enabled me to compare my sampled population to the university population as a whole based on data collected by the university. Future studies focused on specific cultural categories may yield additional beneficial data. I also provided an option for *other* where respondents could fill in a specific answer that clarified their own unique use if the options I provided did not apply to them. The last four questions were open-ended questions in order to allow respondents to provide additional information not addressed in the questions with specific answer options. I also limited the survey length to two pages so that respondents would not be overwhelmed and thus would be more likely to answer all the questions provided. The surveys appear in Appendix C at the end of this document.

Although many different sampling techniques can be used for distributing surveys in order to collect information from a population, I chose convenience sampling as the collection technique for my survey (see MacNealy, 1999). Because I was not able to obtain a complete list of undergraduate students who have Facebook accounts and in order to reduce the number of variables for the population I surveyed, I included only students from lower level undergraduate English classes. At the time of this study,

Facebook allowed users to join networks for a school, workplace, or other organization. While 24,000 people were in the ODU network, I did not have the ability to email all 24,000 members to determine if they were current undergraduate students.

TEST PILOT OF THE SURVEY

Prior to administering the survey to English classes in the fall of 2010, I piloted the survey with a small sample of students in an English course that I was teaching. This allowed me to obtain preliminary results for my questions and subsequently alter the survey as necessary prior to distributing the official survey to the larger sample. I did not include the results from the pilot surveys in the official reported results. In addition to piloting the survey with students, I revised the survey multiple times before accepting the final version.

SELECTING CLASSES FOR PARTICIPATION AND ADMINISTERING THE SURVEY

At the beginning of September 2010, I emailed 11 instructors in the English department to ask if they would be willing to volunteer their classes to participate in my study (see Appendix D). Specifically, I asked instructors who teach composition and introductory literature courses because students in a variety of majors and disciplines take those courses. This process allowed me to sample a group that would more closely represent the general population at ODU as opposed to a group of students clustered within one major. I did not ask instructors who teach graduate level classes to participate because students in those classes are generally older and represent a different demographic than undergraduates and I assumed that their purposes for using Facebook

would be different than undergraduates. I surveyed a total of seven English classes—four English Composition (110) classes and three Introduction to Literature (112) classes.

Prior to handing out the surveys, I informed students that their participation was voluntary and that they would remain anonymous. For the complete statement that I read to students prior to administering the surveys, see Appendix E. My goal was to survey 200 participants in order to obtain enough information to get a variety of results but not so much information that it would be too overwhelming to code and analyze. I also asked students who do not have a Facebook account to refrain from participation. I collected a total of 196 surveys from participants. I excluded one participant's results because I knew the person, knew which survey was hers based on her responses, and did not want to compromise her identity.

CODING AND ANALYZING SURVEY DATA

Once I collected the surveys, I input the data input into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and gave each question its own category. Next I analyzed the data using SPSS [Version 16] so that I could group the data together into initial categories. Because I included a space for participants to indicate additional information, I obtained additional information that did not fit neatly into previously established categories for Questions 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8. For Questions 9-12, the questions were left open for participants to write in what applied to them. Additionally, I did not limit participants from indicating more than one response for Questions 1, 2, 3, 7, and 8; thus, the results for those questions show the overlap between responses and the totals for respondents totaled more than 195. During the initial coding and analysis of the survey data, I began the process for contacting participants for the case study interviews.

CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Case studies as a method for data collection are generally not included in methods for grounded theory, but many of the same assumptions that guide grounded theory are also prevalent in case study methods. Case study research, like grounded theory research, works to provide a rich description of a group or event (Bishop, 1999; MacNealy, 1999). The rich description that develops from analyzing case study data provides additional insight into the theory being developed from the data overall, which can then provide a starting point for additional research to test empirically specific aspects of a research question that emerged from the case study. I used case studies as a portion of data to help develop a theory about my sample population's use of Facebook, and I understood that the case study data were not representative of the larger survey population and that further research to test my claims that emerged from the case study data would be required. Case study research usually only relies upon a few cases that are described in great detail to begin a discussion about a larger population—a discussion which requires supplemental data in order to provide more general information about a sample population. Because I surveyed a larger population prior to conducting my case study interviews, I was able to get a more nuanced picture for how my interview participants fit into the larger sample, and the interviews enabled specific participants to represent themselves based on their responses to my questions.

Case studies as a method also falls under ethnographic research methods. Ethnographies can (a) employ a variety of research methods to obtain a portrait of human behavior in specific situations and (b) complement and explain survey data by allowing

researchers to obtain information from people in the identified sample population over a pre-determined period of time (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). Ethnography was beyond the scope of my research questions and goals for this study, and the data I collected functioned as a starting point for additional research. Because the data were triangulated, the results have the potential to more accurately reflect how the participants represented themselves or a specific aspect of themselves through their responses in the survey and interviews.

Case study methods can be considered problematic—especially because the researcher usually is obtaining information from a small set of participants who are members of a larger population and because case study results cannot be generalized (MacNealy, 1997, 1999). Although case studies may pose problems for generalizing results to larger populations, case studies can provide initial insight into ways a population makes sense of certain practices or ideas that it believes—insight that can become the starting point for future research by providing researchers with avenues for further investigation of larger concepts and ideas with additional populations (MacNealy, 1997). I used case studies to develop a starting point for obtaining additional concepts and ideas that could be tested empirically in additional studies. Yin (1994) further noted that case studies are meant to answer why and how questions. Because the previous scholarship regarding perceived interactivity did not always consider a user's perspective and instead empirically tested specific aspects of perceived interactivity in controlled settings, I wanted to investigate why users engaged with specific aspects of an interface and for specific reasons. I also wanted to investigate how users may or may not articulate

the specific categories that previous scholars had identified as aspects of perceived interactivity.

Case study research has been criticized for being unscientific because the results are based on the researcher's observations and can be seen as biased. In order to reduce the researcher bias for my case studies, I created transcripts from my interviews with participants instead of relying solely on notes or my memory. Creating transcripts allowed each participant's voice to be documented, and each transcript represented a participant's thoughts and statements. According to Mishler (1991), transcripts can be considered rhetorical devices that "reflexively document and affirm theoretical positions about relations between language and meaning. Different transcripts are constructions of different worlds, each designed to fit our particular theoretical assumptions and to allow us to explore their implications" (p. 271). Different types of transcription methods exist, some of which illustrate speech patterns as intonation units (Du Bois, Scheutze-Coburn, Cumming, & Paolino 1991; Ochs, 1979); however, I was not interested in specific discourse markers, so instead I chose to create transcripts that represented the language as spoken by the participants, including non-standard uses of language. By including the non-standard uses of language, I was able to represent the voices of each participant rather than imposing my own language use to represent a participant.

PILOTING, RECRUITING, AND CONDUCTING THE CASE STUDY INTERVIEWS

Prior to conducting the case study interviews with the volunteer participants, I piloted my case study procedure with a friend, and I created a preliminary note sheet. Piloting the case study procedure allowed me not only to test the interview procedure that I planned

on using but also to test the questions that I would be asking to make sure that I was asking the right questions in order to elicit responses that would illustrate the user's perceived interactive uses of Facebook. During the pilot session, I audio recorded my participant. From the initial pilot interview, I reworked some of my questions and added additional questions in order to obtain information from my case study participants.

After my initial case study pilot interview, I recruited participants for the case study interviews. On the survey, I included a space on the first page asking respondents if they would be willing to be contacted further, and I provided an incentive of a \$30 gift card for their time. Of the 195 original surveyed participants, 84 participants responded that they would be willing to participate in a case study interview and provided an email address. I selected interview participants based on how often they used Facebook, how long they had their Facebook accounts, and the variety and amount of activities and tasks for which they used Facebook to complete. Users who had a Facebook account the longest and used their Facebook accounts frequently (logged in more than once per day and updated often) were preferred over potential participants who logged in less frequently and who did not have their Facebook accounts very long (less than 1 year). When selecting participants, I was looking for users who could provide descriptions and reasons for completing a variety of tasks so that I could investigate how the tasks were perceived and described by participants as achieving specific purposes. While I could not know users' exact perceptions and intentions when engaging with specific types of features in the interface, I could draw some conclusions from the ways they represented their actions and choices in the interface based on their statements to me. The transcripts I created from the interviews served as a record that stated in each participant's own words

his/her thoughts as he/she choose to represent themselves. Participants who indicated that they had more than one Facebook Profile also were preferred because I anticipated that if a user had more than one Profile, the user would have a different purpose for each Profile.

When preparing for the interviews, I relied on case study data collection methods as described at the beginning of this section. I selected and emailed four students with the email addresses they provided on the survey and asked if they would be willing to meet with me on campus to discuss their use of Facebook (see Appendix F). Of the four participants I contacted, only one responded and agreed to meet with me. Because I was looking for two case study participants, I then contacted a second group of four students who I selected according to the same criteria as the first group. From the second group I contacted, two students agreed to meet with me. Only two of the three students who agreed to participate in the case study interviews came to the scheduled interview. Prior to one of the case study interview sessions, a participant asked if her friend, who also had filled out the survey, could participate in the case study interviews. Although I agreed to interview her, I later decided not to use the interview data because the participant's use of Facebook—and thus the usable data I was able to collect—was limited.

I scheduled the three interviews during the week of November 8, 2010, allowing 3 hours for each interview. Prior to the interviews, I informed each participant that the session would last between 1 and 3 hours, but each session lasted approximately only 30 minutes. While each session was shorter than I anticipated, I felt that each participant was able to describe how she used Facebook in enough detail to help me answer my research questions.

Because my goal was to collect and analyze data from participants who participated in a variety of activities in the interface in order to observe (a) aspects of the perceived interactivity elements of control and time/speed of response and (b) new aspects of perceived interactivity that previously had not been identified, I was not concerned that the participants I chose to interview did not represent a varied population with regard to gender, socio-economic status, race, or age. As I was coding and analyzing the case study data, I understood that my results only could apply to my case study participants and that future research would need to be conducted to empirically test and confirm the categories that emerged from my grounded theory based analysis. While the demographic information that I collected from my case study participants was significant for identifying who my participants were as people in the larger sampled population, I did not examine the ways gender, socio-economic status, race, or age influenced how perceived interactivity appeared as a constraint in the rhetorical situation and determined features and other aspects of the interface that were or were not perceived as interactive. Future studies may explore how these demographics could influence perceived interactivity and user experience in an interface.

PROCEDURES DURING THE INTERVIEWS

I began each interview by obtaining permission to audio record the session and to use the screen capture recording software Camtasia (Version 6.0.0) to record the participants' actions in the Facebook interface during the interview. In order to maintain participants' privacy, I asked each participant to choose a pseudonym for herself that would be used in the results. In order to further maintain participants' privacy, I also informed them that if I used screen shots and included them in the analysis, I would black

out or blur any information that could reveal the identity of my participants; however, Facebook's branding policies would not allow for my use of altered screen shots. Thus, I recreated the screen captures of the interface (included in Chapter IV) to illustrate the movement of the case study interview participants. While I was unsure of how I would use the screen captures from the interview sessions when I began my interviews, ultimately I used the screen captures while I transcribed the interviews. When I analyzed the interviews, I compared what participants said to what they did as demonstrated on the screen shots. This process allowed me to confirm the accuracy of field notes.

During each interview, I used the revised note sheet from the pilot interview and asked follow-up questions as needed. See Appendix G for the complete list of questions and the note sheet I used during each interview. I debriefed the participants at the end of each interview by asking if they had any questions or concerns about any of the procedures during interview. I also explained my research goals and the ways their interviews were going to help my research. I also offered to provide each interview participant with a copy of my results/analysis once it was completed to make sure that I did not misrepresent them in any way.

POST-INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

After I completed the interviews, I transcribed the audio obtained from each participant in order to begin the coding and analysis process where I looked for key terms and phrases that indicated how perceived interactivity was shaping each participant's experience in Facebook. The coding process I used stemmed from grounded theory procedures suggested by Corbin and Strauss (2008) in which the researcher extracts concepts from raw data and develops them based on their properties and dimensions.

When I coded my data, I looked for concepts to emerge from the data. Concepts in grounded theory research are words that stand for ideas found in the data; they are interpretations of the data and function as the product of the analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). As I coded my data, I looked for concepts to emerge to indicate perceived interactivity. I relied on the elements identified from the literature including control and time/speed of response; however, I did not force data into specific categories and I was open to new concepts emerging from the data based on the rhetorical situation and the users' purposes.

While reviewing the transcripts from each session, I omitted information that could identify the participant, including participant names, and names of participant's friends and family, so that I might protect the privacy of the participants and the privacy of the friends and family of the participants. When I transcribed each interview, I also maintained each participant's voice by keeping non-standard uses of language present in the participants' original responses rather than imposing Standard English language structures on their responses. Newkirk (1992) suggested that researchers can maintain participants' unique voices by transcribing dialect and non-standard uses of language, which will help keep researchers from transcribing *mythic narratives*—transcripts that reflect specific ideological judgments made by the researcher rather than true cultural beliefs of the participants. In order to avoid constructing mythic narratives of my participants, I used the information that I collected from the surveys to compare to what I gathered from the case study interviews and assess for inconsistencies. I maintained participants' voices by leaving their spoken grammar, colloquialisms, and instances of dialect intact. Including the colloquialisms and dialect of the participants also allowed me

to become closer to the case study data because I was better able to understand the perspective of the participants based on their own statements instead of having to rely solely on my notes or summaries of their statements. By reflecting participants' language as accurately as possible, I created a record of what each participant said rather than what I thought each participant said, thus reducing my own bias (see MacNealy, 1997). Once the audio was transcribed, I began the process of writing memos using grounded theory memo writing techniques I described earlier in this chapter.

I did not follow a specific transcription method while transcribing the data. Because I was not looking for specific discourse markers, I omitted my own use of words like *um* and did not indicate pauses as I transcribed each participants' interview. Because I wanted to maintain each participant's voice in her respective transcript, I did not omit uses of words like *um* in my participants' answers. My use of transcripts allowed me to open code my interviews for the categories determined by the literature for perceived interactivity and to allow for new categories to emerge. While coding procedures throughout this study could have been regarded as interpretive acts as described by Grant-Davie (1992), in Chapter IV, I openly discuss my results and assess the ways in which I drew my conclusions from those results.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Limitations emerged from my study, and in this section, I describe the limitations of the sampling procedure, the sample size, the sampled population, the sample demographic, and the study artifact. The results that I report in Chapter IV are meant to be a representation of users' statements about the ways they use Facebook, and I acknowledged that their statements about what they do in the Facebook interface was

self-reported, which means their true feelings, uses, motivations, and intentions regarding Facebook and how they use Facebook may not have been fully articulated in the data I collected. Additional studies need not only to verify the results I report, but also investigate other potential feelings, uses, motivations, and intentions that I do not report here.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SAMPLING PROCEDURE

I was not able to obtain a clear number of how many ODU students have and maintain Facebook accounts, so it was impossible for me to know what percentage of total undergraduate students who have Facebook accounts I sampled. While triangulating the data sets I collected enabled me to obtain a broader and more nuanced picture of my sampled participants, the results of the survey could not be generalizable for the entire student population and for all Facebook users; however, the survey data provided specific insight into a sample set of users that can be retested with other users to determine further ways different types of interactivity influence the ways users engage with an interface. I was able to make generalizations about the 195 people I did survey, but those generalizations could not be applied to the population of Facebook as a whole, to those outside of ODU, and to those outside of the age range of my participants.

As described in the introduction, one of the problems with previous general interactivity studies in and outside of writing studies is the researchers' reliance on conversational metaphors. While I asked the case study interview participants how they defined interactivity, I did not ask this of the survey respondents. At the time I created the survey, I was interested in ways respondents used the interface, thus I felt it was beyond the scope of this study to ask respondents about ways they defined and understood the

general term interactivity. As a result, I did not gather from the study data additional insight regarding conversational metaphors as a framework from which people understand the general term interactivity. A future study could investigate users' perceptions' of general interactivity definitions.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SAMPLE SIZE

In addition to the data not being generalizable to Facebook users as a whole, I sampled a very small number of users. I did not use a second coder for inter-rater reliability because I felt the categories I developed were clear enough to render a second coder unnecessary (see MacNealy, 1999). Because I was the only researcher and I completed all of the coding and analysis of the data, collecting and coding more surveys would have provided richer results; however, I was constrained by time and, as I described in my analysis, the small sample of participants I did survey were representative of ODU students as a whole based on the demographic data I obtained from the university. In addition to the small sample size, I sampled college students, who made up only one population of users who have and maintain Facebook accounts. Facebook originally was created by and for college students, but it has since expanded to include everyone who has access to a device that supports web browsing. By sampling an initial set of target users, I felt I was able to address aspects of the original exigence Mark Zuckerberg had for the Facebook interface. Future studies using a different demographic may provide different results.

LIMITATIONS OF THE SAMPLE DEMOGRAPHIC

This study was limited to a very small demographic: college students who were living in the Eastern United States and who spoke English. I did not collect data asking

participants if English was their first language or if they spoke additional languages.

Other users who are from different cultures and who speak other languages may interpret, use, and perceive the Facebook interface differently; therefore, I may have found different results with a different set of users. Future studies investigating perceived interactivity and other types of interactivity as constraints within the rhetorical situation of an interface should investigate the ways other cultures perceive interactivity and the differences in the way those perceptions act as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of an interface.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY ARTIFACT

Facebook's designers are constantly finding new ways to improve the capabilities of the Facebook interface, thus, during the course of conducting this study, Facebook designers made numerous changes to the interface. My descriptions of the features reported from the surveys apply only to the design and features available in the Facebook interface between September 2010 and October 2010. After I distributed my surveys and conducted my case study interviews, significant changes were made to the Facebook interface so that some of the applications listed on my survey may since have changed in design and potential use.

Two significant design changes took place on the Facebook interface that impacted the results. First, Facebook unveiled two new Profile layouts that may have altered the ways in which people currently are able to connect to other users or see other people's information. One Profile layout was unveiled in December 2010, and in January of 2012, Facebook unveiled the timeline Profile layout, which displays a users' use of and changes to his/her Profile along a timeline. The timeline Profile is meant to be read

and set-up as a narrative of a user's life. A user also can make choices as to which stories to feature and which stories to remove. These changes could influence the user's perceived interactivity of the Facebook interface. The timeline Profile does give pictures a more prominent space on a user's Profile, which could make the timeline be perceived as more interactive to users. As Elmer noted in my interview with her, she used photographs that people posted to understand their lives and to interpret who they are as people.

Second, the ways in which groups were organized in Facebook changed after I collected my surveys. Prior to this change, people could create public or private groups, which allowed members to discuss topics ranging from social/political issues to popular culture characters or phenomena. The old layout for groups resembled a user's Profile. The new groups feature allows users to continue to come together to discuss specific topics, but the layout of the page changed. Instead of resembling the user's Profile page, Facebook designers emphasized the sharing of information through likes, photos, videos, events, and documents. Further, when I distributed the surveys, there were a few participants who did not know what I meant by groups or where they were located. This suggested that participant responses to my questions about groups may not reflect my understanding of what was meant by group with regard to the Facebook feature. Facebook now also has a feature called *pages*, which mimics the previous Profile page style in which group pages were structured. These pages are affiliated with a specific organization, business, person, cause, or other cultural artifact who manages them.

CONCLUSION

Grounded theory served as a framework for my methods of data collection and analysis because it allowed me to develop theory from data. Scholarship in writing studies has not explicitly analyzed and described specific types of interactivity—specifically functional and perceived interactivity—and using grounded theory enabled me to develop theory from data. I was then able to use that developed theory to establish a starting point for understanding interactivity and the specific ways different types of interactivity may function in rhetorical situations, which could aid other researchers and designers. In order to reduce my bias as a researcher, I situated myself as the researcher and triangulated my methods. Because I triangulated my data, I was able to collect three different data sets that supplemented each other and provided data from which I could build a preliminary theory. Because of my small sample size, I was only able to generalize my results to the population I surveyed and interviewed in this study. However, the methods I used can be replicated with other populations to determine the validity of my results. In Chapter IV, I discuss the results of the data I collected and provide the analysis of my results.

CHAPTER IV

THE RHETORICAL SITUATION'S INFLUENCE ON PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY BASED ON THE SAMPLED FACEBOOK USERS

As a social constructivist, I used a grounded theory framework to frame my triangulated data to understand (a) the ways perceived interactivity functions as a constraint within the rhetorical situation and (b) how a user's purpose determines what is and is not perceived as interactive. Based on Sapienza's (2007) suggestion that professional ethos can be established by embedding oneself in the virtual communities one studies, I established my professional ethos by regularly using and maintaining the Facebook account I created and used prior to beginning this study. In this chapter, I present my findings as a rich, thick description that I discovered through the memo writing process I completed from my grounded theory analysis. In order to reduce my researcher bias, I report here only information I discovered about my sampled participants' use of Facebook and do not refer to my own Facebook use or self-reference my own use to understand my observations (see Sullivan & Porter, 1997). The results I describe in this chapter are focused on my research questions:

- In what ways does perceived interactivity appear as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of a digital text (the Facebook interface) and
- In particular, how does a user's purpose determine what is or is not perceived as interactive?

In this chapter, I first describe the features of the rhetorical situation I identified from the three data sets I collected: the rhetors, the users (as members of audiences), exigencies, and constraints. I report the rhetorical situation I identified by first providing

a postmodern map that illustrates the position of the rhetors, users, exigencies, and constraints in the rhetorical situation. Then I provide a more detailed analysis of each component of the rhetorical situation by beginning with Facebook's designer's exigencies for creating and modifying the interface. Exigence, as defined by Bitzer (1968/1992) is the need or problem discourse addresses. I describe the Facebook's designers' exigencies at the beginning of this chapter in order to illustrate ways their exigencies and choices as a business that creates a product for users has the potential to constrain and influence potential ways users used the Facebook interface at the time I collected my data.

After describing Facebook's designers exigencies, I position the study participants in the rhetorical situation based on the data I collected from them and based on ways Facebook's designers constrain them. Specifically, I describe the purposes they reported for creating and maintaining their Facebook accounts and specific ways they reported using their Facebook accounts to achieve their purposes. I describe Facebook's designers and my sampled users first in order to establish who is involved in the rhetorical situation and the constraints they provided to my analysis. By doing so, I was able to keep my analysis focused on the information reported by my participants and available to me about Facebook as a company at the time I collected my data. I report my analysis of the rhetorical situation first in order to introduce the people involved in the rhetorical situation I identified and to situate the elements of perceived interactivity I discuss later. By identifying and describing the people involved in the rhetorical situation, the information I report regarding the sampled Facebook users' purposes addresses the issues I acknowledged from the previous studies in the literature review: (a) researchers have removed participants from the situations in which they used the websites being studied,

(b) researchers did not take into consideration ways specific types of constraints may or may not influence ways users use specific types of website interfaces, and (c) researchers did not take into consideration constraints which may influence ways users use an interface.

After I report my analysis of the rhetorical situation, I describe the elements of perceived interactivity as a constraint in the rhetorical situation and the specific elements of perceived interactivity that begin to define ways it functions. To describe perceived interactivity, I also describe control and time/speed—two elements for which I explicitly explored my data—as well as movement and motivations—two additional elements that emerged from the data. Then I illustrate the ways perceived interactivity appears in the Facebook interface as enabling the overall ability for users to connect with others. At the end of this chapter, I define and elaborate on the concept of connecting—the result of perceived interactivity in the Facebook interface.

IDENTIFYING THE RHETORICAL SITUATION OF THE FACEBOOK INTERFACE

Based on the work of Bitzer (1968/1992), Vatz (1973), Consigny (1974, and Grant-Davie (1997), I defined the rhetorical situation as influences that shape the design and use of the Facebook interface including the designers, users, the users' purposes, and constraints that help to determine ways users interpret and designers create the Facebook interface. In order to determine the rhetorical situation in which my participants operated, I used the three data sets I collected to identify the rhetor, exigence, purpose, and contextual and cultural constraints. Identifying the rhetorical situation of both the designers and users in this study enabled me to narrow the scope of the analysis and to

focus on what emerged as relevant to my sampled participants as suggested by Clarke (2005). Identifying the rhetorical situation also allowed me to situate the users' purposes as a constraint that influenced their use. In this section I describe each of the elements of the rhetorical situation that I identified and illustrate how they function together in a postmodern map (see Figure 5).

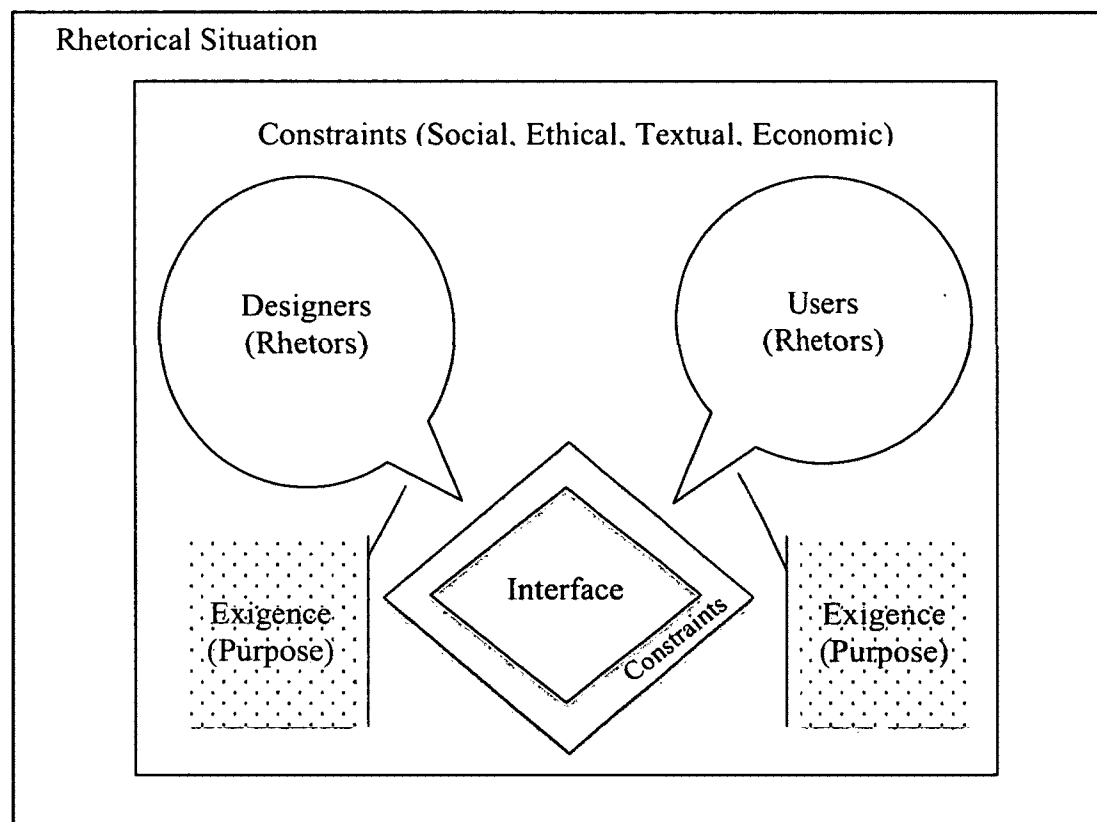


Figure 5. Rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface postmodern map.

The postmodern map of the rhetorical situation in Figure 5 is not meant to be a stable representation of the Facebook interface given (a) the constant changes the Facebook interface undergoes based on the designers exigencies and (b) the changing

ways users decide to use the interface based on their own articulated and unarticulated purposes for creating and maintaining Facebook accounts. In the postmodern map of the rhetorical situation, the constraints, designers, users, interface, and exigence/purpose all are contained within the rhetorical situation box because each of them is a part of the rhetorical situation. While exigence and purpose are separate aspects of the rhetorical situation, I tied them together because both Facebook's designers and users have purposes for engaging with and modifying specific types of discourse.

Constraints, the next large box within the rhetorical situation contains designers, users, the interface, and the exigence/purpose because each one is constrained by culture and context. Constraints restrict decisions and actions of the rhetor's exigence (Bitzer, 1968/1992). In the case of the Facebook interface, while the designers' exigence is based on the need to connect users and enable them to share with each other, the design of the interface is constrained by the perceived and actual affordances of computer technologies. Affordances are physical properties specific environments provide to people, and perceived affordances are representations of physical properties users think are made available to them (Gibson, 1977; Norman, 1999).

The constraints present within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface are social, textual, ethical, and economic:

- Social constraints: users as the rhetor and members of the audience are constrained by cultural discourse conventions.
- Textual constraints: designers are constrained by the physical properties of the text because the materialities of the text shape potential actions or interpretations of the text. Materialities of texts are the cultural and social

forces that influence designers to produce a text, and the physical properties of the text enable users to obtain meaning from it (Hayles, 2002; Wysocki, 2004).

- Ethical constraints: designers are constrained ethically because they have to consider the ways their principles and value systems may or may not cause harm to users when designing the interface. In the case of Facebook, their privacy policies have been met with criticism especially concerning the ways user information is distributed publicly and to third party developers.
- Economic constraints: designers are constrained by their need to make money as a business to enable them to continue to develop and improve the Facebook interface. In interviews and other publicly available statements, Mark Zuckerberg has emphasized Facebook's social mission—to make the world more open and connected. However, Facebook's administrators do make business and design decisions that are connected to their own economic concerns, which are not always received well by users as was the case in 2007 when Facebook launched the Beacon application that publicly posted purchases made at specific retailers. Users publicly protested, and Facebook restructured the application to allow users better control of it. I discuss the Beacon application in more depth later in this chapter.

The placement of the elements in the postmodern map demonstrates how designers and users are contained in their own thought bubbles—both who act as rhetors. In general, the rhetor is a person (or people) who makes choices to shape the discourse conveyed in a rhetorical situation (Grant-Davie 1997). I defined the rhetor as both

Facebook's designers and users. Facebook's designers act as rhetors because they make design choices to enable users to complete specific tasks or prevent them from doing so. Users act as rhetors because they make discourse choices based on their own exigencies for communication. Because both designers and users are motivated by exigencies to engage in discourse in the Facebook interface, I also situated their exigencies and purposes in the postmodern map.

In the postmodern map, the exigence/purpose of both designers and users are located as thought bubbles within the constraint box and outside of the designers' and users' thought bubbles because the exigence/purpose can act as a constraint for discourse decisions both the designers and users make. The exigence of the rhetor (in this case both the designers and users) guides the choices the designers make for the Facebook interface as a text (see Miller, 1984). Bitzer (1968/1992) defined exigence as the need or problem that needs to be addressed through discourse. Facebook's designers' exigence was identified on Facebook's business page: "Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected." Facebook's designer's design choices appear partially motivated by this mission statement.

My purpose in this section is to describe Facebook's exigence as represented by publicly available materials. However, although a considerable amount of scholarship regarding Facebook and its economic motivations has appeared in popular press and scholarly articles, many of their actual motivations and business practices are hidden from public knowledge in order to protect their business model. As a result, I cannot know completely the exact motivations of Facebook's founder Mark Zuckerberg and other executives tasked with making decisions for Facebook as a business. Thus I cannot

know completely how rhetorical constraints affected their specific business decisions. My address of their exigence in this section is meant to be exploratory, and a significantly more in depth analysis in future research should be conducted in order to explore further the ways Facebook's designers' economic motivations influence Facebook users and their abilities to use the Facebook interface.

To enable users to connect with other users, designers designed the interface with a user Profile, which includes specific aspects such as name, birthday, relationship status, likes and interests, political view, and favorite quotes. Facebook's designers also gave users the ability to upload pictures so that one user could view these photos on another user's individual Profile. In addition, when a user (a) commented on another user's page, (b) uploaded new photos, or (c) created a new status update, that information would be aggregated into the News Feed. All of the features Facebook's designers made available to users were meant to give people the ability to share anything and everything about themselves. The spaces in the interface that Facebook's designers' provided to users enabled the users to construct and represent themselves.

Facebook's designers' exigence was similar to Facebook's users' exigence. I identified the primary exigence of Facebook users as their need to keep in touch with friends and family, which matched the primary exigence and purpose of the Facebook interface as defined in Facebook's mission statement—to make the world more open and connected (Facebook, 2012). I identified this similarity based on data I collected from the survey question, Why did you decide to create a Facebook account and Profile? Because communication between users and between users and designers was facilitated by the

Facebook interface, in the postmodern map, I positioned it in its own box between the designers, users, and the exigence of each.

In the postmodern map, the interface is depicted as a shaded diamond with an additional diamond that represents the design constraints of the interface. Both the designers' and users' thought bubbles are on either side of the interface constraint box because I suggest that both influence the interface. The designers influence the interface by making design choices that enable users to create content, and users influence the interface by choosing content to include on the interface and how to navigate the interface. Facebook's designers' control the design of the interface by defining "core site functions and applications, which are fundamental features to the experience on Facebook including a person's home page and Profile" (Facebook, 2012). Facebook's users provide the content that is included on the Home page and Profile, but they have no control over the design of them. In order to further understand Facebook's designers' exigence and purpose for designing the interface for users, I relied on information they provided on the Facebook business page and additional information in available scholarship, which I describe next.

FACEBOOK'S DESIGNERS' EXIGENCE

As noted in the literature review in Chapter II, the rhetorical situation as defined by Bitzer (1968/1992) is based on an actual or potential exigence as defined or perceived by a rhetor. In the case of the Facebook interface, multiple rhetors identified an exigence from their Harvard dorm room—Mark Zuckerberg along with Dustin Moskovitz, Chris Hughes, and Eduardo Saverin started Facebook in 2004 (Facebook, 2012). According to Facebook (2012), their intended purpose during the initial launch was to allow current

and former students at Harvard the ability to connect with each other so that new students could get to know other new students, current students, and/or alumni. Initially, Facebook was only open to Harvard students, but eventually it became available at other colleges and universities around the United States. Before each college was added to Facebook, students at schools that had not been added wrote to Facebook or created groups requesting to have their school added. Eventually, Facebook was made available to businesses and to the general public. Facebook placed an age restriction on users (children under the age of 13 cannot have a user account); however, according to Fox (2011) and Heussner (2011) many children (7.5 million in 2011) under the age of 13 created accounts by lying about their age. During the summer of 2012, Facebook reached 955-million active users.

During Facebook's early beginnings, users had the ability to connect with others by sharing information about themselves in a user Profile. At its initial launch, Facebook users were able to create Profiles that provided information to others including their gender, birthday, relationship status, hometown, current location, likes and interests, education, work experience, and contact information. Over time, new versions of the Facebook interface have been developed. At the time of this study, users had the ability to (a) post pictures; (b) create status updates; (c) write notes; (d) create groups and pages for educational, social, and and/or entrepreneurial pursuits; (e) list things for sale; (f) create public and private events; (g) chat with others using the chat feature; (h) and comment on material other users post. Because users use these features to share information and communicate with others, these features support Facebook's public mission statement to give people the power to share and to make the world more open

and connected. However, Facebook's designers have not acknowledged in their mission statement the ways they indirectly profit from their millions of users and the information their users provide through an advertising business model. I discuss Facebook's advertising business model in further detail in the next section.

Facebook's designers created Facebook based on the idea of the social graph. Users have friends with whom they want to connect and share information, and these connections build the social graph, which Zuckerberg suggested

is the idea that if you mapped out all the connections between people and the things they care about, it would form a graph that connects everyone together.

Facebook has focused mostly on mapping out the part of the graph around people and their relationships. (Zuckerberg, 2010)

The connections mapped out in the social graph also are based on trust—specifically how users trust their connections based on specific topics or in general (Zhang, Sun, Zhu, & Fang, 2010). Facebook has used the social graph to build trust between users and their likes and interests, which has enabled them to build revenue through advertising. Trust in Facebook, as Zuckerberg defined in his initial public offering letter (“Facebook IPO: Letter from Mark Zuckerberg,” 2012), refers to the ways people are inclined to prefer the products and services their friends use versus the products and services advertised to them by advertisers users do not know; thus, people are more inclined to buy or use something if their friends are already using it.

Facebook has relied on an advertising business model in which greater numbers of users use the interface results in greater profits from advertisers. Facebook has been a free service, and users have not paid subscription fees to use the website (Enders,

Hungenberg, Denker, & Mauch, 2008). However, Facebook also has depended on users to create the content provided to other users in the interface; and without the users' labor to generate content, Facebook, as a business, would not function. The user labor that occurs on Facebook has been defined as immaterial labor that sustains Facebook as a business where in order for it to succeed, users must not only generate content but recruit friends to join as well (Cohen, 2008). Côté and Pybus (2007) defined immaterial labor as the conflation of production and consumption and the merging of author and audience. Immaterial labor has significant implications for Facebook because users are producing the content and are not compensated for the content they produce, yet Facebook as a company profits from users' labor to create content.

Facebook has generated revenue through advertisement sales, and advertisers have had the ability to target specific populations based on anonymous user data Facebook provides to them. Even though the user data Facebook provides to advertisers is anonymous, privacy and ethics concerns have been raised because users do not have control over their data. For example, people have had the capability of building third party applications such as quizzes and games, which rely on user data to function. When users decided to install a third party application to their Facebook Profile, the users agreed (usually unknowingly) to allow the developer access to their information and in some instances to their Facebook friends' information as well (Hull, Lipford, & Latulipe, 2010). Figure 6 shows a replicated screenshot of the permission popup for a third party application. The permission popup, published 3 months prior to my data collection, illustrates the types of information developers access after they have obtained permission from users. In the case of this particular application, the developers would have had

access not only to the individual user's information but to his/her friends' information as well.

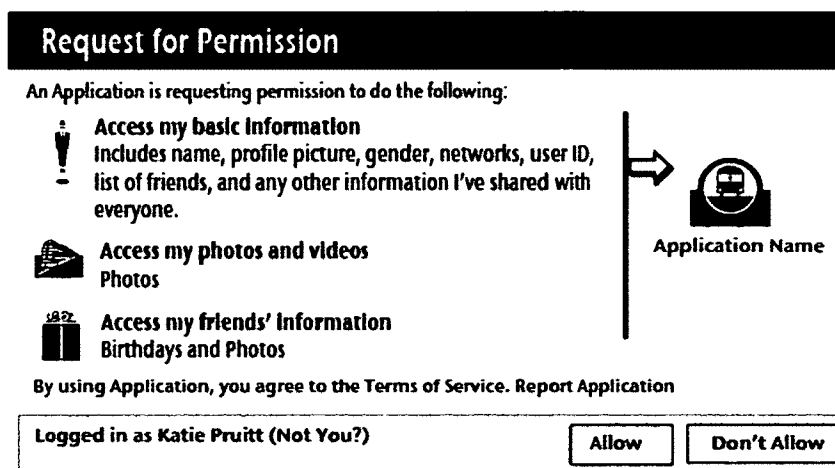


Figure 6. Third party application permission request. (Based on: “New Developer Permissions roll out on Facebook,” Caroline McCarthy, June 30, 2010, news.cnet.com)

The information provided in the request for permission screen allows users more transparency as to what types of information third party applications have access, but it is not clear who the developers are, where they are located, and what they do with the information once they have access to it (Hull et al., 2010). In an article published by *The Wall Street Journal*, Steel and Fowler (2010) investigated a privacy breach in which third party applications were providing Internet tracking companies access to people's names and in some instances their friends' names by transmitting numerical ID numbers that Facebook assigned to each user. While RapLeaf Inc., one company Steel and Fowler cited, defended itself by saying the data were anonymous, each ID number was attached to personal data, which tracking companies may or may not have used ethically. Since I

collected my data, Facebook has enabled users to monitor the ways third party applications use their information (see Figure 7.)

App Settings

You have authorized these apps to interact with your Facebook account:

App	Last Accessed	Action
+ Meetup	More than 6 months ago	Edit X
+ Cafe World	More than 6 months ago	Edit X
+ FarmVille	Last Logged in: March 30	Remove App

This app can:

- Access your basic information** (Required)
Includes name, profile picture, gender, networks, user ID, likes...[See More](#)
- Access your profile information** (Required)
Likes, Music, TV, Movies, Books, Quotes, About me, Activities...[See More](#)
- Access your family and relationships** (Required)
Significant Other and Relationship Details and Family Members and Relationship Status
- Access your photos** (Required)
Photos Uploaded by Me
- Access your videos** (Required)
Videos Uploaded by Me
- Access information people share with you** (Required)
Birthdays, Religious and Political Views, Family Members and...[See More](#)

Last data access: **Basic Information** (March 30)
Basic details - [Learn more](#)

Posts on your behalf: Who can see posts this app makes for you on your Facebook timeline? [Customize](#)

Notifications: When to notify you? [The app sends you a notification](#)

Figure 7. Facebook app settings.

Figure 7 depicts a screenshot from my own personal Facebook account with settings not available to users when I collected by data. Now, users can monitor when a third-party application accesses their information and the specific information that is accessed (see Figure 8). The recreated screenshot in Figure 8 shows the access log from my personal Facebook account and illustrates that the Zynga game Farmville last

accessed my basic information, my birthday, and current city from my Facebook Profile on March 30, 2012. Although this information was not available to my study participants, I included it here to illustrate ways Facebook has attempted to mitigate claims regarding the types of data third party applications mine from user Profiles. While this may have provided one solution to the privacy concerns many have had about Facebook, Steel and Fowler (2010) noted at the time of the reporting of their story, 550,000 third party applications were available for people to use on Facebook, and it was likely Facebook would be unable to oversee all suspect activity by these applications regarding users and their information.



Access Log		
In the last 90 days, FarmVille accessed the following information on your behalf:		
	Basic Information	March 30
	Birthdays and Current City	March 30
Learn more about the data shown here		Close

Figure 8. Third party application access log.

Although Facebook alerted users to monitor and adjust their application settings (Facebook, 2012); it is unknown as to how many users actually monitor and adjust their third party application settings to maintain a certain level and control of their privacy. In one study regarding user disclosure and user privacy, Stutzman, Capra, and Thompson

(2011) found that 77% of respondents reported personalizing (defined as changing the settings from the default) their privacy settings and 92% of respondents reported customizing (defined as changing settings to allow individual friends to view specific types of content) their privacy settings. They also found that users who chose higher privacy settings were more likely to disclose more information about themselves. The researchers asked participants if they had read most/all (5.8%), scanned (47.1%), or not read (47.1%) Facebook's privacy policy. This study did not investigate the ways users understood the ways third party applications access and potentially use their information, but this study provided insight into the ways users make choices about the content they post based on their knowledge of the way their content is made publicly available according to their chosen privacy settings. Future researchers could investigate ways users make choices when using third party applications and the ways they make choices to control information they make available to those third party applications.

Specific applications in Facebook also have generated revenue through a transaction business model in which users pay for digital goods or services on the website. More specifically, in the Facebook interface, users have been carrying out what have been defined as endogenous transactions in which they buy digital goods from third party applications (Enders et al., 2008). For example, users could buy virtual gifts that appear on another user's Profile page, or they could buy virtual materials used in Facebook platform games such as those created by Zynga, such as Farmville and Café World. Zynga games (third party applications) created in-game incentives if users registered their email accounts with Zynga, bought digital features to improve a user's gameplay experience, and recruited friends to help them complete specific tasks within

the game. While it was not clear if and how Facebook received a commission or profited from third party applications, those applications drove users to use Facebook, which enabled their advertising business model to profit.

The features Facebook's designers created and included on the interface enabled Facebook to achieve its mission: "Facebook's mission is to give people the power to share and make the world more open and connected" (Facebook, 2012). Zuckerberg explained this statement in a *Time* magazine article:

The thing I really care about is making the world more open and connected. What that stands for is something I have believed in a really long time . . . *Open* (author's emphasis) means having access to more information, right? More transparency, being able to share things and have a voice in the world. And *connected* (author's emphasis) is helping people stay in touch and maintain empathy for each other, and bandwidth. (Grossman, 2010, p. 68)

This quote demonstrates not only Facebook's mission as defined by its creator and CEO but also that the design and decisions Zuckerberg and his designers make for Facebook center around this mission. While Zuckerberg implied Facebook's mission towards enabling users to connect with others through their interface, Zuckerberg did not acknowledge that Facebook needs users to create the content with which others connect in order for Facebook to be successful or that Zuckerberg and his employees must find and keep users because without them, Facebook would fail.

Facebook further explained its mission through 10 principles that served as the foundation for those who work at Facebook:

- (1) Freedom to share and connect

- (2) Ownership and control of information
- (3) Free flow of information
- (4) Fundamental equality
- (5) Social value
- (6) Open platform and standards
- (7) Fundamental service
- (8) Common welfare
- (9) Transparent process
- (10) One world. (Facebook, 2012)

These principles demonstrated an apparent belief on the part of Facebook's designers that Facebook was constrained only by the law, technology, and evolving social norms.

However, these principles further illustrated the constraints in the rhetorical situation in which users communicate—specifically, the ethical constraints designers take into consideration. In particular, when the designers described the ownership and control of information—they appeared to believe users should own their information, be able to share and remove their information, and protect it with the privacy controls provided in the interface. For the social value principle, ethics were acknowledged because users had the freedom to build trust and reputation, but a user's presence would be removed if they violated the safety of others or engaged in activities that could compromise their rights and responsibilities or those of Facebook as a company. These principles also demonstrate the transparent process principle because users were made aware of Facebook's designers' processes for making decisions and changes to the interface.

While these principles implied the open and free flow of information, the designers were

constrained by the limitations of their abilities to create tasks in the digital interface with computer code, and they were constrained by laws and regulations to protect users (for example: no pornographic images, no user under the age of 13).

In many ways these principles constituted an attempt by Facebook to mediate claims regarding their privacy policies and the changes they make to the interface that in the past have either intentionally or inadvertently put users' personal information at risk. Because users create the content provided to others on the interface, claims that users do not own the content they post (such as photos or notes) have surfaced. For example, Walters (2009), a blogger with a consumer blog affiliated with *Consumer Reports*, described changes to Facebook's terms of service that did not allow users to own their information. His report caused Mark Zuckerberg and other Facebook public relations employees to clarify their policies on Facebook's terms of service. While Facebook traditionally has been quick to respond to publicly raised user concerns—as it did with concerns regarding their terms of service—many executive and design decisions have been made hastily without forethought of the implications and ramifications of its choices.

Many of Facebook's design decisions have been developed quickly based on Facebook's designers' motivations to enable users to create content and achieve their social mission. More specifically, Zuckerberg ("Facebook IPO: Letter from Mark Zuckerberg," 2012) has worked under the assumption that any good idea can be built quickly. Zuckerberg demonstrated this perspective when he described the *hacker way*: "A hacker builds something quickly by testing the boundaries of what can be done through continuous improvement and iteration. The hacker way is accomplished in Facebook's

24-hour hack-a-thons where every few months, all Facebook employees stay at work for 24 hours and build new Facebook features that they are not working on during their regular job” (Huang, 2011). When describing the types of features created at hack-a-thons, Zuckerberg described video capabilities and the like button. Given the rushed nature of Facebook’s interface design and development as seen in its hack-a-thons, the implications for the choices the designers make regarding user safety and privacy have not always been considered.

While Facebook’s designers developed the Facebook interface based on their needs to develop a product in which the content is completely created by users, they also developed the interface based on user needs from anonymous user data they collected from the interface. In a *Time* magazine video (“Working at Facebook: A Day with the Data Team”), the narrator described a meeting between one of Facebook’s product managers, Peter Deng, and members of his data team (Duff, 2010). In this meeting, Deng and his data team discussed anonymous user data that recorded how users used one of the new Profile features launched in December 2010. Deng noted that when the designers made changes to the interface, they used the data they collected to assess specific behaviors that may indicate users are or are not understanding specific functions within the interface design. The designers then provided users with tutorials or educational text that explained how a specific feature worked and what a user could do to use the feature (Duff, 2010). In a similar video about the Profile team, Joey Flynn, a Facebook designer, described his job: “You do kind of a lot of different stuff . . . like interactions, basic interactions, like how people use the page, a lot of product thinking, so it’s like, what do people want” (Duff, 2010). Flynn’s description of his job illustrated the way one designer

negotiated the user's needs with Facebook's own exigence and purpose as defined by Zuckerberg and the other designers.

While Flynn and the other Facebook designers have made choices based on their knowledge of users' wants, their own mission as a company, and what they viewed as best for the product, many of Facebook's design decisions have not always been welcomed by users. In some situations, those changes were eventually accepted by users. For example, when Facebook created the News Feed feature in 2006, users revolted by creating groups protesting the change (Hoadley, Xu, Lee, & Rosson, 2010). The News Feed feature listed every change or action a user made in the Facebook interface, from changes to a user's Profile to specific comments made on another user's Profile. The big concern with the News Feed feature was with privacy—users felt too much of their information was being distributed through the News Feed. Facebook responded by providing users the ability to control the information they conveyed in the News Feed. Boyd (2008) noted that the information distributed through the News Feed had always been available and that it was the seemingly more public way in which the information was distributed through the News Feed that caused the user concern.

The News Feed issue also illustrates one of the most prevalent issues that Facebook faced concerning how they viewed Facebook as a product and how users viewed Facebook as a service—the issue of privacy. Maintaining user privacy has been a significant challenge for Facebook because Facebook's idea of giving people the power to share and making the world more open and connected has not always been how users want to use Facebook. At the time I collected my data (fall 2010), Facebook did not distinguish between the different types of relationships users have with others. As Abril,

Levin, and Del Riego (2012) noted, lumping different social groups together can create unease because real life interpersonal relationships do not function the same way. Since collecting my data, Facebook's designers have since created ways users can group different types of friends together into (a) categories, such as Close Friends or Family, and (b) other networks based on education or work. Facebook's designers also made it possible for users to filter content users see based on the preferences set for the list.

While at the time I collected my data users were unable to group people according to different types of relationships, Facebook appears to have recognized or was pressured to recognize the ways peoples' relationships with others work in their everyday lives as opposed to in a virtual platform. It may never be known exactly why Facebook's designers enabled relationship sorting capabilities in the interface, but it appeared that they attempted to acknowledge cultural and social relationship conventions that occur outside of the Facebook interface.

The News Feed feature was not the only feature that caused severe public reaction. In 2007, Facebook launched Beacon, an advertising system that tracked a user's online shopping habits and broadcast them to the user's friends. As a result, information users did not want other users to know, such as Christmas gifts or surprise engagement rings, were unintentionally revealed (Grossman, 2010). Users again protested the new feature by creating groups. Facebook responded by allowing users to opt out of the feature, but at the time of this study, Beacon still continues to collect data from users who are active in third party applications that use Beacon (Debatin, Lovejoy, Horn & Hughes, 2009).

The Beacon example also illustrates Facebook's motivations to merge users' personal data with advertising to generate a profit. When advertisers chose to create and pay for an advertisement on Facebook, they were able to target the ad to a specific demographic of people. In addition, the advertisement could show users which of their friends Liked the business if the business created a Facebook business page. Facebook encouraged advertisers to create a Facebook page because it made the ad "more engaging and relevant" (Facebook, 2012). While Facebook assumed that users want to know what businesses, products, and services their friends Like, the ethics of this practice can be questioned, and it speaks to their motivations not only to make advertising social but to create revenue as well.

There have been mixed reports regarding the influence Facebook ads have had on consumers. For example, according to Barr (2012), Melrose.com increased their sales by 25% by advertising on Facebook. Vendors at Melrose.com spent only \$1500 on advertisements and were able to use the free Facebook vendor features. Later in this chapter I describe when case study participant Profile clicked on and looked at advertisements in the interface, although she did not indicate if she was influenced to purchase something based on the advertisements she viewed. On the other hand, results of a Reuters survey indicated that 4 out of 5 people said they had never bought something as the result of a Facebook advertisement (Barr, 2012). In another study, conducted by comScore, a market research company that collaborated with Facebook, Lipsman, Mudd, Aquino, & Kemp (2012) found that both fans of the retail companies Amazon, Best Buy, Target, and Wal-Mart and friends of fans of these four companies had higher spending both online and in-stores as the result of Facebook ads. The results were collected during

the Thanksgiving and Christmas holidays, which can be a time when consumers spend more. However, as Barr noted, Facebook users were not usually looking for something to buy when they used Facebook. While users may have gotten product recommendations through the advertisements and recommendations from friends, users may not have bought the product right away, and other influences may have impacted their buying decisions. Although Facebook has used advertising as a revenue mechanism, more research that can explicitly track Facebook's ad impact is needed.

While Facebook's designers' publicly available mission statement is to help people connect with others, Facebook has not publicly acknowledged the ways they depend on users to continue to create content and use the interface to keep Facebook running as a company. All of the choices the designers have made for the Facebook interface has influenced how users can create content and use other people's content in the interface as situated in rhetorical situations. While my analysis of the exigence of Facebook's designer's was not exhaustive, I intended it as a means of (a) describing some of the many criticisms Facebook as a company has faced based on their business practices and (b) pointing out that many of their business practices may not be publicly known or available—especially the ways they use user data.

Next I describe the way the Facebook users in my study were positioned within the rhetorical situation and their purposes or reasons for using the Facebook interface. In order to understand who my sampled users were, I begin by providing general demographic information about them, their computer knowledge, and Facebook uses. I then describe their purposes for creating and maintaining a Facebook account and which specific features they used to achieve their purposes. The data I collected were a very

small sample of users, and I understood their responses as a representation of their needs and values when they may not have reported additional intentions or purposes that influenced the ways they used the Facebook interface. The data that I report here must also be understood as a starting point for further exploration of intentions and motivations that users may have for using Facebook and with additional empirical measures to understand the ways different types of interactivity function rhetorically in an interface.

USERS' POSITIONS IN THE RHETORICAL SITUATION AND THEIR PURPOSES

As I discussed in the literature review, scholars whose previous research regarding perceived interactivity that relied on human subjects did not adequately identify the purposes the users had for engaging with the websites being tested (Johnson et al., Liu & Shrum, 2002; McMillan & Hwang, 2002). My research questions centered around discovering the ways in which the users' purposes influenced perceived interactivity as a constraint in the rhetorical situation. To begin answering my research questions, I collected some general demographic information from my survey participants ($N = 195$) in order to understand who my participants were in relation to my site of study—ODU. I collected data from students taking lower level English writing and literature courses—general education degree requirements at ODU. The demographic questions included on the survey were the first questions respondents answered (see Appendix C). I compared the data I collected with data about the general ODU student population, which I gathered from ODU's Office of Institutional Research and Assessment, which collects information about students based on enrollment. Because I was unable to determine how many ODU students have Facebook accounts, I was unable

to generalize about the ODU student populations' Facebook use as a whole. In the data I report in this chapter, I describe the demographic information I collected from my surveys and the implications of that information.

GENERAL DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF SAMPLED PARTICIPANTS

While the information I gathered is specific to the Facebook users I surveyed, it provided me with an initial understanding of who my participants were in relation to the ODU student population. By making this comparison, I was able to understand how my participants' answers fit into the larger student population at ODU based on their age, gender, and race. In general, my survey respondents statistically reflected the ODU student population. Participants' age, gender, and race were the first blanks on the survey, and I report the demographics of my participants in Table 1.

Of the 195 people I surveyed, 90% ($n = 175$) of my participants were between the ages of 18 and 21; the average age of participants was 19. The average age of my survey participants reflected the average age of freshman students as reported by the ODU Office of Institutional Research and Assessment. Establishing the average age of my participants in relation to the average age of students in a particular undergraduate class rank further enabled me to situate my participants in the ODU population as a whole.

I asked respondents to provide their gender on the survey in order to make sure there were not more responses from one gender over another. While my study was not concerned with gender differences and Facebook use, I felt it was necessary to account for gender in order to align my data with the general ODU demographic data. In the gender category, I had slightly more female than male participants. This reflected a similar breakdown in gender at the university where there were more female students

than male students. The percentages for the breakdown in gender at the university as a whole included both graduate and undergraduate students. The data I used from the university did not differentiate between graduates and undergraduates. This was also the case for the race data I collected.

Table 1

Participant Age, Gender, and Race

Variable	Sample		University	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Age				
18	96	49		
19	43	22		
20	25	13		
21	11	6		
22 and older	20	10		
Gender				
Male	95	49	10,907	45
Female	100	51	13,477	55
Race				
Black/African American	46	24	4,992	20
White/Caucasian	105	54	13,887	57
Asian	8	4	1064	4
Mixed	12	6	736	3
Hispanic/Latino	9	5	1170	5
Other	10	4		
Blank	5	3	1667	.07

In the race category, my results also reflected the demographics of the university. According to the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment at ODU, during the fall 2010 semester, ODU had 18,506 undergraduates who were distributed across six colleges. The racial breakdown of my survey respondents in comparison to the university as a whole for undergraduate students was similar. The percentages for the race categories for the university population included both undergraduate and graduate students. The information regarding race illustrates some possible aspects of the cultural backgrounds of the participants.

To further understand the sampled Facebook users, I conducted two case study interviews to explore in depth the reasons two users used Facebook and to further determine the ways perceived interactivity functions rhetorically. As noted in Chapter III, case studies cannot be used to generalize about a larger population, but as MacNealy (1999) and Bishop (1999) noted, case studies provide specific details to supplement more general information. My two case study participants were members of the larger sampled population, and I conducted two case study interviews in order to obtain more detailed responses for why two users created and maintained Facebook accounts. As suggested by Denzin (1970), I triangulated my data to allow for specific elements of a symbolic reality to emerge. Data from the case study interviews supplemented (a) the data from the surveys by enabling me to determine ways perceived interactivity functioned as a constraint in the rhetorical situation and (b) the genre analysis by providing me with specific explanations for ways specific features in the interface were used by actual users.

I chose both case study interview participants (members of the survey population) based on their frequent Facebook use (logging in more than once a day) and because they

both played Facebook games. My case study interview participants both chose their own pseudonyms. Elmer was a 19-year-old Caucasian female who has been using Facebook for around 5 1/2 to 6 years—since her freshman year of high school. I also chose her as a case study interview participant because she had two Facebook Profiles—one for herself and one for her dog. I described her purpose for creating her dog's Profile later in this chapter when I discuss users' purposes in further detail. Sarah M. is an 18-year-old mixed race female who has used Facebook for approximately 2 1/2 years. I chose Sarah M. because she played the Facebook games frequently, and I was interested in asking her about her gameplay in Facebook. While the general demographic information I collected from the surveys provided me with a starting point for determining who my participants were, I asked additional questions on the survey to situate them further in the rhetorical situation based on their computer knowledge and their purposes for creating and maintaining their Facebook accounts. While both participants were similar in age, gender, and Facebook use, I was interested in finding participants who participated in a variety of activities on Facebook to allow specific categories of perceived interactivity to emerge, which then could be studied in more depth with a wider variety of participants in future studies. Ultimately, my interviews and surveys were meant to be exploratory and to allow for the emergence of theory from data—one of the primary uses of grounded theory.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS' FACEBOOK AND COMPUTER USE RESPONSES

The demographic information I collected from the survey provided me with an initial portrait of the ODU undergraduate student population that I sampled. In order to answer my research questions, I asked some general questions regarding the participants' use of Facebook and their knowledge of computers. These questions were followed by

more specific questions about the purposes the users had for using and maintaining Facebook accounts. Further, this information (a) provided an initial portrait of the participants' purposes for creating and maintaining Facebook accounts (b) enabled me to draw conclusions about the rhetorical situation and the purposes the users had. In this section, I begin with the survey respondents' general answers to the computer use questions and general Facebook use questions I asked on the survey.

In order to determine participants' familiarity with computers, I asked them "How many years have you been using a computer?" I grouped responses into categories by type of response (see Table 2). Because the average age of respondents was 19, using a computer for 10 years would mean that the respondent was around 9 when he/she started using a computer. If the respondents' average age was 9 when he/she started using a computer, I could expect the respondent's familiarity with computers to be high. For the responses in the 10 years or less category, the fewest amount of years did not vary much—one person reported using a computer for 2 years, but most of the respondents reported using a computer for 5 years or more or reported using a computer for 10 years. Ultimately, I concluded from these results that respondents were familiar with computers.

Table 2

Number of Years Using a Computer

Responses	<i>n</i>	%
10 years or less	82	42
11-12 years	35	18
13-15 years	51	26
More than 15 years	10	5
A lot/a long time	7	4
Since I have been in school	6	3
Blank	7	4

I also gauged respondents' literacy of the Facebook interface based on how long they held their accounts and how often they used their accounts. The information I collected by asking "How long have you had your Facebook account?" helped me to understand how familiar the survey respondents were with Facebook (see Table 3). I assumed that users who had accounts for the longest amount of time were more familiar with features and had a well-established purpose for how they used Facebook. At the time I administered the survey (September-October 2010), Facebook had been available to Harvard students for 6 1/2 years, high school and college students for 5 years, and workplaces and the general public for 4 years.

When organizing the data for this category, I grouped responses according to the number of years respondents indicated having had Facebook accounts. Quite a few respondents (26%) did not indicate the number of years they have held a Facebook account but rather responded generally with "years." If I were to implement this survey again in a future study to test emergent ideas from this study, it would be prudent to use

more specific language to elicit more specific responses regarding number of years participants held Facebook accounts. Participants who marked “years” on the survey had their accounts for at least 1 year. Based on the median age of my survey respondents (19), if respondents held a Facebook account for 2 years or longer, they likely opened their account while they were in high school. I concluded from these results that the majority of my respondents were familiar with Facebook and had established a specific purpose for using and maintaining a Facebook Profile because most respondents had been a registered user for at least 1 year.

Table 3

Length of Time Participants Held a Facebook Account

Responses	<i>n</i>	%
Less than 2 years	28	14
2 years	28	14
3 years	42	22
4 years	24	12
5 or more years	21	11
“Years”	51	26
Blank	1	<1

To further understand respondents’ Facebook use and gauge the frequency of their use, I asked them “How often do you log in to your account?” For this question, I provided respondents with six possible answers and a blank for other; 17 categories

emerged from the results (see Table 4). Respondents could choose more than one response to describe how often they log in to their account.

In general, based on those surveyed, I found that the respondents usually were logged in and checking Facebook at least every day, and 46% ($n = 89$) log in a couple of times a day. Of the total respondents, 58 indicated they had an application on their phone. Because those respondents had an application on their phone, they had the opportunity to be logged into Facebook constantly and potentially, depending on their settings, to be alerted to page activity such as new messages, game updates, status updates, and notifications. What was not clear from these results is whether those who do have the application on their phone actually do check it when they receive a Facebook alert. In addition to being updated constantly by phone, 15 respondents indicated they always had Facebook open. While my results did not indicate exactly how much time users spent on Facebook, Hew (2011) found in his review of the research that users generally spend between 10-60 minutes per day on Facebook. Although I cannot directly compare my results to Hew's (2011) findings, the majority of my sampled users did report logging in a couple of times a day which could equal 10-60 minutes spent using Facebook. Because most are logging in everyday, they had specific purposes or reasons for doing so. I discuss those reasons next.

USERS' MOTIVATIONS FOR CREATING AND MAINTAINING A FACEBOOK ACCOUNT AND PROFILE

As I described in the literature review in Chapter II, I tied purpose to exigence in the rhetorical situation. While Bitzer (1968/1992) defined exigence(s) as the reasons or needs for a rhetor to engage in discourse, Kinneavy (1971) and Miller (1984) also defined

exigence as a form of social knowledge in which the rhetor acknowledges that specific purposes influence the aims of discourse. So while rhetors may have exigencies for creating texts, audiences have specific purposes for engaging with specific types of texts, and their purposes can influence the choices designers make to meet the needs of users. Scholars, including Liu and Shrum (2002), have assumed purpose influences users' preferences for general interactivity. In order to determine the influence of perceived interactivity in the Facebook interface, I asked specific questions on the survey and in the case study interviews to answer my research questions. In this section, I describe the different purposes I identified from the surveys and case study interviews that motivated the sampled users to create, maintain, and use the Facebook interface. To begin, I describe the motivations users had for creating their Facebook accounts and Profiles. I then explain my conclusions to each response in relation to my research questions. Because some of the questions on the survey were open ended, I open-coded those responses, and I looked for common themes and ideas that could be grouped together to create a category. When I open-coded the responses, I did not force the data into pre-determined categories but instead let the data speak for itself (see Corbin, 2009; Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

Table 4

Regularity of Participant Login to Facebook Account

Response	<i>n</i>	%
A couple of times a day	89	46
A couple of times a day/I have an app on my phone that alerts me when I have an update	24	12
I have an app on my phone that alerts me when there is an update	21	10
A couple of times a week	20	10
A couple of times an hour	12	6
A couple of times a month	6	3
I always have it open and I check it when there is an update	5	2
I always have it open and I check it when there is an update/I have an app on my phone that alerts me when there is an update	4	2
A couple of times a day/I always have it open and I check it when there is an update	3	2
A couple of times an hour/I have an app on my phone that alerts me when there is an update	2	1
A couple of times a week/I have an app on my phone that alerts me when I have an update	2	1
A couple of times a day/I always have it open and I check it when I have an update/I have an app on my phone that alerts me when I have an update	2	1
I have an app on my phone that alerts me when I have an update/once every 3 months or so	1	<1
A couple of times a month/I check it when a friend texts me to do so	1	<1
A couple of times an hour/I always have it open and I check it when there is an update/I have an app on my phone that alerts me when I have an update	1	<1
A couple of times a week/I always have it open and I check it when there is an update/I have an app on my phone	1	<1
A couple of times a week/I have an app on my phone that alerts me when I have an update.	1	<1

USER PURPOSES FOR CREATING AN ACCOUNT

On the survey, I asked participants “Why did you decide to create a Facebook account and Profile?” in order to begin identifying specific user purposes for the Facebook interface. In order to obtain a general sense of why respondents created a Facebook account, I provided respondents with four options to this question and allowed respondents to choose more than one response. Table 5 shows the participant responses for this survey question.

Table 5

Reason User Created Facebook Account and Profile

Response	<i>n</i>	%
To keep in touch with friends and family	136	70
To keep in touch with friends and family and to network with others at work	24	12
To keep in touch with friends and family and other	13	6
Other	8	4
To keep in touch with friends and family and to create new business or work related contacts	4	1
To keep in touch with friends and family, to network with others at work, and to create new business or work related contacts	3	2
To network with others at work	3	2
To keep in touch with friends and family, to network with others at work, and other	2	2
To create business or work related contacts	1	<1
Not sure	1	<1

As the results in Table 5 indicate, the majority (70%) of respondents reported creating their accounts to keep in touch with friends and family. Other studies have found

that users create accounts and use Facebook for self-expression, passing time, information seeking, personal status, relationship maintenance, entertainment, and/or a need to belong (Doğruer, Meneviş, & Eyyam, 2011; Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). I also asked users “How many Profiles do you have?” because I wanted to investigate if the user had a specific purpose for each individual Profile. Table 6 reflects participant response to this question.

Table 6

Number of Participant User Profiles

Response	<i>n</i>	%
1	184	94
2	4	2
More than 1 but others on other social networking websites	2	1
Blank	4	2

The majority of respondents (94%) only had one Profile. Respondents who created more than one Profile provided a brief response for each Profile’s purpose. One respondent created two Profiles for games. Elmer, one of my case study interview participants, also had two Profiles—one for herself and one for her dog. When asked why she created a Profile for her dog, Elmer explained she created the second Profile because her dog is getting old, and she uses the Profile to keep her dog’s memory alive. However, Elmer also indicated that she rarely logged in as her dog (the last time being 5 months prior to participating in the study). Thus, she primarily used the Profile for herself.

Because the majority of respondents only had one Profile, I determined that the majority of respondents did not have a specific or significant need for a second Profile and that a single Profile served his/her purpose(s).

REASONS FOR MAINTAINING A FACEBOOK ACCOUNT

While Facebook users had specific reasons for creating their account and Profiles, I did not want to assume that users maintained their accounts for the same reasons they created them. On the survey, I asked respondents “Why do you maintain a Facebook account?” in order to further understand the user’s purposes for using Facebook. This question provided me with responses that illustrated if users’ purposes had changed during their ongoing use of the Facebook interface. This was an open-ended question, and I did not provide users with answer choices. To code the responses to this question, I input answers into Excel and analyzed them with SPSS in order to form initial groups of common answers. I then open coded the responses in order to generate categories. I report the categories that emerged from open coding in Table 7.

Table 7

Reasons Participants Maintained Facebook Account and Profile

Response	<i>n</i>	%
To keep in touch/contact/connected/in the know	149	76
Make contacts/meet new people/create events	20	10
For entertainment, something to do	15	8
It is a social necessity/peer pressure	13	6
Blank/no reason	9	5
Share pictures	6	3
It is fun	5	3
It is addicting	4	2
Games	2	1
Creep	1	1

The majority of participants indicated that they maintained a Facebook account in order to keep in touch with friends and family. Researchers of previous studies looking at Facebook users' motivations for using it found similar results—users generally used Facebook to maintain social relationships (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012; Ross et al., 2009; Special & Li-Barger, 2012). Based on these results, I determined that users' purposes were generally the same from the time users opened their account to when they responded to my survey.

To further understand the difference in purposes between the time when users opened an account and the time they participated in this study, I asked the case study participants about the ways their Facebook use had changed since they opened their accounts. Elmer indicated she started using Facebook when she was a freshman in high

school so that at the time of the interview, she had been using Facebook for around 5 years. When she described why she opened her Facebook account, she explained she wanted it to be different from MySpace (Line 176) and that she wanted to delete her MySpace account. She mentioned that content on MySpace took a long time, which was another reason why she had wanted to delete it (Line 186). She also expected Facebook to be different from MySpace because MySpace did not allow as much Profile customization (Line 191). (In MySpace, users only could choose a background for their Profiles and have music play when someone went to their Profile.) When asked about those MySpace features, Elmer said she did not really miss those features on her Facebook Profile. However, later in the session (Line 364), she recanted her statement for not wanting more customization abilities and said that it would be cool to have a place for music in the corner where people could choose to play the music users' provided on their Profiles.

Case study interview participant Sarah M. indicated that she created a Facebook account after her father introduced her to Facebook. He had wanted to introduce her to family members she had never met. Sarah M also described opening her account in order to keep in touch with her friends and family, and she thought it was fun (Lines 2-4). Sarah M's initial purpose for creating her account was facilitated by someone else, and she established her own purpose for using Facebook by maintaining and using her account. In particular, she used the chat feature frequently in order to achieve her purpose for staying in touch with family and friends (Lines 67-74). When asked how her Facebook use has changed the longer she has continued to use it, she described how she has more friends on Facebook now (Lines 288-293). In particular, she described how she

did not have that many Facebook friends when she first started college, but now that she has made more friends, she is able to interact with them on Facebook and build and maintain friendships. What she seemed to mean by interact in this statement was that she could communicate with them. Ultimately, Facebook made her social life easier because she seemed to find it easier to communicate with lots of different people through Facebook. Her reply to this question also reinforced her purpose and helped to elaborate why she used Facebook—specifically that it helped her to manage her social life more easily (Lines 288-293).

When I asked Elmer how her Facebook use had changed the longer she continued to use it, Elmer responded that she used it less daily, which she described as follows:

E: mostly just because me and my roommates, one day, all realized that we were all just sitting on the couch with our computers on our laps and it was like the middle of the day, so we were like okay, this is ridiculous, we need to stop, so now we only sit around at night on it.

K: OK

E: Basically, just because, we didn't want to drown ourselves in Facebook all day.

(Line 276-279)

This quote from Elmer illustrated her perceived need to use Facebook less. As I discuss in the next section of this chapter, her movement through the Facebook interface and how she understood and perceived information about other people also provided insight into how she was spending her time on Facebook.

While the open-ended question on the survey provided me with a general sense of the respondents' general purposes for which users create and maintain their Facebook

accounts, the case study interview participants provided me with additional insight into these conditions. From the survey, I identified that the general purpose for using and maintaining a Facebook account was to keep in touch with friends and family. Responses from the case study interview participants confirmed that users' general purpose for using and maintain a Facebook account was to engage in specific communicative acts through the interface to achieve other purposes. In the next section, I describe ways users use specific features in the Facebook interface to complete specific communicative acts that achieve specific purposes.

COMMUNICATIVE ACTS IN THE FACEBOOK INTERFACE

In order to understand the types of communicative acts users completed to achieve specific purposes, on the survey, I asked the open-ended question "What is your favorite thing to do on Facebook?" While general responses reinforced the main purpose of keeping in touch with friends and family, specific ways users kept in touch with friends and family emerged. Because there were a variety of responses to this question, I coded answers by aggregating the responses into SPSS in order to form and organize initial groups of common answers. From the open coding, 17 categories emerged; three survey respondents left the question blank. Categories formed based on features found on the Facebook interface and specific actions users could complete when using the interface. I report the categories that emerged from open coding in Table 8.

The most responses emerged in the chat/talk with friends' category, with 41% of respondents indicating this. However, the percentage rate indicated may be misleading because the case study interview participants revealed that chatting and talking with other users can take place with the asynchronous communication features found on the

interface. This condition may have occurred if users commented on content so that it appeared that users were having synchronous conversations using the asynchronous features found on the interface. Asynchronous features could have functioned synchronously if two users were logged in at the same time and the responses they provided occurred and were received simultaneously by other users—such as would be the case with users' walls on Profiles, the comments that could occur in response to status updates, and the comments that could occur about pictures and other material posted by a user. While previous studies have explored general user motivations for using Facebook as cited in this section, those same studies did not investigate which specific activities users reported as being their favorite things to do in Facebook. Future studies should investigate in further depth which specific features are used most often and for what reasons.

Table 8

Participants' Favorite Thing To Do on Facebook

Responses	<i>n</i>	%
Chat/talk with friends	79	41
Look at pictures	42	22
Check/look at/read/see/ people's updates and Profiles	31	16
Communicate with friends/comment on pictures and/or statuses; Keep in contact/touch with people	29	11
Look at News Feed/statuses	15	8
Other	10	5
Creep/spy/stalk	10	5
Games	8	4
Post/upload/edit photos	8	4
Check/look at comments	6	3
Post/update status	6	3
"Like" statuses/Pages	5	3
Search/Find/Delete friends	4	2
See/look/check/notifications/messages	3	2
Share links/tag friends in pictures	2	<1

When I created categories for this question, I tried to differentiate between responding to information on the interface and viewing information on the interface. I made this distinction because *responding* and *viewing* are two different actions. Users respond to content on the interface by posting comments to status updates, pictures, notes, or wall posts. I defined viewing information as users reading and drawing

conclusions from user-generated content but not publicly responding to it on the interface. Specific actions in which users were not directly communicating with other users that emerged as favorite things to do on the Facebook interface included looking at pictures (22% of respondents) and checking/looking/reading/seeing other people's updates and Profiles (16% of respondents). From these responses, I determined the act of looking implied users were gathering and perceiving the information other users posted, but the users were not directly communicating with other users. As I discuss later in this chapter, case study participant Elmer described how she gathered information about who someone was based on the information a person provided in his/her Profile, and she assumed that other people understood her based on the information she provided in her Profile. Other responses that implied participants were looking but not directly communicating with others included looking at News Feeds and statuses (8%) and creeping/spying/stalking (6%). Creeping emerged not only in the survey but also in my case study interview with Elmer. When I asked Elmer during a follow up email what she meant by *creep* on people, she explained that, "By 'creep on people,' I simply meant to look at their Profile, their pictures, their wall posts, etc., and then click on someone else from that person's Profile, do the same thing. Eventually, I would be looking at people I didn't even know" (Elmer, personal communication, February 24, 2012).

Other specific responses provided additional examples of users engaging with content but not directly communicating with others. These responses included Like statuses/pages, games, creep/spy/stalk, look at News Feed/statuses, see/look/check notifications, search/find/delete friends, share links/tag friends in pictures, post/update status, and post/upload/edit photos. Within the *other* category, responses were about

specific features present on Facebook or specific activities that only one respondent included. Some responses included contact record labels/show booking, drama, depends, look at bumper stickers, see what groups other people have joined, make jokes, look at girls, take quizzes, time pass, and wall posts. Overall, the responses to this question enabled me to understand my sampled users' actions in Facebook based on their purposes for creating and maintaining their accounts. In the next section, I describe the specific features the survey respondents and case study interview participants mentioned directly as using in the Facebook interface. I also explain ways these features enable them to achieve specific communicative purposes.

FEATURES USERS USE TO ACHIEVE THEIR COMMUNICATIVE PURPOSES

To further understand how the survey respondents achieved their purpose of keeping in touch with friends and family in the Facebook interface, I asked participants about their use of applications. Although I did ask open-ended questions at the end of the survey to prompt participants to describe their favorite thing to do in Facebook, I also asked specific questions regarding prominent features on the interface in order to determine which features were most and least important to users. I report participant use of applications in general in Table 9. The most often used applications were the Quizzes (73 respondents), Causes (46 respondents), and Games (68 respondents).

Table 9

Applications Used by Participants

Response	<i>n</i>	%
Quizzes	73	37
Games	68	35
Blank/None	64	33
Causes	46	24
Football Team	27	14
Daily Horoscope	20	10
Superpoke!	19	10
Other	17	9
Pieces of Flair	14	7
Gifts	12	6
Graffiti	12	6
Marketplace	7	4
Yearbook/Dogbook/Catbook	1	<1

In addition to asking respondents about the applications they used, I also asked questions about their use of four specific Facebook features: Games, Groups, Events, and the Marketplace. I chose to ask about these specific features because at the time I created the survey, these features were featured on every user homepage, and I concluded that these were features Facebook's designers felt were important to users. I report participant use of Games, Groups, Events, and the Marketplace in Table 10. These results helped to illustrate the sampled users' primary purpose of keeping in touch with friends and family.

While the majority of survey respondents ($n = 165$) did belong to Facebook groups, there were some discrepancies as to what they understood to be a group. While I

was distributing the surveys, Facebook changed the Group feature from a Profile type organizational style to one that was easier for users to navigate. As a result, participants may have been considering different Group page formats while responding to the survey.

However, most respondents did not play the Facebook games (117 respondents), and on the surveys, some participants complained that they did not like the game updates they received in their News Feed.⁶ Of the respondents, 17% indicated that too frequent notifications/updates/invites/updating were their least favorite things about Facebook. Many of the games allowed users to provide alerts to other users about specific needs or updates in their gameplay. These types of alerts did not always appear to be applicable to Facebook users who did not play some of the Facebook games. Thus, having the alerts appear in the News Feed did not apply to many of the users' purposes for using Facebook.

Similarly, the majority of participants indicated they did not use Events or Marketplace. While I did not ask participants why they did not use particular features, I concluded that because the majority of users did not use Games, Events, or Marketplace, those features did not contribute to the users' primary purposes. The lack of use of Events and the Marketplace may have been the result of varying user exigencies atypical of exigencies for using more commonly accessed Facebook features. More specifically, users create Events in Facebook to function as an electronic invitation, where users either can invite specific users or enable the event to be open to the public. The Marketplace functions as virtual classified advertisements forum, where users can buy and sell items,

⁶ Many of the Zynga games, such as Farmville, are social games, which allow users to communicate with and seek participation from others [i.e., friends and family] as a means of achieving specific tasks. Zynga games also enable users to notify others of game updates, invite them to play the games, and ask them for help in the game.

look for jobs, or search for places to live. Thus the exigencies for both the Events and Marketplace features on the Facebook interface can be considered different from the exigency for most of the other features—keeping in touch with friends and family.

Table 10

Participants' Use of Facebook Games, Groups, Events, and Marketplace

Response	<i>n</i>	%
Games		
Blank/none	117	60
Farmville, Mafia Wars, Café World, Petville (Zynga)	43	22
Card games	21	11
Other	17	9
Board games	9	5
Groups		
Yes	160	82
No	33	17
Blank	2	2
Events		
No	133	68
Yes	60	31
Blank	2	1
Marketplace		
No	186	95
Yes	7	4
Blank	2	1

From the surveys and case study interviews, additional features emerged as important to users for achieving their purposes when using the Facebook interface. In order to further understand these features, I identified and analyzed them in my genre analysis, and I also differentiated between the ways each feature contributed to the functional and perceived interactivity of the Facebook interface. I discuss these features in the next section.

I did not find similar studies to which I could compare the results for applications used in general or the Games, Groups, Events, and Marketplace in particular that I reported here. Additional studies looking at which specific applications users use and the implications for using specific applications would need to be studied in more depth because my results cannot be generalized to the entire Facebook population.

GENRE ANALYSIS OF FUNCTIONAL FEATURES USED BY RESPONDENTS

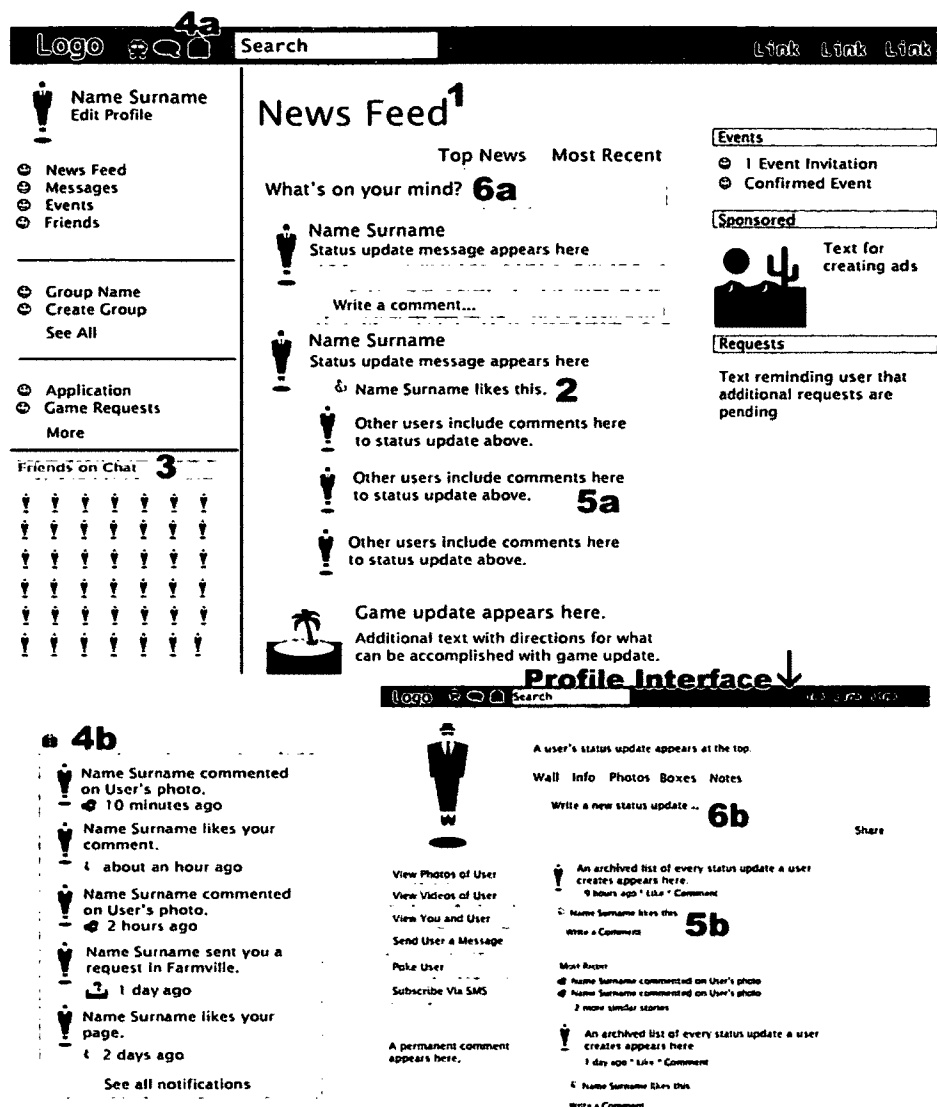
In order to understand the ways the functional features worked in the Facebook interface and were perceived by users, I conducted a genre analysis and analyzed the following functional features for their functionality within the interface: Like button, comments, pictures, poking, chat feature, privacy, color scheme, advertisements, status updates, Profile, see friendship, News Feed, and games.⁷ As I described in Chapter III, the genre analysis I conducted comprised two levels. In Level 1, I identified the participants, and in Level 2, I identified the constraints, interaction, and navigation for the features mentioned by the case study interview participants. I then used those elements to make conclusions about Facebook as a genre. To understand the design choices made by

⁷ This assessment of the features is based on the design of the interface at the time the respondents were surveyed and interviewed—September 2010-October 2010. Since I conducted my surveys and interviews, the Facebook Sarah M. has been redesigned twice, and new features have been introduced to the Home page.

Facebook's designers, in the genre analysis, I identified the navigation (location on the interface within the visual hierarchy); the interaction (how the features and perceptions pertaining to each feature influence textual understanding and use); and the constraints (factors that shape the situation for use). In the navigation portion of the analysis, I assessed how each element fit into the visual hierarchy of the interface. I used the visual hierarchy as a heuristic when coding each feature mentioned by the study participants because the visual hierarchy indicated the importance of the element on the interface itself (see Kimball & Hawkins, 2008).

Through my analysis, I found that many of the most important features to respondents were positioned in the hierarchy of the interface. Lidwell, Holden, and Butler (2010) described hierarchy as relationships between objects in a system. Similarly, the Facebook interface was designed according to a hierarchy of needs in which users' (a) basic needs, such as functionality, reliability, and usability and (b) higher level needs, such as creativity could be addressed. For example, the News Feed was located in the middle of the Home page, and it was one of the first aspects of the interface my case study interview participants checked after logging in to Facebook. Functionally, the News Feed filled the majority of the page—thus prominently displayed on the interface and easy for users to find. The Notifications icon, located in the upper left hand corner, was the first item Elmer checked when she logged in. The upper left hand corner of an interface typically is understood to be important for English readers who read left to right, and it usually the first place a reader begins to read a text (Kimball & Hawkins 2008). I discuss additional features and their functions in more depth later in this section.

Regarding navigation, Facebook's designers generally followed traditional interface design conventions based on reading patterns for users who read from left to right. Because Facebook would not grant me permission to alter screen shots to ensure participant anonymity, I created a model of Facebook features identified by the survey respondents (see Figure 9). Based on responses of the study participants, I determined the News Feed was important for achieving the users' purpose of keeping in touch with friends and family. As I noted earlier regarding the designers' exigencies, when the News Feed feature was launched in 2006, users were upset over their inability to filter the types of information being made public (Hoadley et al., 2010). In response, Facebook made changes to the News Feed and allowed users to choose the types of information the News Feed aggregated. Since that time, Facebook's designers have continued to make changes in response to user concerns as well as their own exigencies. Survey respondents noted that certain types of News Feed notifications, such as updates from games, were unwanted. Survey respondents also noted that some users updated their Profiles too much or needlessly, and those updates appear in the News Feed, which they also did not like.



1—News Feed

2—Like button—located underneath each comment or status update

3—Friends on Chat. To chat with someone, the instant messenger is located in the lower right hand corner, and users can look to see who is available to chat where 3 is located.

4a—Notifications—the notification icon on the interface is a globe

4b—Notification drop-down menu—when a user clicks on the globe icon for notifications, a box drops down describing each notification.

5a—Comments appear underneath a Status update or another type of post a user creates. Comments are aggregated in a user's News Feed.

5b—Comments also appear on a user's Sarah M.

6a—Status Update—users can create a status update on the News Feed

6b—Status Update—users can create a status update on their Sarah M. page

Figure 9. Description of the Facebook interface.

The News Feed also allowed users to comment on other users' updates—specifically new uploaded photos, or status updates (an individual user's comment or update about anything) without having to go to an individual user's Profile. Of the survey respondents, 22% mentioned that looking at other people's photos was one of their favorite things to do in Facebook. When a user uploads new photos to Facebook, that information is aggregated into the News Feed. Because pictures were important to the users surveyed, having access to individual users' pictures on the main page as soon as they logged in enabled them to achieve their purpose of keeping in touch with friends and family. Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin (2008) identified looking at pictures as users projecting their visual self, and they found that users tend to show other users about their identities rather than tell; thus, pictures may have served as an important marker of identity for my study participants. I describe later the way Elmer understood her own identity and others' identities through the content she and others posted. In addition to looking at other users' pictures, users could comment on the pictures and Like the pictures. From the News Feed, users also could comment on status updates or Like something that another user posted. The Like feature on Facebook allowed users to give other users a virtual Thumbs Up (icon) for something that they had posted.

In addition to the News Feed, the Comment features, and the Like button, the survey respondents also noted that the Chat feature was something they used frequently. While the Chat feature acted as a synchronous form of communication, it further helped participants achieve their purpose for maintaining and using Facebook—to keep in touch with friends and family. Because I was not interested in how the Chat feature facilitated personal relationships with other users, I did not analyze the Chat feature beyond its

location on the interface. At the time I conducted the surveys and interviews, images of users who were logged in and available or idle on Chat were located on the left hand side of the Home page. The instant messenger window for engaging in individual chats, however, was located on the lower right hand corner. The visual positioning of the two elements of the chat function in the visual hierarchy of the interface suggested that designers' placed more importance on the availability status of users than the actual ability to chat with those users. However, because users indicated the importance of the chat function to fulfill their purpose of keeping in touch with friends and family, I suggest that the designers' located the messenger window at the bottom right side of the interface not because they considered the act of engaging in chats less important but rather to render the feature itself less intrusive to the overall interface and thus, the user.

While Facebook's designers provided users with the features on the interface, users made choices to use specific features on the Facebook interface based on their purposes for logging in and using Facebook. The physical design of Facebook generally facilitated the respondents' purpose for using Facebook, but 16 respondents noted that they did not like when the designers made unannounced changes to the layout, and 18 respondents wished they had the ability to change the layout of their Profiles. While most users seemed content with the physical design and capabilities of the interface, the 18 respondents desired more control over the ways they could convey information about themselves in their Profile by being able to manipulate the physical design of the interface. Thus, they perceived a lack of control in the Facebook interface. I discuss control as an element of perceived interactivity later in this chapter.

Another complaint from the survey respondents was that there was too much drama that takes place on Facebook. Because users had the ability to say anything on Facebook with regard to an action, comment, or post someone created in Facebook, social norms sometimes may have been violated. For example, one respondent noted that what he/she liked least about Facebook was “how cowardly it is. People use it to humiliate other people instead of confronting them.” Another respondent also stated “There’s a lot of drama that can occur from it.” These statements implied *flaming*, defined as posting online messages that are aggressive, hostile, or inappropriate given the communication situation (O’Sullivan & Flanagin, 2003). Flaming may occur when social norms for communication are violated or someone misinterprets a message. Perception influences users’ interpretations of messages; therefore, for Facebook users, messages that were perceived as inappropriate could cause problems between users and their friends or acquaintances. From these results, I determined that although Facebook allowed users to keep in touch with friends and family, problems could occur when people violated or ignored social norms that typically are understood in non-mediated communication environments.

Ultimately, the design of the Facebook interface was reflective of Mark Zuckerberg: “Facebook is the way it is because of who Mark Zuckerberg is” (Grossman, 2010, p. 67). The color scheme was designed in blue and white because Zuckerberg is red-green color-blind: “there are a lot of colors he can’t see, but blue he can see” (Grossman, 2010, p. 67). Because Zuckerberg did the initial coding and design of the Facebook interface, his vision drove design choices of other designers. His vision also was implicitly based on genre conventions for web design that were seen as best

practices. While I could not know exactly which specific web design practices Zuckerberg consciously chose to follow, I could draw some conclusions about his and the other designers' choices based on the ways specific features of the interface were arranged and positioned within the interface. In the Newsroom on Facebook's business page, the designers listed specific features, which they defined as *Products*. The order of the product list could imply the importance of each feature. Although currently, Timeline and Activity log are listed first in Products, they were not available at the time I collected my data. At that time, News Feed was listed first. I discuss in more detail later in this chapter some of the ways the case study participants used the News Feed. The features as Products did follow many of the best practices for web design.

Many of the best practices for web design come from print document design practices that have roots in Gestalt psychology—specifically the ways objects are arranged on an interface (Kimball & Hawkins, 2008). The visual hierarchy of an interface is one way the design of the interface can enable users to move from one object to the next based on the size and proportion of objects on the interface and their position in the interface (Kimball & Hawkins, 2008; Tidwell, 2011). Larger objects on an interface are given more emphasis versus smaller objects on an interface, which can attract users to engage with the content on the interface; however, users may be looking for content that is buried further in the hierarchy. I describe in more detail later in the movement section the ways my participants look at and through different types of content on the interface and where that content is located in the visual hierarchy.

In the previous sections, I identified the rhetorical situation, the designers' exigencies, the users' purposes, and functional features users use to achieve their

purposes. However, interactivity is not only functional but also perceived (based on users' perceptions). In the next section, I identify and situate perceived interactivity as a constraint in the rhetorical situation.

PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY IN THE FACEBOOK INTERFACE

In this study, I determined the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface to be composed of rhetors (both Facebook's designers and users), exigencies, purposes, and constraints that shape the design and use of the Facebook interface. I found that different features of the interface enabled functional interactivity, and perceived interactivity resulted from users' perceptions of what they could and could not achieve in the interface. Both functional and perceived interactivity worked together to provide general interactivity in the Facebook interfaces. As I discussed in the literature review in Chapter II, scholars outside of writing studies who discussed general interactivity did not always consider the rhetorical situation because they considered it beyond the scope of their disciplinary perspective. However, I suggest that situating specific types of interactivity within rhetorical situations can enable designers and researchers to understand the ways users navigate and perceive interfaces.

PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY AS A CONSTRAINT WITHIN THE RHETORICAL SITUATION

Perceived interactivity functioned as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface because users' perceptions influenced their feelings for specific actions and tasks they could and could not achieve within the Facebook interface based on their purposes for engaging with it. I used specific elements from the previous literature that emerged in my study to define perceived interactivity, which included the

elements of control and time/speed of response. I defined control as users' perceptions of their abilities to choose or manage the content provided on a website, the site navigation, and the features provided on a website's interface (see Ha & James, 1998; Liu & Shrum, 2002; McMillan, 2002; McMillan & Hwang, 2002; Wu, 2005). I defined time/speed of response as how long it takes for a response from the interface to occur after a user has completed a specific action (click on a link, navigate to a new page, or another action that is perceived as interactive; see Johnson et al., 2006; Yun, 2007). Both of these elements provided me with a starting point for determining the way perceived interactivity can function in the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface, and I conducted my grounded theory analysis by looking for additional elements of perceived interactivity to emerge.

In order to identify aspects of control and time/speed of response, I asked the case study interview participants specific questions about both of those elements (see Appendix G). Because grounded theory is meant to build theory from data, I wanted to ask participants directly how they understood their control and the time/speed of response in the Facebook interface. Previous scholars whose studies assessed control and time/speed of response (see McMillan & Hwang, 2002; McMillan et al., 2003; Yun 2007) tested both elements quantitatively, but I was interested in investigating the ways both elements emerged from a user's perspective qualitatively because I wanted either to confirm their results or discover additional ways both elements could function in the Facebook interface. The results I report next are meant to be understood as a representation of a user's perspective, and their statements and my conclusions cannot be

generalized to larger populations. However, my results can be used as a starting point for further investigation from a user's perspective.

In my open coding of the data, movement and motivations emerged in the case study interviews. I analyzed both elements from the transcripts and further assessed them in the memos I wrote using grounded theory. In the literature review, I described direction of communication as an element of perceived interactivity, but in my analysis, I use the term *movement* instead, which I describe in more detail later in this section. I also describe in more detail in this section how the specific perceived interactivity elements of control, time/speed of response, movement, and motivations illustrate perceived interactivity as a rhetorical constraint. Both movement and motivations as categories that emerged from my grounded theory data were meant to be used to build the theory I developed from the data. Additional studies, particularly empirical studies, would need to be conducted to further understand and investigate ways each of these categories illustrate perceived interactivity. Each example I report from the case study interviews are from the transcripts I created (see Appendix H).

CONTROL AS A CONSTRAINT IN THE FACEBOOK INTERFACE

As I previously discussed in the literature review in Chapter II, I defined control as user's perceptions of their abilities to choose or manage the content provided on a website, the site navigation, and the feature's provided on the interface (see Ha & James, 1998; Liu & Shrum, 2002; McMillan, 2002; McMillan & Hwang, 2002; Wu, 2005). Ultimately, the idea of control is also related to the idea of choice—specifically choices a user can make to complete specific outcomes in an interface. In my interviews with my case study participants, I asked both Elmer and Sarah M. to define control in the

Facebook interface and what kind of control she perceived she had in Facebook. In general, Elmer and Sarah M.'s descriptions of control matched the previous definitions from the literature I assessed.

When I asked Elmer about control, she explained that she felt like she could do anything she wanted, and she could see anything she wanted about someone (Lines 215-216). Her general definition of control supported Ha and James's (1998) explanation of control as an element of perceived interactivity and as the ability to navigate cyberspace (in this case an interface) unrestrained. However, her perceptions of control were based on her feelings and actual abilities for what she could control; she defined her control as feeling able to move through the interface unrestrained but did not perceive the limitations Facebook's designers placed on her abilities to complete specific tasks by failing to provide her with certain enabling features (capabilities). Because Facebook's designers provided users with specific capabilities, a user's control was limited to available features and functions in the interface. Her perceived control supports and extends Yun's (2007) claims that a user has control over how she navigates through a website, but that the user does not necessarily control the content of the website. In the case of the Facebook interface, users did not have control over the design of the interface, but they did have control over what they chose to post as individuals or members of groups, and they had the most over who could see what they posted. Elmer did acknowledge that she was sometimes restricted if another user who was not her Facebook friend did not make information publicly available (Lines 215-222)—in those situations she lacked control, but her lack of control was based on other users' choices to control the availability of content to unknown users.

In terms of the control she had over her posted content and her privacy, Elmer described making choices for blocking certain people from certain types of information that she posted—as illustrated in her description of how she managed certain types of information:

E: and you can also, block people from seeing certain things, like my mom, there are some like photo albums that I wouldn't want her really to see that stuff so like, I'll block her and my aunt.

K: Ok.

E: and some other family members, and one of my cousins, kind of like, she's very religious and she is very like, I don't know what the word to describe her, she like doesn't like when I cuss or do anything, so I blocked her from my statuses. (Lines 229-235)

Elmer illustrated her control of her information based on how she perceived other users' reactions to different types of information she posted. In the case of her mom, aunt, and cousin, the information that she was blocking from them was information that she did not think they would approve of. I also asked Elmer if there were other types of control that she wished Facebook would give her, but there was not anything in particular that she felt was lacking in terms of control.

While Elmer described control as constraining the content she would post in Facebook, when I asked Sarah M. how she defined control in Facebook, she described her control based on her knowledge of social constraints for communicating in public communication mediums like Facebook (Lines 236-240). She further elaborated on how she was restricted by social boundaries for communicating in Facebook by stating:

S: but at the same time you have to be like, careful with what you do, because it lets you be free, but at the same time like its other than because if you do something wrong someone a person can report you and you have to get off Facebook, so you have to remember that you're free on here but you have like to be careful with what you do. (Lines 240-243)

In this statement she mentioned being “free” to do as she pleases on the interface, but her choices for communicating to others was based on her knowledge of social and cultural constraints. Her implied acknowledgement of cultural and social constraints in her discourse choices illustrated the way control as an element of perceived interactivity functioned as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. Users have to negotiate social norms, which constrain them in the ways they can complete specific tasks like responding to a comment or posted photos. While Sarah M. was in control of her choices on Facebook, her control also was perceived based on social and cultural constraints, which guided her to make choices in the interface.

Users also can lose control when hackers unknowingly log in to a user's account and post unwanted information as a user. This happened to Sarah M., which she described as follows:

S: like I had a problem with somebody trying to get into my Facebook, and I had to change my password, like privacy is okay but it could be better like, I wish I could have more control of keeping people off my Facebook, or trying to get it on into my Facebook, like the privacy level can be a lot better. (Lines 256-259)

This statement also illustrated the privacy tension between Facebook users and designers as I previously noted with regard to the News Feed feature and Beacon application. In the

surveys and the case study interviews, there were a few complaints about the privacy features—5% of survey respondents indicated they wanted better privacy features but most did not mention privacy in the survey. Users perceived having control over their information; however, when Facebook’s designers decided to make changes that compromised users’ actual control over their information, users began to question their actual control—as illustrated in Sarah M.’s previous statement. It appears that in an effort to make the world more open and connected, Zuckerberg and his team have made design choices that have instead compromised users’ privacy and potentially alienated users.

For example, Facebook’s designers provided users with default privacy settings when a user opened an account for the first time, and these default settings allowed a person’s status, photos, posts, bio, favorite quotations, family, and relationships to be publicly available unless a user changed the settings on his/ her Profile. Users had the option to keep these default settings or to customize their settings depending on how public or private they wanted their information to be. The default settings Facebook provided also illustrated Facebook’s unspoken mission to make user data publicly available to people who may then use it for additional purposes such as advertising. Sarah M. felt that she lost control over her information when a hacker was able to access her account, and in that particular situation, she did not perceive loss of control. She was able to regain her control by changing her password, but as she indicated in her statement, her perceptions of the privacy and security of her account changed.

With regard to control as an element of perceived interactivity, I found that participants indicated the presence of control in the games users played on Facebook. While overall most survey respondents ($n = 117$) did not play the available games in

Facebook, Sarah M. did play the games, and she described her control in relation to the Facebook games she plays. Sarah M. played the games Café World and Farmville, made by the social game company Zynga. Zynga indicated that their mission (similar to the Facebook purpose) is “to connect people with their friends through games. Every day millions of people interact with their friend and express their unique personalities through our games” (Zynga, 2012). Zynga’s mission to enable people to interact socially is facilitated through the structure of their games. Their unstated missions also are (a) to make money by selling users materials to help them play the games and (b) to collect and use user data to either improve their games or for other undisclosed purposes that may or may not be ethical. When users play Farmville and Café World, they rely on their friends to help them to complete specific tasks. In Farmville, players act as farmers—planting crops, harvesting crops, collecting coins from animals, and helping friends in the same endeavors. Each task requires users to click on specific elements of the interface in order to complete specific tasks. Players are also provided incentives to complete specific tasks. Some of those incentives are more coins or items to help the person in a game, better in-game tools to achieve specific goals faster, and bonuses if specific goals are completed. Gameplay in one Zynga game is similar to gameplay in other Zynga games.

Sarah M. described the control in the Zynga games Café World and Farmville as being able to control playing a character that enables her to do something when none of her friends are online, and she mentioned they capture her interest and are addicting (Lines 86-90). For her, control in Farmville and the other games that she played was about choices for tasks to complete and the time to complete specific tasks within each game. Sarah M. described specific tasks that she could choose to complete in the

Farmville game, including harvesting crops, taking care of animals, planting crops, and going to other people's farms (Lines 102-105). While Sarah M. felt in control of making specific choices in games like Farmville, the game's designers were the ones who provided her with specific choices that enabled her to complete tasks, and they provided her with suggestions for tasks to complete to make her successful in the game. Thus, her control was perceived based on the designers' interface designs for specific tasks that she could complete.

Her actions also illustrated the false binary of *active* and *passive control* as described by Liu and Shrum (2002), Jensen (2008), McMillan (2002), and Richards (2006). They described active control as the user being able to make choices based on the amount of control users want in a given situation. They defined passive control as ways designers do not enable users to make specific choices in an interface. In the case of the Facebook interface, the binary of active/passive control did not adequately define the ways users and designers understood and determined what was and was not possible to accomplish in an the interface, and users perceived their abilities to accomplish specific tasks based on available features. Ultimately, users had active control over different types of tasks they chose to complete in the Facebook interface, but they had passive control over the design of the interface. For example, Facebook's designers made specific design choices for the interface, such as different types of content users could include on their Facebook Profiles, yet Elmer and Sarah M. generally were satisfied with their abilities to include information on their Profiles. In the Facebook games like Farmville, users have no control over the design of the game, but they have control over the choices they make in the game. Ultimately, distinguishing between active and passive control is not always

necessary when a user's sense of control is perceived, and their perceptions enable them to understand the choices they can make for the types of tasks they can accomplish. Users are unable to control which tasks are available to them to complete because the design of the interface provides them with the available tasks.

In this study, I found that time and control worked together in certain tasks users could complete in the Facebook interface. For example, in the Facebook game Farmville, time and control influenced Sarah M.'s perceptions of the ways she played Facebook games like Farmville. For example, when Sarah M. planted crops in Farmville, she had to plow the field either by clicking on the farm plot or by selecting a tractor to plow. Once the field was plowed, she had to select which crops she wanted to plant. To plant the crops, she then either had to click on each individual plot or use a seeder to plant the crops. Once all of the clicking to plant the crop was completed, she then had to wait a certain amount of time to pass for the crops to grow. The waiting period for crop growth ranged from 5 minutes to 4 days. Sarah M. understood the time commitment in Farmville (Lines 107-109), and she would structure her time according to how long it would take to complete specific tasks in the game. For example, when she planted a crop, she would identify how long it would take for the crops to grow and then log back in to the game at the determined time in order to harvest the crops (Lines 124-127). Ultimately, while she was in control of what she planted and when, she did not have control over when the task in the game would essentially be finished (as determined by the completed growth of the crops). Facebook's designers built time control into the game, and it functions as a constraint of the interface. It also works as a constraint that helps to achieve goals. Yet, Sarah M. perceived her control when she played the game. She had control over which

crop she chose to plant based on the amount of time she wanted to spend waiting for the crop to grow, but she could not choose how long it would take for a crop to grow. The amount of time that needed to pass for certain tasks to be completed influenced her perceived interactivity, which I describe in the next section.

TIME/SPEED OF RESPONSE IN FACEBOOK

According to the literature, the faster a response occurred in an interface (time/speed of response), the more interactive the site was perceived to be interactive (Johnson et al., 2006; Yun, 2007). This general assumption applied to the Facebook interface, but user perceptions of time/speed of response also depended on the ways a feature functioned in the interface. Certain tasks in the Facebook interface depended on a slow response rate, but they still were perceived to occur quickly by the case study interview participants—such as tasks in the Facebook games. In this section, I describe how the case study interview participants perceived time/speed of response in the Facebook interface and how it functioned as a constraint in the rhetorical situation. In order to elicit responses regarding time/speed of response, I asked each case study interview participant how fast he/she expected a reaction to occur when the participant clicked on something. In addition to asking that question, other responses emerged during the interviews that indicated time/speed of response.

While I did not test aspects of time/speed of response extensively through direct observation methods as was the case in previous perceived interactivity studies, I was more interested in obtaining information based on user's statements about time/speed of response in order to further test their claims in later studies. The responses obtained from the case study interview participants were meant to be a representation and are not meant

to be generalizable and representative of the entire sampled population. Because grounded theory is meant to build theory from data, I was interested in building a theory about time/speed of response from a user's perspective instead of from direct observation.

In general, both case study interview participants felt the response time to their actions on the Facebook interface was fast. With regard to speed, Elmer assumed the response time would be fast when she clicked on a feature in the interface. As a result, when the response time was too slow, she would log off (Line 209-210). Because Elmer assumed that her actions in the Facebook interface would be rewarded with a fast response time, she had pre-established perceptions for how she believed the Facebook interface functioned. Her assumption that clicking on a button or link would provide her with a fast response supports Yun's (2007) findings that the speed of response for an action depends on the users' needs and expectations.

Like Elmer, Sarah M. had similar expectations for the time/speed of response for specific features of the Facebook interface; however, Sarah M. indicated that the load time could be longer for different types of applications or features and that she was willing to wait depending on the feature she was using. When I asked Sarah M. directly how fast she expected specific features of the Facebook interface to be, she did not provide a specific time frame. Rather, she indicated only that features had to load in general (Line 212). When I asked Sarah M. a follow-up question about specific features of the Facebook interface that were slower to load, she mentioned certain games could be slower to load than others (Lines 221-228). For example, she mentioned Social City as a game she played that could take a long time to load depending on what task she wanted

to complete in the game. She described how if she had three different cities open, it would take a long time for the game to load. I asked if she minded the slowness of the games (Lines 230-232), and she said that she did not mind that they were slow. She also mentioned that even if a game was slow, she thought it was fun (Line 228). She also indicated that she would warn others of how slow the games were and advise them not to start playing the games if they did not have the time or the patience for them (Lines 230-232). Ultimately, Sarah M. decided what she wanted to do in Facebook based on how fast she expected things to load (Lines 193-194). Her willingness to wait for features to load in Facebook further reinforces Yun's (2007) claims that users' perceptions of an interface can depend on their own needs. Sarah M. made sure she was not in a hurry when she used a feature that was slow to load, specifically if it would achieve a specific outcome based on a specific purpose for using the feature.

Even though the games in Facebook could be slow to load, Sarah M. was willing to occupy her time completing other tasks in Facebook while she waited for a game to load. In particular, she would look at the advertisements located on the right hand side of the Facebook interface. She further explained that she would click on an advertisement because she usually saw something she found interesting or that caught her attention (Lines 387-391). As with any user, the advertisements that appeared on Sarah M.'s Facebook page were tailored to her based on specific demographics, locations, and/or keywords she used that indicated her interests or ideas. When I asked her how often she would click on an advertisement, she indicated she would click when she found something that caught her attention and that usually the attention-grabbers were related to something she was interested in doing, such as going to a concert or watching a

basketball game (Lines 386-391). She also mentioned that the advertisements were speedy; and if she clicked on one, they would load quickly, thus enabling her to accomplish another task while a game loaded. In this study, I found that time/speed of response enabled users to move through the interface and that users' actual movements through the interface also indicated movement as an element of perceived interactivity. I discuss the concept of movement next.

MOVEMENT THROUGH FACEBOOK

In the literature review in Chapter II, I described direction of communication as an element of perceived interactivity. While I did not include direction of communication in my data collection methods, movement, as an element of perceived interactivity, emerged as a way to illustrate the oscillation users had between looking at and looking through the Facebook interface. As briefly mentioned in the literature review in Chapter II, Lanham (1993) described the at/through oscillation: when someone looks at a text, he/she is interpreting it at face value and when someone looks through a text, the text becomes transparent. In the case of the Facebook interface, users look at the text when they negotiate a new feature that is unfamiliar to them and must look at it to figure out how to use it to complete a specific task. When a user looks through the Facebook interface, they are able to complete a task more fluidly because the design properties of the interface are more transparent. Brooke (2009) asserted that not only is looking at and through an interface important but the position from which the user looks at and through an interface is important as well. Because Facebook users are in the position of both rhetor (making choices for creating content) and audience (taking in information provided on the interface by other users), their oscillations between both roles while

using the interface illustrates their purposes for engaging with a text and their perceptions of the information they take in from the text. I explain in more detail in this section the ways users' oscillations between looking at and looking through interfaces illustrate their purposes for engaging with an interface and the ways their perceptions influence their abilities to complete tasks in the interface.

In the perceived interactivity literature, movement was defined similar to direction of communication described by previous scholars (Downes & McMillan, 2000; McMillan & Hwang, 2002; Quiring & Schweiger, 2008). Direction of communication refers to the information flow between users and/or users and the interface. The term direction of communication was problematic in the literature because it relied upon conversational metaphors to illustrate the back and forth movement of discourse and did not consider situational factors such as ethical, economic, social, and cultural constraints that also influence users' choices and purposes for engaging in specific types of activities within an interface.

In order to understand the case study interview participant's movement through the Facebook interface, I used Camtasia (Version 6.0.0) to record their actions. Because Facebook would not allow me to use altered screen captures in this analysis, I recreated the screenshots to illustrate the participants' movement through the interfaces (see Figures 9 and 10).⁸ In this section, I describe the movement of Elmer and Sarah M. as well as the ways their movement reinforced their purposes and enabled them to perceive interactivity. My explanations for the different Facebook features are based on the genre analysis I conducted of the interface.

⁸ The Facebook interface has been significantly redesigned at least two times since I conducted my interviews in November 2010.

Movement emerged as a category from the grounded theory memo writing, and I found it had similarities to the previously identified category of direction of communication. Future research would need to investigate ways movement as an element of perceived interactivity functions rhetorically with more users who represent a larger subsection of users. For the purposes here, my definition of movement should be understood as a working definition that emerged from my data and which represents two users' movements in the interface.

Elmer's movement through the interface was based on her purpose to keep in touch with friends and family through different types of content her friends posted. Elmer indicated that when she logs in to Facebook, the first thing she checks is her notifications. The notifications alert users to (a) game requests, (b) friend requests, (c) event invitations, and (d) comments posted to walls, photos, and comments within a thread that the user also may have responded to. The notifications were the starting point for how she achieved her purpose by seeing new information that her Facebook friends posted. I illustrate the notifications in Figure 9 as Item 1, and the arrow in the diagram points to the box that drops down when a user clicks to see if he/she has notifications.

Elmer indicated that once she finishes looking at her notifications, she moves through a specific string of friends' Profiles in order to see the friends' updates to their Profiles. She defined what she looked at on her friends' Profiles as "stuff" and indicated that looking through the stuff leads her to other people's Profiles. The string of friends' Profiles that she moved through was usually the same set of friends, and she started with her best friend. Elmer's general movement through the interface began by first looking at "stuff," determining if it was new by looking through it, and then moving on when the

oscillation between at and through was complete. When she moved through her string of friends, she described how she was mostly looking for and at pictures on the page (Line 33). If each page that she checked had nothing new posted, she saw that person as boring.

Some of the survey participants also indicated that Facebook could be boring: “it gets boring after a while” and “bored after a while.” These responses were in response to the question “What is your least favorite thing about Facebook?” For Elmer and the survey respondents, the notion of boring implied that users had not added anything new to look at or that there was nothing to hold her attention to a particular page. Based on my results, I found that when users look for something new on the Facebook interface, they first quickly look at the content and then through it to perceive something about it. The at/through oscillation enables users to achieve their purpose of keeping in touch with friends and family by assessing the information others provide; however, other users can be perceived as “boring” if no new content is provided to them to achieve their purpose. Although Elmer indicated that she found people’s Profiles boring, she also described how she would deviate from looking at the same string of friends’ Profiles when something caught her attention on someone’s page, which would then lead her to someone or something else that was not in her usual movement pattern. Thus, I found that the oscillations between new and old content on the Facebook interface was constant and that users were constantly making sense of the content on the interface through their perceptions of it by looking at it and through it.

Elmer stated that once she has moved through her string of friends and has seen all of the new updates and pictures that users posted, she would go back to her own Profile. She described her Profile as her “home base” where she would look for

something to lead her on another browsing path. In particular, she would look to see if anyone wrote on her wall. She also mentioned that she would browse through her own pictures even though she has seen them “a million times” (Line 79). Elmer’s comments indicate that her movement while looking through the interface prompted her to look for new places to explore on the interface. Figure 10 illustrates her movement.

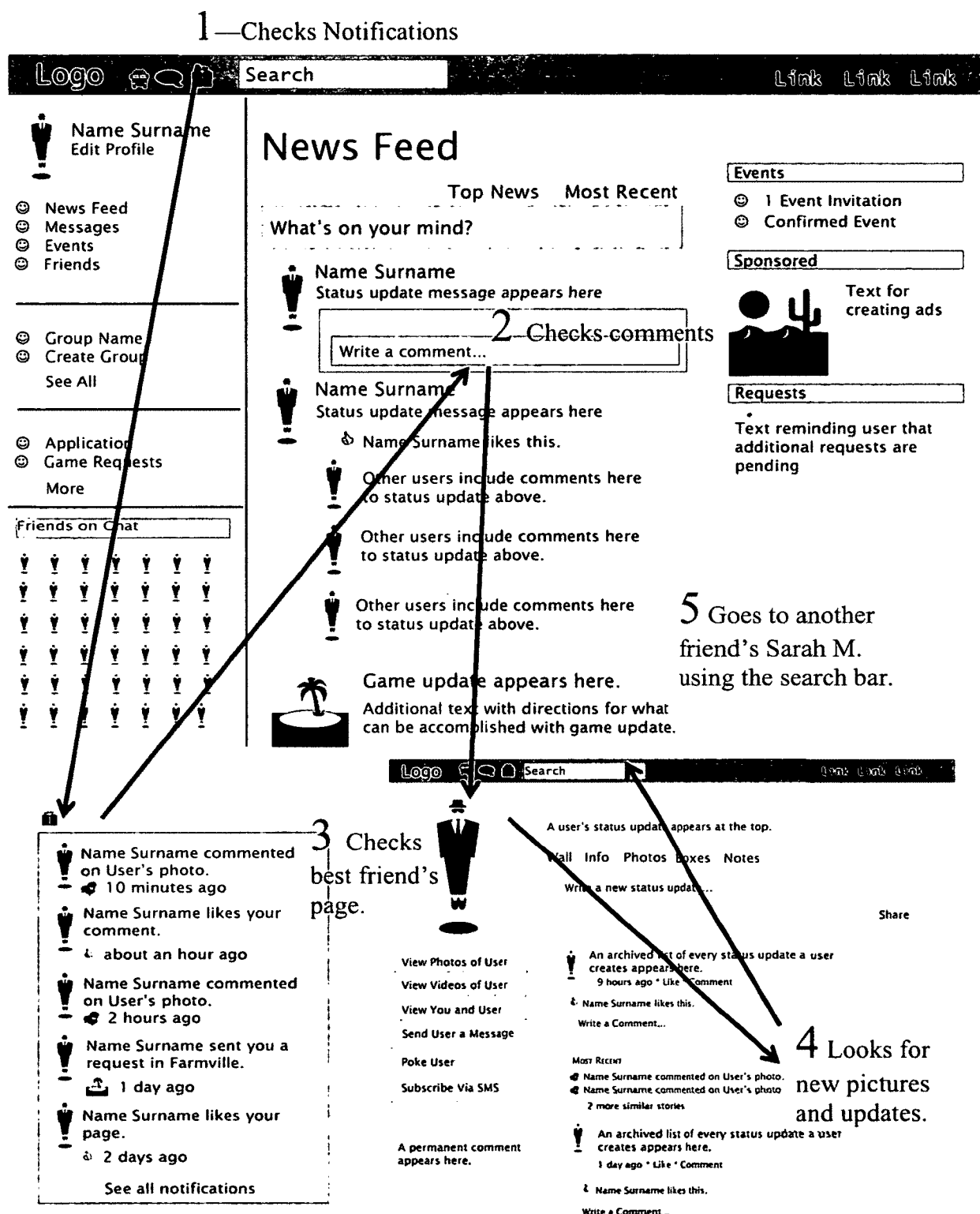


Figure 10. Elmer's movement through the Facebook Interface (Facebook is a trademark of Facebook Inc.)

While Elmer and Sarah M. both had the same general purpose for creating and maintaining Facebook accounts, their movements through the interface were a little different from each other. Sarah M. indicated that when Sarah M. first logs in to Facebook, she checks the News Feed and looks at her friends' statuses. In the screen capture of my interview session with Sarah M., I noticed that when she checked the News Feed, she also changed the feed from *Top News* to *Most Recent*. Top News, as most recently suggested by Facebook (2012), compiles your friends' most interesting posts, and the Most Recent filter lists content posted by friends in real time. Facebook makes Top News the default when a user goes to his/her Facebook homepage. Sarah M.'s switch from Top News to Most Recent illustrated how she wanted the most up-to-date information from her friends first because she had likely already seen the old information.

Sarah M. indicated that while she Sarah M. looks at her friends' statuses in the Most Recent view, she will comment or Like certain types of content she sees. She said that then she would check the events she had been invited to and decided if she planned on going to any of them. Sarah M. explained that these actions all take place on the Home page when she logs in to Facebook. She described how she completes those actions first so that she can keep in touch with her friends:

S: basically to like to keep up with my friends, like this is another way, that's why I like like the status thing they say something if they're doin' something or like sometimes they'll put it up there to invite people like my close friends I wanna keep up what they're doin' since we're not like most of them we're not in school together so, so just wanna make sure and then like some events are like

family events and this keeps me up to date with my family business and stuff when I'm here at school. (Lines 45-50)

In this quote from my interview with her, she described the specific types of information she looks for when she first logs in. I found that her oscillations between looking at and through the interface were based on her need to stay in touch, and her ability to stay in touch was perceived as looking at content, responding to content, and confirming attendance at events.

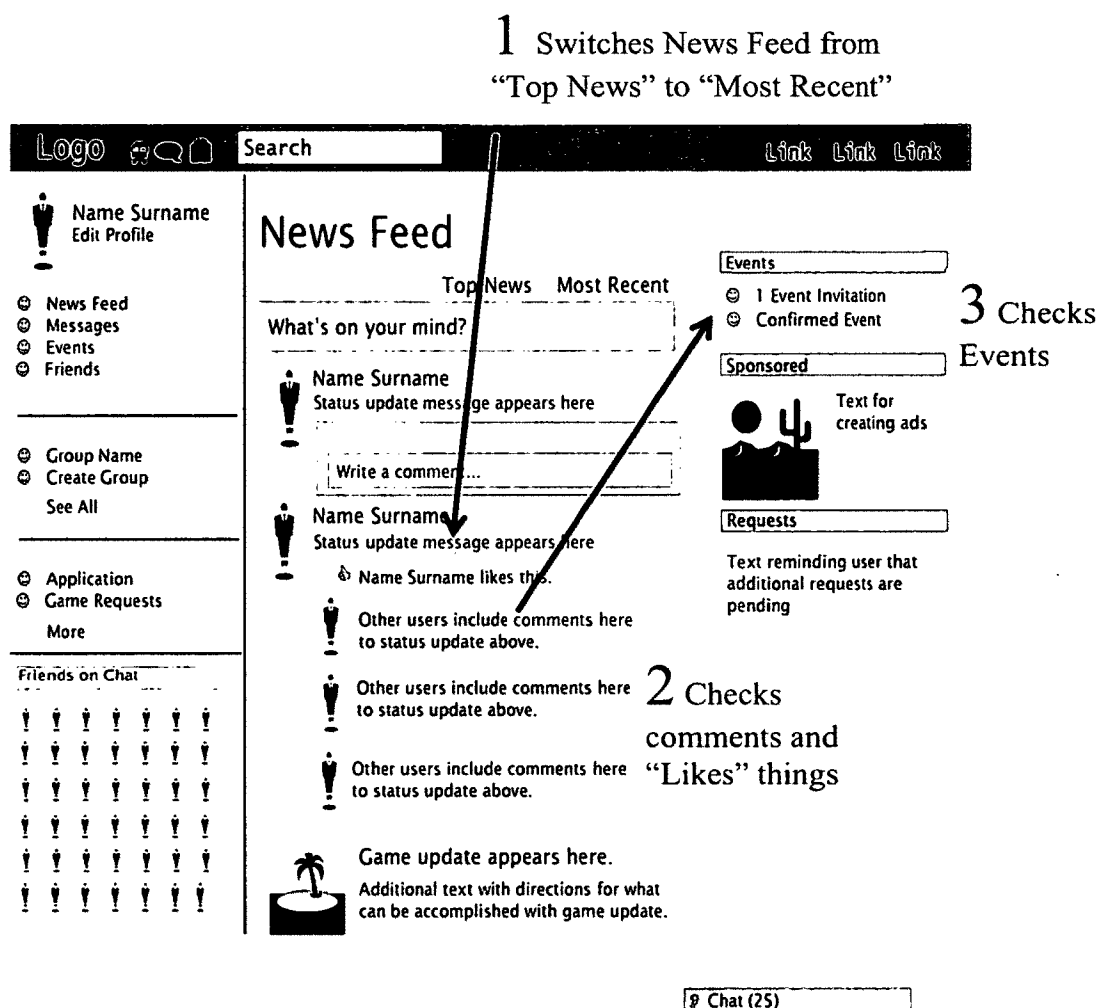


Figure 11. Sarah M.'s movement through the Facebook Interface (Facebook is a trademark of Facebook Inc.)

During our interview, Sarah M. described the games that she plays in Facebook, but she did not mention them when she described what she does when she first logs in to Facebook. When Sarah M. described playing Facebook games, she mentioned that the games are time consuming, and that she will arrange her time for when she will play according to specific tasks she needs to complete in the games. She explained, for example, that if she is waiting for another class, she will login and play a game until class

starts; she indicated this time usually goes by quickly (Lines 135-137). During my interview with her, she did go to the Farmville game, but I did not observe her playing Farmville because the game was not loading properly on the computer I was using to record the interviews. Sarah M.'s movement when she first logged in to Facebook during the interview is presented in Figure 11. As depicted in the figure, Sarah M. began in the middle of the page, scanned for new information, and took action to achieve her purpose to keep in touch with friends and family.

In this study, I found that both Elmer and Sarah M.'s choices for the tasks they performed in the Facebook interface enabled them to keep in touch with friends and family, and their movement illustrated their oscillations for looking at and through the interface to draw conclusions about content other users posted based on their perceptions of the information. Their oscillations between looking at and through the content on the interface was dependent on their purposes for logging in and using Facebook as well as their perceptions of the relevance of the content provided by other users. Their choices also were based on specific types of motivations as one element of perceived interactivity. I describe these motivations next.

MOTIVATIONS AS AN ELEMENT OF PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY IN FACEBOOK

I defined motivations as an element of perceived interactivity in the Facebook interface as what drives users to make decisions to engage in specific tasks available to them to complete in the interface. Motivations also are based on exigence and purpose. As I previously discussed in Chapter I and Chapter II, exigence is what provokes a rhetor to respond to a specific need with discourse (Grant-Davie, 1997), and purpose is users'

intended objectives to engage in discourse in a rhetorical situation. In this study, I found that Facebook users primarily were motivated to engage in discourse in the Facebook interface to keep in touch with friends and family. Their motivations also were based on cultural and social conventions that influence the different types of discourse they used to complete specific tasks.

I also defined motivations based on Goffman's (1959) work regarding self-presentation strategies, where Facebook users are constantly negotiating the ways they want to be perceived and the ways they are perceived by others in the Facebook interface based on the content they choose to post or not post about themselves and others. Goffman (1959) defined the activities users engage in to present themselves to others as performances; people present a *front* or a public persona to others. People also maintain a private or *backstage* presence, where people let go of or test personas privately in order to gauge their appropriateness for a front stage. Goffman's (1959) descriptions of front and backstage provided a theoretical starting point for determining and explaining specific reasons Facebook users in this study made specific choices to represent themselves in the Facebook interface. Specific motivations emerged from my data, which were based on the users' purposes for engaging in discourse. User motivations to engage in discourse included deciding when to provide updates to other users and when to look at and check for specific types of information on other user's Profiles. I discuss those motivations in more detail in this section.

Recently, scholars have investigated Facebook's users' motivations and found that users were motivated to create and maintain Facebook accounts in order to project a self that is socially desirable. For example, Zhao et al. (2008) found that their sampled

users showed instead of told users about themselves and were motivated to contribute content to the interface in order to present a socially desirable self through their interests and activities and in the pictures they posted. Nadkarni and Hofmann (2012) confirmed Zhao et al.'s results in their study where they found that users used Facebook to fulfill the social need to belong and for self-presentation (based on Goffman, 1959). Special and Li-Barber (2012) found similar results: respondents' motives for using Facebook were to maintain relationships, pass time, and entertain themselves. The results from my sampled Facebook users confirm the results from these studies regarding motives for using Facebook. In this section, I describe the ways motivations functioned as an element of perceived interactivity that enabled users to make discourse choices in the Facebook interface and their perceptions of those choices. To begin, I first describe how motivations emerged in the surveys.

In the surveys, motivations emerged as answers to the questions "How often do you update your Profile?" and "How often do you update your status?" I asked both of these questions to determine how often the sampled users were doing these tasks. When users update their Facebook Profiles, they are able to add pictures and information about themselves including (a) relationship status; (b) hometown; (c) current location; (d) date of birth; (e) educational information; (f) employment information; (g) likes and interests such as books, movies, television, music, favorite quotes; and (h) other information about themselves that the users self-report and that does not fit into one of the Profile's pre-established categories. For this question, respondents were given five specific choices and a blank for *other* where they could fill in a response. Some respondents provided more than one response. I present the responses for this question in Table 11.

Table 11

Regularity of Participant Profile Updates

Response	<i>n</i>	%
Once every couple of months	59	30
Once a month	48	25
Once a week	36	18
After a serious life change	27	14
Once a year	14	7
Update based on feelings (Whenever I feel like it)	10	5
Never	4	2
Other	4	2
Hardly ever	2	1

One important category that emerged was users' motivations to update their Profile based on feelings. While only 10 respondents indicated that they update their Profiles based on feelings, the emergence of this particular category illustrated a social or cultural need for users to provide updates about their lives. Specific responses I grouped into the feelings category ranged from "whenever I feel like it" to "whenever I need to update it." Ultimately, the feelings users had to motivate them to update their Profiles were based on their perceptions of culturally important information. These perceptions also influenced respondents' understandings for when they should update their statuses.

I also asked respondents how often they updated their status on the Facebook interface. Updating a status differs from updating a Facebook Profile. The status allows a person to describe their current actions or post short pieces of information for other Facebook members to see on their Profile. A Facebook user's status also appears in other

users' News Feeds, and it is something that both case study interview participants reported as one of the first things they check when they log in to Facebook. For this question, respondents provided more than one response. I present the responses in Table 12.

Table 12

Regularity of Participant Status Updates

Response	<i>n</i>	%
Once a week	75	38
As often as possible	54	28
Once a month	21	11
2-3 times a week	10	5
When I feel like it	7	4
Never	6	3
Every couple of weeks	5	2
Blank	4	2
Other	4	2
Once a year	2	1

The results indicate that over one quarter (28%) of respondents updated their status as often as possible. I did not provide a follow up question on the survey asking respondents what they meant by as often as possible, and I was not able to determine specifically what respondents meant as *often*.

One specific category of motivation that emerged was updating a status based on feelings. Seven respondents reported updating their status based on the statement “whenever they feel like it,” and more specific responses that further indicate motivations based on feelings included “whenever the mood strikes me,” “When I feel like its[sic] needed,” or “when something strikes me as update worthy.” These particular responses illustrated Goffman’s (1959) assertions that people are constantly trying to maintain a specific personal front. A person constructs a specific personal front in order to define him/herself according to social and cultural signs that can be perceived and understood to create and maintain his/her identity. Respondents in this study did not indicate specific events that would strike someone’s mood as update worthy, but users likely create a status update based on information they perceive as important for others to know about them and to reinforce their personal front.

It was beyond the scope of my data to offer definitive conclusions regarding a socially appropriate status update. In a study conducted by Karl and Peluchette (2008), the researchers asked participants to rate for appropriateness specific types of content users would post on Facebook. They found that certain types of content, such as pictures showing people drinking or references to drugs and alcohol, were pieces of information they would not want future employers to be able to see. Karl and Peluchette’s results illustrated that users were aware of the perceptions others may have of content they post online, but more research needs to explore which types of content is broadly deemed inappropriate by users on Facebook. While the surveys provided me a starting point for determining the way motivations functioned as an element of perceived interactivity, the case study interviews with Elmer and Sarah M. provided further evidence for the

relevance of feelings as an element of perceived interactivity. In particular, motivations for maintaining relationships were one specific category that emerged from my case study interviews.

MOTIVATIONS FOR MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS

While motivations as a general category of perceived interactivity emerged from the data, different types of motivations appeared to suggest different types of reasons users have for creating and maintaining their Facebook accounts. People have different types of relationships with others, and people have to maintain different types of personal fronts in order to maintain a persona for a specific region.⁹ Because users use Facebook to keep in touch with each other—often while maintaining various personas (see Goffman, 1959)—one of the questions I asked the case study interview participants was “How does Facebook help you to feel closer or farther away from people socially?” I asked this question because Facebook has indicated that its mission and purpose are to enable users to share and connect with others. Asking this question enabled me to (a) understand participants’ perceptions of their relationships and (b) test my assumption that users would feel closer to or further away from other users based on their abilities to achieve Facebook’s mission. While the purpose of this study was not to investigate the ways users managed or understood social relationships in the Facebook interface, I could not completely ignore the social function of Facebook, and this particular question proved to offer insight into the case study interview participants’ perceptions of their own understandings of their relationships with people as facilitated by Facebook.

⁹ Goffman defines a region as a location bounded by people’s perceptions. A region is not necessarily a physical location, and it can be defined by culture.

Physical distance emerged as an element of motivation in Elmer's responses.

Elmer noted that she felt closer to her family with Facebook because her family lives far away and that Facebook allowed her to keep in touch with them more easily (Lines 284-286). She gave the example of her cousin who she rarely sees; but through Facebook, she was able to talk to her every other day (Lines 288-289). For her Facebook friends who were not family members, Facebook did not change her perceptions of her relationships with them unless they went to other schools (Lines 271-272). Elmer described how she could see the pictures her friends from other schools posted; and from those pictures, she could figure out what was going on in their lives (Line 294). Ultimately for Elmer, the relationships that she had with people impacted how she perceived her relationships with them on Facebook. Hsu, Wang, & Tai (2011) found similar perceptions from respondents in Taiwan: users communicated with others they defined as acquaintances by using less time-consuming communication such as games and gift features. Users in the study engaged with close friends through tools that were more intimate—like direct messages. In a second study that surveyed students at a large European university, Pollet, Roberts, and Dunbar (2011) found that participants who spent more time online using an instant messenger service or online social networks did not increase the emotional closeness of their relationships with others. Pollet et al. examined emotional closeness with three different types of relationships, including support and sympathy groups (strong relationships) and active network (weak relationships).

While the results from the Hsu et al. (2011) and Pollet, et al. (2011) differed, the results illustrate the differences in perception users can have regarding their own discourse needs and purposes. For Elmer, using Facebook allowed her to feel more

closely connected to her friends who went to other schools and her family who did not live in the area where she went to school as opposed to her friends she could see every day, friends with whom she had a weaker social connection on Facebook (Line 298). Elmer did note that she still felt closer socially to her best friend and roommates, although she did see them frequently. Thus, I determined that Elmer used Facebook to increase the closeness she felt in relationships with people in her life outside of Facebook with whom she otherwise would not feel connected because of physical distances.

When I asked Sarah M. how Facebook helped her feel closer to or farther away from people socially, she explained that sometimes Facebook is a reminder for her of being far away from some of her friends and family while she is at college (Lines 312-316). She mentioned that she gets a little sad when she cannot do things with some of her friends and family, but she also said that it makes her a bit more comfortable with being away from home because she is able to keep in touch with her family and friends. Sarah M. also described how pictures help her to keep in touch with people because pictures remind her of memories she shares with others (Lines 322-324). In this instance, equating memories with keeping in touch required Sarah M. to rely on perceptions of past events. Ultimately, I found that both Elmer and Sarah M. were motivated to use Facebook to maintain the relationships they had with others, and their perceptions of their relationships with others depended on the ways they perceived and understood close relationships outside of using Facebook. While Elmer indicated she logged in to Facebook multiple times a day, she did not suggest addiction as a motivation for using Facebook; however, Sarah M. and a few of the survey respondents did.

ADDICTION AS A METAPHORICAL MOTIVATION FOR USING FACEBOOK

In this study, I found that based on their purposes for creating and maintaining an account, users can spend large chunks of time completing specific tasks in Facebook. For example, in my interview with Elmer, she mentioned that she uses Facebook less often because she and her roommates realized how much time they were spending on Facebook (Lines 276-279). Because of the amount of time users could spend using Facebook, some users noted feeling addicted to it. For example, when I asked survey respondents “What is your least favorite thing about Facebook?”, nine participants responded that it was “addicting/distracting/time consuming.” To the question “Why do you maintain your Facebook account,” four survey participants responded that it was “addicting.”

Early studies focused on Internet addiction defined it as an impulse control disorder that does not involve an intoxicant (Kandell, 1998; Young, 1998), but Internet addiction is not listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* and scholars have not conclusively defined it as a psychological disorder or whether or not it can be considered a psychological disorder (Nalwa & Anand, 2003). In a more recent study, Nalwa and Anand (2003) found that pathological users of the Internet (a) delay work to spend time online, (b) lose sleep due to late night logins, (c) consider their life without the Internet to be boring, (d) fail to check and/or control their time online, (e) feel frustrated when they fail to logon at a predetermined time, or (f) feel lonely. Nalwa and Anand sampled 100 people ages 16-18 and from the initial sample, identified 18 dependents and 21 non-dependents. While the sample size of the Nalwa and Anand’s study was small and the result not generalizable to the larger population, the researchers were able to identify specific factors that can contribute to Internet addition. Although

Internet addiction is not a medical condition, I use the term here in a metaphorical sense because that is the way it emerged from my data from both survey and interview participants.

In this study, I defined *addicting* not as a medical term but as it emerged in my study as a metaphor to describe the ways users mentioned feeling immersed in the content that was available for them to browse. Based on participant responses, I found that users perceived specific features as addicting. For example, when Sarah M. initially described control in the games, she mentioned how addicting the games could be:

S: It's you control what's going on, like you, it's basically you doin' the farming, through like a character in a game, and that's why I like to play it, plus they can be quite addicting at times, like when you're bored or somethin' and none of your friends you want to talk to online, like you play these games and then like the next thing you know, like, you get interested. (Lines 86-90)

I interpreted her statement to mean that she could become engrossed in the games she plays on Facebook. When I followed up with a question regarding what she found addicting about Café World in particular, she described some of the different tasks she needed to complete to be successful in the game and described it as another way for her to interact with her friends (Lines 86-90). I concluded from these statements that her sense of addiction was based on the sense of achievement of purposes that playing the games allowed her: (a) to have something to do when her friends were unavailable and (b) to interact with other people.

CONCLUSION: PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY RESULTS IN CONNECTING

As I previously described with regard to Figure 5, in this study I found that the rhetorical situation was composed of constraints that shaped the designers' and users' discourse use when creating and engaging with the Facebook interface. As I discussed in Chapter I, people assume that digital texts like the Facebook interface are interactive in general, but no one has ever made it entirely clear what is meant by the term interactivity. In my study, I broke up the general term interactivity into functional and perceived interactivity, and I explored the ways specifically perceived interactivity enabled researchers and designers to understand the ways users make sense of their general interactions with website interfaces through their perceptions of interactive content in the Facebook interface. By situating perceived interactivity as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface, I was able to investigate the ways users made sense of their abilities to complete specific tasks. Control, time/speed of response, movement, and motivations all functioned as elements of perceived interactivity that emerged from my grounded theory analysis, and I discovered how each of these elements constrained the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface and contributed to the general interactivity of the Facebook interface. The user's purpose—to keep in touch with friends and family—determined aspects of perceived interactivity in the Facebook interface, and the purpose influenced how the survey and case study interview participants perceived they were able to stay connected with their friends on Facebook. From my analysis of the data, I concluded that perceived interactivity enabled connecting—as I illustrate in Figure 12.

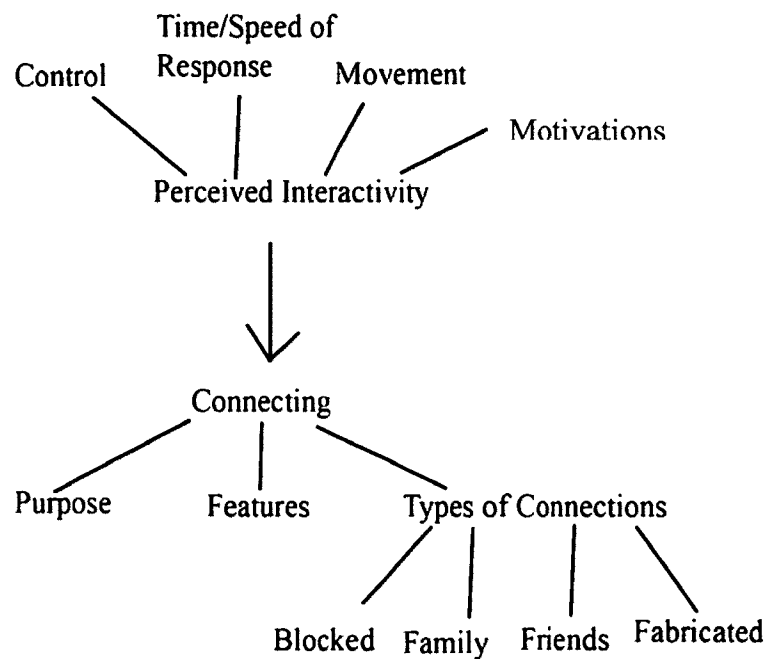


Figure 12. Perceived interactivity in Facebook.

I found that connecting in Facebook was based on the purpose for using the interface, the features available in the interface, and the different types of connections between users. In the diagram in Figure 12, perceived interactivity and the elements of perceived interactivity (control, time/speed of response, movement, motivations) show the process of connecting that reflects participant responses indicating that Facebook enables people to connect with others. I found that connecting, as facilitated by the Facebook interface and a user's purpose, was comprised three main components: purpose, features, and types of connections. Purpose, as defined by the survey respondents and the case study interviewees, included: keeping in touch, creeping, stalking, looking, checking, playing games, networking, and making contacts. Features as a factor of connecting enabled respondents to facilitate their purpose through the structure

of the Facebook interface, and the features and structures of the Facebook interface contributed to their perceived interactivity. Features included Facebook chat, the Profile wall, games, status updates, notifications, events, birthday notifications, and other applications.

Types of connections that emerged were based on the information gathered from the case study interviews and the literature I assessed about Facebook. Because (a) people structure their relationships based on different ways they categorize their relationships with others (see Goffman, 1959) and (b) the Facebook interface did not enable users to differentiate between different types of relationships with others, users perceived their connections to other people according to social and cultural conventions. From my analysis, I determined that perceived relationships occurred based on four different types of Facebook choices for describing connection categories: blocked, family, fabricated, and friends. Because the participant-described purpose for using Facebook was to keep in touch with friends and family, it was logical that two of the emergent categories were friends and family. I discuss each of these categories in more detail later in this chapter.

Although they cannot be generalized to all websites with similar functions as the Facebook interface, these categories illustrate the types of social relationships that can occur in the Facebook interface. In this study, the users' experiences in the Facebook interface could be determined by the different types of connections they had with other users or that they perceived to have had with other users. The case study interviews provided insight into the ways different types of connections were created by perceived interactivity in the Facebook interface, and the case study interviews provided further insight into the ways in which perceived interactivity functioned as a constraint within

the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. In this next section, I describe in more detail different ways connecting occurred as the result of perceived interactivity by the study participants. I describe the ways Elmer and Sarah M. used their Facebook Profiles to facilitate their abilities to connect with others in Facebook. I also describe the types of connections that emerged from the case study interviews that further illustrate ways perceptions of users' connections with others were mediated by the Facebook interface.

USER PROFILE TO PROMOTE CONNECTING

During my interviews with Elmer and Sarah M., I asked them about the information they included on their Facebook Profiles. Their responses to this question provided me with insight for the ways they constructed their personal fronts¹⁰ using their Facebook Profiles. I found that users relied on social and cultural perceptions to interpret other users' content on their Profiles. For example, Elmer noted that she did not include too much personal information on her Profile, and she assumed other people would draw conclusions about her life based on the pictures she posted: "I'm sure everybody could figure that out by my pictures, but I don't put, I don't say much about myself" (Lines 140-142). In her Profile, she did include her Bio and All about Me, in which she included her favorite quotes from her favorite movies as well as her likes and interests by Liking things. Ultimately, Elmer used her pictures to speak for her rather than actually describing herself with words within the pre-established areas for such descriptions.

While Elmer did not provide much personal information on her Profile, Sarah M. described more specific types of information she included in her Profile:

¹⁰ As defined by Goffman (1959), personal front is any information that creates an appearance of someone including physical features, social status, cultural affiliations, and any information that someone uses to define herself or that culture uses to define others.

S: in my Profile, mmm, um, I got information, like a quote of mine, and then some of my friend's lists and then things that I like, um, also I might have like some games and stuff that I play, like the gadget of those and then my statuses and stuff on here, then my picture. (Lines 52-55)

Sarah M.'s dad introduced her to Facebook, and she initially thought that it would be easy to set-up her account. The more she continued to use Facebook, she realized that she had to spend time creating a Profile that other users would not find boring:

S: I had to do a lot like add certain things add pictures of myself so people would know who I am and, like I had to build my friends list and everything, like make my, I didn't want my Profile to be so boring so when people come to it, like oh that's it, that's all she has, so like I started you know what I'm saying getting on these games, and doing different quizzes and stuff, and like places on my Profile to make it look interesting. (Lines 167-172)

Sarah M. seemed to assume that the more information she included on her Profile, the more others would think she was interesting. This relates to Elmer's assumption that people would learn about her and who she was as a person based on the information about herself that she chose to post or exclude. Elmer's and Sarah M.'s descriptions of the content they posted on their Facebook Profiles further confirms the results from a study conducted by Zhao et al. (2008) where users show other users about themselves through the content they post rather than telling others about them themselves. In this study, I determined that by showing without telling, users assumed their Facebook friends would draw conclusions about them based on the content they posted. In the case of Sarah M., in order to not appear boring, she showed users who she was by (a) playing

games and quizzes that provided content to be posted on her Profile and (b) building her Friends list. For Elmer, the pictures she posted represented her and the activities in her life. For the participants in this study, perception played a large role in the ways they drew conclusions about other users.

PERCEPTION, RELATIONSHIPS, AND CONNECTING

In this study, I determined that although Facebook did not recognize different types of relationships (i.e., Facebook friendships), participants did and that they did so through their perceptions. This posed a problem because as Grossman (2010) noted, Facebook's interface design has not always matched the ways in which users have used the Facebook interface or have perceived their relationships with other people on Facebook:

It smooshes together your work self and your home self, your past self and your present self into a single generic extruded product. . . . On Facebook, there is one kind of relationship: friendship, and you have it with everybody. You're friends with your spouse, and you're friends with your plumber. (p. 68)

Theoretically, in specific types of situations, people make choices to represent themselves to others; in the case of the design of the Facebook interface, it blurred the boundary between users' public and private lives and users' abilities to filter their personal information according to social norms and conventions (also referred to as decorum) in specific situations (Abril et al., 2012). According to Goffman (1959), people engage in performances in specific settings, and people rely on social and cultural conventions to determine the appropriate discourse for a specific situation. A person's personal front is the appearance and manner in which they present themselves to others. My results

indicate that in the Facebook interface, users in this study were constantly constructing their identities through the information they chose to post about themselves. However, users had to rely on perception in order to understand the relationships that people shared with others in real life and to understand people's lives and ideologies. Because the design of the Facebook interface did not accurately reflect people's real lives and relationships with others, users' perceptions were based on how those users chose to represent themselves.

According to Goffman (1959), regions are places bounded by barriers of perception, and people manage their performances according to their knowledge of the audiences in which they are performing in front of. When people are unable to keep audiences separate from each other, and an outside audience member views a performance he/she was not meant to see, the performer has to adjust his/her actions to match the expectations of the new audience member or include the new audience member in the discourse. In the case of the Facebook interface, a user's future or current employers may view content posted by the user that may not leave a strong impression of the user—for example, images of the user binge drinking or posing provocatively, or status updates complaining about work or co-workers. Thus, users have to manage multiple regions of their lives at the same time while constrained by an interface that does not provide an easy way to differentiate between different types of audiences a user has. Since I conducted the surveys and case study interviews, Facebook's designers have created controls that enable users to differentiate more easily between different types of connections (relationships). At the time I collected my data in 2010, users could filter

other users from some aspects of the content they posted, but certain features remained public to all of a user's friends.

In the case study interviews, Elmer and Sarah M. described their relationships with others through the Facebook interface. Their descriptions illustrate ways they perceived their relationships with others when the Facebook interface did not allow for differentiation between the different types of relationships they had with others. Four different types of connections that functioned as relationships with other users emerged in my study—blocked, family, fabricated, and friends. I discuss each type of connection in more detail next.

Blocked connections emerged from the data as instances when Facebook users wanted to connect with other users' information but when they were not Facebook friends. Elmer's movement through the Facebook interface illustrated this type of connection. Elmer's movement through the Facebook interface allowed her to connect with others who she may not have known and who she may have found by scouring her friends' Profiles to obtain information about her friends and her friends' friends. In Lines 258-260, she said: "um, well if I'm not friends with someone I want to see their pictures if I click on it and it doesn't let me see them, I do get aggravated, but that's their own person keeping their privacy." Looking at other users' pictures was important to her in Facebook because she gathered information about people through their pictures, and even if she did not know the person whose pictures she wanted to look at, she perceived some sort of connection to that person through his/her pictures. Facebook also allowed users to intentionally block other users from having any contact with them on Facebook. Once a user is intentionally blocked, neither user will be able to contact each other, see

information posted by the person such as comments on other users' Profiles, or search for them on Facebook.

Because both Elmer and Sarah M. used Facebook to keep in touch with friends and family, they maintained familial connections on Facebook. The Facebook Profile enabled users to distinguish their family members from their general friends using a list function, where family members would be listed on the left hand side of the Profile page. Not all users who participants listed as family members in Facebook were blood relations. For example, Elmer noted:

E: and I also have multiple siblings who aren't my real siblings except for one of them.

K: Ok.

E: and one of my parents and then one lady who's not my parent.

K: Ok.

E: but I consider her my mine so. (Lines 133-138)

For Elmer, even though she was not a blood relative to some of the people she lists as siblings or parents, her real world connection to them felt more like a blood relation instead of just a friend or acquaintance. In this instance, her perception was visually actualized on the Facebook interface. While previous studies looking at users' relationships with others did not directly address the ways users perceive and represent their relationships with family members on Facebook, Karl and Peluchette (2011) noted that the generation gap between millennial users (people born after 1982) and their parents is narrowing, such that Millennials and their parents tend to stay more closely connected to each other through different communication technologies. Karl and

Peluchette found that Millennial children had positive reactions to friend requests from their parents. While the Karl and Peluchette study did not investigate user perceptions of familial relationships on Facebook and the ways users represented familial relationships on their Profiles, the way Elmer represented non-blood related family members reflected her perceptions of them in her real life.

In order to maintain her familial relationships, Sarah M. used the chat feature when using her phone was not possible as she described to me:

S: me like since I can't be with my parents 24/7 now since being to college if they want to like if they know that I'm like doin' somethin' that I can't get to my phone but I might have my computer on, like they'll like talk to me, like we interact like I'll say something and my dad'll like give me advice about it or anything like if I'm having a problem or I know I can go to my dad and like instant message him or something like my friends like my friends in different colleges this is how we keep up with each other on Facebook, like we do stuff like we can plan stuff like yesterday like one of my friends chatted and asked me am I coming to visit her I told her no cause I have stuff to do and she understood like you bein' in college and everything Facebook is recommended for college people especially you know what I'm sayin' if you tryin' to reach your friend but they might've gotten a new number you never know like this could be the place where you can talk and like keep up with each other. (Lines 295-306)

In this explanation for how Sarah M. used Facebook to keep in touch with people, she described the way she maintained her relationships with people. Specifically, in this case,

her relationships with people were not perceived—instead, the Facebook interface mediated communication for her.

The third type of connection that emerged from my data was fabricated connections. I defined fabricated connections as connections created or suggested by the Facebook interface through the system level code, which would suggest new friends for users, but the connection is not always one that occurs in real life. Fabricated connections emerged in my discussion with Elmer regarding the See Friendship button. At the time of my interviews, Facebook had introduced the See Friendship button, which showed the actions two users shared in Facebook aggregated onto a single page. Specific actions that were aggregated together were wall posts shared between two users, photos both users were tagged in, mutual friends of both users, Likes and interests the two users shared, and events both users had attended. The comparison created through the See Friendship feature could be between a user and one of his/her friends or between two users, who may or may not be Facebook friends. Elmer described liking the See Friendship feature because it allowed her to “see like your entire history with another person and you can also look at two other people’s and type in whoever you want” (Lines 84-85). She illustrated the way a connection could be fabricated (Line 89) when she described how she could compare the friendship between her sister and her best friend: “so like here, I can see one of my friends and one of my best friends and my sister . . . [participant mumbled] random. I don’t think they’ve ever talked.” This particular feature allowed her to see information about two of her friends in a new way—even though her sister and her best friend did not have any sort of relationship with each other in their everyday lives.

I defined Friends, the final type of connection the Facebook interface enabled, as anyone listed as a friend on a user's Profile. Because Facebook did not differentiate between types of friendships on the user Profile at the time of my study, all users were lumped into the same category. Facebook also suggests friends to other users. The friend suggestions the interface provided were based on the friends of the users' friends. These suggestions were meant to help users connect with others, but the more friends a user had, the more opportunities Facebook as a business had to profit from advertising revenue. My study participants did not mention anything about the ways friends were suggested to them through the code in the interface based on their friends' friends or if they take the suggestions the interface provided to them. Future studies should investigate ways friend suggestions from the computer code influences users' perceptions of the interface.

My results and the analysis of my results reported here are meant to introduce the theory constructed from my data. The theory I created from my data needs further empirical testing to confirm the results I reported. In the next chapter, I describe in more detail future research directions and additional conclusions from my data that should be investigated further by writing studies scholars or scholars in fields outside of writing studies who want to employ a rhetorical framework for investigating ways different types of interactivity function rhetorically.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION—A WORKING DEFINITION FOR PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY

In Chapter IV, I provided a rich, thick description of my data based on my grounded theory framework for data collection, and I answered my research questions: In what ways does perceived interactivity appear as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of a digital text (the Facebook interface)? and How does a user's purpose determine what is and is not perceived as interactive? I developed these questions in response to the gaps in and outside of the writing studies literature regarding interactivity as a general term. Those gaps in the literature were:

- The general term interactivity has not been understood according to different types of interactivity—specifically functional and perceived interactivity, and
- Users and designers have not been situated rhetorically according to exigencies and purposes found in rhetorical situations of a digital text—in this case the Facebook interface.

In this chapter, I summarize the study and findings. From there, I describe ways the term general interactivity appeared in my results, and I propose a working definition of general interactivity based on my results that includes functional and perceived interactivity and aspects of the rhetorical situation to further illustrate the findings of this research. This definition should be further tested in additional studies, and it must be modified according to other textual genres and communication situations. I conclude with the implications of the research, and I present future research directions for writing studies scholars.

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

In order to supplement the previous research in and outside of writing studies, I used the grounded theory framework to develop a theory from the data I collected. The theory I developed and reported in Chapter IV was meant to be a starting point for researchers to further investigate the claims I made and to test my claims with similar types of interfaces. Identifying the elements of the rhetorical situation (rhetors, audiences, exigencies, and constraints) enabled me to obtain a specific portrait of my participants as they represented themselves in the surveys and case study interviews, and it enabled me to obtain a preliminary sketch of Facebook's designers based on publicly available materials. The information I collected and analyzed from participants and the information available to me about Facebook's designers and Facebook as a business were meant to be a representation and must be understood based on the design and resources available to me at the time I collected my data.

As I reported previously in Chapter IV, the rhetors in the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface were both Facebook's designers and Facebook's users. Facebook's designers acted as rhetors because they made design choices based on exigencies that enabled users to complete specific tasks, including posting updates and pictures, playing games, and instant messaging with other users. Facebook users acted as rhetors when they made choices to update and/or upload content to the interface in response to a specific discourse need based on social, textual, ethical, and economic constraints. The perceived interactivity elements I identified were meant to build theory from data, and each element would need to be tested further to determine in more detail

specific ways each element constrains different types of rhetorical situations. I explain a few ways each element can be tested further later in this chapter.

Control as an element of perceived interactivity constrained users' perceptions of whether or not they had control over their actions and/or their information in the interface. For example, Elmer and Sarah M. felt they were in control of being able to achieve specific tasks in the interface, and they had control over the information they posted. Time/speed of response as an element of perceived interactivity constrained the ways users perceived their ability to accomplish a task within the interface. Sarah M. would plan to complete specific tasks based on the amount of time she had available. For example, because she knew certain games were slow, she would make more time to accommodate the slowness of the game, and if she had less time to complete a specific task, she would check comments or post comments because she knew those tasks took less time.

Control and time/speed of response were not the only elements of perceived interactivity that constrained the rhetorical situation. Movement and motivations emerged from my study as two elements that also constrained perceived interactivity within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. Previous scholarship regarding perceived interactivity defined movement as direction of communication, but the definitions of direction of communication I assessed did not consider reasons why users move through an interface according to a broader rhetorical situation. I defined movement as the users' oscillations between looking at and through the Facebook interface. A user's oscillation of looking at and through an interface illustrates the ways a user navigates different types of content to achieve a specific purpose. Users will look at content and decide if it is

relevant to them, and they will look through it to perceive something about it in order to draw specific conclusions about the content. Elmer's movement pattern illustrated the ways a user oscillates looking at and through in order to draw specific conclusions about herself and other users. My definition of movement as an element of perceived interactivity illustrated important aspects of the interface for users based on their own purposes for engaging with the interface. Movement emerged as a category in the theory I developed from the data, but my conclusions about movement must be tested empirically to determine ways it can or cannot constrain the interface. Later in this chapter, I suggest ways additional studies can test movement and the other elements of perceived interactivity that emerged from my results and the implications they may or may not have in rhetorical situations of interfaces.

Motivations emerged from the survey data as the reasons users have for creating and maintaining their Facebook accounts. The general user purpose that emerged from the results was to keep in touch in friends and family, and users were motivated to complete specific types of tasks based on that general purpose. Specific types of motivations that emerged were to maintain relationships and the feeling of being addicted to using the interface. Users were also motivated to update their Profiles, to comment on their friends' posts, and to browse content on the interface based on their purpose to keep in touch with friends and family. Motivations, along with the other elements of perceived interactivity including control, time/speed of response, and movement also influenced the ways the users' purposes' determined users' perceptions of interactivity in the Facebook interface. While these motivations were self-reported from users, there could have been additional motivations users may have had that were not self-reported or articulated by

my sampled users, and additional studies would need to identify and investigate ways those motivations influence the design and use of the interface

Motivations also emerged from using the interface itself, even if users came to the interface for specific reasons. Users could develop additional reasons for using the interface when prompted by an aspect of the designer's interface design or by other outside influences that the designer's design of the interface may or may not compensate for such as work or educational uses. In this study, I did not investigate the ways the interface, as constructed by designers, created purposes, persuaded users to engage in specific activities, or was used for work or educational uses. Future studies would need to investigate ways users are persuaded to complete specific tasks in interfaces based on the interface design, work or educational uses, and the implications of the persuasive techniques interface designers employ to lead users to complete specific types of tasks. Studies that use Facebook as the site of study could investigate ways designers may or may not persuade users to provide specific types of information in their Profiles and if users do so willingly given the ways they may or may not be persuaded to provide information.

In general, the purposes my respondents articulated helped me to begin to determine what was and was not perceived as interactive in the Facebook interface. The users' purposes also functioned as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. The physical constraints of the interface enabled users to perceive the specific tasks they could and could not complete in the interface, including posting pictures, posting to the wall, and reading/commenting on content on the News Feed, and I concluded that these abilities enabled users to achieve their purpose of keeping in touch

with friends and family. While the sampled users utilized these features most often, Facebook's designers also constrained users by making available only certain capabilities. A few users mentioned on the survey that they wished they were able to manipulate certain aspects of the interface more easily, like the user Profile. Facebook's designers constrained users by providing them with functions but not providing them with the ability to modify or customize the interface. Other user purposes either self-reported by Facebook users or by Facebook designers should be investigated further to determine the impact of the way the interface is used, understood, and modified by both users and designers to compensate for needs.

Because the purpose of this study was to develop a theory from data for perceived interactivity and ways it appeared to function as a constraint in the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface, I developed a working definition of general interactivity that includes both functional and perceived interactivity. Before I present the working definition of general interactivity, I describe ways conversational metaphors can be extended based on perceived interactivity.

EXTENDING CONVERSATIONAL METAPHORS AND MODELS IN TERMS OF PERCEIVED INTERACTIVITY

As I discussed in the literature review, scholars who defined the general term interactivity used conversational metaphors to define interactivity and its functions (Rafaeli, 1988; McMillan, 2006). The conversational metaphor has been used to define the general term interactivity as similar to face-to-face communication in which a sender sends a message and a receiver responds to the message (Shannon & Weaver, 1949). While the Shannon and Weaver (1949) model accounts for noise to disrupt the

transmission of a message, the conversational metaphor does not adequately take into account the design of the system based on the exigencies of the designer nor the receiver's own purposes for engaging with the system.

In order to extend the conversational metaphors used to define the general term interactivity, I distinguished between functional and perceived interactivity in order to understand the ways both types of interactivity function within the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. Differentiating between both types of interactivity extends the conversational metaphor to define interactivity as a general term by illustrating the ways different types of interactivity function within a text. Both types of interactivity can occur in a text, and both types of interactivity work together as a constraint within the rhetorical situation of a text. While conversational metaphors for interactivity as a general term do not adequately illustrate the ways interactivity functions, it did appear in my case study interviews when I asked my case study interview participants how they defined the term interactivity.

While the case study interview participants' definitions of interactivity cannot be generalized to the survey respondents, their definitions help to provide a starting point for how interactivity was understood, and their descriptions of interactivity reinforced the previous definitions of interactivity as a conversational metaphor discussed in the literature. The participants' definitions of the general term interactivity gave me a further sense for the ways they perceived their actions and abilities to use Facebook based on their purpose for using it.

When I asked Elmer how she defined interactivity, at first she did not understand my question. I directed her to think about interactivity in terms of clicking on different

items in the interface (Lines 322-323). After I directed her, she explained that she wrote a lot of comments on people's pages. Thus, she saw the act of commenting as interacting with other Facebook users. She also indicated that she wrote comments in Facebook for other users' pictures, status updates, wall posts, comments to other users' comments, or videos or links posted by other users. Sarah M. reinforced Elmer's definition of interactivity in general by describing how she used Facebook to keep in touch with people through games and chat.

I also asked both case study interview participants what they thought were the most interactive and least interactive features of Facebook. Elmer stated that she felt the entire website was interactive (Line 331). When asked to explain what she meant by the entire website being interactive, she explained how it was interactive in terms of her own use:

E: I mean, when you're looking through people's pictures or people, like when they leave comments on other people's pages even messages and events, you know, you're interacting with someone. (Lines 333-335)

This description of how she found Facebook interactive illustrates her purpose, and it also illustrates that she understood she was interacting with other users through the interface. Leaving comments for other users mimics asynchronous communication because other users can respond quickly to content a user posts especially if two users happen to be logged in at the same time and are looking at and respond to the same content. When I asked Sarah M. to describe what she found to be the most interactive feature of Facebook, she responded a little hesitantly that she found the chat feature to be the most interactive feature on Facebook. She went on to describe how she used the chat feature

such that she would chat with multiple people at the same time. She found the chat feature to be fast. Her description of the most interactive feature for her also reinforced her understanding of interactivity in general as a conversational metaphor.

Ultimately, Elmer's and Sarah M.'s descriptions of what they viewed to be interactive in the Facebook interface reinforces the conversational metaphor because the actions they completed mimicked a face-to-face conversation. In addition to the conversational metaphors used to describe interactivity as a general term, the models proposed by McMillan (2006)—user-to-user, user-to-documents, and user-to-system—also emerged in my study and illustrated specific ways the interface functioned. While I criticized these models for not accounting for the ways previous researchers interpreted users' understandings and perceptions of their engagements with the interfaces being studied, in terms of the Facebook interface, each of the McMillan (2006) models can be understood according to the types of connections that Facebook users perceived to have with other users or with the interface as a document or system.

For example, user-to-user interactivity occurred when users chatted with others in synchronous conversations using the chat feature, which functioned as an instant messenger. Sarah M. noted the chat feature was one of her favorite things to do in Facebook. User-to-user interactivity was also perceived in the Facebook interface when users commented on content another user posted, and both users' comments seemed to occur synchronously. This condition occurred when both users were logged in at the same time or both users had alerts on their phone or another portable device, which allowed them to respond quickly. While users can communicate with each other electronically on an interface like Facebook, participants' perceptions of certain types of

social interactions appeared to be dependent on the ways the interface mediates those interactions.

User-to-documents interactivity occurred when Elmer decided to look at information and interpret information provided by users on the interface. She interpreted the pictures and other visual information other users posted as a form of communication about specific aspects of other users' lives. User-to-documents interactivity in the Facebook interface was dependent on the information users provided to others; but in terms of perceived interactivity, users must make sense of the information based on their own cultural and social perceptions of other user's information. While McMillan's (2006) description of user-to-documents interactivity implied aspects of users perception, future research that uses this model needs to consider the rhetorical situation in which an interface incorporates user-to-documents interactivity. In the case of the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface, identifying the ways the designers construct the interface to provide users with features to achieve a perceived purpose then enables others to identify the ways users are using those provided features to achieve an actual purpose.

User-to-system interactivity occurred in the Facebook interface when users provided responses for actions they completed using specific features provided on the interface by Facebook's designers. For example, the advertisements that appeared on Sarah M.'s Profile as she waited for information to load were not randomly selected but rather based on the information she provided on her Profile, including relationship status, location, age, gender, interests, and occupation. The advertisements were interesting to Sarah M. because the content was based on her interests; however, it was unclear from

my interview with her if she understood the ways she was targeted by specific advertisers based on the data she included on her Profile. Ultimately, designers have taken advantage of her perceptions by manipulating the system to appeal to her likes and interests. It is not clear how many people click on Facebook ads even though, as Hof (2011) noted, marketers spent \$4 billion in advertising on Facebook in 2011.

While Sarah M. was the only respondent of all the participants who mentioned anything about the advertisements in Facebook, her brief description illustrates her awareness of the existence of advertisements on Facebook. Other respondents may not have acknowledged Facebook ads because they were not prompted in the survey or interview to do so or because the advertisements may not have had relevance to them. Because only one person mentioned advertising on Facebook and I did not ask users directly if they clicked on Facebook ads or if they were persuaded to make purchases based on whether or not one of their friends Liked the product on Facebook, I cannot draw generalizable conclusions about the effects of Facebook advertisements. As I discussed earlier, researchers have reported mixed results for the effectiveness of Facebook ads for increasing revenue for businesses who advertise on Facebook. Even though users did not mention advertisements and other economic constraints that influence Facebook's designers, users may or may not have been aware of their position as content developers for Facebook. I describe later in this chapter ways future studies can explore the ways users are positioned as content developers who do not receive a profit for the content they post to Facebook and their perceptions for their immaterial labor.

While I was not looking to confirm the models proposed by McMillan (2006), my survey results implied her models and did illustrate the types of interactivity the models were intended to illustrate; however, my results further illustrate the need to understand and situate individual interfaces in the rhetorical situations in which they are used instead of using a general model or definition of interactivity to explain the phenomena that occurs between users, between users and the system, and between users and documents. The interactions that occur, which can be based on perceptions of available functions of the interface, must also be situated according to the designers' intentions in response to a perceived or actual exigence. Ultimately, these models provide a starting point, but as Eubanks (2011) noted, metaphors must be understood in larger situations and not as individual entities understood on their own.

A WORKING DEFINITION OF INTERACTIVITY USING A RHETORICAL FRAMEWORK

As I noted in the literature review in Chapter II, I described and defined both functional and perceived interactivity as two facets of the general term interactivity. My working definition for functional interactivity was the mechanical features that were considered to enable interactions to occur in an interface. My working definition for perceived interactivity was users' psychological impressions of the ways specific features included in a website's interface enable them to complete specific tasks. Both working definitions provided a starting point to reconcile the ways functional features of interfaces mediate users' perceptions. Scholars' previous definitions and discussions of perceived interactivity provided me with specific elements I used to define perceived interactivity. Those elements were control and time/speed of response. I analyzed my data to allow the

elements of control and time/speed of response to emerge and to confirm their relevance in the rhetorical situation. I also looked for new elements of perceived interactivity to emerge. Two new elements that help to define perceived interactivity in the Facebook interface did emerge: movement and motivations. In this section, I provide a working definition that I developed from my data for perceived interactivity based on the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. I also provide a working definition of general interactivity that is informed by both functional and perceived interactivity as well as the rhetorical situation. Neither of the definitions are meant to be static and should be understood as flexible according to the nuances present in similar or different rhetorical situations from the ones I identified in my study.

I suggest that while perceived interactivity is based on people's psychological impressions of specific features in an interface, it is also based on the elements of control, time/speed of response, movement, and motivations as I identified in my study. Based on this understanding in my study, I created this definition of perceived interactivity:

Perceived interactivity is based on the user's control over their information and what they want to do in an interface, the user's oscillations (movement) through the interface, the user's time and speed of response for information to be sent and received through the interface, and the user's motivations for determining what actions to complete within the interface.

In this definition, I take into account specific types of psychological impressions users can have when engaging with the features and content included in an interface. Users' perceptions of the control that they have in an interface influences the choices they make. For example, users may reveal more personal information about themselves in the

Facebook interface if they perceive they have control over who has access to their information—even if third party developers are using their information without their knowledge. In terms of speed of response, if a user perceives a fast response time for an action the user takes in the interface, which enables her to achieve her purpose, he/she may be more inclined to come back and use the interface. This concept was demonstrated by Elmer's and Sarah M.'s perceptions of time/speed of response in the Facebook interface. While different types of interfaces can be embedded within a variety of rhetorical situations, this definition of perceived interactivity can apply in particular to other social networking websites that respond to similar exigencies and fulfill similar user purposes. Additional studies would need to be conducted to confirm this assertion.

Because most social networking sites are responding to similar exigencies and similar user purposes as those associated with Facebook and its users, my results describing how different types of interactivity function within a social networking site may apply to other types of social networking sites. Boyd and Ellison (2007) defined social networking sites as those that allow users to (a) construct a public or semi-public Profile in a bounded system, (b) create a list of other users with whom they share some sort of social connection, and (c) view and navigate their list of social connections within the system (p. 2). Most social networking sites likely enable users to connect with others for different purposes, including maintaining current friend and family relationships, building new relationships, or developing and maintaining business or professional relationships. Facebook fits into Boyd and Ellison's (2007) definition, and my definition of general interactivity applies to the rhetorical situation of social networking sites:

Interactivity in social networking websites is mediated by the functional features provided by the designers' and users' perceptions for completing specific tasks in the interface. Users' perceptions are based on their abilities to control their information, their abilities to complete tasks in the interface, the timing and speed of their actions in the interface, their oscillations looking at and through the interface (movement), and their motivations for completing specific tasks in the interface. Users' perceptions also are influenced by social and cultural constraints that influence their choices and motivations for completing specific tasks within the interface.

This definition is specific to the interactivity in the Facebook interface because general interactivity in websites that are situated in different rhetorical situations may function and be perceived differently by users, which would cause a need for different types of interactivity to be investigated according to the rhetorical situations of those interfaces. Future definitions of general interactivity should consider the same aspects of the rhetorical situation I investigated, including the rhetor, the audience, the exigence, the constraints, and user purposes for engaging with an interface.

This definition also moves the general interactivity discussion away from conversational metaphors, which I argue limits general interactivity discussions by ignoring situational influences such as reasons users use an interface. In addition, they do not fully illustrate the ways perceptions and functions are received and understood by users. Conversational metaphors provide a starting point for interactivity definitions, but they do not adequately explain specific aspects of interfaces that provide different types of interactivity to users.

Both the perceived interactivity definition and the general interactivity definition I developed based on my study would need to be tested with different types of users to determine if different ways the interface is used determines if perceived interactivity occurs in other ways based on other rhetorical situations. Because my case study interview participants were rather homogenous (both female, around the same age, similar use), a wider range of ages, genders, and uses may provide a wider cross-set of results. The definition I developed for general interactivity is based on the rhetorical situation of the Facebook interface. This definition is meant to function as a starting point for other scholars to investigate ways other types of interfaces function in rhetorical situations based on designers' exigencies and users' purposes. Future research should test this definition to confirm my results and to see if the same types of interactivity function and are perceived similarly according to a variety of rhetorical situations.

Instead of using conversational metaphors to begin general interactivity discussions, interactivity should instead be understood as a continuum. In Chapter II, I described the continuum as having low levels of interactivity at one end and high levels of interactivity at the other end. I then placed each feature along the continuum based upon user's perceptions for ways interactivity is perceived. The continuum I created in Figure 2 was meant to be a starting point, and I updated the continuum I created in Figure 13 to illustrate what emerged from my data.

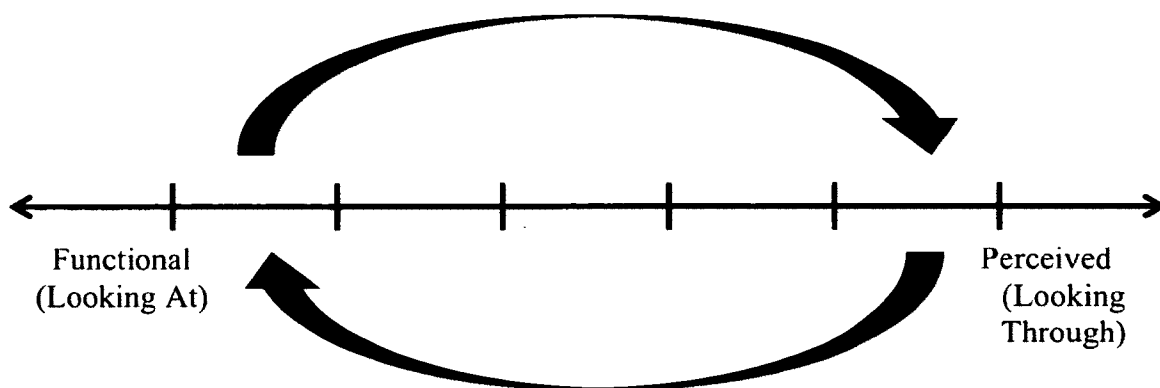


Figure 13. Updated perceived interactivity continuum.

The continuum in Figure 13 demonstrates users' oscillations between looking at features and looking through an interface. Each feature a user described is positioned at a point on the continuum based on the ways a user looks at it or looks through it, and the feature moves along the continuum based on the level of functionality or perceptual properties as identified by the user. The arrows that circle around the continuum are meant to illustrate the dynamism of a feature when a user engages with a feature in an interface. Users likely juggle multiple features in an interface at the same time, and multiple features can be placed along the continuum to illustrate the ways they work together or separately to create a specific experience for a user.

In terms of the Facebook interface, specific features emerged as important to the study participants, including the wall, the chat feature, the News Feed, and commenting features. By using those features, the participants achieved their reported primary purpose to keep in touch with friends and family, and the participants perceived those features as more interactive (based on the emergent perceived interactivity elements). Because one purpose of social networking sites is to enable people to communicate with each other for

personal and professional reasons, communication tasks that occur in face-to-face communication environments can take place in interfaces (such as synchronous chat features), but they are mediated by an interface (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). The interface can mediate how messages are conveyed, and it can provide additional communication structures that are not necessary or available in face-to-face communication situations. Features that mimic face-to-face communication must be understood according to the ways the interface mediates communication tasks situated in rhetorical situations and not separate from a larger communication situation.

The continuum I created in Figure 13 is meant to be a starting point for future studies that investigate ways different types of interactivity create a specific experience in rhetorical situations for users. The data I collected served as a representation of users' thoughts and uses of the Facebook interface. Different users may have additional reasons for using the interface, and the continuum in Figure 13 would need to be modified based on other users' uses of the interface. The continuum I created in Figure 13 should be seen as dynamic, and it should be tested further with other types of websites to validate the claims I have made here.

SIGNIFICANCE AND INTERPRETATION

The results from my study support the previous assertions from the literature regarding functional and perceived interactivity. In particular, my results confirmed control and time/speed of response as elements of perceived interactivity and expanded the perceived interactivity conversation by adding two new elements of perceived interactivity—movement and motivations.

My study also expanded the perceived interactivity scholarship from outside of writing studies by illustrating the relevance of the rhetorical situation when designers create texts for users and when users make choices and take action in an interface. While Facebook's designers were members of the original target audience (college students at Harvard), they are guided by their own exigencies for Facebook as a social networking website. Designers of future texts can consider their intended audience more productively based on users' wants, needs, and discourse choices to achieve a specific purpose. As described in my analysis, Facebook's designers interpret user data according to user actions within the interface, and they make design decisions according to the data they collect. While their methods for understanding the ways users engage with an interface may provide an initial portrait of user use, my case study interviews provided more substantial and nuanced information that illustrated the choices users made as situated within a rhetorical situation. Incorporating stronger user-centered design practices can further enable designers to create interfaces that not only respond to exigencies, but also to the needs and purposes of users.

The Facebook interface is embedded in a variety of rhetorical situations, and the results that emerged from my data only illustrate a few of the many rhetorical situations in which the interface is embedded. My analysis is also based on (a) available materials from Facebook itself, (b) popular press articles, and (c) scholarly articles, and many of Facebook's designers' choices are likely influenced by constraints that I am not aware of, especially if they are private business secrets that are not publicly available. Thus, while Facebook's designers may make choices that do not appear to be best for users, they may

be constrained to make design choices that cannot incorporate user feedback appropriately.

It can be argued that Facebook's designers expanded the social networking website genre. Friendster was launched in 2002, and MySpace was launched in 2003—prior to Facebook's 2004 launch at Harvard. Since its initial launch, Facebook has attracted over 900 million users, and Friendster and Myspace have since changed their purposes from connecting people socially to connecting people through games (Friendster) and connecting people with entertainment (Myspace). According to its mission and design, Facebook continues to connect people socially, and the designers make business and product decisions to continue to enhance its purpose for its users. Facebook's success can be assessed based on the number of users it has and the amount of traffic it receives on a daily basis. While the general success of Facebook can be tracked according to site hits and number of users, its success also can be tracked based on user feedback. From the very small sample of users that I surveyed and interviewed, the general consensus was that users were satisfied with Facebook as a social networking site.

My study also reiterated the prevalence of conversational metaphors as a conceptual system people use to define interactivity in their everyday lives. When asked and prompted, both case study interview participants described interactivity as a conversational metaphor. Their definitions reiterated the importance of the metaphor as a common conceptual system that functions as a starting point for the ways general interactivity can be understood. Yet, upon further investigation, I found that their initial definitions were only a starting point for describing their actions in an interface. They

provided me with insight regarding the reasons behind their actions in the Facebook interface and how they perceived their interactions according to their own purpose for engaging with the interface. Ultimately, conversational metaphors provide an initial framework for defining and determining one way in which interactivity functions in website interfaces, but delineating between different types of interactivity—specifically functional and perceived interactivity—enables designers to address relevant design choices for both their own rhetorical needs and users' needs.

IMPLICATIONS FOR WRITING STUDIES

While researchers in writing studies have begun to consider interactivity in general from a rhetorical perspective, my research situated different types of interactivity in a rhetorical situation in order to illustrate the ways it functioned according to identified rhetors' exigencies and self-reported users' purposes. While the disciplinary perspective of scholarship from disciplines outside of writing studies generally is not concerned with rhetoric as a framework for analysis, their work provided a starting point for how interactivity in general along with functional and perceived interactivity might be defined, and their work provided me with a starting point for my own study. Also, using rhetoric as one element of a framework for analysis provided me with a beginning for investigating ways different types of interactivity contribute to the functionality and perceptions of an interface.

While my conclusions from the data are meant to be a preliminary beginning for a larger research agenda, developing working definitions regarding perceived and general interactivity enables me to begin to untangle a term that is used widely to describe a variety of phenomena in a variety of communication situations. The working definition I

present here should be modified based on specific communication situations. Writing studies scholars can straddle multiple subfields, which creates overlap in the ways this research can be implemented into writing studies scholarship and practices. In this section, I address the implications of the answers to my research questions for technical and professional communication, technical and professional communication pedagogy, and digital rhetoric.

TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Technical and professional communication research relies upon rhetorical foundations that help to influence the ways people communicate with each other using a variety of communication technologies in specific rhetorical situations and contexts. As technical and professional communication research continues to investigate ways to improve and understand communication in rhetorical situations, different types of interactivity, such as functional and perceived interactivity, should be included as design elements according to the genre of the text. As McDaniel (2009) noted, “technical communicators can use their knowledge of audience, context, and content to help devise and design interactive technologies that are intuitive to use and yet flexible enough to satisfy a variety of informational needs” (p. 373). For technical and professional communication, different types of interactivity as design conventions and constraints must be understood according to the rhetorical needs of the rhetors and audiences targeted by the rhetor. McDaniel (2009) went on to state that interactivity is an important factor for technical communicators to consider especially because experience design, wiki-based management systems, social networking, and other communication systems and genres incorporate various types of interactivity, which are based on the rhetor’s

needs and the needs of audiences, contexts, and content. Differentiating between and implementing specific types of interactivity like perceived interactivity in a text should be considered from a generic perspective because the discourse communities, cultural constraints, and design considerations such as features of the genre should be accounted for when designing a text that incorporates elements of perceived interactivity.

Because good interface designers find ways to create an interface appropriate to the needs of users, the appropriateness of an interface is also linked to usability and user-centered design.¹¹ The Usability Professionals' Association (n.d.) defined usability as "the degree to which something—software, hardware or anything else—is easy to use and a good fit for the people who use it" (para. 1). Designers can revise different types of interactivity more effectively based on ways users engage with and use specific types of interfaces by considering users' perceptions of interfaces. For example, the results of my study showed that specific features of the Facebook interface that were not used frequently did not contribute to achieving the user's purpose, which caused the feature to be perceived as less interactive.

TECHNICAL AND PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION PEDAGOGY

Technical and professional communication practitioners are not the only ones who can benefit from understanding the ways perceived interactivity functions within a rhetorical situation as a constraint of interface design. Technical communication pedagogy can integrate into design lessons general interactivity discussions that differentiate between functional and perceived interactivity because understanding the

¹¹ Usability research is often associated with Jakob Nielsen, Donald Norman, Michael Wiklund, Janice Redish, and others, and their work is concerned with usability as user-centered design (Schneider, 2005). User-centered design is concerned with designers creating products that have been tested by users and subsequent iterations of the design are altered according to user input and use.

differences between the two can enable learners to determine specific ways users rhetorically make sense of and engage with the design of interfaces. A rhetorical framework provides designers with specific criteria to consider when creating an interface, including their exigencies, their audience, their audiences' purposes, and the constraints that shape the choices they make for the interface design. Teaching students how to design interfaces with a rhetorical framework reinforces Andrisani et al.'s (2001) assertions of the importance and relevance of interactivity for technical communicators: "as a technical communicator, it is essential to understand the complex physical and cognitive events that inform interactivity to ensure our online creations are accurate, effective, and truly interactive" (p. 309). In this statement, the researchers imply an understanding of users' needs in interfaces, and students must be taught ways to recognize users' needs and wants in interfaces.

Students can be taught ways to implement different types of interactivity in interfaces based on a designer's exigencies and users' needs through specific literacies. Many different types of literacies can be drawn upon to learn new material, and Cargile-Cook (2002) described layered literacies as a framework for technical communication pedagogy. The literacies she included in her framework were basic, rhetorical, social, technological, ethical, and critical. Teaching students how to implement perceived interactivity enables them to develop the following literacies:

- Social—developing and using collaborative skills;
- Technological—using specific communication technologies to produce texts and to understand how others use technologies to communicate;

- Rhetorical—understanding and analyzing the audience, purpose, and situation; and
- Critical—recognizing ideological stances and power structures when analyzing and composing texts.

Each of these literacies is developed through creating and analyzing an interface through classroom activities and projects. Students can then differentiate between functional and perceived interactivity based on ways users engage with an interface for specific purposes. Technical and professional communication pedagogy is not the only area concerned with developing students' literacies for usability design. The study of digital rhetoric should include specific types of literacies for students as well, in particular, critical literacy.

While I did not investigate critical literacy in depth in this study, my working definitions can provide a starting point for introducing different types of interactivity to students to help them recognize the ways functional features and perceptions can influence not only themselves but other people in the ways they use interfaces. For example, students can investigate the implications of the ways they are positioned in interfaces according to the ways they interact with interfaces—both functionally and perceptually. More specifically, students can critically assess Facebook's privacy settings or the ways users are positioned as immaterial laborers in the interface. My definition of perceived activity can provide a starting point for students to assess the ways they oscillate between looking at and through interfaces to evaluate the ways they use interfaces to practice critical literacy. Selber (2004) noted a similar view: "a critical approach to literacy first recognizes and then challenges the values of the status quo" (p.

81). When students assess their movement by looking at and through an interface, they can define the choices they make and then assess the choices they are forced to make based on the design of the interface. In terms of the Facebook interface, assessing their own movement through the interface could enable them to investigate the ways they are positioned as consumers and determine if they need to or can make changes to the ways they present themselves in the interface, use specific features, or maintain different levels of privacy.

DIGITAL RHETORIC

Many rhetoric scholars are concerned with the teaching of writing and literacy (Lauer, 2006), and discussions of the general term interactivity along with a breakdown of the term into functional and perceived interactivity are appropriate for discussions regarding writing for digital environments. In particular, discussions of different types of interactivity take into account ways people construct and understand texts, which facilitates the use of different modes of communication. Students using different modes of communication to both create and interpret texts is the foundational idea of multiliteracies pedagogy. Modes can include words, visuals, sound, space, and gestures to convey a message to be interpreted by people (Cope & Kalantzis, 1999; Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001; New London Group, 1996).

Different types of interactivity can contribute to the visual, spatial, and gestural modes of design. Visually, users must make sense of what specific icons and buttons represent in order to achieve specific tasks, and their interpretations of specific features is based on users' cultural knowledge. Spatially, functional features must be located in places on interfaces that enable users to perceive ways they can use them in interfaces.

Different types of interactivity are influenced by the gestural mode when users have to make physical movements in interfaces such as controlling a mouse to complete specific tasks. Each mode under which different types of interactivity can be classified must become part of a user's literacy repertoire in order for that user to be able to engage with a text for specific purposes. Rhetoric and composition is not the only field that considers the ways specific modes enable people to engage with and take meaning from specific texts. New media is also concerned with ways specific aspects of texts, or the materialities of texts, shape textual design and interpretation practices.

An interface can be considered a text because of its materialities, which include the physical and cultural properties that define it as a text. As my research illustrates, different types of interactivity can function as materialities that can enable designers to create texts that are appropriate for participants given the rhetorical situation and the needs for discourse. Hayles (2002) noted: "Focusing on materiality allows us to see the dynamic interactivity through which a literary work mobilizes its physical embodiment in conjunction with its verbal signifiers to construct meanings in ways that implicitly construct the user/reader as well" (p. 130-131). While Hayles was concerned with interactivity as a general term that encompasses different types of interactivity, she acknowledged that general interactivity is dynamic. The working definitions I developed for perceived and general interactivity should also be understood as dynamic—they change according to the materialities of the text and the rhetorical situations in which texts are embedded. For example, in the Facebook interface, users' perceptions based on control, time/speed of response, movement, and motivations likely change when Facebook's designers make changes to the interface. I was not able to gauge their use and

perceptions of the interface based on the changes Facebook's designers made to the interface since I collected my data, but future studies should investigate ways changes to the interface shape users perceptions of Facebook not only as a social networking website, but also as a business attempting to achieve a specific mission that is defined both publicly and privately.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Because my results were based on a very small sample of Facebook users, future studies would need to test each aspect of perceived interactivity that I identified (a) empirically, (b) over a longer period of time, and (c) with a larger cross section of users who have different types of experiences using the interface. Because my survey participants were within the same age demographic and my case study participants were both female and almost the same age, future studies that rhetorically situate an interface like Facebook should investigate ways different types of users use Facebook. My case study participants both used Facebook extensively, but some users may not use very many of the features or have very many Facebook friends. A study that investigates a larger cross section of different types of users could provide further insight into the ways different types of interactivity work in different types of rhetorical situations.

In future studies testing time/speed of response and movement, data collection methods that use direct observation could provide more specific ways users perceive time/speed of response and their movement through the interface. Prior to collecting my user data, I considered other methods to collect case study data to reduce researcher bias and to account for aspects of perception and intention, such as think-aloud protocols and contextual inquiry. Think-aloud protocols are a method of collecting data from

participants by asking them to describe what they are doing as they are completing a specific task. I initially thought this method would be helpful for enabling participants to explain why they complete specific tasks as they are doing them, but after careful reflection on the method, I found that there were too many problems inherent with think-aloud protocols and the results I anticipated obtaining using this method would not have fulfilled my study goals. Think-aloud protocols have been criticized for collecting inaccurate data because it can be awkward for participants to talk while they are carrying out a task—speaking every thought while trying to complete a task is not a natural process. Specifically, if a person is thinking out loud about what they are doing, they have to figure out how to verbalize a task that may occur without much thought and reflection (Ericsson & Simon, 1980). I chose not to conduct think-aloud protocols with each case study participant because I thought they would be too cumbersome for participants, and I was not interested in if the design of the Facebook interface was effective in enabling users to complete specific tasks—instead, I was interested in what users did in the interface and why.

I also considered contextual inquiry to collect data in my study. Contextual inquiry is a common research tool for those who are interested in improving the way computer systems are used by individuals in specific work situations. In contextual inquiry, rather than collecting abstract data, the user explains something about the system that he/she is using then shows the researcher exactly what she means when she describes using a system in a certain way (Beyer & Holtzblatt, 1998). Similar to the limitations of think-aloud protocols, one limitation of a contextual inquiry is that asking a participant to verbalize what he/she is doing and why as the participant is doing it is not a natural

process (Hoonhout, 2008). While this may be the case, asking users to describe how they use and make sense of a task or system allows the researcher to uncover deeper knowledge of the task as opposed to drawing conclusions from observation alone. In order to track and record user movements within a system during the think-aloud protocol/contextual inquiry, screen recording software, eye-tracking software, or key recording software can be used to empirically measure and identify specific types of movements participants make through an interface. While both think-aloud protocols and contextual inquiry methods may have provided me with additional insight into the ways the case study participants used the Facebook interface, I only was interested in obtaining one data set that expanded the general survey data by investigating specific ways users achieve their purposes and perceive interactivity in the Facebook interface. While direct observation methods only can provide a representation of users' actions in a specific environment, the data that could be obtained from similar studies could supplement the results I obtained here.

While I only briefly mentioned economic constraints with regard to Facebook's designer's exigencies, further studies should explore the ways users are aware of their position as immaterial laborers and the way Facebook uses their data. Because Facebook users create the content in the Facebook interface for free while Facebook's designers and employees profit from the content through advertisement sales as one means of revenue, users may not be aware of their position as laborers. However, a study further investigating user motivations in terms of immaterial labor and users' reasons for using Facebook may provide further insight into the ways they perceive their position as users within a rhetorical situation

Although participants in this study did not perceive immaterial labor as a constraint in the Facebook interface, they did perceive privacy issues as constraints. I did not, however, explore in depth users' perceptions of their privacy given the features Facebook provides to them. Both case study interview participants and a few survey participants mentioned privacy without being prompted, but it was not an issue about which I explicitly asked participants. Based on their responses, privacy may be one aspect of the interface that is transparent to them, which may speak to the larger issue of critical literacy I mentioned earlier in this chapter. Studies using contextual inquiry methods, think-aloud protocols, and other types of interviews with a larger cross-section of users could provide insight into the ways users make sense of or do not understand the ways their information is conveyed publicly—both knowingly and unknowingly—and whether or not the way their information is used matters to them.

While I was concerned with expanding with a rhetorical perspective the interactivity conversation in and out of writing studies, additional theories also can supplement current interactivity conversations. For example, articulation theory emerged as one theoretical position that I considered as a framework for this study. Hall's articulation theory is concerned with the construction and breakdown of connections between different elements in rhetorical situations; different elements in rhetorical situations can be called conceptual objects to define components of situations that act as articulations (Johnson-Eilola, 2005). Conceptual objects as articulations can be words, actions, systems, and other contextually dependent factors that come together and break apart when a person or something uses or engages with the conceptual objects. Another term for articulations is the term coupling. Dourish (2001) used the term coupling to

describe how connections are made between a person's intentional actions when using or interacting with something (like an interface). The coupling between a person and an object is derived from the connections that are made between a person's choices to complete specific actions and the affordances of the object. Future research investigating different types of interactivity, specifically functional and perceived interactivity, should consider using articulation theory as a framework for further understanding the oscillations between users looking at and through interfaces and their perceptions of the tasks they are able or unable to complete based on specific purposes.

Articulation theory would be a useful framework to use to explore the perceived social connections that users create when engaging with the Facebook interface. As case study participant Elmer illustrated, she was constantly coupling pieces of information together to create specific connections for herself regarding other users with the information she takes in from the interface. The couplings she created for herself enabled her to move from one piece of information on the interface to the next, and she made assumptions or perceived the conceptual objects located on the Facebook interface based on her cultural and social knowledge. Ultimately, the couplings that she created are another way to explain movement as an element of perceived interactivity because she is moving from one object on the interface to another based on how she connects the objects together based on perception. This created movement can further inform designers of how users take in and understand the information located on the interface. Designers can use that information to create more usable interfaces.

While I was not interested in analyzing the social actions that occurred between users on Facebook, it was difficult for me to ignore completely the ways users interacted

with each other socially. Of all the social actions I noted, Elmer's assumptions about other users based on the information they posted was most intriguing because they imply she assumed she knew someone based on the information the person posted. This was especially noteworthy in cases where she did not really know the person in real life. Ultimately, it was her perceptions of the content others posted that made her feel as if she knew them even if she only happened to stumble upon the user's Profile while browsing the Facebook interface. Exploring users' social and cultural assumptions of others could provide valuable insight into the ways people make sense of themselves and others in virtual environments.

The sampled users also mentioned social phenomena, such as the chat and commenting features on the interface. These features facilitated communication in a mediated environment, and it seemed that the social interactions that occurred through the interface were most meaningful for users because their general purpose was to keep in touch with friends and family. For example, Sarah M. indicated that she found the commenting features on the interface to be fast, and they were important for her since at the time of our interview it was the first time she was away from home, and being able to quickly connect with her Facebook friends enabled her to stay connected to them. Future research should explore users' perceptions for ways users are able to maintain and create relationships with others; which would provide further insight into the fulfillment of Facebook's mission.

Another aspect of the Facebook interface that I began to address in my study was the issue of privacy and safety. Further research regarding Facebook and perceived interactivity should look at privacy as an aspect of control in particular because it did

seem to influence users' perceptions of their actions in the interface. Facebook's mission is reflected in the default privacy settings for users when they create a new account, which is their information is available to everyone. Users are able to customize their privacy settings according to how they want their information to be made available to others, but the interface design is constructed in a way that does not consider social norms and different types of social relationships in a person's life. The inability for users to easily filter and distinguish between different types of social relationships can allow unintended audiences like future employers access to private information. Privacy is also a concern because it is not known what Facebook's designers and third party developers do with user data. Investigating specific aspects of Facebook's privacy policy and privacy features in depth was beyond the scope of this study, but it has future research implications. While both case study interview participants felt they had control over their information and choices to accomplish specific tasks within the interface, I cannot generalize their answers to a larger population of Facebook users. Ultimately, privacy issues function as an ethical constraint within the rhetorical situation. Users perceptions of privacy influence the rhetorical situation of Facebook because if users are satisfied with how they perceive their abilities to control their information, Facebook's designers may not make changes to privacy controls and policies—even if the way Facebook manages user privacy is unethical.

CONCLUSION

In this study, I discussed the problems in the general interactivity scholarship in and out of writing studies—specifically the limitation of using conversational metaphors for describing ways interactivity works in specific rhetorical situations. In order to

resolve some of the problems with using conversational metaphors to define interactivity in writing studies, I introduced the terms functional and perceived interactivity. I also expanded the general interactivity conversations outside of writing studies by situating different types of interactivity within a rhetorical framework from which the term can be understood and further explored. The results from my study show that different types of interactivity function in different ways within a rhetorical situation of an interface, and I urge researchers to explore in the future new types of interactivity and the ways they function in different rhetorical situations according to designers' exigencies and users' purposes.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE MEMOS FROM CASE STUDY INTERVIEW WITH ELMER

Memo 1 Elmer: General Thoughts Observations from Session

Terms that emerged: Boring, addicting, stalking

From the transcript, Elmer uses Facebook to keep in touch with friends and family—especially those who live far away. She created a second Profile for her dog who is getting old in order to keep her memory alive, but she primarily uses the one for herself.

Her reason for having a Facebook account is comparable to the survey data where most users use Facebook for the same purpose.

Facebook allows her to keep in touch with friends and family through different things that her “friends” in Facebook post. For example, when she logs in the first thing she checks are her notifications. The notifications alert users to game requests, friend requests, event invitations, and comments posted to walls, photos, and comments within a thread that the user has also posted to. She also has a specific string of friend’s pages that she will move through in order to see what is new with the person.

Summary of Interview After Entire Transcript Analyzed

Overall, Elmer’s purpose for using Facebook aligned with the purpose that Facebook has for itself. While Elmer did not use every single feature possible, her use of it provided some interesting things to consider. Her own use of Facebook also provides a portrait for how a user moves through the interface in order to achieve a specific purpose.

Based on how Elmer described her movement through the interface, it can be compared to a sock hop—but since Facebook is virtual—it can be seen as a virtual sock hop where people login and check out what their friends are up to—who is with who, what pictures have they posted, or whatever else someone decides to post about

themselves and their lives. In the case of Elmer, her movement through the sock hop is based on a series of friends that she usually checks when she logs in. Sometimes, as she is looking through a friend's page, she stumbles upon something that piques her interest and she deviates from her usual pattern for browsing through people's information.

This movement from one person's page to the next is like a social dance, like a sock hop, where someone is trying to "check out" other people. Virtually, this movement is mediated by the interface, by the creators of Facebook, and by what users decide to divulge on their Profile. All of this information is then collected, perceived, and understood by users. In the case of Elmer, she relies on her own perception to figure out what is going on with other users and she assumes that other users will make assumptions about her and who she is based on the information that she posts or chooses not to post.

One problem with the current literature about interactivity is that it doesn't always take the movement of a user through an interface and the purpose the user has for moving through an interface with a specific purpose into account. In the case of Elmer, she moves through the Facebook interface looking for updates and information about users. Her interactions with the interface are in turn mediated by what is available to her and by her purpose for choosing to perform a specific action. Facebook users do not have any sort of control for how the interface is laid out or how their Facebook Profile looks. A user does have control over what information is posted and who can see that information. Yet, privacy and security problems have arisen where information that users thought was private was actually viewable to the public. The privacy settings that are built into Facebook do allow users a certain amount of control, but Facebook has also been criticized for making the settings too complicated which doesn't allow users to control their information in a way that best meets their needs.

Because Facebook and the movement of a user through Facebook is mediated by what is provided to the user by Facebook itself, the interactivity that is provided to a user straddles different types and categories of interactivity. For example, users perceive specific actions to be interactive such as feelings of closeness to someone who live far away (Elmer). In other instances, users are provided unwanted information or do not have control over their information. For example, from the survey responses, many respondents complained about game requests that they didn't want or invites to events

that were not in their area. A few did complain that their information was not secure because of the privacy settings that were provided.

Memo 2 Elmer: Looking at Other People's Profiles

Checks notifications, and looks through a friend's "stuff." Looking through the "stuff" leads her on a trail to other people. Starts with best friend. Best friend also a mutual friend with someone else, checks her page, then leads her to another friend's page. Will check pictures on each friend's Profile. If nothing new, seen as boring. The idea of boring seemed to be defined as nothing new look at or nothing to hold her attention to a particular page.

Some respondents in the surveys also indicated that Facebook gets boring after a while. I wonder if that is because there are not constant updates or some updates may not be as interesting as others.

Will deviate from looking at the same friends' pages unless something catches her attention from that person's page which will then lead her to someone or something else. Mostly looking for or at pictures on the page (line 73). She also mentions towards the end that she likes seeing the baby pictures people post (line 356).

1/11/11 Notes Based on "Connecting" Category

The idea of stuff is interesting from what she said. Ultimately she is looking for different things when she looks at someone's Profile. Specifically, she is looking for pictures or updates someone's page. It seems that these updates create a connection for her—connections that provide information about the person and connections that get her thinking to look at information somewhere else on the person's page or on someone else's page. The information and the connections made between information acts like a springboard where something stimulates thought about something which stimulates a thought for her to move on to something else. This can be seen in line 69 of the transcript as well: Line 69: Unless like, I see something on someone's page and it reminds me of someone else, and I'm like "oh I wonder how they're doing?"

This line indicates to me that the "stuff" that is included by a user on each page allows other users "friends" to infer something about the person. While the Facebook

interface provides users with specific features and areas to include information, it is ultimately up to users to include the information in each area of the Profile. In addition to what is included on the profile, privacy settings allow or do not allow other users to see specific bits of information on a profile. In line 249 she says: “um, well if I’m not friends with someone I don’t want to see their pictures if I click on it and it doesn’t let me see them, I do get aggravated, but that’s their own person keeping their privacy” This response came after I asked her what she expects when she clicks on something and whether or not it takes her somewhere or not somewhere—ultimately her expectations for what Facebook allows her to do and not to do.

From this quote, even though she wants to see what is on other people’s profiles and can’t, she becomes “aggravated” because that information is something she has an interest in seeing. Ultimately, this could be seen as what I am going to call a blocked connection where someone is connected to another person through someone else, but because of internal privacy features, that connection is blocked or missed by a user.

Looking at Own profile

Asked what other features she uses—like own wall? I prompted her with talking about her wall after she finished describing how she looks at other people’s profiles. This prompted her to describe how her own profile is her home base—she goes back to it to find something else to look at from there. She described looking through her own profile pictures even though “I’ve seen them a million times” (line 83). She will also look through the comments on her page.

She will also use the “See Friendship” feature that is added to a comment on a person’s wall. She likes that feature because it allows her to “see like your entire history with another person and you can also look at two other people’s and type in whoever you want.” What seemed to strike her is that a person can compare the friendship of two people who likely have never spoken to each other (Line 93).

It seemed that pictures were one of the most important things that someone could post on Facebook for her. She describes (Line 139) how she doesn’t put a lot of personal information on her profile, but that “I’m sure everybody could figure that out by my pictures, but I don’t put, I don’t say much about myself.” It seemed from this statement

that her pictures speak for her rather than actually describing herself with words within the pre-established areas for describing oneself in Facebook.

1/11/11 Notes Based on Connecting Category

What's interesting to me about how she uses her profile as her home base is that it kind of acts as a metaphor for her connections in real life. She herself has friends that she maintains relationships with or connections with, and her profile acts as her virtual self that maintains virtual connections with people. It is beyond the scope of this dissertation to explore how the profile acts as a virtual self, but her actions of going through her own comments and her own pictures could be seen as acts of reaffirming herself where she is reminding herself of her own personal connections and being reminded of memories.

Being able to see the connection she has with other people and between her friends is possible with the "See friendship" feature. This feature also allows her and other users the ability to see the comments that have been shared between themselves and other users. The feature only compares two people, the person can see similar likes and interests, photos that both people are in. The feature also allows a comparison between two users and a user can type in two other users to compare their friendship. Elmer seemed kind amazed that two people who had never spoken to each other could be compared and have information come up that seemed to indicate that they are friends. A term concept like "fabricated connections" could be used to describe how this sort of interaction takes place. Because people can be fed into the "see friendship" feature, their real life connection may not actually exist, but in Facebook it can and does exist.

It also seemed that since she doesn't put a lot of personal information up on her profile and that she assumes that people will come to her profile and make assumptions about what she does and who she is based on pictures in particular and what little information she does provide that tells other people something about her.

Memo 3 Elmer: Unique/Specific Use of Facebook by Participant

Dog's profile (starting line 98)

Elmer uses her dogs profile to keep the dog alive since the dog is getting old. She also uses it to post pictures of her dog from her phone so she doesn't lose the pictures from her phone. In the profile itself she included information in each of the pre-established areas where the dog's likes and interests what she enjoys when her mom died and she created a bio for her. In the interests area she included information based on the music that she likes and the movies and television that she herself likes. She also listed herself as one of her dog's parents (line 124).

Listing Other People as Family When Not Blood Relatives

She describes how she lists her siblings, but only one person listed is her real sibling. She also mentions that she lists another woman who isn't her parent but is listed as one.

Looking at Other People's Pictures

At the beginning of the interview, when Elmer described how she would look at other people's pictures, it was clear to me that looking at other people's pictures was a large component for why she kept and maintained her Facebook account and why she would go on Facebook frequently. She described one specific way in which she would look at people's pictures towards the end of the interview when I asked her to describe anything else in Facebook that she hadn't told me about up until that point. She then described how she would look through her friends' pictures of their children (lines 356-362). She mentioned this because she happened to look at someone's profile during the interview where their children's pictures appeared.

Posting Videos and Links

Towards the end of the interview when asked what else she likes to do in Facebook, Elmer described how she likes to post videos and links. In particular, she described posting links to her mom's page (lines 364-368). She also shows me how people can currently post music as a link in Facebook (line 373). Showing me how she posts links and videos to other peoples pages also illustrates how she connects with others

through information. This creates connections for her because it seems that information that she finds online allows her to connect to others in another form.

Birthdays

When looking at the main page, Elmer sees the area where her friends' birthdays are posted. She explains that she likes that she can see Birthdays because they keep her out of trouble for forgetting other people's birthdays (lines 376-377).

Poking

While we were on the main page of Facebook, I noticed that someone "poked" Elmer. I asked her if she used this feature, and she explained that it looked like she did, but she in fact did not use the "poke" feature (lines 378-386). She also explained that the person who had poked her, was someone she had not spoken with since her freshman year of high school. She guessed that poking was something that she thought people did, but she wasn't sure. Ultimately, the purpose for poking was something built into the interface that was unclear to her. Because poking was a feature that was unclear to her, it can be inferred that its purpose for use did not coincide with her own purpose of use.

1/11/11 Notes Based on "Connecting" Category

With her dogs profile, she uses it to keep the memory of her dog alive because she is getting old. Based on the survey data as well, Elmer was the only respondent that indicated that she created a second profile for her dog. While she is the one who manages her dog's Profile, it seems that having the Profile keeps her feeling connected to her dog. She also keeps her dog's memory alive by uploading pictures that she takes of her, and this allows her to save the pictures that she takes so she doesn't lose them. She acknowledges that Facebook isn't a very significant way to keep her alive (line 106). However, it seems that this perception of Facebook not being a significant way of keeping her alive is potentially based on Facebook not being a physical/tangible thing and that Facebook can be perceived by some as something trivial or not to be taken seriously.

When she discusses listing people as family members she is not only describing blood connections but also connections that she considers to be like family (Line 136). Facebook allows these sort of connections to be expressed by creating places for family connections to be present. In addition to one woman as her mother, she lists other people as siblings who are not actually her siblings.

I didn't ask a follow up question for why she lists people who are not her family members, but by listing them this could indicate perceived interactivity where because she lists them, it creates a feeling of closeness to the person since she has them listed in a familial way.

Memo 4 Elmer: Information Included in Own Profile

On own Profile included her bio and all about me—including favorite quotes from favorite movies

Describes not putting much info about herself on own Profile (line 129). Included likes and interest by "Liking" things. Did include family information including family members that aren't actual family members.

She says she wasn't sure why she didn't include a lot of information about herself—didn't feel it was necessary to include much information about herself. She also says that people can look at her pictures to figure out what she is up to (Line 139).

From Elmer's statements about what she included in her Profile and based on how she uses Facebook to look at other people's pictures and comments that she doesn't necessarily want to reveal too much information about herself, but she wants to know more about other people. This assumption may not be completely accurate because she was not able to completely articulate why she doesn't put a lot of personal information in her Profile, but it seems that she assumes that other people will make judgments about what she does and who she is based on what she does include. It seems that she relies on perception to gain information about and from other people. Later on in the session when I asked what she expected Facebook to let her do, she said that she expected it to let her creep on people. From this it could also be inferred that she is self-referencing somewhat in that because she assumes that because of the way she looks at other people's Profiles for information, other people will look at her Profile and gather the same bits of information about her, that she gathers about them.

****Based on what she includes in her own Profile she is relying on the perceptions of those who have access to her Profile to figure out who she is based on the information she does provide.**

Memo 5 Elmer: Applications/Games Used

She used to play Farmville, but she stopped. She started playing because her mom played (line 152).

She uses Picnik to edit photos (line 145). She uses it every once in a while—only when she wants to (Line 156)—when she needs to update her Profile picture.

She also uses Facebook mobile

She has used notes (line 160). She uses notes when there's a survey to fill out and she'll do those when she's bored. She also would create notes when she was in high school where she would write about her felines towards graduation—but she hasn't done notes like that since then (Line 167).

Based on the types of applications and games available on Facebook, Elmer doesn't really seem interested in those sorts of applications. Later on in the session, she describes how much time she would spend on Facebook and how the amount of time she spent sort of took away from other things that she needed to accomplish. With Farmville, she (line 149) got sick of it and it was taking up a lot of her time. It seems that specific applications are less important to her use of Facebook than what people post to Facebook.

1/15/11 Notes

Based on how she uses the applications and the games, she uses them to keep in touch with people—reinforcing the main purpose she has for having a Facebook account in the first place. While she played Farmville in the past, the reason why she stopped playing was because of how much time it took (line 149).

Additional Features that Facebook Could Provide

When asked about control and other types of control she wished she had, Elmer described instead having a dislike button. What is interesting about her response to this question is that she associated a feature to having control. This is interesting because features or elements built into the interface don't actually give people control because

they are built and included by the interface designers of the website. This then is another example of perceived interactivity because Elmer's understanding of a feature within Facebook is seen as giving her control when in fact that control is mediated by what is and is not included within the interface by those who create the interface.

One such feature that she wished she had was a dislike button because there is a like button. However, she envisioned potential issues with the dislike button because it could cause social conflicts between users—her example, if someone says they started dating someone that another person doesn't like—the person could dislike that bit of information which in turn could cause the person who posted the new relationship to become angry (line 230-236).

Unwanted Alerts (See defining interactivity memo for "liking" alerts to events)

When asked about how what she wished Facebook would alert her to that it doesn't already, Elmer responded instead that she wished she wasn't alerted to comments that come after her comments to someone else's status (lines 253-260). For her, the comments that come after her comment become repetitive and she doesn't care about them. Based on my own use, these alerts come in the form of emails or the user is notified through the Facebook notifications process as well. These alerts can be turned off in the settings, but it seems that Elmer was not aware that these alerts can be turned off. Because Elmer was not aware that these alerts can be turned off, this seems to be one feature that is not built in as intuitively as it could be. Because Facebook has many default settings for users, the control then moves away from the user and instead moves in the direction of those who run Facebook internally. Because Facebook's purpose is to make the world more open and connected, alerting users to every comment that is made on a status, picture, or comment contributes to the overall purpose of Facebook. However, as Elmer noted, this can become repetitive for some users if the comments go on for quite a while.

Memo 6 Elmer: Expectations for Facebook and Use

When First Started Using It

When she first started using Facebook, she wanted it to be different from myspace (line 172) because she started a Facebook account so she could delete her myspace

account. She deleted her myspace account because she felt like myspace was for middle school.

At the beginning of the session, I asked elmer her age and she said that it was 19. Based on her age, it is likely that Elmer graduated high school either in 2009 or 2010. Myspace was launched in 2004 and Based on when she graduated high school, in late 2005, Facebook was opened to high schools which would make her a freshman in high school. She also mentioned that myspace took a long time to load everything, which was another reason why she deleted it (Line 179).

She also expected Facebook to be different from myspace in that it didn't allow as much customization as Myspace (Line 185) where users could pick out backgrounds to their Profiles and have music play when someone went to their Profile. When asked, she said she didn't really miss those features on her Profile.

Now as a user she expects things on Facebook to be fast not slow like they were on myspace (Lines 193-204). If she does find Facebook running slow, she logs off.

Based on her previous statements for her expectations of Facebook, what Elmer heard about Facebook is what she got from Facebook when she first started using it and after her initial use of it. She expected it to be fast but she also expected less customization for her Profile. Ultimately, Facebook let her do what she wanted to do. Later in the session (line 345), she says that it would be cool to have a place for music in the corner where people can choose to play it if someone goes to their page. From this statement, it seems that the choice and ability to have music can also allow a user to provide information to other users about themselves.

Use of Facebook Changed

When asked how her use of Facebook has changed the longer she continues to use it, Elmer responded that she uses it less daily. She described how during her first year in college, she would be on Facebook for hours (line 264), and when asked why she decided to stop using it so often she responded that she and her roommates realized that they would all be on the couch with their laptops on Facebook and they decided it was too much time spent on Facebook and they needed to spend their time doing other things. At the beginning of the interview, she mentions that she only goes on Facebook at night.

Based on her description for why she decided she needed to stop using Facebook as often, I think this statement is telling for how people are interested in what other people are up to. Elmer's initial description of how she moves from one Profile to the next in order to look for information about people is also indicative of how much time can be spent "connecting" with people. It is also important to keep in mind that this ability to "connect" is mediated through an interface—an interface that is managed by Facebook. Users manage the information they share on Facebook, but what can and cannot be included within the interface is managed by Facebook itself.

APPENDIX B

GENRE ANALYSIS SPREADSHEET

Worksheet 1: Genre Analysis Part One--Discourse Community			
Elements of Discourse Community (based on surveys, and other cultural, ideological elements that emerged.			
Use by Discourse Community:			
<i>User Purpose (intentions-- uncompleted actions)</i>	<i>Facebook Purpose (Assumed intentions/uncompleted actions)</i>	<i>Goals (completed actions)</i>	<i>Values</i>
Keeping in touch with friends and family	Giving people the power to share and make the world more open and connected. Zuckerberg defines this as: "Open means having access to more information, right? More transparency, being able to share things and a voice in the world. And connected is helping people stay in touch and maintain empathy for one another, and bandwidth." (Time 2010, p. 68).	look/see/check information on other people's Profile	maintaining familial relationships
chat/talk with friends	One World: The Facebook Service should transcend geographic and national boundaries and be available to everyone in the world.	creep	posting information about one's life to connect with others

Entertainment/something to do/fun	Fundamental Service: People should be able to use Facebook for free to establish a presence, connect with others, and share information with them. Every Person should be able to use the Facebook Service regardless of his or her level of participation or contribution.	stalk	
Make contacts/meet new people/create events	Free Flow of Information: People should have the freedom to access all of the information made available to them by others. People should also have practical tools that make it easy, quick, and efficient to share and access this information.	comment (pictures status, updates)	
	Freedom to share and connect: People should have the freedom to share whatever information they want, in any medium and any format, and have the right to connect online with anyone - any person, organization or service - as long as they both consent to the connection.	update (Profile, status)	
	"but we still come to work everyday and make the decisions that we think are best for the product." (time,		

	2010, p. 68)		
	Newsweek (2007): not a social networking site but a utility, a tool to facilitate the information flow between users and their compatriots, family members, and professional connections.		
Demographics:			

Age Results	Total	Percent	ODU
18	96	52%	18-21 9,714 or 53.22%
19	43	22%	22-24 3, 642 or 19.95%
20	25	13%	25-34 3,147 Or 17.24%
21	11	6%	
22 & up	20	10%	
Race Results	Total	Percent	ODU(degree seeking undergraduates including first-time, first year) 17,819 total students in this category
Black/African American	46	24%	4,193 or 24%
White/Caucasion	105	54%	10,848 or 61%
Asian	8	4%	979 or .05%
Mixed	12	6%	
Hatian American	1	0.05%	
Native American	1	0.05%	
Hispanic/Latino	9	5%	704 or .04%
Other	8	4%	
Blank	5	3%	

Gender	Total	Percent	ODU (13686 total undergraduates full time degree seeking)
Male	95	49%	Male- 6396 or 47%
Female	100	51%	Female--7290 or 53%
How many years using a computer?	Total	Percent	
10 years or less	82	42%	
11-12 years	35	18%	
13-15 years	51	26%	
15 or more years	10	5%	
a lot/a long time	7	4%	
blank	7	4%	
Since I have been in School	6	3%	
Blank	1	0.05%	

Worksheet 2: Genre Analysis Part 2 Discourse Community Use

	Navigation (Location on the interface within the visual hierarchy)	Interaction (how features and perceptions influence textual understanding and use)	Constraints (Factors that shape the situation)
Feature			
Liking	Located under a comment or post that a person creates, within the hierarchy of the post, it follows the left-to-right reading sequence. Once someone reads a post, the next thing the person sees is the "like"	perceived--user clicks "like" and feels like they are engaging with the other person Actual--only a link, automatic response once clicked that "you" like the thing, Delay could occur if the user's connection is not working properly	Can only "like" something. Can't dislike something unless someone puts it in the comment itself. Surveys indicated wanted a "dislike" button. Elmer said it would cause problems,

	button. Located on the newsfeed, a person's Profile anywhere where someone can comment of something. Can also "like a page and connected to external websites.		but wanted one
com ments	Located underneath a status update, photo, post. Can add a comment unrelated to something to a person's wall.	Can mimic face-to-face communication depending on how fast someone responds to a comment--the speediness relates more to perception and understandings of how it relates to face-to-face communication.	speediness can influence elements of perception. Limited by the number of characters someone can use in a post.
pictu res	Appear in the newsfeed, on a person's wall, on the Profile they were included in their own tab. Also located in the lower left hand corner on the side. Prominence since the thumbnail stands out visually.	people can browse through friend's pictures. Can edit pictures using Picasa (Elmer). Elmer also assumed people could learn about her based on the pictures she posted (Perceived interactivity). Just having pictures there doesn't necessarily make them interactive, they are interactive based on perceptions.	If not friends with someone, may not be able to see all pictures (complaint of Elmer). Can create restrictions for who can see which pictures in the privacy settings. For Facebook, photos organized by who's in them with photo tagging. A user can untag themselves in the

			photo. Photosharing launched in 2005, by 2007 getting more traffic than Flickr, Picasa, Photobucket (Time, 2010, p. 61)
poking	Located under a user's Profile picture on an individual Profile is the function to poke someone. If someone has been poked it appears on the right hand side of the screen underneath events, and requests	User clicks on a button to "poke" someone, a user perceives it as a specific type of action based on their relationship with the person who poked them (Newsweek, p. 46, Aug 2007). Elmer was unsure of what it actually did.	whether or not poking is useful can be dependent upon a user purpose--for user's like Elmer it doesn't mean anything. From a Facebook development standpoint, it could help connect/reconnect people in a subtle way
privacy	Located on the main page on the masthead/navigation bar under the "Account" tab. User has to scroll through a list to find it and then navigate through the settings to figure out how she wants to set her page. Provides recommended settings where everyone on Facebook has access to status, photos, posts,	The pre-set settings are created to achieve the purpose Facebook itself sets out for users, but users have the option to customize based on user purpose. Settings are based on actual interactivity where a user action provides a specific user response. Previous misunderstandings caused Facebook to come under fire for not informing users of how privacy worked. Reworked/rewrote privacy	Updating security/privacy features to keep up with threats to security and privacy. Not able to determine what the options were at the time of the survey/data collection. Sometimes the user purpose and the Facebook purpose don't always mesh--Facebook wants it to be open and connected,

	<p>bio, favorite quotes. Friends of friends have access to photos/videos tagged in, religious & political views, birthday. Friends only have access to permission to comment on posts, places you check into and contact information. Public search is automatically enabled when a user creates a new Profile</p>	<p>statement to be more user friendly. Surveys indicated some mistrust with the privacy settings.</p>	<p>and some users do not always want it to be open and connected. Newsweek (2007)-- Chris Kelly Chief Privacy Officer "Facebook is about replicating the social restrictions of the offline world". 2009 Unveiled new set of privacy rules (Time p. 68 2010), but users were upset--their purpose did not match Facebook purpose.</p>
<p>Causes</p>	<p>Located under Applications? Launched in 2007</p>	<p>A Profile for a specific social, political, humanitarian cause that people can help with by donating money or spreading a specific message. Can be perceived as interactive since a person can join a cause but not have to do anything in particular to help the cause</p>	<p>This feature has moved on the interface a lot. The distinction between a cause page and a Profile page for a cause could be unclear to users.</p>

chat feature	A list of friends available or idle is located on the left hand side of the screen. The chat feature itself is located on the bottom right hand corner. As someone chats with someone, each chat window opens up along the bottom right hand side of the screen	Mimics face-to-face communication because it is synchronous--is an instant messaging platform. Cited as one of most favorite and least favorite features in the surveys	Synchronicity dependent on web connection and functionality of the feature itself--many complaints in surveys for the feature being buggy and not working. Problems with the feature can make communication difficult
color scheme	Blue masthead at top of screen, shades of blue highlighting	Does not seem to contribute to interaction or perceived interaction. Blue/white color scheme created because Zuckerberg is red/green color blind. Because colors are not customizable, one restriction to someone's ability to customize	Inability to customize color scheme a constraint that could enable users to perceive information about others based on customization. Profile unable to distinguish between green/blue on chat feature indicating when someone was/was not available to chat. May be more distinctive to someone who is color blind?

quizzes	<p>appear in a list on the left hand side.</p> <p>Gives the top five applications user uses then user has to click "more" to get to the other applications. List appears to be based on use and games are mixed in with quizzes</p>	<p>quizzes relate to users personal lives and popular culture. The quizzes listed on Sarah M's page were things like "What movie is the story of your life?/How many kids will you have?/Which teen mom are you?/What % gay are you?" To use, users choose answers from multiple choice questions, and the computer will tally up results based on answers given. Meaning from results are perceived.</p>	<p>Limit to meaning of results because questions may not provide full range of answers to a user. Users may perceive more than what is provided by answers to the quizzes.</p>
games	<p>listed on the left hand side underneath the group area. If used often, listed first before other applications.</p>	<p>Features within each game vary but based around clicking on things to achieve something and relying on friends to help complete tasks. Given pop-up prompts for certain tasks. Experience based on perception and need to complete/advance in the game. Constantly given new goals and incentives for completing specific things. Users can also post public messages generated by the game to other user's Profiles or to their own Profiles.</p>	<p>While users are making choices about what to complete and what not to complete in the game, choices are created and presented by game designers. Relies heavily on perceived interactivity since outcomes are never physically held objects.</p>

		Those messages also end up in their newsfeed	
Adv ertisements	<p>Located on the right hand side of the page. Advertisements are customized based on information included in a user's Profile.</p> <p>Zuckerberg did not want advertisements to be obtrusive, so located on the right hand side as small individual rectangles. Can be ignored given the location on the page, or can be the last thing someone sees on the page.</p>	<p>works on perceived interactivity because advertisements based on person's information and interests. Profile will click on the advertisements while she is waiting for something to load. Interesting to her because they relate to her interests. Can "Like" an advertisement which can create the feeling of control (perceived interactivity) (time 2010, p. 64).</p>	<p>Problems with security and advertisers obtaining personal information--not always clear what information they were getting or not getting. Users have no control over whether or not advertisements are located on the page. Zuckerberg originally did not want advertisements like banner ads (Time 2010, p. 64)</p>

Profile	<p>it's own page that provides other users with information about someone. An individual user's Profile provides areas that someone can fill in with information including, DOB, relationship status, hometown, location, job information, education, interests, hobbies, favorite movies, music, television, books, quotes, photos, boxes (applications), video, notes, friends, likes.</p>	<p>Users fill in the information, and other users look at it. Elmer describe how a person can learn a lot about another person based on how they perceive/understand what someone posts about themselves. Implies that you don't actually have to communicate with someone to learn about them.</p>	<p>Offers no customization--can decide what to post/not post make public/private (to an extent), but users are not allowed to change the color scheme or move information to other locations on the interface. Does not distinguish different types of friendships with other people</p>
see friendship	<p>located at the end of the list of links when one person comments on another person's page, a link is provided. Allows someone to see all content that is shared between two users.</p>	<p>Works on perceived interactivity because only the user can derive meaning from the content that is shared between users. Elmer liked the feature but thought it was strange that two people who never spoke to each other could have a page compiled with shared information</p>	<p>Early problems with the link because it was seen as an invasion of privacy when users did not give permission for information to be shared in this way. Also showed information like events that people were invited to that others may not have been invited to.</p>

New sfeed	Located on the main page in the middle. Based on location and size, one of the first things people see. Launched in 2006, most people didn't like it (Time, 2010, p. 68/Newsweek, 2007, p. 46) it collects everything does on Facebook and provides alerts to other users.	It uses code to aggregate information to one place without user's permission. Perceived as interactive when someone decides to click on something to go to someone's page or engage with a game, but relies on perception to make the content meaningful to someone. Some information not wanted as seen in the surveys--game information.	Limited user control as to what is/is not streamed in the newsfeed. Can see Top News (what gets the most comments) or most recent (what was posted in time). Sarah M. clicked most recent during the interview-- default is top news. More recent changes allow users to filter what is seen in the newsfeed. At the time of the surveys/interviews, filtering was not available.
Statu s updates	located right . next to the person's name, and it shows up as an update in the newsfeed	it acts as an asynchronous form of communication depending on how fast someone responds to another user's updates. Can be perceived as fast and timely depending on how fast someone responds to a post or how someone responds to a comment based on a status update.	420 character limit as of 4/11/11. many revisions of what someone can post. Previously restricted by sentence structure.

Worksheet 3: Conclusions from Analysis		
		<i>Analysis Methods from Scholarship</i>
features used by users to maintain social connections		user has to move from a to b within the genre. This is conventionalised within the genre (Askehave & Nielsen, 2005)
features mimic face-to-face communication like chat. Other features not meant to be synchronous end up being synchronous like the wall and comments		
Perceived interactivity influences how connections are understood by users		
interactivity itself provides the means to complete specific actions--function/structure		
Facebook purpose matched user purpose, but how Facebook provides certain services isn't always what users want--roll out changes seemingly without asking users if they want those changes (Newsweek 2007 Article about wall). Changes are also seen to privacy and how users maintain or want to maintain privacy.		
Problems with providing understandable and stable privacy. Privacy settings that are recommended by Facebook match their purpose, but they don't necessarily match the user purpose		
Problem with making real-life social relationships be represented in the way they are understood in real life online. Merging of social relationships that may not necessarily be wanted to be		

merged (Newsweek article/Time article)		
Zuckerberg sees the ability to share information as empowering (Stengel /Time Magazine 2010)		
<p>Time Nov. 2010 Quoted Barry Wellman</p> <p>"Thinks Facebook developers don't understand the fundamental difference between life online and offline.</p> <p>"We all live in segmented, diversified worlds. We might be juggling girlfriends, jobs, or different groups of friends", he says. "But [Facebook thinks] we're in one integrated community."</p>		
<p>data from genre analysis confirms conclusions collected from survey/interview data--helps to organize information collected based on user purpose</p>		

APPENDIX C

SURVEY DISTRIBUTED TO PARTICIPANTS

Facebook Survey

Demographic Information

Age _____

Gender _____

Race _____

How many years have you been using a computer? _____

How long have you had your Facebook account?

Weeks

Months

Years

How many Profiles do you have? _____

If you have more than one, describe in a word or two what each is used for:

How often do you log in to your account?

☐A couple of
times a
month☐A couple of
times a
week☐A couple of
times a day☐A couple of
times an hour☐I always
have it open
and I check
it when there
is an update☐I have an app on my
phone that alerts me
when I have an
update

Other:

Would you be willing to act as a case study participant where I will ask you further questions regarding your Facebook use, and I will observe your use of Facebook? (if so, you will remain anonymous and you will be compensated with a \$30 giftcard)

- Yes

- If yes, please provide me with an email address that you may be reached at (this email address will remain private and will not be distributed to anyone):

- No

Please make a mark next to the choice or choices that apply to you in the following questions:

1. Why did you decide to create a Facebook account and Profile (Mark all that apply)?

- a. To keep in touch with friends and family.
- b. To network with others at work.
- c. To create new business or work related contacts.
- d. Other (explain): _____

2. What types of applications do you have/use (Mark all that apply)?

- a. Yearbook/Dogbook/Catbook
- b. Superpoke!
- c. Daily horoscope
- d. Pieces of flair
- e. Graffiti
- f. Marketplace
- g. Quizzes
- h. Causes
- i. Football team
- j. Gifts
- k. Games
- l. Other: _____

3. Which Facebook games do you play (Mark all that apply)?

- a. Games by Zynga (Farmville, Mafia Wars, Café World, Petville)
- b. Which one(s)? _____ Board games
- c. Card Games
- d. Other: _____

4. Are you a member of any Facebook groups?

If yes: If so how
 Yes? many? _____ No?

5. Do you start your own groups? Yes? No?

5. Do you create events?

- a. Yes
- b. No

6. Do you create postings in the marketplace?

- a. Yes
- b. No

7. How often do you update your Profile (Mark all that apply—This does not include updating your status)?

- ☐ Once a week ☐ Once a month ☐ Once every couple of months (3-4 months)
☐ After a serious life change ☐ Once a year Other: _____

8. How often do you update your status?

- ☐ As often as possible ☐ Once a week ☐ Once a month ☐ Once a year Other:

Please answer the following (Feel free to write on the back of the page):

9. What is your favorite thing to do on Facebook?
10. What is your least favorite thing about Facebook?
11. What is one thing you wish Facebook would let you do?
12. Why do you maintain a Facebook account?

APPENDIX D**EMAIL TO INSTRUCTORS**

Hello—

This is Katie Retzinger, and I am contacting you to see if you would be interested in volunteering your class to participate in my dissertation research study. I am currently a Ph.D. student in the English Department here at Old Dominion. I am looking at people's uses of Facebook, and I would ask your students to complete a survey that would only take 10 minutes or less of their time. I would need time to introduce myself to your class, and it would only take 15 minutes total out of your class. If you decide to have your class participate, their identities and responses would remain anonymous. I have also obtained IRB exemption approval from the College of Arts and Letters here at Old Dominion University. I look forward to hearing from you, and I would like to thank you in advance for your time.

Sincerely,

Katie Retzinger

APPENDIX E

STATEMENT READ TO STUDENTS PRIOR TO ADMINISTERING THE

SURVEY

Hello, I am Katie Retzinger, and I am currently a Ph.D. student in the English Department here at Old Dominion. Your instructor has given me permission to distribute a survey that I am using to gather some information about how you use Facebook. This survey should take you around 10 minutes to complete. I have received Institutional Review Board (IRB) exemption approval to conduct this survey. This survey is completely voluntary, and you do not have to fill it out. If you decide to participate or not participate your decision will not affect your grade in this class. If you do not have a Facebook account, do not fill out this survey. Thank you for your time and for your responses.

APPENDIX F

EMAIL TO CASE STUDY PARTICIPANTS (FALL 2010)

Hello—

This is Katie Retzinger, a Ph.D. student in the English Department at Old Dominion University, and I recently came to either your English 110 or 112 class to distribute a survey about Facebook. You indicated on your survey that you were willing to be contacted further about participating as a case study participant. I am writing to see if you are still interested in being a case study participant.

Participating in my case study would involve 2-3 hours of your time where I would ask you further questions about how you use Facebook. We would meet on campus in BAL 4040, and we would use a computer that allows me to record audio and the screen as you describe how you use Facebook. In my dissertation, your name will be changed, you can pick your own pseudonym and any information that could potentially reveal your identity or your Facebook friends' identities would be left out. When I write up the results, you will remain anonymous.

For your time, you will be compensated with either a \$30 giftcard to the retailer of your choice or if you prefer cash, \$30 cash. If the time that we meet is during a meal, I will provide you with that meal.

If you are still interested, please reply to this email with a preferred time and one alternate from the list of days and times below:

November 2, 2-5pm

November 8, 12:30-3:30pm

November 3, 1-4pm

November 9, 9:30-12:30 am

November 4, 10-1pm

If none of these days and times work, but you are still interested, let me know an alternate day and time that would work for you. Thank you—

Katie Retzinger

APPENDIX G

CASE STUDY INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND NOTE SHEET

Introduction:

Obtaining permission to tape record Think-Aloud:

You agree that you are voluntarily allowing me to observe you describing how you are using Facebook. You understand that you will remain anonymous and the pseudonym of your choice will be used in place of your name and that information you provide to me that could identify you will not be included in my notes and in my dissertation. You also understand that you can withdraw your participation at any time. You also understand that this session is being audio recorded and will be transcribed and that screen capture software will be used to record your movements in Facebook, but any portions of the recording that identify you or any other individual will be omitted from the transcription and from my dissertation.

To begin, I will ask:	Notes	Observations
Pseudonym & Email		
Age		
Race		
gender		
How long using Facebook?		
Why did you open an account?		
How often do you login?		
Where do you normally use Facebook?		
When do you normally access Facebook?		
Are there times when you avoid using Facebook?		
How many Profiles?		
How did you choose what to include in your Profile?		

Questions about using Facebook		
Show me what you do when you login to Facebook		
What do you check first?		
Why do you check those things first?		
What features do you use the most? Why?		
Why do you play the games that you do?		
What do you do w/in each game?		
What do you like about each game?		
How much time do you spend playing each game?		
How do you understand the way time works in the games that you play?		
What kind of Control do you have?		
What kind of responses do you expect from the games that you play?		
What were your expectations for what Facebook would be like when you first started using it?		
What do you expect Facebook to let you do?		
Explain to me why you have specific things on your Profile		
Why did you install the applications that you have?		
Passage of time—when you click on things how fast or slow do you expect it to take for something to happen?		
What do you think when something is slower or faster than normal when you use Facebook?		
How do you define control in Facebook?		
What kind of control do you have?		
What kind of control do you wish you have?		
What kind of responses do you like when you click on something?		
What kind of responses do you dislike when you click on something		

What kind of responses do you wish you didn't get from the interface?		
How has your use of Facebook changed the longer you continue to use it?		
What kind of relationships do you have with people on Facebook?		
How does Facebook help you to feel closer or farther away from people socially?		
How do you define interactivity when you use Facebook?		
What do you find interactive about Facebook?		
What do you find to be the most interactive feature about Facebook? Why?		
What do you find to be the least interactive feature about Facebook? Why?		
What do you wish Facebook would let you do?		

De-Briefing:

Explain what I am looking at from the material that I am gathering.

APPENDIX H

CASE STUDY INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Case Study 1: Elmer

Age: 19

Race: Caucasian

Gender: Female

How Long using Facebook?: Since Freshman year of high school—5 1/2 – 6 years

- 1 K: And you have how many Profiles?
- 2 E: just one, actually I made one for my dog, so I guess that could be two.
- 3 K: Okay. And then, how um, then do you keep your dog's Profile active, or did
- 4 you...?
- 5 E: Um, no not really
- 6 K: so you mostly just use yours
- 7 E: [participant mumbled] yes
- 8 K: ok, so why did you make one for your dog?
- 9 E: [participant laughing] um because I'm obsessed with my dog and, I think that, I
- 10 just wanted her pictures up and a bunch of my friends and my family are friends
- 11 with her
- 12 K: Ok, um, and so, why did you open your own account?
- 13 E: Just to you know, post pictures, keep in touch with friends and family that live far.
- 14 Also to just you know what's going on. You find a lot out from Facebook.
- 15 K: and then how often do you log in?
- 16 E: now more only like twice a day, mostly at night
- 17 K: And then where do you normally use it?
- 18 E: At my own apartment.
- 19 K: do you ever log in like
- 20 E: and on my phone, actually yes
- 21 K: do you log in on a computer?

- 22 E: on a laptop, yes
- 23 K: Ok, and then you normally access it at night?
- 24 E: uh huh
- 25 K: and then, are there times when you try to avoid logging in?
- 26 E: I try to stay off it during the day because once I'm on it gets kind of addicting so I
- 27 try to limit myself to the night
- 28 K: ok, let's go ahead and login
- 29 **pause to turn on Camtasia and to login**
- 30 6:10 So once you get into Facebook, what are the first things that you check?
- 31 E: first my notifications
- 32 K: Ok, then I guess what do you look for?
- 33 E: um comments, um picture comments
- 34 K: ok, um and then, once you check your notifications, then what do you do next?
- 35 E: Then I go, and I look at, my best friend X's page
- 36 K: Ok
- 37 E: and a couple of my other friends', just look through their stuff and normally it
- 38 brings you on a trail to other people's page ending at people you don't even know
- 39 K: Ok, so I guess, like when you, ok, so go to go to go ahead and go to her
- 40 page...have you logged in yet today, or is this the first time?
- 41 E: no
- 42 K: ok
- 43 E: first time
- 44 K: Ok, so then when you go through her page then
- 45 E: at first then, I've already seen everything down there, so then I would probably
- 46 just click on Y's page
- 47 K: Ok
- 48 E:.. since she's there, Go over to Y's
- 49 Then I'd be like "Oh, hey Y"
- 50 K: Ok
- 51 E: look through her stuff to see if there's any pictures up, which there's not, and then
- 52 she's boring

- 53 K: Ok
- 54 E: I've already seen those
- 55 K: ok so then, so now Y's boring, so now where do you go from Y? if you were to
- 56 E: from Y, I'd probably check, move on to one of my other friends. My friend Z. But
- 57 he's always boring so I kind of consider myself just like, stalking and stuff
- 58 K: ok
- 59 E: So I look and nothing new, that was the last one,
- 60 K: Ok
- 61 E: um and I just go through a series of friends
- 62 K: and you usually the list of friends the same every time you go through?
- 63 E: uh huh
- 64 K: Ok
- 65 E: Unless like, I see something on someone's page and it reminds me of someone
- 66 else, and I'm like "oh I wonder how they're doing?"
- 67 K: ok
- 68 E: and I'll check theirs
- 69 K: ok, so mostly you're looking at pictures
- 70 E: uh huh
- 71 K: and what other features do you use, like do you use your own wall
- 72 E: Um, I look through, yeah I normally go back to my Profile and then, you know
- 73 see if anyone wrote on my wall
- 74 K: ok
- 75 E: This is always like home base, if I'm not doing anything I'll just go back to my
- 76 Profile and find something off there
- 77 K: Um so what do you look at on your own Profile
- 78 E: um a lot of times I find myself randomly, I don't know why, looking through my
- 79 own Profile pictures even though I've seen them a million times
- 80 K: Ok
- 81 E: I'll look through there and also like comments and there's actually a new feature
- 82 on Facebook, see friendship,
- 83 K: oh ok

84 E: that I really like and basically you can see like your entire history with another
85 person and you can also look at two other people's and type in whoever you want
86 K: ok
87 E: that's always fun
88 K: ok
89 E: so like here, I can see one of my friend's and one of my best friends and my sister
90 [participant mumbled] random. I don't think they've ever talked. And there's my
91 dog's page
92 K: ok, now can you, if you were ever going to update your dog's page, do you have
93 to log in as your dog?
94 E: uh huh
95 K: ok, and when you do that, so how often do you log in as your dog?
96 E: very very rarely, the last time, I did was, july
97 K: ok
98 E: oh even earlier than that even maybe, yeah, I haven't logged in as her in awhile
99 K: Ok
100 E: like if I take pictures of her and like mobile upload them then I'll tag her in it and
101 you know
102 K: ok and then, why do you, I guess, why do you like tagging you dog
103 E: Um, I don't know, well she's getting old, so that's one thing, I wanted to keep her
104 alive at least in one way, even though Facebook wouldn't be a very significant
105 way to keep her alive but
106 K: Ok
107 E: you know just to keep pictures of her up and in case I lose them in my phone
108 K: ok, ok so then in your own, and I guess in your dog's Profile so like what sorts of
109 information did you choose to
110 E: Well, uh in her little info, I just wrote about what she enjoys, like treats, going for
111 rides and cheese and
112 K: ok

113 E: and little things like that. And I also included um well her mom died, we used to
114 have her mom so I put as if she's a person, like rest in peace, um so where she
115 lives
116 K: ok
117 E: in the area made a little bio for her
118 K: Ok
119 E: and she's a couple of activites and interests being pet and then her music, I picked
120 all of the music that I like
121 K: ok
122 E: and the movies that I like and the television that I like
123 K: OK
124 E: and I listed myself as one of her parents
125 K: Ok, and then in your own Profile, what did you choose to include
126 E: um, well my bio and all about me I just put one of my favorite quotes from one of
127 my favorite movies
128 K: ok
129 E: and I didn't put too much about myself in my info, basically at all, I just put some
130 of the stuff, on Facebook you like things, so that's all of my likes and interests and
131 so just things that I liked
132 K: Ok
133 E: and I also have multiple siblings who aren't my real siblings except for one of
134 them
135 K: Ok
136 E: and one of my parents and then one lady who's not my parent
137 K: Ok
138 E: but I consider her my [participant mumbled] so
139 (13:30) K: Ok
140 E: I didn't really put too many too much like personal information right on my
141 Profile, I'm sure everybody could figure that out by my pictures, but I don't put, I
142 don't say much about myself
143 K: ok, um and then why did you decide not to

- 144 E: no reason really in particular, but just because, I feel like, I don't know, I'm not
145 sure really, I just didn't feel like that was necessary
- 146 K: Ok, and then um, do you play games?
- 147 E: I used to play Farmville, I used to love Farmville, but now I don't play any games,
148 occasionally I'll use one of the applications that's called um, picnic and it's a
149 photo editing one
- 150 K: Ok
- 151 E: and I'll do that every once in a while
- 152 K: Um, and then why did you stop playing Farmville?
- 153 E: I just got so sick of it, it took up like as if I don't spend enough time on Facebook,
154 Farmville, just like multiplied that
- 155 K: Ok
- 156 E: I basically started Farmville because my mom did
- 157 K: Ok
- 158 E: my mom and my best friend's mom so, it's like a little competition there
- 159 K: ok, and then so when you use picnic, how often do you use picnic?
- 160 E: only when I want to, like choose a new Profile picture, I'll go to picnic and see if I
161 can make it look any better
- 162 K: Ok, are there other things that you use in Facebook or
- 163 E: um, I don't think I've ever, not really anymore no, I use mobile Facebook, or
164 notes actually, I do use notes
- 165 K: Ok
- 166 E: and those are just notes
- 167 K: Ok, so then when do you decide to make a note
- 168 E: um, well a lot of them are like if I see other friend's notes like they're little
169 surveys or whatever if I'm bored then I'll do one of those
- 170 K: ok
- 171 E: and in high school towards graduation I would use notes, and I'd just like writing
172 about, um, how I was feeling towards graduation how close we were getting and
173 everything going on, but I haven't done notes since high school

174 K: Um, ok um, what were your expectations for what Facebook would be like when
175 you first started using it?
176 E: I think, I think I wanted it to be different than myspace
177 K: ok
178 E: because the point of me getting a Facebook was deleting my myspace
179 K: ok
180 E: [participant mumbled] from one thing to another
181 K: ok
182 E: but, and it was much different from myspace
183 K: Ok, um and why did you delete your myspace?
184 E: cause I felt like myspace was for like middle school, you know
185 K: ok
186 E: also it took super longtime to load everything
187 K: Ok, um, and so what did you sort of expect Facebook to, how did you expect
188 Facebook to be different?
189 E: um I knew that, hmm, just, that I knew that we couldn't have music on Facebook,
190 on the actual Profile, and you couldn't pick what your Profile looked like, as with
191 myspace you could do anything you wanted to your Profile
192 K: and did you sort of miss those things?
193 E: not particularly
194 K: ok, um, and then so, what do you expect Facebook to do now, or what do you
195 expect Facebook to let you do now?
196 E: you mean, in the future or,
197 K: right now, so when you log in, like what do you expect it to let you do?
198 E: creep on people
199 K: ok, so I guess when you're using it, when you um, so you said one of the
200 problems you saw with myspace was that it took forever to load, do you see the
201 same sorts of problems with Facebook?
202 E: Not nearly as much at all
203 K: Um, so do you find um, so when you click on things do you find things to be
204 relatively fast?

205 E: uh huh
206 K: and so when things are slow, I guess what do you sort of like, I guess are there
207 times when Facebook is slow, that you expect it to be slow or do you always
208 expect it to be fast?
209 E: I always expect it to be fast, and when it isn't fast, and it's too slow for my liking
210 I'll just get off.
211 K: oh ok
212 E: I don't feel like dealing with having things load for hours
213 K: ok, when you are looking on Facebook and what kind of control do you see
214 yourself having?
215 E: I feel that I can do anything, like I can see anything about anyone, if I'm friends
216 with them,
217 K: ok
218 E: and even if I'm not friends with them, if I want to see like one of my friend's
219 friends that I'm not friends with, most of the time you can even see their Profile
220 pictures unless they block them from you
221 K: Ok
222 E: so I feel like I can see anything
223 K: ok
224 E: which kind of creeps me out in a way that everyone can see my all my business
225 too, but what is Facebook without that
226 K: um, ok, um so do you feel like you have control over your information?
227 E: definitely,
228 K: Ok
229 E: and you can also, block people from seeing certain things, like my mom, there are
230 some like photo albums that I wouldn't want her really to see that stuff so like, I'll
231 block her and my aunt,
232 K: ok
233 E: and some other family members, and one of my cousins, kind of like, she's very
234 religious and she is very like, I don't know what the word to describe her, she like
235 doesn't like when I cuss or do anything, so I blocked her from my statuses

236 K: Ok
237 E: you know,
238 K: ok, do you wish that Facebook gave you other sorts of control?
239 E: I couldn't really think of anything else to do that you can't do now. I do wish
240 there was a dislike button, because there's likes
241 K: Ok
242 E: like, that would cause some uproar though
243 K: ok, what kind of uproar would you foresee?
244 E: I know in like if some people had like a relationship a new relationship and
245 someone didn't like it they didn't just like, you know people would be like "Nee"
246 K: oh, ok
247 E: you know freak out over that, "well you disliked my picture"
248 K: ok, ok so then I guess when you click on things, so what type of responses do you
249 expect to happen when you click on something like,
250 E: I always expect to see something new, even though I don't always,
251 K: ok, so I guess like are there certain things you click on that you wish it would take
252 you to a different page than what it takes you to?
253 E: um, not really, it's pretty all, all pretty clear, you know when you click on
254 someone's name and you get what you think you're going to get
255 K: Ok so if you do click on something, are there times when you don't like what you
256 get after you click on it? Like, not in terms of someone's content, but in terms of
257 what Facebook takes you to? Or doesn't take you to?
258 E: um, well if I'm not friends with someone I don't want to see their pictures if I
259 click on it and it doesn't let me see them, I do get aggravated, but that's their own
260 person keeping their privacy
261 K: Ok, and I guess are there things, like do you wish that the way Facebook is set up
262 would let you, you know alerted you in other ways that it doesn't?
263 E: there are some alerts that you get that I feel like I would rather not get care not to
264 be alerted about
265 K: ok

266 E: like this, when I comment on someone else's status, and then it tells me every
267 time someone else does

268 K: ok

269 E: yeah I don't care about, so that can get repetitive, especially when there's a long
270 conversation, like for one person's status

271 K: Ok, and has your use of Facebook changed the longer you continue to use it?

272 E: I've definitely started to use it less daily

273 K: Ok

274 E: I used to, like last year, in the dorms, I would just sit on Facebook, for hours,

275 K: ok, so why do you think you decided to stop using it as often?

276 E: mostly just because me and my roommates, one day, all realized that we were all
277 just sitting on the couch with our computers on our laps and it was like the middle
278 of the day, so we were like okay, this is ridiculous, we need to stop, so now we
279 only sit around at night on it

280 K: OK

281 E: Basically, just because, we didn't want to drown ourselves in Facebook all day.

282 K: ok, do you feel like Facebook helps you feel closer or farther apart from people
283 socially?

284 E: well with my family, definitely closer, because they all live far,

285 K: ok

286 E: so it's nice to be able to, you know keep in touch with them so easily,

287 K: Ok.

288 E: and then my cousin, right on top, she, I rarely see her, but I talk to her on
289 Facebook, like every other day

290 K: OK

291 E: but with my friends I feel like it doesn't really change much of anything, except if
292 they do go to other schools

293 K: Ok

294 E: you know, it keeps me like, I can see their pictures, and figure out what they're
295 doing, and you know,

- 296 K: ok, so would you say then that the closer someone is to you physically rather than
297 locationally that you feel less connected to them on Facebook?
- 298 E: yes, definitely, except, with the exception of my best friend and my roommates
299 (26:12) K: ok, so how would you define interactivity when you use Facebook?
- 300 E: Like how I just like talk to people?
- 301 K: um or how you like use it
- 302 E: um
- 303 K: Like clicking on things and
- 304 E: well I don't ever really use Facebook chat
- 305 K: ok
- 306 E: So, just 'cause it's so many glitches I guess
- 307 K: ok
- 308 E: but I do write a lot of comments on people's just like random comments that I
309 come around their page and say something that I know about them or I'll write it
310 down
- 311 K: ok
- 312 E: I comment on a lot of things
- 313 K: ok, ok so I guess socially then how would you define interactivity?
- 314 E: um, hmm, I'm not sure exactly how to answer that
- 315 K: ok
- 316 E: socially how would I define, I think maybe I just don't understand the question
- 317 K: ok, that's fine, ok, so like, so when you socially interact with someone on
318 Facebook how do you see Facebook allowing you to do that
- 319 E: I feel like basically allowing me to see what I see and being able to actually
320 comment
- 321 K: Ok
- 322 E: I guess on anything, you can comment on statuses, on pictures, on other people's
323 comments
- 324 K: ok, oh go ahead
- 325 E: like here I saw this comment that my cousin wrote and I actually "liked" it
- 326 K: ok

327 E: so you can like what people say rather than just liking the picture
328 K: ok so then you defined the commenting features of Facebook interactive?
329 E: uh huh
330 K: ok, and is there anything else that you find interactive about Facebook?
331 E: I feel like the entire Facebook is just all interactive
332 K: Ok, so I guess explain that
333 E: I mean, when you're looking through people's pictures or people, like when they
334 leave comments on other people's pages even messages and events, you know,
335 you're interacting with someone
336 K: ok
337 E: so, even with like the events, you can interact with people on event pages, and
338 like, [participant mumbled], and like I can write on that wall, and I can see what
339 everyone else wrote
340 K: ok
341 E: mumbles
342 K: so, I guess, um what do you find to be the most interactive feature about
343 Facebook
344 E: mmmm, Facebook chat, even though I don't use it much, anymore but that's
345 basically just like instant messaging
346 K: Ok, so what do you find to be the least interactive thing about it?
347 E: um, well I know like, this is an event that I got invited to sharkey's friends and
348 November blah blah blah
349 K: Ok
350 E: it's in Scotland
351 K: ok
352 E: so, I mean, I keep getting invited to these things in Scotland and obviously I'm
353 not going to go to
354 K: Ok
355 E: but I get invited because when I did go to Scotland I went to Sharky's bar, so I
356 "liked" it on Facebook and whoever likes it, you know, gets these 5,000 invites
357 per day

358 K: oh ok,
359 E: and I hate that
360 K: and do you find that someone will um, you know, someone out of state will invite
361 you to things that you can't go to
362 E: yes, um, very often, different schools do
363 K: ok, and is there anything you wish Facebook would let you do?
364 E: um, well I guess I said before that I didn't really miss it but music would be kind
365 of cool to have on a page, you can put music like on your Profile in the corner if
366 you can choose to play it
367 K: oh ok
368 (31:30) E: but like on myspace, see like this kid's status, there's nothing more
369 official than Facebook official, so basically like if there's something on Facebook
370 if you're dating someone on Facebook then it's only official because it's on
371 Facebook
372 K: ok
373 E: but yeah, I would just like to have, you know if someone goes to my Profile and
374 the song that I choose starts playing
375 K: Ok, I guess is there anything else that you do in Facebook that you haven't told
376 me about?
377 E: um, let's see, not exactly, I just, well, I've already said this but one of my favorite
378 things to do is, kind of weird, like the girls who got pregnant in my high school I
379 always go through their pages and look at their baby pictures and
380 K: ok
381 E: and follow all of that, kind of odd, but I like doing that
382 K: Ok
383 E: that just reminded me because I saw someone's pregnancy pics
384 K: ok,
385 E: but I think that's, also I can like post videos and links
386 K: Ok

387 E: like something I always do on my mom's page is, I post things that I like that I
388 find, even joking or not, I'm like "I want this" like the last thing I posted was a
389 Bugatti on her page and I said I found my Christmas present that I wanted
390 K: ok
391 E: I also found this cute dog that I found on Facebook, just like random things that
392 I'll post on my mom's, and little videos that I find on youtube
393 K: ok,
394 E: and see like, people can post music like that, like my friend makes music so he
395 always posts his own stuff up there
396 K: ok,
397 E: mmm, and I like that you can see Birthdays, Cause that keeps me out of a lot of
398 trouble sometimes, forgetting birthdays
399 K: ok, and then do you use the poke feature?
400 E: I don't, it looks like obviously I do, but I obviously don't even really know what it
401 is
402 K: OK
403 E: Like the most random people I guess have poked me, like this girl {Name
404 removed} who I haven't talked to since like freshman year in high school, I'm not
405 sure why she poked me, and I don't even know what poking means
406 K: ok,
407 E: sometimes I guess it's just something to do I think, I don't know
408 K: ok,
409 End at 34:42

Case Study 2: Sarah M.

Age: 18

Race: Mixed

Gender: Female

How long using Facebook: 2 ½ Years

- 1 K: why did you open your account?
- 2 S: For one, my dad actually introduced me to it cause we have family members on there
- 3 that I've never met and also that's another way for me to keep up with my friends that
- 4 I talk to that's kind of fun
- 5 2:29 K: so then you keep in touch with family and friends?
- 6 S: yeah
- 7 K: ok, and then um how often do you log in?
- 8 S: everyday
- 9 K: ok, so how many times a day?
- 10 S: ooo, it depends I do get on there a lot so, probably, yeah a lot of times
- 11 K: ok, and then where do you normally use Facebook?
- 12 S: on my laptop in my room or if I'm near a computer
- 13 K: Ok, and then do you have an app on your phone?
- 14 S: yes, I do
- 15 K: Ok, and then, does it alert you whenever you have like an update, or how
- 16 S: yeah, if somebody like comment on my status, or like send me something through a
- 17 message I get the alert through my phone
- 18 K: ok, are there specific times when you normally access Facebook?
- 19 S: I know before I go to class, which is like 8:30 in the morning, after class, and I do
- 20 access like in between, like on my phone
- 21 K: ok
- 22 S: so kinda like in between certain things when I'm not doing anything
- 23 K: Ok, are there times when you avoid using Facebook?

- 24 S: is like, the only time I avoid is during class, like I don't get on it during class though
25 I'm supposed to be paying attention, or if somebody's constant messaging me, and I
26 don't want to talk to them, or something
- 27 K: ok
- 28 S: yeah
- 29 K: and then how many Profiles do you have?
- 30 S: one,
- 31 K: let's go ahead and log in,
- 32 S: alright
- 33 K: Ok, so when you log in what do you check first
- 34 S: first I check my news feed, like what all my friends have been sayin', look at their
35 statuses or something,
- 36 K: ok
- 37 S: like if I like something they say I either comment or like it, there's just like a like
38 button on here
- 39 K: OK
- 40 S: and then I have like events and stuff, that I get invited to I check those out to see if I'll
41 be going to them or not
- 42 K: ok
- 43 S: um huh.
- 44 K: Ok, and then, so why do you check those things first?
- 45 S: basically to like to keep up with my friends, like this is another way, that's why I like
46 like the status thing they say something if they're doin' something or like sometimes
47 they'll put it up there to invite people like my close friends I wanna keep up what
48 they're doin' since we're not like most of them we're not in school together so, so just
49 wanna make sure and then like some events are like family events and this keeps me
50 up to date with my family business and stuff when I'm here at school
- 51 K: ok, so then in your Profile, what did you choose to include in your Profile?
- 52 S: in my Profile, mmm, um, I got information, like a quote of mine, and then some of my
53 friend's lists and then things that I like, um, also I might have like some games and

54 stuff that I play, like the gadget of those and then my statuses and stuff on here, then
55 my picture

56 K: ok, um, is there stuff that you decided not to include on your Profile?

57 S: um basically like personal stuff, info like my relationship status, birthday and where
58 I'm from, but I wouldn't like put my phone number or address or nothin' like that on
59 there

60 K: Ok

61 S: some people do, but I wouldn't recommend it

62 K: OK, and then which features do you use the most?

63 S: hmm, um as far as like games and stuff?

64 K: yeah, or even like,

65 S: um, I do play the games, I have a games list, I play too many games on here actually

66 K: ok

67 S: um like it's different kind of games, ones called café world and Farmville, I play like
68 those, also like different quizzes and stuff, like teenage quizzes or different things like,
69 how old will you be when you have kids and stuff like that

70 K: Ok

71 S: yeah, and also um I use the chat

72 K: ok

73 S: like if I know a friends online and I want to talk, I chat with them on here, I use that a
74 lot I use, I been usin' that a lot lately

75 K: ok

76 S: uh hm

77 K: ok, so then, which games do you play?

78 S: café world, it's a lot, but the main one I play is café world

79 K: Ok, um and then you did say you used Farmville

80 S: Farmville also

81 K: ok, and are those the two that you play the most?

82 S: yes

83 K: ok, so why do you play those two the most?

84 S: They're interesting

- 85 K: ok
- 86 S: Like cause you get to, its' you control what's going on, like you, it's basically you
87 doin' the farming, through like a character in a game, and that's why I like to play it,
88 plus they can be quite addicting at times, like when you're bored or somethin' and
89 none of your friends you want to talk to online, like you play these games and then
90 like the next thing you know, like, you get interested,
- 91 K: ok, so what specifically about café world is addicting?
- 92 S: like you get to cook
- 93 K: Ok
- 94 S: cook different things like I be, I cook certain things that I've never heard of or like um,
95 it's another way for you to interact with your friends, cause you can they can request
96 to be your friend in the game and you interact through the kitchen and stuff and
97 Farmville you get uh, a taste of farming life
- 98 K: ok
- 99 S: like it's time consuming and everything so like if I'm waiting for another class to come
100 I get on here and play a game, next thing you know it's class time for class
- 101 K: ok, so what do you do within Farmville
- 102 S: um Farmville, like you, harvest crops, you like take care of animals, like every day um
103 real life farming things, you plant, like and you can go on to other people's farms and
104 plant and everything and it takes time, which I like, cause you to get to a feel for like
105 actually farming
- 106 K: Ok, and why do you feel like you are farming
- 107 S: cause like you do the work, it's like, it takes time, like your hen can actually like egg
108 because its like farming actually like you have to plow this, you have to do this to the
109 cows and everything else like it takes time
- 110 K: ok, what do you do within café world?
- 111 S: um, it depends on what like I'm cookin', like you have to serve drinks to the customers
112 and you servin' the food, like you gotta hire people, fire people if they're not doin'
113 their job, like it's like you're like a manager of a restaurant.
- 114 K: Ok, what do you like about each game?
- 115 S: um, each game is different

116 K: Ok

117 (10:17) S: one's not the same as the other, like it's a process, like you have to go to
118 different things, it teaches you different things like patience cause you have to be
119 patient from one thing to another, and you also if it teaches you somewhat why about
120 life cause you have to be like a individual an adult with certain situations, and then like
121 it teaches you about responsibility, cause like, it's about time, like certain crops grow
122 this time and that so you have to keep up with certain things

123 K: ok, so how much time do you feel like you spend playing Farmville

124 S: um, I plant every day, so back there with the time, to like so basically if I plant
125 something that takes like a couple hours I know I have to come back in like four hours
126 and like harvest them so about most of the time I'm playing the games so every time I
127 login to Facebook,

128 K: ok

129 S: I'm either playing one or the other games

130 K: ok, so how does time work in each game?

131 S: ok, so, in café world for example, you cook the meal, and like it depends on you get to
132 choose which meal you want to cook, cause they put how long it takes to cook and
133 everything so choosing which meal and like you have to plan it around your schedule,
134 like when I cook I plan it around what class I have and how long it takes so I won't
135 spoil, so basically like, for college student playing these games you have to plan it
136 around your schedule, and like class and studying time and everything cause it could,
137 it could be a distraction from you studying or actually you like goin' to class

138 K: OK

139 S: that's the bad part about it but it's fun

140 K: ok, same with Farmville, how do you understand time

141 S: Like, same thing like, this is more difficult than café world because you have to like
142 take care of the animals and they're like on a time and like, like the chickens, they're
143 ready for the eggs to be pumped out or anything, so basically, it's like the plants and
144 the animals, so like that's like more time

145 K: Ok, so within those games, what kind of control do you have?

146 S: I think you take most of the control, like it's another one like, it's different games like
147 some games like Family feud and stuff on here you choose to, so basically you're in
148 full effect, like everything you need to do or have to do has to go through you, like you
149 have to serve the meals and everything so basically if I don't, it either spoils or like
150 you go along and stuff like happens like in a real restaurant or on a actual farm.

151 K: Ok, so when you're playing these games, what kind of responses do you expect to
152 happen like as you're sort of clicking through each game?

153 S: hopefully, like when I play, like hopefully it goes right, like something could happen
154 like its constantly like pop ups and everything it's time, like, cause the customers can
155 get impatient or are waiting for you and everything, so basically you have to be like
156 quick, like if you're not on your p's and q's, like customers can leave and everything
157 that's like you're losing money, but except it's in a game, so basically you have to be
158 content on with playing these games or most people who don't have time they usual
159 either quit or you know I'm saying ask a friend who's doing this or that to like help
160 them out

161 K: ok, so what were your expectations for what Facebook would be like when you first
162 started using it?

163 S: Well when my dad introduced it to me he made it seem so easy, like you just do this
164 and do that, but it was actually complicated, cause like first getting on there I had to
165 find like family members and friends and everything and like you had to go through
166 the search thing and people, some people has the same name as you so basically the
167 picture of the person helps a lot like to actually make my Profile what it is like I had to
168 do a lot like add certain things add pictures of myself so people would know who I am
169 and, like I had to build my friends list and everything, like make my, I didn't want my
170 Profile to be so boring so when people come to it, like oh that's it, that's all she has, so
171 like I started you know what I'm saying getting on these games, and doing different
172 quizzes and stuff, and like places on my Profile to make it look interesting

173 K: Ok, so what do you expect Facebook to let you do?

174 S: Basically let me be free to do whatever like, you know what I'm saying, there should
175 be no interruptions, especially if I'm talking and chatting with a friend or playing a
176 game, like let me express myself, like my Profile, I think that's a good thing that

177 Facebook has because it lets you say like if you do this or that or put what you want if
178 you don't want to be private it lets you do that but if you want your Profile to be public
179 it lets you do that also but at the same time it gives you privacy

180 K: Ok, let's go back to your Profile real quick

181 S: uh huh

182 K: ok, um, let's scroll down, I just want to make sure we talk about all the things you've
183 got on there, ok, yeah I got all that, um I think we already talked about applications, do
184 you have any other applications besides like the games

185 S: um on here,

186 K: and quizzes,

187 S: um, let's see um, this is my whole Profile, like there on the side, like all the other
188 quizzes and stuff

189 K: Ok, so do you mostly just go into café world and Farmville, the other games you play
190 when you, I guess when do you play the other games when you're not playing café
191 world or Farmville?

192 S: Um, I play certain ones, it depends on the mood, like some things just like take too
193 long, and I'm like ok I don't have time for this, where other times, it's like, um like
194 these certain games, I'll get game requests from people like they want me to send them
195 stuff or they I receive stuff, like it's like social

196 K: OK

197 S: social acting and everything

198 K: ok,

199 S: yeah like if I want a real life game that like comes on TV like family feud or the price
200 is right, I'll play them

201 K: ok

202 S: cause it seems like more real, yeah

203 K: Ok

204 S: and then like I have other games like you send like, this game called, it's like a app
205 that's called iHearts where you send hearts to people like they're sick or something

206 K: ok

207 S: yeah

208 K: iHearts, okay
209 S: uh huh,
210 K: ok, so when you click on things in Facebook, um how fast do you expect things to
211 take for something to happen
212 S: um, they have to load,
213 K: ok
214 S: each thing has to load, like it takes like I'd say about 10 seconds for each thing or app
215 to load, or and like it's another process, like you have to choose what you want to do,
216 like some things'll come up, like this person sent you something, then you send them
217 something back and then you can be like yes or no, it depends on you, so it depends on
218 what app you click on like the quizzes they come up like that, they're real fast, cause
219 it's just questions, and stuff like yeah, different games
220 K: ok, now are there certain things, um that take slower that you expect to take slower
221 (18:23) S: um, I think out of the games I play, I think social city takes a long time. It
222 depends on what you do cause like you can say like you have like 3 different cities you
223 have to take care of and like that's a lot of things that have to load up within the game,
224 so like it depends on how you do on the game or somthin', also like, um there's one
225 called sorority life that's a little slow because as soon as you move from like updates
226 about the game and everything you have to go through each one just because if
227 something important when you playing the game so that's like It's important because
228 it's a little slow, but they're like fun.
229 K: ok, so you don't mind if it's slow?
230 S: no, cause I know like what am I expecting, but some people are like first time have to
231 warn em like this game or that if you have time or patience for that game, if you don't,
232 I wouldn't recommend playin' them
233 K: Ok
234 S: yeah
235 K: ok, so within Facebook, how would you define control?
236 S: control, like as far as friends I like it mainly, I keep it mainly for the friends and the
237 family, like you have to have like be in content on the same level with certain people,
238 like on Facebook, you can't just like say what you want to say to this person because it

239 leads to a lot like, problems and everything so like you control everything that you
240 want to do, but at the same time you have to be like, careful with what you do, because
241 it lets you be free, but at the same time like its other than because if you do something
242 wrong someone a person can report you and you have to get off Facebook, so you
243 have to remember that you're free on here but you have like to be careful with what
244 you do

245 K: ok

246 S: yeah

247 K: um, so then what kind of control do you have?

248 S: As far as me, um, besides being free, like the features it have, like I can chat with
249 somebody, like the chat, is fast, I think that's the fastest feature on Facebook. Like you
250 control that and then far from the games, yeah, like everything is control, cause like it
251 keeps you updated with everything so basically, I have like some good control over
252 my Facebook, me being like 18 and older appropriate to use Facebook and everything

253 K: Ok, do you with you had other, more control or what kind of control do you wish you
254 had?

255 S: One thing in think Facebook needs like more help with this privacy cause it's like easy
256 for people to get to your password, like I had a problem with somebody trying to get
257 into my Facebook, and I had to change my password, like privacy is okay but it could
258 be better like, I wish I could have more control of keeping people off my Facebook, or
259 trying to get it on into my Facebook, like the privacy level can be a lot better

260 K: ok, so when you click on things what sorts of responses do you like when you click on
261 things?

262 S: like back when you commented on people's status, my friend I've known her in high
263 school, like you would comment and like it takes them like a matter of seconds to
264 comment back like the features are fast, when you like talkin' to people that's the main
265 thing that I like, or you like something and then like people interact fast on here,

266 K: ok, so what kind of responses do you dislike when you click on something

267 S: um when like somebody go into your Profile and they can comment on somethin' on
268 your pictures, cause that's like the comment on your pictures is private if somebody
269 want to comment on your picture or anything they can say like that that's like certain

270 things I want like people to like keep to themselves and everything like you can
271 comment, but you comment if somebody goes into your pictures they can see what
272 you two were talking about, like that thing that can be private like some people don't
273 have to hear or see what you're saying to somebody else,

274 K: ok, ok, so when you're clicking on things within the Facebook interface, um what kind
275 of responses do you wish you got oh, that you wish that you didn't get from the
276 interface

277 S: interface like, um people tend to share a lot like you can share who like you can put a
278 youtube video on here sometimes and it pops up cause your friends and everything and
279 like what they do with their own Profile, you see what they do so like when they want
280 to add videos and stuff I'm like "ok I don't want that to keep popping up" everything
281 you do on Facebook I have to see cause we're friends and we're interacting, so things
282 like that like if they want to put a video on their Profile, just put on their Profile, but
283 don't put it on like my wall or my status the same way like certain things when I'm
284 strolling or looking at stuff, I don't want to see, that.

285 K: ok

286 S: yeah

287 K: Ok, so how has your use of Facebook changed the longer you continue to use it?

288 S: I have more friends now, like maybe in high school to college has changed because
289 coming into college I had more friends in high school but now that I'm making friends
290 here Facebook is a way for me to like interact with them because in college you can
291 get busy and you know what I'm sayin' you can't really see the friend or have a cell
292 phone or anything and I see them on Facebook I chat with them and everything so it
293 makes social life college easier

294 K: ok, what kind of relationships do you have with the people on Facebook?

295 S: me like since I can't be with my parents 24/7 now since being to college if they
296 want to like if they know that I'm like doin' somethin' that I can't get to my phone but
297 I might have my computer on, like they'll like talk to me, like we interact like I'll say
298 something and my dad'll like give me advice about it or anything like if I'm having a
299 problem or I know I can go to my dad and like instant message him or something like
300 my friends like my friends in different colleges this is how we keep up with each other

301 on Facebook, like we do stuff like we can plan stuff like yesterday like one of my
302 friends chatted and asked me am I coming to visit her I told her no cause I have stuff
303 to do and she understood like you bein' in college and everything Facebook is
304 recommended for college people especially you know what I'm sayin' if you tryin' to
305 reach your friend but they might've gotten a new number you never know like this
306 could be the place where you can talk and like keep up with each other

307 K: ok, how does Facebook help you feel closer or farther away from people socially?

308 S: socially, Like sometimes my friend'll be doin' somethin' like in another state or
309 something, like me missin' them I'm like, I want to be there with them, like you may
310 interact and talk but sometimes it's like Facebook, can't like help you get to where
311 they want to be like it sets in that you're not with that person anymore but at the same
312 it makes you comfortable, because you can still talk to them and like certain events I
313 get I'm not even from Norfolk, I'm from Richmond, so like I'll get invites from social
314 things at home and it's like well I can't make this now mean it makes me a little sad
315 but I have to realize that you know what I'm sayin' I'm in college and some things
316 have to change and everything like it's not a everyday routine like it is in high school

317 K: ok, so how do you define interactivity

318 S: interactivity? Um

319 K: yeah, when you use Facebook in particular

320 S: Facebook? I use the games to interact with friends the chat, like when you're trying to
321 make jokes, or do like have fun with your friends I think Facebook is that place cause
322 like you put pictures up, and like they can tag you into the pictures but like I hung out
323 with my friend that day and you laugh about it cause like I remember that day, pictures
324 and everything, like its memories

325 K: ok

326 S: yeah, with your friends or family at that it's like you have family reunions and pictures
327 up and like oh I remember when [participant mumbled] did this or somebody did that
328 like it's like good

329 K: Ok, so then what then do you find interactive about Facebook?

330 (27:23) S: Havin' friends, you meet new people, I think this is a great place to meet new
331 people especially if you're close like in the same area with somebody, like that's the

332 interactive feature that should not never change, like making new friends, keeping up
333 with old friends, like having fun with each other not even being in somebody's
334 presence with, actually over internet social site, I know it's for social but you keep up
335 with a lot

336 K: ok, what do you find to be the most interactive feature of Facebook?

337 S: um, I would have to say the chat

338 K: ok

339 S: yeah, like 'cause, the thing I like about the chat, you can chat with as many people as
340 you want at one time, so you can be like oh I'm talkin' to a number of people and like
341 "really" yeah, cause some people don't know that chat they think like that you have to
342 chat with one person at a time, that's not true, like you can be takin' to five different
343 people and it's easy to keep up cause once you send something to one person
344 somebody can be sendin' a message to you so that's like easy faster and it's like great,
345 for people especially if you're not like the talkin' type person like when you talkin'
346 like person you can chat with them it's like easy for you

347 K: ok

348 S: also chat it's private, I give that like the best privacy feature on Facebook is private
349 only you can your friend can talk nobody can see what you guys are talking about

350 K: ok, what do you find to be the least interactive feature about Facebook?

351 S: one thing that's least interactive about Facebook that's kind of hard question 'cause
352 it's like everything but, Facebook like, one thing that I don't like is like back with the
353 chat like it's the thing over here like you can see who's on by their pictures and then
354 you can come over here and click the chat thing and it tells you like what names are on
355 but one thing I don't like is a friend see like if it's like that you may think that they're
356 on here but actually they're not, and that's like misleading like you want to talk, like
357 oh such and such is on but in actuality they're not, like you click on their name and
358 they be like dadada is offline, so like if they're offline, like why their picture showin'
359 up there that they are, like that's one thing that could be changed and that doesn't like
360 help the situation at all, [participant mumbled] bein' on Facebook

361 K: ok, what do you wish Facebook would let you do?

362 S: as far as like If you're trying to plan a party or somethin', like, I think they could make
 363 that process easier, like you have to go through like who you want to invite and
 364 everything, to make sure that you have who you want at your party or event, or like the
 365 process is difficult, cause' you have to go through your whole friends list, like they
 366 could separate different friends better, yeah, cause I remember I was plannin' my
 367 graduation party and like I had to go through a whole a hundred list of friends like
 368 okay that's like the whole like they should be in like sections like family or your
 369 friends or your this that, associates and everything like separate columns of your
 370 friends to make your preparation for this or that easier

371 K: Ok is there anything else about Facebook that you do that you haven't really talked
 372 about yet?

373 S: one thing that I like, um, depends on anything like usually if you click on applications
 374 or something there be like stuff over here on the side like if you for males like they can
 375 tell you what games are comin' on for football or basketball, like females they have
 376 like different shoppin' sites on here they have like this like school

377 K: ohh

378 S: they keep up with that like coupons and everything, they usually have like, you know
 379 like a shopping person they have different sales they tell you what stores are on sale,
 380 music, like different genres of different cultures and everythings on there like if it's
 381 like a concert comin' up they tell you who and when and ticket prices and everything
 382 yeah that's what I like, ads of stuff

383 K: ok

384 S; Yeah

385 K: so how often, do you click on the ads then?

386 S: yeah, like if I find somethin' interesting, like oh this person comin' to perform or
 387 somethin' I'll click on that and it give me details or like I like basketball, like watchin'
 388 it so I'll be like okay so who's playin' tonight different stuff like that it leads to like
 389 different websites like guys like this football person or this basketball person it'll take
 390 you to that link like if you want to know who's comin' on it'll take you to like
 391 NBA.com and then it show you who's comin' on and stuff like that

392 K: ok

393 S: yeah it's quick too

394 K: ok, and why do you like going to the Ads on the side?

395 S: most of the ads on Facebook are pretty interesting especially if I like to do something

396 like I do do the big blue capitol one bowl so basically it tells me who he's goin' up

397 against and I can like just click on that if I want to vote for big blue it will like go to it

398 K: ok

399 S: like stuff that I usually do or like are interestin' and like I click on it and it takes me

400 there and then like it helps me out a little

401 K: ok

402 S: yeah

403 K: what makes you want to click on a Facebook ad instead of an ad somewhere else?

404 S: well see if I'm waiting for a game to load, I'll be checkin' this out while the game is

405 loading, so like it catches my attention like I could be waiting for somethin' like some

406 of the like slower things that we talked about earlier like I turn on the games that take

407 a minute to load while those are loading I could be like on something else checking

408 out somethin' interestin' like to keep me for wanting to be waiting for the game or

409 something cause there's always an ad up there that's you're going to look at like

410 especially if you're doin' like the beginning of football season like they have stuff

411 about Redskins cowboys and everything if you're a fan like you're gonna want to click

412 on it if they're talkin' about your team that you like or somethin'

413 K: ok, is there anything else that you do in Facebook that haven't talked about yet

414 S: no I covered everything

415 K: ok

416 S: oh and it's a feature on Facebook somebody's birthday

417 K: ok

418 S: it'll tell you like they'll put it up in events like if it's somebody's birthday and you can

419 click on there and you can wish them a happy birthday and they have this thing where

420 you can send them like a virtual gift or something like that's one thing about Facebook

421 that's pretty neat

422 K: ok do you send virtual gifts if it's their birthday?

423 S: yeah, I do

424 K: ok, and then why do you like sending virtual gifts?

425 S: it's like you know you're not close to that person, and you can't really send them

426 something at the time, like that's like a help like you're thinkin' of them like we may

427 have to send you that present in person but like it's still a little virtual gift like I'm

428 thinkin' about you and like we're really wishin' you a happy birthday or somethin'

429 K: ok

430 S: uh huh

431 K: alright, any other things?

432 S: Nope

VITA

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